

## Star Gate 621

### Chapter 621: I Am About To Arrive (II)

If Silver Moon ever rebelled, Li Hao would work for Silver Moon instead. It was so comfortable working for the authorities. Even if he skipped every day of work, he knew that he would still get paid.

“So the little brother is here for pleasure?” The fatty didn’t mind being turned down. “Don’t run around then. It’s fine enough inside the city, but things are a mess outside. Supernaturals have suddenly risen and are causing a ton of trouble. They’re killing people everywhere! Since you’ve come from the north, you’ve probably encountered your fair share of trouble during your travels. You’re lucky to still be alive! I hear that there’s a massive battle going on in the North Sea. City annihilation missiles were fired a few days ago and everything was turned upside down! Ai, it’s always the ordinary people that suffer.”

Li Hao nodded. The central region was something else alright. Even residents of a small city knew of the happenings in the North Sea. To be honest, he hadn’t known anything about the world when he was in Silver City. He had no idea what was happening in the central region.

“I’m familiar with fun and pleasure. Where are you going, little brother? I can give you a ride.” He pointed at a car not too far away. “That’s my car and I like anyone from the north. My wife is also from the north! Let’s continue our chitchat in the car, little brother. I’ll take you wherever you’re going!”

“That’s really alright!” Li Hao smiled. It was his first time meeting someone so friendly.

“Don’t be so polite, you’re on my way and I have nothing else to do. I’m here to recruit more people for the factory anyway. I don’t think I’ll be finding anyone at this part of the day, so I should be getting back. Where are you going, little brother?”

“It’s really alright...” Li Hao declined again.

“Aren’t you being too standoffish?” The fatty pretended to be unhappy. “We rely on our friends when we’re out and about. I’m trying to be friends with you, or do you think too little of your big brother?”

Li Hao was speechless. I really don’t know you that well! But seeing at how friendly the other was...

“I’m headed south to the Four Peaks. I want to see the central belt...”

“To the south?” The fatty was surprised. “That’s so far away... Are you a supernatural, little brother?”

“No.” Li Hao smiled. “Just a backpacker. My teacher says that I should walk ten thousand kilometers as opposed to reading ten thousand books...”

“A student?” The fatty was even more surprised. “You’re a student? In college?”

“You could say that.” Li Hao nodded after some thought. “I’m a student of a small academy.”

The Veteris Institute of Silver City. If he hadn’t withdrawn, he would be just about ready to graduate.

“My apologies for the disrespect!” the fatty laughed. “So you’re a scholar. Your big brother isn’t very cultured. I know of the north, but... to put it bluntly... It is a cold and poor area. It’s difficult to study to your level! Reaching that level in our region is rare enough already.

“Then you must be careful! I’ve heard of people speak of scholars traveling the world. The world is not safe these days. How about this, I’ll take you to the south of the city. If you wish to leave, you can just walk out of the southern gates. If you don’t want to go just yet, you can enjoy your time in the southern quadrant...”

“My thanks, then!” Li Hao laughed. The fatty really was very friendly. He followed the fatty to the car and saw another person sitting in the backseat when the door was opened. The fatty introduced the other man in his thirties.

“This is the factory’s accountant and has come out to recruit people with me. What a pity that you want to leave, little brother. If you stayed... and being a college student... You can be our treasurer and earn eight thousand a month! It’s hard to recruit scholars these days.”

The man in the car inclined his head at Li Hao and shifted half a butt over. Li Hao didn’t mind the situation at first, but frowned slightly moments later. His expression promptly smoothed out and he climbed into the car without saying anything. Panther was close on his heels.

The accountant frowned to see the dog, prompting an explanation from a smiling Li Hao.

“This is a stray dog that I picked up from the street. It’s too lonely traveling alone, so I kept the dog with me. Please don’t mind it. I can get off if it’s inconvenient...”

“It’s alright!” chuckled the fatty up front. “It’s wonderful that the little brother is kindhearted. The little dog is rather cute. Accountant Zhang, shift over to make some space...”

The man in the backseat didn’t say anything, just moved a bit more to the side. The little car wasn’t big to begin with and there was less space in the backseat; Panther took up further room. Li Hao didn’t count as tall in the north, but he was very tall here, so the entire backseat was rather crowded.

The merry fatty started the engine. He was a chatty sort, whereas Accountant Zhang didn’t say much.

“Where in the north are you from, little brother?”

“Silver Moon.”

“Ah, Silver Moon. That’s so far away. I know that there were martial masters there back in the day and hear that it’s a pretty savage place. Of course, it’s all wild rumor. Are you familiar with martial masters, little brother?”

“Not really,” Li Hao laughed. “We scholars don’t have much to do with those kinds of people. We just spend our time with our books, wait to graduate, and find a post with the government. Those things are too far away for us.”

“That’s true.” The fatty nodded and continued with an unending spiel of chatter. “These days, those who can afford to study at school come from good families. Judging from the little brother’s condition, you should be a rich scion in Silver Moon?”

