

Star Gate 591

Chapter 591: Demon Sword Erupts in All Directions (IV)

A powerful surge of energy rushed into Panther's body. The Yellow General marveled at the durability of the monster spirit's body and did indeed sense a current of aura surging throughout. It seemed a bit like... a sword aura!

A swordsman?

The Yellow General thought of Light Sword, but this didn't feel like her. Setting the possibilities aside, the general quickly directed his energy to suppress the aura. The aura wasn't weak, but it shouldn't cause the monster spirit's death. The monster spirit was truly very strong.

Panther drank in all of the general's energy like a bottomless pit. Everything sent into the dog's body vanished in the blink of an eye. As the Yellow General kept up the infusion, he cursed to himself that this monster spirit was very strange.

Sweat gradually collected on his forehead, a surprising reaction for a metamorphosis expert. Though he was newly ascended to this level, he was coming off worse for the wear against a weak monster spirit. His energy seemed insufficient!

"Hup!" grunted the general as he brought more energy to bear. He focused his attention on the task at hand. This was when Li Hao knew that his chance had come. If he couldn't end the general with one blow right now, then it would be too hard to manage.

A startled look dawned in Panther's eyes as the general focused on suppressing the aura. The man noticed it too, and was just wondering about it when the monster spirit cried out with pain!

"Arf arf!" Panther barked with agony. Li Hao sliced right through Panther's stomach with his sword—a stroke of five forcefully fused auras stabbed into the man's heart!

Li Hao knew that this would also injure Panther, but there was no time to think so much. It wouldn't be a fatal injury.

Pfft!

The two parties were so close together that they were nearly face to face. Even if the Yellow General reacted in time, he didn't have the space to retreat. He could only watch as the sword pierced through his heart!

Shock and bafflement flooded his mind. What was going on?? He was very strong! But as strong as he was, he didn't anticipate that the monster spirit envoy he was focused on saving would suddenly produce a swordsman from its stomach to kill him!

Was it the swordsman that'd just attacked the envoy? How had he hidden in the dog's stomach? Try as the Yellow General could, he couldn't make sense of it.

Even now, he didn't consider the possibility that Panther was a fake. That shouldn't be the case. Thus, he was truly confused how someone had soundlessly burrowed into the envoy's stomach. Was it a unique supernatural ability?

Possibly, but the attacker should be a martial master!

As his thoughts tripped over themselves in a detached daze, Panther smashed its paw over and crushed the general's head. It was only then that the man realized... The envoy was working with the swordsman!

It was too late. One man and one dog jointly killed the Yellow General in a split second. His death finally rang the alarm bells for Xu Xing and the second steward. The second steward's first thought was to run, while Xu Xing's first thought was to rush to the mirror and undo the treasure's restriction. He'd just sealed off the area, so no one knew that someone had died inside.

Red Beard and the others could come in if the seal was undone! Even if Red Beard wanted to rebel, he wouldn't kill the second young master. And with Xu Qing alive, Red Beard might chose to protect Xu Xing instead.

Xu Xing's reaction was fast enough, but Li Hao darted out of Panther's stomach and rushed the man just as quickly. A domineering sword aura erupted—Xu Xing's hand was almost touching the mirror, and yet, he was too late!

Pfft!

Stellaris ran through his neck and twisted his head around when Li Hao yanked the weapon back. Xu Xing's eyes shook when he looked at his murderer. His lips opened and closed as he mouthed... Li Hao!

Indeed, he clearly glimpsed his killer at this moment. He would recognize the young man even if the latter was a pile of ashes! This was the guy who'd killed his elder brother and nephew. The entire complex knew who he was because his appearance had long been made common knowledge.

Demon Sword!

Li Hao slew him with one thrust and turned with a punch, running through both fleeing Solars with a massive collision. He whirled around with the sword, rushing the second steward whose leg was caught in Panther's mouth.

"Demon Sword... You're Demon Sword Li Hao!" shrieked the second steward with absolute terror. How was this possible?! How had Demon Sword crawled out of the dog's stomach and what was he doing here?! He should be in White Moon City! Countless people want his head and the Xus would've sent people as well if it wasn't for this ceremony!

And yet, here Li Hao was.

BOOM!

A massive boom ripped out as the sword swung through the air. Panther bit down ferociously and struck with its paw, ignoring the wound on its stomach. It ripped through the man's lower body, eliciting a shrill scream as Li Hao's sword descended!

The scream cut off with a grisly thud.

It was quiet. There were five corpses on the ground, their owners unbelieving of their deaths. The Yellow General didn't even have his head anymore, he must have died the most reluctant deaths of them all. He'd been a metamorphosis expert!

If he'd faced his attackers straight-on, not even the joint efforts of Li Hao and Panther could've taken him down. The duo would have to flee for their lives. But instead... he'd died so easily to the young man.

A drop of Water of Life hit Panther's stomach. The dog looked plaintively at Li Hao. Although it'd received two drops of Water of Life, it still felt highly put out. That'd been too painful!

Li Hao said nothing; he quickly stowed the corpses in his ring and walked downstairs, collecting the six treasures on the third floor. He then descended to the second floor and took all of the origin weapons. Finally, he reached the first floor and gathered all of the storage rings, threading them on a rope and turning them into a necklace of rings. His silver armor materialized as Li Hao placed the necklace in the armor's pocket.

He also collected the suits of armor on the ground. Though he didn't know what to do with them yet... he wanted them all the same! Li Hao quickly filled another storage ring with everything on the first floor. Dull thuds sounded from outside—someone was attacking the treasury.

Li Hao took some time to collect all of the armor before returning to the fourth floor. There was only one item on it—the mirror fragment that reflected the situation outside.

Red Beard seemed to have frightened off a lot of people after killing a Nova. He was leading people in an offensive against the treasury, viciousness glinting from his eyes. Yu Qiao was vomiting blood elsewhere as Xu Qing beat him black and blue...

Everything was happening very quickly.

Li Hao glanced at the mirror fragment. Red Beard might appear as soon as he claimed the item. But if he didn't... was he going to wait for Xu Qing to kill the others and then come kill him? He'd be flayed alive then!

The young man took out a tree root, equal ruthlessness shining from his eyes. It'd be one thing if Red Beard didn't try to stop him, but if he did... he could eat tree root! The little tree was very strong, so this item might be able to kill the pirate. If not, perhaps he and Panther could deliver the final stroke.

Li Hao abruptly made up his mind and shoved the mirror fragment into his storage ring. The protective shield around the treasury abruptly vanished, letting in sounds from the outside world. A massive boom roared from the doors before Red Beard's sinister voice traveled in. "Second young master, I'm here to protect you!"

Off in the distance, Xu Qing blinked. His... manor... seemed to have lost something...

Red Beard's astonished voice came back on the wind as the duke stared for a moment. "Who are you? Where's the second young master??"

The pirate was indeed startled. Who was this person?

Li Hao noted that apart from the pirate, there were three other Novas charging him. Although the other three were initial Novas, he didn't have the time to spare for them.

Metamorphosis level expert, is it?

The young man clenched his teeth and activated the tree root.

Red Beard wanted to kill the stranger before anything else was said, but fear dawned in his eyes. A towering tree seemed to appear in front of him, one that shot countless branches at him!

Is this an illusion? Red Beard roared despite his thoughts and brought his blade down on the tree!

A streak of brilliance illuminated East Heart City as a shocked Xu Qing, Yu Qiao, and others watched a towering tree run through Red Beard and his three subordinates with thousands of branches! The men were riddled with holes!

Red Beard was too stunned to react before his head was also run through. Shocked as he was, Li Hao didn't have time to think too much before he struck with his sword, beheading the pirate! Panther erupted with motion as well and smacked the others to death. Well, the pirates were mostly dead already.

The tree disappeared after the enormous blow, leaving only Li Hao and Panther in the air. The young man scooped up the corpses and threw his head back with wild laughter!

"Do you recognize my voice, Xu Qing? You idiot! You really believed that there's a monster spirit envoy and gave me the Windchaser Boots for it! My thanks for your generosity! I humbly accept your two sons, your grandson, and your general! Oh yeah, and your treasury! Hahaha!! Thank you for all of it!"

Xu Qing gaped. The massive golden dog in the air transformed into a black dog.

"Arf arf arf!" Panther barked, particularly proud of itself.

"Li... Li Hao..." Xu Qing blinked. Li Hao?

“That’s me!” the young man hooted with laughter. “You really believed my dog is some monster spirit from some bullshit palace, you’re such an idiot!”

With that, he raced through the air at an extremely fast pace!

Xu Qing looked around, everything occurring to him in slow motion. Have I... been had? I have... been had!

“LI HAO!!” His eyes filled with bloodlust. “Get out of my way!” He sent Yu Qiao flying with a punch.

“After him! Get Li Hao! I swear on my last breath that I will kill Li Hao!” He sank into utter madness. My two sons, my Windchaser Boots, my treasury, my mirror treasure... All of it was gone! He didn’t care about Yu Qiao and the rest, they could be killed any time, but Li Hao needed to die today!

Chapter 592: Reinforcements (I)

The Heaven and Earth Generals and numerous resident experts rushed where the young man had disappeared, their expressions fluctuating with a variety of emotions.

Li Hao!

This was the greatest scandal beneath the heavens! It was the greatest joke beneath the heavens!

The nobly and lofty Steadfast Duke, the overlord of the east, had been swindled out of house and home! He’d given away his greatest treasure with his own hands and his two legitimate sons...

Yu Qiao was surprised to see the duke flat-out ignore the rest of them. Amid his shock, he frowned in the direction that Li Hao had fled in. This Li Hao... was an interesting one. He could’ve fled with none the wiser if he’d raised less of a fuss. Granted, with Red Beard in his way, the disturbance

would've been great either way. But if he'd concealed his identity and not said he was Li Hao, the duke might not be this crazed.

It wasn't just because the young man had killed people and seized the Xu treasury, but also because he wielded the Li family sword!

"C'mon, let's go back!" Yu Qiao called to his people with a light glittering in his eyes. "Everyone be careful, but this is also an opportunity. Old man Xu Qing has once more lost people in this battle and the key detail is, his reputation has reached rock bottom. Who will believe after today that trash like him can lead the east to a glorious future? Let's head back and share this news with the rest of the world. Make sure we capture every single detail! Just you wait to be laughed at, Xu Qing!"

He was no match for Xu Qing, so he would only stay to his death if he insisted on lingering. As for the weaklings of the duke's household, he had no desire to kill them. There was no point in doing so.

And for the possibility of saving Li Hao? Forget it. It was better not to be buried alongside the kid. Not to mention, there was no reason for him to help the young man. If it wasn't for him, the rest of them wouldn't have been nearly killed by the duke. It was generous enough of them to not take Li Hao to task for their injuries.

Yu Qiao soared into the air and punched out, sending flames gushing out of his fist and engulfing the complex in flames!

"The Steadfast Duke Xu Qing is the height of incompetence and peak of hypocrisy," announced a resonant voice in East Heart City. "He attempted to kill the leaders of the twenty-one eastern provinces today, leaving an opportunity for Demon Sword Li Hao to rush into the complex and kill the Red Beard pirate that was colluding with Xu Qing..."

Yu Qiao's companions decided to maximize the effect of this piece of news. "Demon Sword has killed Xu Qing!" they roared. "The manor has toppled. Rejoice, ye beneath the heavens!"

With that, the powerhouses quickly scattered in the four directions. Time to go home! Only when they were in their own territory would they be safe.

Although the Steadfast Duke wasn't dead, he likely wasn't in the mood to disprove rumors at this time. He was probably furiously chasing after Li Hao and had no mind to spare for this nonsense. The city of East Heart shook when it digested the news! Countless spies in the city froze with shock, their jaws dropping so far down that they could fit an egg in their mouths!

Did we... hear that right? Who? Demon Sword Li Hao?

My heavens, what kind of outlandish tale is this? How is this possible? Li Hao razed the manor of the Steadfast Duke, the overlord of the east for the last two hundred years??