“That’s not really the case... My grades are fine enough, so the government gave me a scholarship. My family has some savings, so we manage to make do,” Li Hao answered offhandedly as the smile on his face began to grow odd. He seemed to be grasping something—martial masters, supernaturals, family background, friends, the same hometown...

The fatty could chat about everything under the sun. Anyone else he chatted with would reveal everything about themselves and be impressed by the fatty’s conversation skills. He could talk about anything as he knew a little of everything.

But... why was the car driving further and further away? Li Hao watched the splendid sights fade out the window and the raucous dim gradually quiet. The prosperous central region was really quite something! The fatty was also a nice person and quite friendly. Li Hao had formed a good first impression of the central region, but it was slowly being tinged with some regret.

“How come we aren’t taking the city roads, big brother?”

“They’re too congested and will take us an hour to get to the southern city. We’ll take the outer roads. They may be further away, but they’re also faster...”

Eventually, there was even a lack of buildings on the sides of the road. They were in the suburbs, weren't they?

Li Hao breathed out softly and looked at the quiet accountant. "Big brother Zhang." He smiled at the man. "You're the accountant. If you have eighty-one workers and pay them thirty-two hundred coins a month, what's your total payroll expense every month?"

"Eh?" The accountant blinked and took a moment to gather his thoughts. He paused in a daze before replying, "Does your family own a factory?"

"No, but my friend's family does. He always complains about high payroll expenses, so I'm curious how much other factories have to pay each month."

Accountant Zhang's eyes darted around as he mumbled inaudibly, "Well, this, ah... It's not much money. It's just eighty-some people and a small factory. The bunch of us..."

The car trembled as the fatty stomped on the breaks with a cough. "Accountant Zhang, I have a bottle of water in the trunk, can you get it for me..."

"Oh, okay!" The accountant turned around and started rifling through the back, as if looking for water. Li Hao sighed and didn't move.

A pair of hands appeared around his neck the next second and tightened with all of the accountant's strength. He forced out through grit teeth, "Fatty, do we kill him or bring him back? And why did we make our move halfway there?"

"Idiot, his questions were a sign that he suspected you," the fatty snapped back without looking back. "And you stammered for an actual response! Choke him unconscious and take him back! The mines need people! Damn it, educated people are absolutely nothing good and you're an idiot to not even manage this..."

“Can you?” Accountant Zhang asked as he squeezed with incredible strength. It looked like their victim knew a thing or two, he might’ve practiced some martial arts, but not made it to Slayer of Tens. He cursed as he choked Li Hao, “So you want me to calculate numbers? You little fucking brat! You’ve got a lot of ideas in that head of yours, huh!”

He began to gradually feel that something was amiss. Why wasn’t the kid fighting back? They were old hands at this operation and even killed people part way sometimes, but their victims usually struggled. Why wasn’t this one moving?

He bent over to look down at Li Hao and was nearly scared out of his wits! The coolly composed young man stared right back at him and smiled to see the man bend over.

“This is so annoying!” he sighed.

The fatty’s expression shifted drastically and he brought the car to a screeching halt! Li Hao grabbed the bent over head and leaned forward, grabbing the fatty who was ready to run. He kicked the front seat to smithereens.

“Forgive us, noble sir! We’re just trying to get by the days...” the fatty begged for mercy.

“Here I was thinking that the central region is quite nice and very prosperous!” Li Hao sighed. “Even its people are so friendly. So this is the true business you’re in, huh!”

“We were wrong, noble sir! This is our first time doing so...” claimed the fatty.

“Don’t even go there, you guys have a lot of experience!” Li Hao laughed. He squeezed when the fatty wanted to protest further and shattered one of the fatty’s arms. Li Hao laughed heartily when the fatty screamed with anguish. “I’ll pop your head next if you keep screaming!”

The agonized screams immediately cut off. Although drenched in sweat and baring his teeth with pain, the fatty didn't dare scream anymore. They were in trouble! He knew that they'd run into a tough target.

Is he a supernatural?? No. Is he a martial master?? No... The kid lied to us! Superhumans don't have this much time on their hands! He'd been careful enough already!

Accountant Zhang's head was almost popping. Li Hao casually flung the man by his feet and piled the two together. They were drenched with sweat from pain.

"Out with it. Do you take people and kill them at the mines?" Li Hao raised an eyebrow.

Chapter 622: I Am About To Arrive (III)

"Y... yes... noble... sir..." Drenched with sweat, the fatty stammered a painful reply. "These... are... not... our operations... but the Inspectorate's... operations. The Inspectorate... has a mine... and we're... just errand boys..."

"We are paid... only two thousand coins... for every person... we get... We only target... foreigners... and don't dare touch... locals..."

"Don't kill us... noble sir... We just work for others... You are a noble one and know... what the Inspectorate does... There is no need to cause an investigation... for two worms such as us..."