Upheaval was to rock this world! This wasn't a minor character that was affected, but a massive headline of the ruler of the eastern continent being stomped into the ground! Countless transmission pendants whirled with activity and shared the news across the dynasty in the blink of an eye.

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Heaven and earth were overturning inside East Heart City. Being sovereigns of their domains, Yu Qiao and the others were naturally aware of how to most effectively strike at the duke's prestige. Half truths and half lies at a time like this were the most fatal!

The duke's manor was being consumed by flames. No matter how diligently the duke's servants tried to put out the fire, flames created by a metamorphosis level expert were impossible to extinguish. They could only watch with resignation as the flames spread until everything was reduced to cinders.

This further confirmed that something had happened to the duke. Otherwise, no matter how ferocious the fire raged, the duke should be able to douse it. The key thing was, regular people wouldn't dare set the complex on fire either.

"So the duke is dead?!"

“Oh no, is war coming to us now??”

“I don’t think so...? If the duke is dead, we’ll still be the subjects of whoever they send next. We’re not officials... So long as it isn’t those pirates or bandits that come...”

There wasn’t truly a lack of personnel at the Steadfast Duke’s manor. Some Solars quickly soared out to suppress the unrest. The duke’s army outside the city walls also mobilized to prevent unexpected attacks at this time.

However, a lie is halfway around the world before the truth has its boots on. Even though the duke’s people announced in all directions that the duke was fine, that it was only unstable factors seeking to stir up trouble, that everything had been pacified—not many believed them. Prejudiced by their first impressions, the people were more willing to believe Yu Qiao.

Otherwise, where was the duke? Why was his manor in flames? Was Red Beard really dead? It would be a cause for national celebration if the greatest pirate of the East Sea was dead. As for whether or not the pirate had colluded with the duke, the veracity of that was unknown. But since that rumor existed, people were readily willing to believe it.

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The news spread too far in a very short amount of time.

Near River province.

Various sides considered how best to deploy their troops to attack Southern Ford, to lure Li Hao out of White Moon City. Fan Chang looked around with a smile on his face. With these people helping him, he was certain that Silver Moon would suffer a certain degree of loss this time. It would quench some of his burning hatred!

Earthturner Sword, Light Sword, and Li Hao all needed to die!

As the group discussed the last item on the agenda of when to send out their troops... many of their transmission pendants vibrated. Glances were quickly exchanged around the room before people took out their pendants. Something major had happened if so many had received news at the same time.

Fan Chang had also received a message. He hadn't wanted to read it, but since everyone was, he decided to inspect his pendant. He froze as soon as he did so; he wasn't the only one. The hall turned so silent that a pin drop could be heard. There wasn't a hint of vitality, as if it'd become a graveyard.

Breathing could be heard only after a prolonged silence.

"Impossible!"

"Hearsay!"

"Bullshit, this is nonsense!"

"....." Voices were raised in anger. This wasn't real!

There were also unpleasant expressions on other faces as it wasn't just one faction's intelligence arm reporting this. One faction might get it wrong, but not so many at the same time. Everyone present was a heavyweight of a major faction. How could all of their intelligence gathering go wrong at the same time?

Finally, someone asked in a voice hoarse with shock, "Demon Sword... is out of Silver Moon? When did this happen? He showed himself a few days ago and is said to be in White Moon City..."

This was incredibly hard to believe! The group was still discussing how to force him out, but the young man was already out of the province. Granted, it was better for him not to be out if he was to present himself in this manner.

“The Steadfast Duke possesses countless powerhouses and Red Beard is a metamorphosis level expert. Not only that, but his four generals of Heaven, Earth, Yellow, and Black are also said to be the metamorphosis level. The Steadfast Duke is a premier martial master and the Xus reign over the twenty-one eastern provinces. Those like Yu Qiao can’t even breathe freely—how could he be crushed by Li Hao?”

“We don’t know much yet, so we can’t determine anything. It only says that the duke’s manor has burned to the ground and that the Steadfast Duke might even be dead as well...”

“.....” A heated discussion broke out amid the stunned crowd. Demon Sword Li Hao!

When the three swords fought in the North Sea, their weakest was Demon Sword Li Hao. Although he was quite strong to beat back a late Nova, he was just an opportunistic fighter in many people’s eyes. But now... a bucket of cold water rained down over them, chilling their hearts.

He’d traveled through thousands of kilometers to strike at an enemy! To them, this was the young man’s counterblow and warning. You guys want to kill me? Then I’ll kill you first!

The Steadfast Duke was fated to have a death feud with him, so Li Hao went to the duke first to make the first move and attack during their grand ceremony.

Fan Chang took a deep breath and forcefully quelled the trembling of his hands. “Everyone, hold your horses. We don’t have any specifics yet and should await detailed reports! I’ve seen Li Hao’s strength for myself. He had difficulty killing a late Nova a few days ago, he can’t have possibly reached the stage of killing a metamorphosis expert so quickly! If that’s the case, he won’t be the Demon Sword, but the God Sword!”

He didn't believe this! There was simply no way that Li Hao had so quickly grown to the level of exterminating a major faction by himself. The Steadfast Duke was much stronger than the Director General Office of Near River. The duke commanded numerous metamorphosis experts, even more than the Steppe Prince. How could such a titan of the east be so easily killed?

Fan Chang didn't believe it!

The assembly managed to find their calm. "Then about attacking Southern Ford..." someone asked hesitantly.

"The hell are we attacking for!" someone cursed. "Are we supposed to fight to the death with those Silver Moon martial masters after Li Hao's gone? Is there any benefit to that?"

They were here for Li Hao, not to kill Silver Moon powerhouses. Killing Li Hao meant obtaining the divine sword that would help them break through. What good was killing Silver Moon martial masters for?

They could put their lives on the line for Li Hao's sword, but Silver Moon martial masters were hot-blooded sorts who loved a good fight. That wasn't what the crowd wanted.

Fan Chang cursed inwardly to himself. As Silver Moon's neighbor, he dearly wished that these people could charge straight into Silver Moon. But now, none of them were willing because the key target had run off. They'd be fools to go against Silver Moon still!

Fan Chang sighed inwardly and regarded his neighbor solemnly. Was Silver Moon really a land of demons? Li Hao had crossed thousands of kilometers to attack the Steadfast Duke. Although no one here voiced it aloud, they were all deeply panicking. Some of them wanted to immediately depart for home if there wasn't further news soon!

This was terrifying!

Multiple metamorphosis experts and Novas were dead. This was unbelievably shocking! Not even the premier powerhouses of the nine ministries and royal family dared talk about attacking the Steadfast Duke.

Hence, everyone waited for further information. A general atmosphere of anxiety developed in the hall as cups of wine and tea disappeared into stomachs. Somehow, the cold Near River province was feeling a bit too hot for comfort.

Chapter 593: Reinforcements (II)

White Moon City.

Pfft!

Kong Jie spat out a mouthful of tea and gaped, then promptly shot into the sky. He wasn't the only one. Huang Yu also soared upward from the military barracks in the distance. And while Director General Zhao didn't fly, he glanced sharply at the Silver Moon Guard base in the distance and almost crushed his teeth when he gnashed them.

"Go ask where Li Hao is!"

Deputy Zhou didn't ask for further clarification before promptly vanishing.

Where was Li Hao?

Li Hao's ship was still parked in the plaza, his Demon Hunters were in closed door cultivation. No one thought much of it as it'd only been three days. This was how the young man operated when returning from a mission.

But now, where was Li Hao? Or was there someone outside causing trouble in his name?

The more Director General Zhao thought about it, the more ludicrous he found the idea! How was this possible? He was well aware of the Steadfast Duke's strength and that the three generals mentioned in the report were of the metamorphosis level. Red Beard had apparently been in attendance today, he was also a metamorphosis expert. The duke himself might be one too, even without unsealing his battle strength.

That made for a five metamorphosis experts and a dozen Novas. All of Silver Moon might have to unseal themselves in order to triumph over that level of strength. But now their intelligence reports said that the Steadfast Duke had been killed??

Who would believe that?!

Two powerhouses broke through the air and landed in the skies over the Silver Moon Guard base.

"Liu Long, Hao Lianchuan, get out here!" Kong Jie roared.

Liu Long was cultivating in the main hall. He opened his eyes with a faint frown and walked out.

"Inspector General Kong!" He raised a cupped fist salute to those in the air. "Commander Yu! What might the two lords need from us? The leader is in seclusion. This level of disturbance and noise might disrupt his training..."

"That's right!" Hao Lianchuan also walked out. "Isn't it over the line that you two have directly barged into our base? Director Hou may be gone, but the Night Watchers..."

"Shut up, you little fucking shit!" Kong Jie let loose, startling Hao Lianchuan into silence. "Do you take me for a fucking idiot? Li Hao is here? Do you honestly think so little of me?!"

"....." Huang Yu didn't say a word. Honestly, probably. Stop protesting. We didn't know about this matter until it was public knowledge in the east. What are we, if not idiots?

“What are you cursing at me for?” Hao Lianchuan coughed awkwardly. “That’s not nice, inspector general. What’s going on?”

Had Li Hao’s movements been revealed? They’d all stayed at the barracks for the past three days without leaving. Even Hao Lianchuan knew that it was to provide cover for Li Hao. Had the young man done something?

“What’s going on??” Kong Jie was on the verge of losing his mind. “Li Hao ran off a long time ago, didn’t he? Did he run off as soon as he came back? He went to the Steadfast Duke’s manor in the east, turned everything upside down, seized the Windchaser Boot, killed metamorphosis experts, and apparently even killed the duke!

“He’s definitely killed a ton of Xu family members and burned the complex down. The entire dynasty is shaking over this, particularly the twenty-one eastern provinces! Great changes will soon take place in the east with the duke dead...”

It was like Liu Long and the others were listening to a proclamation from the gods. Their jaws dropped and their eyes widened with incomprehension. Huh? Are you talking about Li Hao or someone else?

“Did Li Hao leave the day he came back?”

“I... I don’t know...” Hao Lianchuan didn’t dare hide anything anymore. He awkwardly mumbled in a small voice, “It’s not like Director Li informs me of his movements...”

“Then shut up!” Kong Jie looked at Liu Long. The man was frowning, but inclined his head.

“The leader said he had some business to take care of before he left.”

Fuck that! This is some business?! Well well well, these guys all keep a stiff upper lip huh?!

Kong Jie couldn't decide if he wanted to just explode with rage or strangle someone. He shouted with renewed fury when he saw someone emerge from the hall, "Wang Chao, you guys come from the Inspectorate and helped conceal the fact that Li Hao is gone. Did you not even think of informing the Inspectorate?!"

Wang Chao and the rest were still reeling within the crowd. When he heard his old boss berate him, Wang Chao answered blankly, "Inspector general... we didn't know!"

Did they really not know, or were they pretending? Kong Jie wanted to vomit blood. At the same time, there was nothing he could say. He'd come to confirm whether or not Li Hao was truly gone. Now he was certain, the lad was gone. The one in the east was probably the genuine Li Hao.

He snorted before turning to leave. Huang Yu also vanished without a word. Outside the base, Light Sword had listened with glittering eyes. She shot into the sky and followed Huang Yu and Kong Jie. Despite the obvious look of skepticism, she didn't pose any questions.

Kong Jie was further irritated by that! I wanted you to help with some matters before and you ignored me, saying you wanted to wait for Li Hao. Isn't this fine and dandy, you can wait all you like now!

He tossed over a transmission pendant, which Light Sword quickly examined. The look in her eyes shifted as she murmured, "How is this possible?!"

As the Steadfast Duke's former senior steward, she was all too familiar with the household's strength. Li Hao couldn't afford to provoke any of the three major generals, to say nothing of the duke. She couldn't fight the duke either and had done so before only because she unsealed herself.

"This may not be true." Light Sword furrowed her brows. "The duke is not that easy to kill. He'll unseal himself if he'd backed into a difficult situation. Few are those in this world who can kill him."

His death was impossible!

The other two nodded and Kong Jie responded, “Something must have happened even if that guy isn’t dead. His manor wouldn’t be reduced to ashes otherwise. If the duke isn’t dead and Li Hao isn’t dead, then that means the duke is chasing him. Otherwise, there would already be people out to suppress the unrest!”

He was able to deduce a thing or two upon further thought. If this was the case, then Li Hao was in high peril. How in the world had that madman thought of making trouble for the Steadfast Duke??

Light Sword vanished on the spot without a word.

“Where are you going?”

“The Sword Sect!”

“.....” A speechless Kong Jie watched her go. Light Sword was plainly going to seek out Hong Yitang. Was she going to Li Hao’s rescue?

He looked at Huang Yu, who rumbled, “Let’s go to Ole Zhao first. If Li Hao isn’t dead, he’s probably being chased down. but he’s too far away! This is a different situation from last time. Last time it was just the duke’s son leading the group, but this time it’s likely Xu Qing himself! We may not be able to catch up to them.”

And may not be able to leave. There were large numbers of powerhouses gathered on their shared border with Near River. The White Shark Raiders and Starlight Pirates were all stirring to action. The executives of Silver Moon may not be able to set foot outside their home.

“Let’s wait for more details.” Kong Jie took a deep breath. “It shouldn’t be too long. There were a lot of people at the memorial rites today. Many of them might be dead, but not all of them. We’ll have detailed reports soon, but we need to think of a way to help. Li Hao may be in grave danger!”

Huang Yu nodded. That was a certainty.

“Old Huang,” Kong Jie laughed ruefully. “This Li Hao can cause more trouble than his master! His master didn’t dare conduct his matters like this before! In the two hundred years of Skystar history, there doesn’t seem to be anyone who’s ever directly attacked one of the three founding dukes!”

This was unprecedented in history! The young man must be the boldest beneath the heavens! If he survived this escapade, his reputation would far eclipse Yuan Shuo’s throughout the land. As well known as the old man was, did he dare attack the Steadfast Duke?

Yuan Shuo was highly regarded in the Silver Moon martial world, but there were possibly only a few veteran martial masters who remembered him in all of the world. Li Hao’s singular move would emblazon his name in the minds of all superhumans and even civilians in the world.

He’d kicked in the door of the overlord of the east!

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Every locale in Skystar Dynasty was discussing recent events and shaking in reaction.

Skystar City, the Night Watcher headquarters.

Hou Xiaochen had been fretting over Li Hao becoming public enemy number one, but now he sighed. It was the rest of the world who needed to fret now. They likely wouldn’t be able to sleep peacefully at night if Li Hao didn’t die after these events.

The Silver Moon powerhouses waited in a tiny office, waiting for more news to reach them. They soon looked at a vibrating transmission pendant. Hou Xiaochen picked it up and exhaled after a long while.

“It wasn’t a frontal attack. The kid brought his dog, hid in the dog’s stomach, posed as a Kui Mountain monster spirit that was the descendant of an ancient monster spirit. He tricked the duke into giving him the Windchaser Boot and cowed the twenty-one provinces of the east in the guise of a monster spirit.

“During his act, he incited conflict between Yu Qiao’s party and Xu Qing. He then killed Xu Xing, the Yellow General, other people, raided the Xu treasury, and used a particularly unique method to kill Red Beard and three Novas under his command...

“And now, the Steadfast Duke is leading the Heaven and Earth Generals after him!”

Yu Luocho first heaved a sigh of relief, then grew solemn again. “So this means he has indeed killed a metamorphosis level expert... despite using outside methods?”

“Yes.”

“Does he have more of those methods?”

Hou Xiaochen grinned. I’d be a god if I knew.

“Xu Qing is not weak...” Manager Yu said slowly.

“He’s very strong!” Hou Xiaochen’s grin disappeared. “Even I wouldn’t dare say that I’d win against him. He might be on the same level as the Steppe Prince. He’s very, very strong! Not to mention, he has two metamorphosis level experts with him and multiple Novas. He wants revenge, the sword of the Lis, and the full set of the Windchaser Boots!

“With those two weapons in front of him, he’ll want to kill Li Hao even if he has to unseal himself!” Hou Xiaochen breathed out explosively. “Little Yu... you go! Be careful. Hurry and find Li Hao...”

“Director...”

“You can unseal yourself, Golden Spear can’t!” Hou Xiaochen frowned when his thoughts traveled to this point. “This won’t do. Here, go to Sky Sword Mountain! If Sky Sword is still in closed door cultivation, tell him to come out and that I need his help. Demon Sword Li Hao... can be considered the eighth sword of Silver Moon. No one would deny that! Have Sky Sword personally rescue the lad, hurry!”

Chapter 594: Reinforcements (III)

“Understood!” Yu Luochoa realized that the director was concerned she wouldn’t be able to rescue the young man. Even she asked uncertainly, “Can Li Hao... survive to that point?”

As fast as she was, she wasn’t that fast.

“It’s up to fate now... the kid wouldn’t have done all this if he didn’t have a bare minimum level of confidence in getting away. He might be able to use the Windchaser Boots since he’s seized them. In that case, he could be running very quickly. The duke may not quickly catch up to him!

“What I’m worried about is that since he’s not in Silver Moon, that will tempt powerhouses from various places to come out of the woodwork. He was their target to begin with, and now he is even more of one! Who wouldn’t want to kill the lad with two divine weapons on him?”

Yu Luochoa quickly left without another word. They needed reinforcements in the shape of Sky Sword!

“Time to get to work!” Hao Lianchuan took a deep breath and looked at the silent Golden Spear.

“Hmm?” asked the latter.

“Li Hao is known throughout the lands, can we older folk fall behind him?” Hou Xiaochen declared. “Let’s throw Skystar City into disarray too and make it so that people don’t have time to cause trouble for him! Take the Silver Moon Guards with you—today, we start exterminating the members of the three great organizations hiding in Skystar City!”

“Ah yes, have the Night Watchers assist us. Send word to those youngsters that as Night Watchers, the Skystar commander wants to summon them for a mission. They need not return if they are afraid of offending people!”

“Understood!” Golden Spear quickly nodded his head. The director was going to flex his muscles now!

Hou Xiaochen looked to the east after the man left and frowned once more. Li Hao was crazy! Although it was a given that the Steadfast Duke wouldn’t let him off the hook, charging to the east to attack the duke was beyond the pale. Who was the last person who’d been so crazy?

Though Hou Xiaochen took a walk down memory lane, he could not identify who was as crazy as the young man. Not even Yuan Shuo matched Li Hao’s brazen style.

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Everyone beneath the heavens had their attention focused on this event. The true reports were soon disseminated—some jeered at the contents, others were shocked.

“Xu Qing is an idiot!”

“He was conned by a boy!”

“But we can’t underestimate Demon Sword. His boldness knows no bounds. He’s willing to walk out of Silver Moon under these circumstances and go on the offensive. Also, no one knows what he

used to kill Red Beard. It might be the methods of the ancient civilization. This kid may have obtained some ultimate moves in Battle Heaven, so we have to be on our guard against him!”

“He gets into more trouble than his master and he’s more vicious! Xu Qing’s got to be absolutely crazy with rage after losing his two legitimate sons. Of course, the more important thing is that Li Hao’s got two divine weapons and the treasury of the Xus!”

That point was first and foremost on everyone’s minds, causing many factions and some provincial rulers to secretly send people to the east. Li Hao was being hunted by Xu Qing! The young man held divine weapons, treasures, and even Water of Life.

Everyone committed the title of Demon Sword to memory. They’d received a full understanding of his bold, mad, yet also highly comprehensive methods. While the people jeered at Xu Qing, their thoughts turned to the fact that Xu Qing had fallen for the claim of an ancient monster spirit. That meant that the monster spirit traveling with the young man was possibly of an ancient bloodline. It was said to be from the Battle Heaven ruins.

Then... could it be that the dog spirit was a descendant of ancient monster spirits in Battle Heaven?

In that case, Li Hao hadn’t lied about this. The dog was indeed an ancient monster spirit with an eminent background—Battle Heaven.

.....

News quickly spread through the lands.

In a remote mountain forest of the central region.

The soil abruptly loosened in an area and a head popped out. It shook itself off and looked at the skies.

“Hot damn, we’re finally out!” Yuan Shuo beamed. “That took more than ten days!”

It’d been a dozen days since they entered the ruins and they’d almost died inside. Thank goodness it’d gone smoothly. Yuan Shuo was in excellent spirits and fine fettle. He’d gained quite a lot from the trip.

“Too bad that plant spirit was dead and didn’t leave behind too much Water of Life. Otherwise... Well, it’s good that it was dead. I may not have been able to win if it was alive.” The man burrowed out of the ground, followed by a radiantly smiling Jadelight Sword. She seemed to have gained quite a lot on this trip too, Yuan Shuo had been very helpful.

They’d dug a hole into the ruins and though they’d encountered many mechanisms, they also walked away with many benefits. It was only a dozen days, but Jadelight felt that her strength had taken a leap forward. This was so nice!

“Finally, no one will say that the master is less than the disciple.” Yuan Shuo grinned from ear to ear. “The kid only killed the commanders of the White Shark Raiders, and he may not have been the one to deal the final blow. I have refined four auras now and am almost there with my fifth. Come, let’s test ourselves against a mid Nova. If they’re easy to kill, we’ll go to a peak Nova!”

Yuan Shuo was highly cocky at the moment. It was just a dozen days and less than twenty since the kid had killed the pirates. As good as he is, as much sword energy as he has, he can’t possibly improve so much in such a short amount of time.

The master is less than the disciple? My five auras are almost fully refined! Once I succeed, I will outmatch a regular Nova even if I’m still a Summoner of Spirit.

He was in a fantastic mood! The excavation hadn’t been for nothing.

“Let’s check the transmission pendant and see if there’s any news...”

“I threw it away!” Yuan Shuo rolled his eyes. “It’s not mine, am I supposed to bring it with me when robbing graves? That gives people a lock on my location! Stay sharp, Jadelight. Not to mention, what can happen in such a short period of time?”

Despite his words, he did want to find someone to ask about recent events.

“C’mon, I remember there’s a stronghold of the three great organizations up ahead. A Celestial pavilion, if I recall correctly. Let’s go investigate...” He waved Jadelight forward and prepared to move out when he glanced overhead. A figure flashed through the sky. Just when he wanted to take a closer look, another figure broke through the air.

Are they looking for me? Yuan Shuo went on the alert. Have I been located? But I don’t have a transmission pendant on me.

Another figure shot past with extreme speed. These were all powerhouses and looked to be flying to the east. Each of them was darting through land and sky, heedless of resource consumption as they looked to be in a great hurry.

What’s going on? Yuan Shuo looked on with confusion. Had something major happened?

Another figure seemed to come toward them as he grappled with his thoughts—it was another person at extremely fast speed. The old man’s eyes moved quickly and he bounded into the air, appearing in front of the other in the blink of an eye!

A middle-aged man promptly screeched to a halt with wariness; his expression morphed to dismay when he took a clear look at who’d stopped him. He turned to flee!

“An old acquaintance!” Yuan Shuo struck with his fist. “Heh, aren’t you that... that person? What are you running for? I’m not going to eat you. I remember seeing you twenty years ago. What province are you from? Your dad seems to be a senior executive of that province, right?”

The person's expression shifted rapidly as he perceived the threat behind him. He quickly stopped again and turned around. "Big brother Yuan, I'm just passing by and didn't see anything. I'm a Night Watcher now, and one of the branch directors. I'm not part of the three great organizations anymore..."

"The Night Watchers? Then forget it, I can't be bothered with you!" Yuan Shuo cackled. "Give me your transmission pendant! Ah, I saw a lot of people fly by in the sky just now, all of them in a huge hurry. What, are they going to pick up money? You're also in a rush, so tell me, what are all of you guys doing?"

"Do you... not know, big brother Yuan?" murmured the middle-aged man as his expression shifted some more.

"No shit, would I be asking you if I did?"

"This matter has something to do with you too, big brother." The man took a deep breath. "Something's happened to Demon Sword!"

Demon Sword!

Yuan Shuo blinked. What Demon Sword... Li Hao? But Li Hao was just Li Hao; Yuan Shuo wasn't used to people calling Li Hao Demon Sword. Using the moniker in lieu of the name meant that it was widely accepted by the people. Regular martial masters didn't receive this kind of treatment, particularly in this era. It was too hard to create a reputation for oneself!

Was this a result of Li Hao killing the White Shark Raiders?

"Have the White Shark Raiders come for revenge?"

The middle-aged man stiffened and looked at the man. You're... seriously behind the times! The White Shark Raiders incident practically happened in the Stone Age! They might not even cause trouble for the young man now.

"No, it's the Steadfast Duke!"

"Ah, I see. The Xu Feng matter, right?" Yuan Shuo guessed at some of the truth. "I knew that the truth wouldn't be concealed for long..."

He casually glanced at the transmission pendant and promptly lost his train of thought. After a long moment, he narrowed his eyes at the middle-aged man. "This is from today?"

"Yes!"

"Why did he go to the Steadfast Duke's manor? This says that he has one of the Windchaser boots to begin with..."

"Scroll up, big brother Yuan. There's another piece of massive news from a few days ago!"

Yuan Shuo hurriedly paged through the pendant and roared with laughter. "So he killed the Steadfast Duke's eldest son a few days ago... Isn't he something! I would think that I've been in seclusion for a dozen years instead of a dozen days!"

"So Xu Qing's leading people to hunt him down. What are all of you guys running to the east for?"

"I'm just... going to gather some more information," the middle-aged man said apprehensively. "If there's a chance to, I'm going to help Demon Sword since he's big brother's disciple..."

"Am I the idiot or are you the idiot?"

“No... I just... you see it too, big brother... I’m just an initial Nova... What kind of bad intentions can I have... I’m just going for a look...”

“Forget it, I’m not a killing fiend,” Yuan Shuo barked with laughter. “Too many people are going there, you won’t make a difference. Don’t tell anyone that I was here! Don’t say anything about me! That’s right, I remember you... What’s your name again?”

The wordless middle-aged man tried to prevent his eyes from rolling upward.

“Don’t lie to me, I remember beating you back in the day. Although I don’t remember your name now, I’ll find it when I look through some records. I’m kind and benevolent, but my disciple is vicious and cruel! I’ll have him look for you if he doesn’t die from this, how about it?”

Chapter 595: Reinforcements (IV)

“My name is Zhou Long!” clarified the middle-aged man when faced with the threat of Li Hao coming for him.

“Right right, that’s it. Your father is a deputy in the provincial government...”

“He’s the director general now,” Zhou Long offered carefully.

“Eh?” Yuan Shuo blinked. “He hasn’t died yet?”

Zhou Long didn’t know what to say.

“Good, so long as you have some sort of background. I’d be worried if you didn’t have any sort of status. I wouldn’t be able to find you after this. Very well, you may go about your business!” Yuan Shuo chuckled. “Lend me your transmission pendant and don’t you dare report it lost. Otherwise, I’ll come visit you at home if I don’t receive any news!”

The middle-aged man smiled sheepishly. A merry Yuan Shuo quickly vanished into the distance.

“Big brother Yuan, it’s dangerous to the east,” Zhou Long couldn’t help but call out. “I think you shouldn’t take the risk. Demon Sword’s in too much trouble this time!”

Yuan Shuo suddenly recalled something and looked back with a grin. “I remember now, when you lost to me, you grabbed my thigh and kept wailing for big brother to spare you. That was you, wasn’t it?”

Zhou Long flushed beet red!

“I knew I remembered you from somewhere. I’ve defeated a lot of people and can’t possibly remember them all. You’re that really cowardly guy! That’s good, I’ll remember you this time!” Yuan Shuo laughed. “You’ve got a strong desire for survival. Very good, don’t say that you’ve seen me, understood?”

Yuan Shuo landed back on the ground and looked at Jadelight. “I’m making a trip to the east, you can have fun by yourself.”

“Has something gone wrong?” Wu Hongshan looked at him solemnly.

“Yes, that unfilial disciple of mine stirs up trouble everyday. I thought I was the great demon around, but I was wrong!” Yuan Shuo shook his head with a laugh. “You’re too weak. Although you improve quickly and may be able to match blows with an ordinary initial Nova now, you’re still too weak! Go have fun with the three great organizations, just be careful...”

“And what about you?”

“I’m going to look for my unfilial disciple!” Yuan Shuo chuckled. “Everyone will think I’m dead otherwise! That damned Hong Yitang is trying to usurp my position! I finally raised a strong

disciple, but he wants to take the kid from me! People will think that Li Hao doesn't have a master if I don't put in an appearance soon!

"Give me all of your mysterious power stones and Water of Life!"

Wu Hongshan handed over a storage ring without a word. Yuan Shuo had given them to her before, saying that they should share the gains. But now, he took them all back. Plainly, he felt that he wasn't strong enough yet and needed to swiftly increase strength in a short amount of time. He needed to grow even stronger!

Yuan Shuo didn't say anything after obtaining the storage ring and waved a hand. "Be careful. You can wait for me at Skystar City or wander around yourself!"

"When will you be back?"

"I don't know," chuckled Yuan Shuo. He vanished on the spot like a bird taking off; he was extremely fast. After watching for a while, Wu Hongshan disappeared with a turn of her body as well.

I'm too weak...

Those were disheartening words. Jadelight Sword was one of the Seven Swords of Silver Moon, but was quickly dismissed by her companion. He hadn't even asked her before deciding to not bring her along. Plainly, he felt that she would only hold him back.

Wu Hongshan swiftly traveled through the forest and vanished from sight. In that case, she would not continue to be that weak! The limits had been broken, so she would bravely forge ahead!

.....

Yuan Shuo flew faster and faster, suddenly swallowing all of the life essence with a clench of his jaw! His blood qi frothed and organs shook.

“You guys all think I’m dead, don’t you?!” They all wanted to kill or capture his disciple at the drop of a hat!

The hell! Can I not lift my blade anymore, or have your brains hardened to stone?

Xu Qing...

Xu Qing!

They’d crossed paths thirty years ago and Xu Qing was indeed strong. He would be even stronger now. If it hadn’t been for the Xus family, Yuan Shuo would’ve chopped his head off when they fought!

A surge of anger rose in Yuan Shuo’s heart. The Buddha Mountain, three great organizations, Xu family... All of these people who he hadn’t fully resolved back in the day now fancied themselves to be characters of note!

And the Steppe Prince...

Although I’ve fallen behind for a few years, I’m not as weak as you guys think I am!

Yuan Shuo picked up increasing speed. The eastern continent was very far away and he didn’t know if he’d make it in time. But that was of no matter. He’d slaughter the entire Xu clan if Li Hao was dead. The old one would come if they beat the young one. It looks like this old one isn’t strong enough to command sufficient deterrence!

.....

All factions throughout the lands shook.

Li Hao breathed heavily and panted for breath. He swallowed a droplet of Water of Life, immediately recovering from some of his wounds. Internal force surged and sent the Windchaser Boots into another burst of activity. He instantly shook off his pursuers again!

There were only three people who were still keeping pace with him—Xu Qing, the Heaven and Earth Generals. They were hot on his heels as they could call upon extreme speed as well. Xu Qing bore a frosty expression on his face!

They hadn't said a single word ever since leaving his manor. It'd been several hundred kilometers and they were long out of East Heart City. As fast as Li Hao was, the three metamorphosis experts weren't slow.

The other Novas had long been left behind.

Xu Qing's legs were as if cyclones. He didn't fly like a supernatural, but glided through the sky. Each movement propelled him past the two generals, covering several hundred meters with one step.

The gap between the two sides was maintained at approximately five thousand kilometers. But whenever Li Hao exhausted his internal force and needed a brief break, the other side would swiftly catch up. Five thousand kilometers was their average distance from each other.

In terms of speed, Li Hao was much slower than his pursuers. It was only with the Windchaser Boots that he was able to pull ahead again and again.

Up ahead, he panted for a bit. Not only did he have to run, but he needed to take Panther with him. As fast as the dog was, it was a bit slower than a metamorphosis expert. It was truly the dog riding the human now!

Li Hao didn't have the effort to spare for Panth, it had to cling to his shoulders the best it could and dash for safety again and again through the young man's efforts.

Four humans and one dog commenced a soundless chase. No one raised much of a fuss. It was a hunt to the death, why attract more people? Li Hao didn't want to draw attention for fear of putting himself in greater danger. Xu Qing didn't want more people for fear of someone making off with his treasure! He must kill Li Hao!

He wouldn't be able to wash away his shame if he didn't kill the young man. But for an old politician like him, the crux of the issue was the two divine weapons. The sword of the Lis might allow him to unseal his battle strength without reservation.

Therefore, the four people continued their silent exercise. Urgency dawned in Li Hao's eyes. These guys were so much faster than he expected. His reserves might not be able to keep up if this continued. Although sword energy constantly replenished him, utilizing the Windchaser Boots also consumed mind intent. Once mind intent was exhausted... that was the end of the road!

Should I go to the Kui Mountains? That might bring a lot of trouble to the big snake if he did. He'd just cleared their name, wouldn't it be inappropriate to go to the mountains now? But if no one stopped these guys, he might not be able to get away.

Silver Moon is too far and there's no need to go to the Kui Mountains...

Various possibilities flashed through his mind, but Li Hao had already made up his mind. He adjusted his direction and ran toward the west! That was where the East Sea was!

Xu Qing raised an eyebrow. Did the boy want to run to the sea? Enter the waters, maybe? He quickly took out a transmission pendant and gave his orders. Whether it was the East Sea or land,

all were his territory! It was a foolish daydream if Li Hao thought he could escape the eastern continent!

The four seas surrounded the central region—the seas of North, South, East, and West were all interconnected. There were interflows between them apart from being ultimately connected together. They were a sign that enclosed the central continent.

Li Hao was running toward the East Sea. Of the North Sea, there were the eight major pirate factions that were led by the Starlight Pirates. The East Sea was also occupied by pirates. While they weren't as rampant as those of the North Sea, there were plenty of them as well. Red Beard was very well known; most of the East Sea pirates were raised by local autocrats and despots!

Purposefully creating enemies to consolidate their own position was one reason, raiding and looting treasures was another, blockading a continent was also one such reason...

Li Hao chose to enter the sea because the silver armor could travel through the deep blue. It was easier than running on land and more discreet. On land, even mountain forests were just one specific area. It was very different in the sea—the entire expanse would have to be combed through no matter where one entered.

As a martial master, none of these people would be able to catch up to him so long as he evaded their line of sight. Such was Li Hao's determination. He also had another reason—there were major monster spirits in the seas. Some of them were very strong, and while martial masters might survive a sojourn in, supernaturals would be quickly discovered. Li Hao and Xu Qing were fine, but the two metamorphosis supernaturals would be swiftly mobbed if they entered the sea.

The young man had wanted to use the big snake to slow down his pursuers, but he remembered well the favor that the snake had done for him and chose to enter the sea instead.

Sword energy surged furiously while Li Hao took out a treasure as he ran—the Goldensky Lotus he'd identified earlier in the treasury. All eight petals were present and he ripped one off, swallowing it. A stream of clear energy surged toward his organs and strengthened his auras. His presence fluctuated slightly, giving a clue to Xu Qing behind him.

The man's expression shifted and he abruptly erupted with power, crossing several thousand meters to draw close to Li Hao!

Chapter 596: The Winds Surge on All Sides (I)

Li Hao brought his blood qi up and erupted with the Incantation of the Blade of Blood. Blood qi rushed into the Windchaser Boots and he shot out again, accelerating!

Xu Qing looked coldly at the fleeing young man. "Li Hao," he called out sternly. "Do you think you'll enjoy the same treatment as Light Sword and hang on until Silver Moon rescues you?"

Li Hao didn't respond. There was no need for conversation. The duke pressed forward again, continuing in more gentle tones. "So long as you return the Windchaser Boots to me, we can possibly erase our past grudges. We have both gone through our hardships and can exchange smiles at the end of it. Such is the martial world—you kill me, I kill you. I underestimated you and lost my son and grandson for it. I admit, my skills were less than yours. However, enmity cannot continue forever. Return the boots to me and it will all be water under the bridge. You will walk your path while I walk mine, what do you say?"

Li Hao still refused to respond. I'm not an idiot! I won't have a chance of surviving after I give the boots to you! I won't be able to run away!

The young man abruptly changed directions and ran off in another direction. Xu Qing's eyes widened and he cursed softly to himself. The young man didn't care about his words at all!

Wanna ambush me? Then get some premier martial masters here! There's a ball of light that burns like the sun on the hill ahead. Do you think I'm blind??

It would appear that Xu Qing was aware he was headed to the East Sea. The duke had arranged for people to intercept him. Even if it was only a momentary delay, that might give Xu Qing and the others enough time to catch up, surround Li Hao, and kill the young man!

However, Xu Qing underestimated Li Hao in the end. His special eyes were his greatest guarantee of escape. He'd depended on them from an early time—back when he was fleeing from scarlet shadows.

“He might be a Heaven's Eye,” a very displeased Xu Qing transmitted to his two generals. “He can sense or see something.”

A Heaven's Eye! The duke himself possessed some of those cultivators, as did all factions. It was just a matter of how strong they were. He'd set off too quickly to bring his, not to mention that if Li Hao was too weak, there'd be nothing to read from him. He was also a martial master, which made it harder to see through him.

.....

Li Hao panted heavily and turned back for a look. He had sword energy to replenish himself, but so did the two metamorphosis experts have mysterious power and stones to do the same. They just didn't refuel at the same pace he did.

Xu Qing, however, surprised him. The man was very strong! His internal force was so strong that he rarely stopped or even paused to recharge. This meant that his blood qi and internal force had all reached an extreme level, so his rate of consumption wasn't too great. If he was just a metamorphosis expert, then he would be hard pressed to catch up to Li Hao. The young man could call upon the Windchaser Boots and sword energy from Stellaris.

But a martial master, and a very powerful martial master at that... That was creating issues for Li Hao.

.....

In the rear, Xu Qing was also frowning.

He's consuming internal force so rapidly and using the Windchaser Boots, which are another massive drain. How can he keep up this pace...

The duke's eyes darted around—the sword of the Lis! That had to be the case. That Li Hao could reach his level of accomplishment in such a short period of time had much to do with the sword of the Lis. Xu Qing had caught up to the young man once at the very beginning and connected with a punch. He could already sense then how strong Li Hao's organs were.

Greed dawned in Xu Qing's eyes. If he could claim the sword for himself and completely strengthen his organs, he would be able to unseal himself without reservation! He might become the greatest beneath the heavens! He was strong to begin with—how would anyone match him if they didn't unseal themselves?

He took out his transmission pendant and began issuing orders again.

“You guys should wait at the East Sea,” he also transmitted to the two generals. “Even though this guy's going in circles, his ultimate goal is either the East Sea or Kui Mountains! He must have some contact with the big snake of the mountains, but that doesn't matter for now. He tried so hard to remove the snake from this picture that he probably doesn't want to go to the mountains. You guys go to the East Sea first and mobilize the pirates. Seal off the waters!”

“Then, what about you, Your Grace...”

“I'll be fine!”

The two generals swiftly left after some thought. They were aware of how strong the duke was. Although everyone seemed to be of similar footing on the surface, even a peak Light Sword would be cut down if he unsealed himself. Xu Qing simply wasn't willing to as each instance was a case of risking his life.

To the duke, things had not progressed to that point yet. He wasn't certain that he could immediately use the sword of the Lis after he killed Li Hao. If he was reassured that it would immediately re-seal his organs, then he would promptly unseal himself and catch up to Li Hao.

The two generals sped away, a development noted by the young man when he turned back for a look. His expression shifted rapidly—Xu Qing was proving to be a tough foe. The two had probably left to ambush him in the sea. Even though it would prove fruitless, it was tough for him to enter the sea once that opening was blocked.

“You’ve got some nerve, Xu Qing!” Li Hao finally uttered his first words in this chase. He laughed loudly as gale winds howled. “Today is your death day! Be careful of Light Sword and Earthturner Sword treating you to tea together if you keep chasing me!”

“Li Hao, if you think the Steadfast Duke’s intelligence network is that inadequate...” Xu Qing answered remotely.

“How would I have made it inside your home if it’s not inadequate?”

“.....” Xu Qing couldn’t find a good response to that. Indeed, it was very inadequate for him to be unaware that Li Hao had left Silver Moon. But under normal circumstances, why would the young man leave, much less visit the duke’s manor? Apart from Panther, who in the world could consider this possibility?

Seeing how stubborn the young man was, Xu Qing thought for a while as he kept pace.

“Li Hao, I only want to kill you because I want to resolve the problem of the five organs. You sought revenge on the Xus simply because you were afraid that I’d come for you. But I have dozens of sons and grandsons. Losing two sons and one grandson is nothing concerning!

“How about this, promise me something as a member of the eight families. I won’t kill you or even seek revenge on you. Nor will I seize your treasures, but I’ll help you! What do you think?”

“I think you think I’m an idiot!”

“No, you don’t understand!” Xu Qing said softly. “You should know that the eight families weren’t necessarily the strongest existence even in the ancient civilization. There was the Human King, emperors, and innumerable powerhouses in those times!

“My Xus could rise up, or rather, any family or faction that can rise during this era needs to thank the ancient ruins. But we’re unable to access the core of many ruins—the eight families might be able to!

“To most people, seizing your sword is just to enter the next cultivation stage. Why should they go to you if there’s any other method available? On the other hand, my family holds sway over a ruin that was the key to our rise!

“The Windchaser Boots are not marvelous creations, despite being part of the eight familial treasures. According to my information, the Lius weren’t that prominent in the ancient civilization. The ruins that I hold belonged to a true powerhouse...” Xu Qing chuckled. “If you’re willing to explore a ruin for me, similar to how your master operated for others, I can even imitate Hou Xiaochen and protect you!”

“A ruin?” Li Hao sped up with his question. Go fuck yourself man!

“That’s right, a ruin! A very important ruin. It’s not only Silver Moon that has ruins, the eastern continent had an incomparable existence in residence during the ancient civilization. The eight guardian clans only safeguarded a door that led to a mysterious land, but that doesn’t mean that they were the strongest!

“The ruins that the Xus grasp have been developed for hundreds of years, but we are yet to plumb its depths! The city’s name is Tranquil Star! I am a man of my word—so long as you excavate the ruins for me, not only will I not hold you responsible for the deaths of my sons and grandson, but I’ll help you with your revenge!”

Xu Qing was very serious as these were his actual thoughts. Li Hao could utilize the Windchaser Boots, Stellaris, was a Heaven’s Eye, and even counted the descendant of an ancient monster spirit among his followers... He really had the thought of asking the young man to explore the ruins for him.

Would a powerful ancient city be less than Stellaris? The eight families weren't the strongest in the ancient civilization, they just carried a heavy burden on their shoulders. Xu Qing could gather from bits and pieces of information that the Tranquil Star he oversaw had once produced ultimate powerhouses that walked out of this world!

Not even the ancient Human King might be a match for them. Of course, these ancient records were hard to determine truth or falsehood from, but Xu Qing knew that there must be great treasure stored in a place like that.

.....

Up ahead.

Li Hao's heart stirred. Tranquil Star! Xu Qing's two sons were Xu Zhen and Xu Xing—their given names formed the same characters for Tranquil Star! Was there a connection there? It was obvious that the Xus held full control over the ruins. Where else would the armor and mysterious power stones come from?

Judging from what he'd seen, the Xus controlled a formidable ruin. It was incredible that they'd yet to fully explore it, the family had many metamorphosis experts! Was it another area similar to Battle Heaven?

Li Hao wasn't interested as he'd yet to have the time or strength to fully explore Battle Heaven, much less a ruin of the eastern continent.

"Really?" The young man still displayed interest on the surface. "I don't believe what you say. If you're sincere, kill Ying Hongyue for me first and I'll explore the ruins for you second. I won't think it's a loss even if you kill me in the middle of the excavation."

"Why suggest something that is impossible to accomplish?" Xu Qing shook his head and stepped through the air, once more catching up to Li Hao. "My family knows much about the three great

organizations and have sponsored Yama quite a bit. I'm not afraid to let you know that there are Xu members inside Yama!

"However, Red Moon is the strongest out of the three. Not only is it the strongest, but it is the most mysterious. Apart from that, Ying Hongyue may be the most terrifying of the three leaders. Based on the supernatural hierarchy, he should've fully set foot into the sixth level. He might even be peak sixth level!

"I am ninety-nine percent not his match even if I unseal myself... But that might not be the case if you are willing to help me! Also, you think of your revenge too simply. That Ying Hongyue could rise is due to his genius, strength, and most importantly, his backers!

"Your master was very strong in his time, no? But why couldn't he seize the opportunity in front of him and was surpassed by others instead? That is the consequence of being a lone wolf! Whether it is the three great organizations, nine ministries, royal family, or nobility—they're all major factions. Ying Hongyue has powerful backers and is tied to some highly confidential secrets. Much of what you see now is only what we are willing to let the people see. The truth is much more complicated!"

Chapter 597: The Winds Surge on All Sides (II)

"Take my Xus, for example," Xu Qing said softly. "You don't honestly think that our basis in suppressing the east is just me and a few generals, do you? You came so suddenly to the manor that we didn't have a chance to react. This is also a result of us having been at peace for so long, we've grown a bit dull around the edges.

"However, you should know that no one treats their territory aboveground as the heart of their faction. Ruins and ancient cities are where powerhouses put down their roots! I say all this to help you understand that, having seized the Windchaser Boots and overturned my home, death will be coming for you all the same if you are unwilling to enter a partnership. It will find you even if I don't kill you!"

Li Hao's heart shook. Was that true? Xu Qing was implying that his family had many more powerhouses, that most of them resided in the ruins and ancient cities. It would seem that many people and factions like him were thus, such as the Ancient Guard of Red Moon. They preoccupied themselves with exploring ruins and rarely showed their faces.

Ruins...

Li Hao hadn't explored many ruins yet, but he'd found ancient heavyweights in the two that he had. If he could discover the powerhouses of the Battle Heaven Army and the little tree, then so could these people. He couldn't possibly be the only one to make such finds.

"Not only can you and I partner together, but so can the existences behind us! The method that you used to kill Red Beard should be a... core origin division as recorded in the ancient records, right? You really do have an agreement with an ancient plant spirit, don't you? The imperial palace of the Kui Mountains might be fake, but you must have seen an ancient plant spirit somewhere. Is it in Battle Heaven? It looks like the eight families were really something. We've met similar existences before, but were unable to approach them or strike up a partnership..."

Li Hao remained swiftly making his way through the sky and didn't respond. The duke was both trying to persuade him and attempting to numb him to Yu Qing's movements. The duke had noticeably increased his speed just now and was drawing closer. Previously five thousand meters apart, the two were now roughly three thousand.

The young man put on a burst of speed and widened the gap by another two thousand meters. Of course, that spontaneity consumed another large chunk of internal force.

Xu Qing frowned, growing furious. He was unable to use his family's heritage treasure, but the young man was having the time of his life. The effects were truly astonishing! The distance that they could cover in a split second was incredibly long. If he could use it and instantly close the gap to those of his level, would they be able to withstand him?

Li Hao was only using it for escape, but in Xu Qing's eyes, these boots were the greatest tools for killing others. Speed was the only martial method that could not be defended against!

The duke picked up speed again, his organs trembling and his blood qi surging upward. His internal force stirred, wanting to unseal his body. This pace was beyond his limits. If this continued, he might truly unseal his battle strength.

“Don’t force me, Li Hao. You’re a Silver Moon martial master, so you should know that you’re dead without a doubt once I unseal my organs!”

“Come on, let’s see you try!” Li Hao barked with laughter. “I’ve got nothing to lose and am all by myself. If I die, I die. And you? You are the Steadfast Duke, the overlord of the entire east! Can you resealed yourself once you break your locks? Do you think you can accomplish that just after taking my sword? Have you been able to use the Windchaser Boots in all these years of possessing them? My sword is ranked number among the eight, are you as idiotic as those outsiders?”

Xu Qing didn’t say a word. This was why he was warier than most. It was precisely because he’d one such weapon before that he knew how hard it was for outsiders to fully control the eight weapons. It was hardly a moment’s worth of work. Time was required to slowly observe and familiarize himself with it.

“Don’t forget that there is more than one path to recovering the five organs. Sword energy isn’t the only way. So long as there’s sufficient Water of life and blood pearls, they will do just as well. Do you think my family hasn’t the least bit of reserves over the years?”

“Then it’s perfect that you’re here!” Li Hao beamed brightly. “You can unseal yourself. So what if you have those items? How long can you maintain your condition? Will you be able to keep yourself under control once you do? The stronger one is, the harder control is!”

Trying to intimidate me? I’m not scared!

The Xus would certainly possess Water of Life—the duke just couldn’t make up his mind to use it at the moment. Li Hao was a bit nervous that the old fart would truly throw caution to the wind and unseal himself. If he did, that would be trouble!

Seeing that they were running further and further from the Xu manor, Li Hao found the situation tricky. He was consuming sword energy too quickly! There almost wasn’t enough time to replenish it. Thankfully, he’d stored a lot when helping Light Sword recover from her wounds. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have time to refuel Stellaris during their chase.

Li Hao covered another one hundred and fifty kilometers during their conversation, his mind deep in thought as he abruptly changed direction. Xu Qing frowned, more certain than ever that the young man possessed a heavenly eye. An opponent like this was a difficult prospect—killing intent appeared in the duke's eyes! He had heavyweights lying in wait up ahead, but that plan was defunct now as well.

Only martial masters can evade his senses!

The duke knew full well that Heaven's Eyes could easily discern supernaturals, but were almost blind to martial masters. Since it was supernaturals attempting to ambush him at present, they could not find success at all.

After some thought, Xu Qing reached for his transmission pendant again. It would be difficult to rely solely on supernaturals if he wanted to stop Li Hao.

Not long after the duke transmitted a message.

Li Hao's scalp suddenly tingled; he looked around, finding no one other than Xu Qing behind him. There were no supernaturals—was it martial masters this time? That would be concerning! Did the Steadfast Duke have more powerful martial masters under his command?

“Arf arf arf!” Panther's hairs suddenly stood upright. It growled with urgency.

Li Hao's expression shifted as three items shot toward him from the sky. They appeared to be bombs and were locked onto the young man. Xu Qing watched closely from behind.

Li Hao, you underestimate a major faction. Not to mention, I've been following you the whole time. You've probably never tasted a city annihilation missile before. Why did wandering martial masters rarely provoke a major faction? This was the reason why!

The duke shifted slightly back; three city annihilation missiles landed at this time. As Li Hao's scalp crawled with numbness, he quickly called upon the Windchaser Boots. However, the missiles were too quick!

Not only that, but they were spread out in three directions in a showcase of precision firing. The Steadfast Duke in the rear was the only direction not covered. If Li Hao wanted to survive, he would have to run behind him!

The young man instantly understood the situation. The Steadfast Duke's troops had fired the attack at coordinates supplied by Xu Qing.

"Break!" he grunted, summoning blood qi and mind intent. He shot through several thousand meters again, just as the bombs detonated into rings of energy!

No sound, just formidable force swept through the area. All trees, rocks, and mountains were reduced to ashes beneath the bombs.

Having retreated to a safe distance, Xu Qing said softly. "Do you think that the dynasty stands to this day simply because of those supernatural and martial masters? Do you think that people refrain from rebelling only because they don't want to be first?"

None of that was the case! It was just that there was yet to be a person who could withstand the destruction caused by a city annihilation missile, even in this age that saw a great number of powerhouses!

According to Xu Qing's judgment, it would take supernaturals in their sixth cultivation level and martial masters able to unseal themselves before the missiles could be weathered. No one else could survive being blasted. Of course, the missiles also came with their share of drawbacks, such as hitting everything in their zone of detonation. It was very hard for them to lock onto a specific person.

They had done so this time because the duke had steadily supplied the coordinates for their hit. If he wanted to use the missiles on someone stronger than him... Well, a very hearty good luck with that!

But as many as their drawbacks were, the city annihilation misses were still an effective deterrence. Light erupted from the three bombs and illuminated the land and sky with brilliance. It was soundless! But a massive wave of energy churned in the next second as heaven and earth resonated!

Even though the Steadfast Duke was quite a distance away, he stumbled from the oscillation of energy and almost went deaf. His world temporarily lost its sound and he closed his eyes; that piercing light seemed ready to stab into his eyes. Li Hao was probably the worst off!

The duke felt that it would be difficult to blast the young man to pieces. With the Windchaser Boots present, the kid should be able to flee from ground zero, but he would be injured! It was Xu Qing's judgment that even if Li Hao could evade the center of detonation, he wouldn't find it that easy to escape from the blast radius entirely. These city annihilation missiles were great weapons that the ancient civilization used against alien races!

KABOOM!

A tremendous explosion ripped through the air only after everything was leveled before their eyes. The ground fissured in all directions, gaping cracks in the surface. Off in the distance, observers registered the development with shocked eyes and swiftly recorded it.

"The Steadfast Duke utilized three city annihilation missiles in his pursuit of Demon Sword. Demon Sword... was situated within the blast zone!"

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Li Hao felt himself lifted through the air. He'd never seen a city annihilation missile before, nor experienced its might. Silver Moon had threatened to use them a few times, but never actually fired the weapons. It was said that the central region had employed them a few times, but Li Hao had never seen an occurrence with his own eyes.

Today, he did. And personally experienced three of them!

Three avenues of escape were sealed off, but he barreled forward nonetheless. He managed to escape the center of detonation, but even so, the ripples spreading in all directions slammed into him so hard that he wished for death!

Cracks even appeared in the silver armor. Panther instantly left Li Hao behind and flung itself forward in the shape of the golden dog. It howled as all of the golden hair on its back was burnt off. It was suddenly a bald dog!

Li Hao's organs suffered the blows from the immense impact. If it wasn't for his organs being so strong, he might've died from the shock to his system. Though he survived, blood flowed out of his orifices!

Chapter 598: The Winds Surge on All Sides (III)

The cracks on the silver armor were slowly closing, but they also indicated that the blast from the city annihilation missiles were beyond the current capabilities of the equipment.

A large mouthful of blood spewed out of Li Hao's mouth when he opened it. He grabbed the bald dog and glanced backward. Xu Qing continued to back away, putting nearly ten thousand meters between them!

The duke opened his eyes to see the young man break out of a cloud of dust and flee for his life again.

"You won't be getting away!" he said coolly. "That was just a warning, Li Hao! Your position is consistently known since I'm tracking you. That was just three missiles. Do you want to suffer a spread of ten or full coverage of thirty next?"

Keeping his eyes pointed forward, Li Hao continued to flee!

Thirty missiles? Right, he wouldn't be able to escape that, but would Xu Qing dare fire so many? Thirty was definitely out of his range of tolerance, but Li Hao didn't believe that these things could be infinitely fired.

He was caught off guard the first time, so he only sensed impending danger and not its source. Now that he had a sense for what he faced, he recalled there was an energy ripple a split second before the missiles arrived.

They were a massive ball of combined energy—possibly an energy bomb similar to what Fan Chang had thrown down to make his getaway. These were just bigger and more powerful, but likely harder to fire.

Behind him, the duke frowned. Li Hao sure could run. He was obviously injured as there were cracks and charred marks on his silvery-white armor. The descendant of the ancient monster spirit was even more noticeably injured, yet Li Hao did not give up.

“Li Hao, there will be no room for survival if you keep this up. Partner with me...”

“Partner my ass!” Li Hao shouted him down and rose into the air. “Keep chasing me if you dare! I’m going to where there’s more people, so bomb them all if you want. It’s not my territory!”

BOOM!

Li Hao swiftly vanished, dragging a whining Panther behind him. A coolly composed Xu Qing gave further orders to his army through the transmission pendant.

Running for his life, Li Hao’s eyes abruptly widened and he suddenly infused all of his internal force into the Windchaser Boots. The missiles were descending upon him again!

KABOOM!

A massive energy discharge leveled a small mountain in front of him. Li Hao's stumbling figure once more disappeared.

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"That was close... Pfft!" Li Hao spat out another mouthful of blood. There must be a camp nearby for the duke's army. The missiles wouldn't arrive so swiftly otherwise! They were too fast! It took time to fire missiles, they weren't instantly teleported to their target.

He raised his head up at the sky and once more shot forward. A military camp came into view with less than a minute of swift travel! A loud eruption roared as soon as the young man appeared. Countless bombs fired at him. Guns emptied their magazines at the sky and numerous Solars flew out of the encampment. There was even a Nova that floated out to watch their attacker solemnly.

Demon Sword! He was as thorny as stories made him out to be!

Li Hao roared with fury and slashed out with his sword, breaking through the firmament. His sword crashed down and pulverized countless soldiers with his sword qi. Even supernatural powerhouses died by the droves.

He could sense the displacement of air from the duke's movement and waved his sword around in response. He killed one hundred people in the blink of an eye and thrust his sword toward the center of the camp in one final stroke!

BOOM!

A building exploded to reveal a massive launcher. Sword qi raced through the air and cut the structure to pieces!

There was no time to kill more, Li Hao swiftly left again! The Steadfast Duke had arrived.

Xu Qing surveyed the site with a brooding look in his eyes. This was the drawback of the city annihilation missiles. If one wanted to swiftly lock onto and kill enemies, then one could not be too far away. That also easily provided a trajectory for targets to trace the firing origin and kill those attacking them, as well as the launcher.

The camp was in disarray. Injured soldiers offered salutes of respect when they saw the duke.

“Please forgive us, Your Grace!”

“Fix the launcher!” was the only thing that Xu Qing said before he shot off in Li Hao’s direction.

The young man had now suffered two detonations. Although he wasn’t in the center for either of them, it was still a painful experience. Panther was even more seriously injured and kept whining. It couldn’t talk, but if it could, it would be cursing the duke’s ancestors!

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“This can’t go on...” Li Hao kept vomiting blood. The duke might have many army camps. He would be targeted as soon as they drew near one. Xu Qing might not kill him after a few more attempts, but he would die from the ripples!

“I need to enter the sea...” The young man coughed out another mouthful of blood. He hadn’t wanted to go before because he’d been concerned that the two generals were waiting by the shore with more people. Hence, he changed directions, but now he had to go!

It was more dangerous on land!

He wouldn’t survive the onslaught if this continued. This was the Steadfast Duke’s territory. It was only now that Li Hao understood why the large factions were difficult to deal with. Not only did

they possess numerous powerhouses, but a sufficiently large enough crowd of mundanes would cause fatal damage all the same.

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Silver Moon.

Director General Zhao's face darkened when he glanced at a report. "Xu Qing has activated city annihilation missiles for use. Although he hasn't fired them into cities, it is forbidden to use these weapons!"

Struggles for supremacy, killing each other, war... All of that was normal. But those in charge also knew that backlash was inevitable once weapons of such lethality were entered into the mix. One such missile wouldn't destroy a city, but twenty or thirty in a spread would kill all of the mundanes in a large city like White Moon City—assuming that it wasn't completely razed to the ground!

Thus, there was a tacit understanding on all sides starting from a very long time ago. Apart from the three great organizations, no one was to use city annihilation missiles on anyone else. Silver Moon possessed some, but they were used to threaten the three great organizations. They were only ever utilized as threats—they'd never been actually deployed.

Huang Yu slammed his hand on the table! "It looks like Xu Qing hasn't caught up to Li Hao yet. The duke is ignoring the agreement and firing the missiles at will! Damn!"

"Take the Silver Moon Army." The director general was silent for a while before looking into the distance. "And three launchers, as well as thirty missiles. Go have some fun at the North Sea! If the various sides won't impose sanctions on the Steadfast Duke's army, then we'll start lobbing missiles at other provinces instead of the water!"

Huang Yu promptly vanished on the spot.

“If you ask me, we should just fire straight at Near River!” Kong Jie snorted.

“And kill all of their civilians?” Director General Zhao looked at Kong Jie. The man didn’t respond.

The North Sea was one matter since it was populated by pirates. All they needed to do was avoid merchant vessels. But if fired into Near River... then there would be too many dead.

“Xu Qing’s keeping nothing in mind apart from his desire to kill Li Hao!” Kong Jie snapped. “He won’t care about some intimidation. The east is his territory, after all. What good is a threat from a distance?”

Huang Yu’s actions may have some effect, but it was more likely that Xu Qing was censured after the fact. Whether it was the nine ministries or the royal family, neither side would care too much about the current developments.

Did anyone expect them to send out troops to pacify the east? That was pure daydream! Silver Moon’s actions would only result in the various sides to keep a tighter grip on their missiles, but it wouldn’t forestall total usage. Once they heard that it was possible for a human to survive a missile strike, then the missiles would no longer ensure balance between the various factions of the world either.

“Have Light Sword and Earthturner Sword set out yet?” asked Director General Zhao.

“They should’ve. I have no way of tracking their movement.”

The director general nodded. Indeed, they were too far away and it would take a while to reach the eastern continent. Li Hao could only count on himself for the time being.

Kong Jie sighed as well, finding the young man to have been too brash. Granted, Li Hao probably hadn’t expected that Xu Qing would utilize city annihilation missiles. Attacks were hard to evade with a powerhouse dogging his footsteps.

“Li Hao is a deputy director of the Silver Moon Night Watchers, after all. Have the Inspectorate send word to Skystar City to condemn Xu Qing. Request that Skystar City step forward to intervene and stop this conflict...”

Kong Jie rolled his eyes. Was there something wrong with Ole Zhao’s brains? How was that possible?

“Go!” Director General Zhao frowned. “At least it gives us the moral high ground, which makes it convenient for what we do next. Otherwise, everything we do is inappropriate! Don’t say a word about the grudge between Li Hao and the Xus. Don’t admit to anything and have people come to the Night Watchers if they have proof! The Xus are not a law enforcement agency and Xu Qing is neither the Night Watchers nor Inspectorate!

“Ah yes, remember to say that Silver Moon sent Li Hao to exterminate the Red Beard pirates. As for the deaths of Xu Xing and the others... did anyone see it have anything to do with Li Hao? People only saw him kill Red Beard, but Xu Qing’s been chasing the young man ever since. Does the duke want to avenge the pirates?”

“So you want to use principles of righteousness to force Xu Qing to stop?” Kong Jie mused. “He still cares about his reputation since he wants to conquer the world.”

“It won’t work that way!” Director General Zhao shook his head. “He won’t give up so easily. This just makes it so that he won’t dare utilize his army!

“Go on then.” The director general waved the inspector general off. “Hurry and spread the word. Don’t forget to apply for a commendation for Li Hao. Shouldn’t upstairs be rewarded for killing a major East Sea pirate? Li Hao loves promotions, so promote him! We lack a peacemaker commissioner after Hou Xiaochen’s departure, so let’s get one for him!”

“Um... Very well!” Kong Jie wasn’t certain what the old man wanted to do, but this was better than doing nothing. He soon left as well.

Director General Zhao paused for a moment before picking up a red communicator on his desk. He dialed a number and intoned, “Mobilize the hidden guards in Calm Borders and the closest three provinces. Have them help Li Hao and obstruct Xu Qing. Buy the young man some time...”

“Milord...”

“Just do it!”

“Understood!”

The communicator cut off.

Chapter 599: The Winds Surge on All Sides (IV)

The director general looked to the east again, his forehead scrunched together. The region was too far away. What a pity that the teleportation formations of the ancient civilization had long been lost. They would be able to instantly teleport over otherwise.

It was one thing if Li Hao was close to Silver Moon; the province couldn’t do much when he was in the east. Kong Jie, Huang Yu, and the others could go to him if he was nearby. Their hands were tied when the young man was so far away.

“The east... the east... Yu Qiao, East Pole Duke, Helios...” After some thought, Director General Zhao picked up the communicator again and dialed another number. The red communicator was a top secret in the dynasty. It’d taken a lot of labor, resources, and effort to create this communication system.

It was more advanced than a transmission pendant and only certain executive officials were qualified to be assigned one. While the likelihood of being eavesdropped upon was very high, the director general didn’t care about that at the moment. The transmission pendants operated within a small circle. Such a small circle was unable to connect to other people.

The communicator was answered moments later with confused laughter.

“Director General Zhao? What brings you to me today? What an honor!”

“East Pole Duke, how would the East Pole province like to mobilize its troops to threaten Calm Borders? You should at least force its Heaven and Earth Generals back within provincial borders...”

“Are you joking, director general?” chortled the lofty duke. “The dynasty still stands. Director General Zhao is such a jokester!”

“East Pole can establish a camp in Silver Moon when our ruins open next!”

The duke stopped laughing and fell into silence. “Too hard! I think it’s the end of the road for Demon Sword even if the two generals return to Calm Borders. You think too little of Xu Qing and the Xus! Xu Qing is now playing cat and mouse, he won’t make it out of the Xu net!”

“Just do your part.”

“Very well! But... this is the dynasty’s communication system...”

“Mhmm.” The director general smiled. “Will the dynasty keep us under constant watch? Our conversations are top secret and if they listen in... that means they don’t trust us at all. They should be worried about backlash from the ninety-nine provinces in that case. Therefore, this won’t leak. If it does, then something’s gone drastically wrong with the dynasty for even us to be monitored, don’t you think?”

“Hahaha, that makes sense!” laughed the duke. “Very well then, I’ll make the arrangements. But my hands are tied if Xu Qing thinks Li Hao is more important than Calm Borders.”

“It’s enough for you to take action.”

“Will do. Don’t forget your words now, director general.”

“We of Silver Moon would not do so.”

“Mmhmm, I trust you!”

The call was over and neither party cared if the central government had been listening. So what if they had? This was a development that they’d wholeheartedly approve of!

Director General Zhao breathed out a soft sigh. This was the best he could do. As for everything else... that was up to Li Hao.

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Doggedly pursuing his quarry, Xu Qing suddenly frowned and glanced at his transmission pendant.

“The East Pole Duke announced three minutes ago that some rebels have seized power among the Steadfast Duke’s army and fired city annihilation missiles of their own accord. This has caused such an uproar in the east that the East Pole Duke will immediately send out troops to pacify the disturbance. He hopes that the Steadfast Duke will open the door of convenience for them to work together...”

“Bastard!” a livid Xu Qing roared angrily. How dare East Pole send troops out!

Of course, he may just be posturing and looking to scare a neighbor, but six out of Xu Qing’s eight generals were dead. His two vice commanders—his sons—were dead, and he was not with the army. He could direct them remotely, but if the East Pole army really came calling... The Steadfast army would absolutely be defeated.

Xu Qing gnashed his teeth and input orders through his pendant after a moment. No matter if it was an empty threat or not, powerhouses needed to be in residence at the army. His two generals needed to hold down the fort in person, so as to dissuade the East Pole Duke from doing anything.

“Silver Moon!” sniffed Xu Qing. It went without saying that it must be Silver Moon behind this. Someone had bought out the East Pole Duke—the guy wouldn’t have so easily taken a stand otherwise!

Dealing with these matters wasted a bit of time for him. Xu Qing snorted coldly and broke through the air, continuing to give chase. It didn’t matter if he was two people down. These happenings would just make people more wary of Silver Moon.

Just you wait, you Silver Moon bastards!

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Over the North Sea.

Two figures sped past overhead. Their presences were so overwhelming that nearby powerhouses, pirate ships, and merchant vessels all backed away fearfully.

A wry expression crossed Hong Yitang’s face. Here he was again, it’d only been a few days! Last time it was Light Sword, this time it was Li Hao. Can’t you guys take a break for a while?

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On the East Sea close to the central region.

Yuan Shuo grinned at the transmission pendant in his hand. “Nice!” So the duke had utilized city annihilation missiles, and more than one at that. The Xus were brutal, as was Xu Qing. Of course, there was a death feud between Li Hao and the Xus, so it made sense that the family had utilized the missiles when Li Hao kicked down their front doors.

Yuan Shuo wasn’t angry about this as city annihilation missiles weren’t that deadly to powerhouses. It was regular folks that the missiles were extremely effective against. Whether it was the government or the martial world, it went against the rules to utilize city annihilation missiles. However, there was nothing one could do if someone decided to ignore the rules.

Yuan Shuo smiled, not sure if he should stew in anger or laugh in this moment. He looked at the sea in front of him. The eastern continent could be found on the other side. There was a massive bridge rising in front of him—the East Sea Bridge.

Constructed by the eastern continent, it ran through the central region and eastern continents. It was where the sea was at its most narrow. Roughly one hundred and fifty kilometers long, this was an impossible mission to accomplish if the supernatural domain had not appeared in the world.

Since this was now an era of the supernatural, no miracle seemed out of reach, not with supernaturals on the scene. Of course, Yuan Shuo was long used to sights like these. What did this bridge count for?

The ancient records spoke of the ancient civilization crafting walls one thousand meters tall and circling part of the world!

“Little tyke... You really know how to get into trouble. What’d you have to go and visit their territory for?” grumbled Yuan Shuo. A short blade appeared in his hand, one that was somewhat translucent and crystalline. It was the stone blade of the eight families.

Yuan Shuo was not skilled with weapons, but that didn’t mean he didn’t know how to use them. On the contrary, he was much better at using weapons than some martial masters. The only ones he didn’t measure up to were premier powerhouses that specialized in a certain weapon. The stone blade was invincible, which made it useful.

He set foot onto the big bridge. There were troops in residence on both sides. The closest province on the central region side had set a watch and the Steadfast Duke's troops were on the other side. Access to the bridge was limited. A powerhouse flew over as Yuan Shuo made his way upward.

"This bridge is not available for access! Take the waterways if you wish to go to the east!"

The bridge was built, but usage denied.

"It's said that Xu Qing built this bridge to connect the central region and east region because East Shore province has sworn fealty to the Xus." Genteel and refined, Yuan Shuo smiled at the incoming officer. "Is that true?"

"Who are you?!" rebuked the officer as his expression shifted slightly. Of course it was true. If it was false, Xu Qing would be crazy to invest so many resources into building a bridge that made it easier for the central region to invade.

Reality was the exact opposite, the duke had built the bridge to make his invasion of the central region more convenient. Naturally, it couldn't be the enemy on the other side. It had to be someone in his own camp or a friend. The ruler of the East Shore that held true authority was a descendant of a general who once fought for the Xus. He'd been a follower of the first generation duke.

Yuan Shuo hadn't cared about these matters before as they had nothing to do with him. But now, he smiled radiantly. "I'm going to walk this bridge today, so get out of the way. Since you don't know me, your status probably isn't too high. I'm going to make trouble for the Xus on the other side. I won't kill you if you move, so don't force my hand!"

The officer's eyes widened. Anyone who could voice these thoughts would not be a typical character! He was wary, but the East Sea Bridge was a very strategically important connection. The key was that there was a little problem in the middle of the bridge at the moment. It wasn't broken, but large sums of pirates were gathered. The bridge served as the boundary that they spread out from to chase Li Hao.

No one was allowed onto the bridge at this time. The officer quickly transmitted a message in all four directions and drew some movement from a distant military camp. Large numbers of supernaturals appeared.

“You have the East Sea separating you, but you still want to work for the Xus?” Yuan Shuo raised an eyebrow.

“I don’t understand what you’re talking about!” rebuked the man. “Leave at once! This is important East Shore territory and we are currently conducting a military mission. No one is allowed to pass!”

“Military mission?” Yuan Shuo laughed and promptly vanished on the spot. A transmission pendant appeared in his hand.

All that the officer knew was that the trespasser vanished. When he next appeared, he was flipping through something. The officer immediately understood that something was amiss and roared, “Kill the bandit!”

Bam!

Guns fired and supernatural abilities deployed as his order was immediately answered. Yuan Shuo ignored all of it and vanished again while he looked at the pendant.

“The kid’s really in trouble this time,” he sighed. “East Shore has dispatched a military unit to seal off the sea...”

The information in the pendant was very simple. Seal off the East Sea Bridge and all shorelines within one hundred and fifty kilometers. Coordinate with the East Sea pirates. Report Demon Sword’s movements when he is found. Do not engage.

Plainly, this side had received word from the Xus as well. The province coordinated their movements with the East Sea pirates to seal off the waters. Calm Borders was on the other side. As fast as Li Hao may be, he was still within Calm Borders territory. If he was to cross the sea, this was where he would have to do it.

Yuan Shuo ceased speaking after he read the news. His stone blade sparkled as he disappeared again; heads thudded to the ground. As onlookers watched on with shock, Yuan Shuo darted around like an agile ape. He issued no threats or boastful words. His blade simply flashed in and out of sight, leaving no one alive on the bridge!

Chapter 600: Savages from the North (I)

Not a flicker of change crossed Yuan Shuo's expression after he killed everyone on the East Shore side of the bridge. He darted into the military camp on the shore and arduously dragged out a mammoth crate.

"Heh, an energy bomb. Not bad, they've even got city annihilation missiles. It looks like they won't stop until they've killed Li Hao..." Yuan Shuo also dragged out a massive launcher. He seemed very familiar with it and fiddled with the launcher for a while before looking across the East Sea. "Damn it, I have no idea where you guys are fighting. I guess I'll just raise a fuss. Run here if you're smart enough to, tyke! If not, I'll attract some attention with what I'm doing anyhow."

He spat into his palms and grunted as he dragged out a massive bomb from the nearby crate. It was as translucent as a crystal and highly classified in terms of strategic importance. The one in charge of this camp had been a Nova. Novas were fully qualified to look after these items as initial Novas were rare powerhouses for regular provinces.

But for Yuan Shuo, that level was plainly insufficient. He didn't even exude ripples when he killed the initial Nova.

He could sense the violent energy within when he hoisted the massive bomb onto his shoulders. These bombs were almost all excavated from the ruins. Any ruins that were of regular size or greater possessed such missiles. They were part of the standard city defenses.

As for whether or not they could be found in Battle Heaven... Yuan Shuo hadn't made it inside. He'd only taken a turn outside, but it was his expectation that there was a ninety-nine percent chance that those missiles could be found inside the city as well, and in large numbers.

At the moment, he focused on nothing else but quickly loading the launcher! After one missile, he continued with more. East Shore had significantly invested in this army unit by equipping them with six city annihilation missiles. Yuan Shuo loaded them all into the launcher and smoothly picked up a small box next to it. A code was required to fire these, but the code was hard to break. Any that were in use now had been successfully broken.

"This is all my fault," Yuan Shuo sighed as he broke the code. "Look at what you guys have turned things into! If I'd known, I wouldn't have publicized how to crack the code thirty years ago. I'd thought to bring about world peace by having the various sides check each other, which leaves space for us martial masters to fight to our heart's content. But now look at what the result is—you guys are going after my disciple!"

His words would shock many if they became public knowledge. Not everyone knew that weapons such as the city annihilation missiles had appeared on the scene long ago, but that they hadn't been in use for long. It wasn't until thirty years ago that the various factions knew how to break the code and fire them properly.

Prior to that, any usage required activation of the self-destruct sequence. To put it simply, some martial masters or a large army unit would have to run the missile to wherever they wanted to bomb and manually detonate it. The launchers were completely unusable.

Thirty years ago, Yuan Shuo felt that this was such a pitiful arrangement. A large number of friendly troops died every time they used a missile, so he decided to share the way to break the code with a wave of his hand.

The loudly cursing old man swiftly loaded all of the city annihilation missiles, broke the code, checked his aim, then glanced across the sea again. It was too far for him to get a clear look. Further details were impossible. That was fine, he didn't care.

He pressed the fire button, sending six missiles shooting through the sky at an extremely fast pace. Approximately five minutes later... KABOOM!

A stunning explosion ripped through the void!

Tidal waves reared in the sea and the bridge shook violently. In a location toward the center of the bridge that Yuan Shuo could not see, countless ships were falling apart and endless pirates had already been obliterated out of existence. The incredibly durable bridge began collapsing.

First it was half a kilometer, then one kilometer, and then one and a half kilometers... The damage rapidly spread for half a dozen kilometers. One fourth of this strategically important East Sea Bridge had been destroyed in a split second. The collapse was not contained and continued to spread elsewhere!

Wails of pain sounded, some pirates lucky enough to survive keened their anguish. Most of their fellows had been bombed to death because Yuan Shuo had glanced at his transmission pendant and knew that there were pirates somewhere in the center. He didn't know their exact location, his goal was just to destroy the bridge. The pirates were an added bonus.

Various pirate leaders hovered in the air. Some were gravely wounded while others were lucky enough to survive disaster. Some were shell shocked, while one screamed, "It's East Shore... East Shore utilized their city annihilation missiles! This was a trap and great war is upon us! They randomly fired off city annihilation missiles..."

Chaos had their home in a grip that was closing around them! Such were the thoughts of all of the survivors.

BOOM!

A massive wave churned across the water surface and slapped all of the fleeing pirates into meat paste. It was almost one thousand meters tall!

The East Sea was finally no longer tranquil. A few remaining pirate faction leaders quickly spread the word. East Shore had fired city annihilation missiles!

Perhaps it was the central region that'd sent people. The sky was falling.

.....

Moments later, the world finally recovered its senses.

Within Silver City.

"Damn it, what are all of them doing?!" cursed a heavyweight. "Are they seeking to start a war that drags in the entire dynasty? What on earth is East Shore doing?! They fire their missiles after Xu Qing has utilized his. Are they all crazy?!"

"Inspector general, bad news," a quavering voice rang with fear and horror. "Huang Yu has taken the Silver Moon Army to the North Sea and fired... thirty city annihilation missiles at the territories of the Sea Monster Raiders, White Shark Raiders, and others. The North Sea is in complete pandemonium and tidal waves are so numerous that they crash into each other. Huang Yu is warning everyone in affected provinces to evacuate from the coastline. The tidal waves will be upon them soon..."

The inspector general suddenly fell silent and sat down in a stilted motion. "Announce this to the lands!" he heaved a sigh. "Steadfast Duke Xu Qing has committed a grave crime in brazenly firing the city annihilation missiles. He is to be demoted and stripped of his title as duke. He is now the Steadfast Marquis!

"Have the royal family stamp the decree and distribute it! Also, send men to search and confiscate all that you can from the duke's home in the capital..."

"This is bad, inspector general." A nervous messenger walked in at this time. "Skystar Commander Hou Xiaochen has led the Silver Moon Army into a besiegement of the duke's manor. He claims that heavyweights of the three great organizations are hiding within the complex.

“He killed the duke’s younger brother, Xu Yao, on the spot and found a Red Moon ghost face mask when he searched the man. He is currently arresting all of the duke’s powerhouses, if not outright killing them. The eldest girl of Xu Qing’s second wife, the young girl who is a genius young girl, has been snatched out of Skystar Academy. Hou Xiaochen grabbed her directly from class and has already locked her into the Night Watcher dungeons!”

“Bastard!” The inspector general flew into a rage and slammed his hands down as fists on the table. It splintered and fell apart. “Who gave him the authority to do so?!”

“He... he says... that he is the Skystar commander and as such, possesses this authority. Whoever dares oppose him is a rebel and an evil supernatural from the three great organizations...”

“The Skystar commander...” The inspector general blinked and fell silent. He remembered now, he’d agreed to this posting a few days ago. Indeed, this was the Inspectorate, the secondary law enforcement agency apart from the Ministry of Armed Forces. After the Night Watchers were formed, they were the first law enforcement agency. However, the agency still answered to the Inspectorate despite showing recent signs of wanting to break free.

“Good, very good!” the man sneered after prolonged silence. “These Silver Moon martial masters are definitely hot-blooded, alright! Forget it, let them have their fun with each other! Xu Qing wants to kill Li Hao, so Hou Xiaochen ends his line in Skystar City first. I’d like to see what else these crazies can get up to!

“East Shore would not attack the Xus for no reason at all. They must not be the ones to fire the missiles.” The inspector general was calm now. “It’s ninety-nine percent Silver Moon behind this. If not a contingency arranged by their provincial government, then... Yuan Shuo!”

The people around him blinked. Yuan Shuo?

The inspector general was so certain because the only person who could do so, who dared do so, and could attack with such precision was Yuan Shuo. There was no one else! When he played with

the city annihilation missiles, the rest of them could only hold the missiles in their hands and personally deliver it to the blast zone!

“Ignore them!” sneered the inspector general after a while. “They can fight each other, so long as it doesn’t affect anyone else. I’d like to see how a family with two hundred years of history will stand against those Silver Moon lunatics!”

“Then... do we just let Hou Xiaochen throw his weight around like this?” someone asked apprehensively. That guy had gone mad! This was Skystar City, but he was deploying troops within the city and taken people directly from Skystar Academy. There were powerhouses in residence at the academy. It was an institution of learning that countless high placed officials sent their descendants to.

It was a true academy for nobility.

“There are so many heavyweights at the academy. Did none of them take a stand?” the inspector general asked aloofly.

“Yes, Vice Headmaster Wang stepped forward...”

“And?”

“And... lost one of his arms to a jab from Hou Xiaochen. He was arrested and taken in for sentencing. If he’s found out to be part of the three great organizations, he’ll be executed on a later date!”

“A peak Nova lost his arm to one stroke?” The inspector general frowned. Hou Xiaochen seemed stronger than before.

“Yes!”

“Then forget it.” The inspector general grinned. “It’s not like this is civil discord, it’s just the Skystar commander of the Night Watchers carrying out his duties! As for the East Sea, North Sea, and Calm Borders firing off missiles... Let the Ministry of Armed Forces deal with that!

“Everyone’s watching the show, so let’s keep watching it!” He spat on the ground with a sneer. “I bet you before long that it might be missiles flying through Skystar City before long!

“Notify me when either Li Hao or Xu Qing is dead.” He left with a flourish of his sleeves. “Don’t disturb me for anything else!”

“Understood!” The resigned group watched their superior office walk off. It looked like he was very put out by the hostilities on both sides. The main issue was that no one else was willing to step in, causing their superior to throw his hands up despite wanting to help at first. The group also clucked their tongues with surprise when their thoughts turned to Hou Xiaochen.

“Commander Hou... is a ruthless guy!” someone murmured with a smile of wanting to watch a great show. This has nothing to do with us, the bigger the better!

Hou Xiaochen was a deputy director at the Night Watchers when it came down to things. He was part of the Inspectorate as well. To see him be so brazen and antagonize characters that they wouldn’t normally be daring to provoke... beating them and crippling them outright... Honestly, it felt damn good!