"The Inspectorate has a mine?" Li Hao frowned. "So they have a mine. They can just hire people, why are they taking people off the streets?"

The fatty refused to respond, whereas Accountant Zhang quickly replied, "What we do cuts down on costs and increases profit margins... How much of a fee do they need to pay for one hundred people? Just two hundred thousand coins! But if these people are all hired employees, they would require monthly salaries of three to five thousand coins. That would be nearly five hundred thousand coins a month... and one hundred people are hardly enough for the mines."

“The mines require at least one thousand staff, which means a few million or tens of millions a month. That’s at least one hundred million a year!

“Not to mention, there are a lot of refugees nowadays. Some of the cities in the central region have been razed to the ground and refugees are running everywhere. There’s beggars throughout all of the cities, or thieves, or robbers. The Inspectorate is kept too busy by them and decided to haul them all off to the mines. Not only does that save money, but it saves a lot of trouble...”

Li Hao blinked. “Refugees?” he whispered.

“That’s right! A city’s been blown up near us, which means at least five hundred thousand people don’t have places to stay. They need to run anywhere and everywhere—several tens of thousands have come to us. We don’t have the time for them, we barely have enough time for our own people. All of them come with a lot of issues as well, so it’s best for everyone that they’re hauled off to the mines. They won’t die of starvation out in the open and it saves us a lot of trouble...” Being more dim-witted than the fatty, Accountant Zhang spilled everything he knew of in one go.

Li Hao mused over his words, so this was the true situation. The Inspectorate earned a lot of money and eliminated a lot of trouble with this course of action. There was no need to think about settling in the influx of people when there were no beggars and no refugees. Neither did they need to worry over a city’s worth of minor crime and infractions.

It was multiple birds with one stone!

No wonder Li Hao had thought the city was a nice place earlier. It was so prosperous that there wasn’t a sign of a single beggar—those could still be found in Silver Moon. He’d felt that general security was quite good!

How could it not be? All of the beggars and refugees had been sent to the mines.

“Your inspector general... is quite a talent!” Li Hao laughed.



Who knew if he truly meant the compliment, or was jeering with sarcasm. This city's inspector general was indeed a brilliant person!

Li Hao didn't grow mad as there was no need to. He'd seen the military collude with pirates and the Steadfast Duke raise pirates as a personal force. He'd bore witness to the director general of a province supporting pirates. What hadn't he seen yet?

This was just the Inspectorate of a small city hauling people off to the mines so that they could maintain a picture of peace and tranquility in their city! They were simply one city out of one thousand in the central region. Perhaps they were an exception.

"Where are the mines?"

"Just... up... ahead... Another twenty... kilometers... by car..."

It was far away. Li Hao heaved a sigh and stepped on the two. He kept stepping on them until they could no longer speak. The young man leaned back against his seat and said, "Panther, drive the car. Let's go take a look!"

Panther wagged its tail merrily and saw that Li Hao meant his words when it took another look. It climbed excitedly into the driver's seat, ignited the engine, shifted into drive gear, and stepped on the accelerator.

The little car flew over the terrain with a dog in the front seat! Its two forepaws clutched the steering wheel, looking very much like an experienced driver!

The dog's driving was steady enough; Li Hao grinned. Thank goodness no one was around to see this, or they'd say that his driving was less than a dog's! Even a dog drove better than him!

To be honest, Panther really did drive well. As it grew more comfortable with driving, it could even pull some tricks. Its tail hooked around the steering wheel and drifted the car across the road...

Inside the car, the two men almost being crushed to death looked at each other with horror. This was a monster spirit! A major monster spirit! Those of the central region had seen many more monster spirits that could understand human speech compared to the north. Abject with terror, the two realized that this monster spirit was at least a Sunflare or Solar.

Li Hao ignored them and sat comfortably in the backseat, contemplating something. He saw a mountain after half an hour of the dog's rapid driving and had Panth stop a long distance away.

The car disappeared with a wave of his hand when everyone alighted, sending more fear into the fatty and accountant. A storage ring!

That was the equipment of a powerhouse!

Li Hao still didn't speak. He grabbed both men by the arm with one hand and squeezed hard. They stuck to his hand like balls of dough. He shot into the air, the two dangling from his hand like fluttering rags. They'd long passed out from terror and pain.

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In the air.

Li Hao looked down over the mountain and noted that there were several supernatural guards on the mines. There were possibly a few martial masters as well. None of them were strong. The supernaturals were either Starlight or Darkmoon, there wasn't a single Sunflare.

There was a gathering place in the mountains that rang with activity. Li Hao flew over for a look; food was being distributed from the meeting point. A middle-aged woman was receiving her portion of a black steamed bun and a bowl of congee. It should fill her stomach and wouldn't result in starvation, but the woman wailed with distress.

“Sir, please give me another bun, just one more!” she cried to the heavens. “Just one more... I have three children who are dying of starvation! The eldest one can’t move anymore and the four of us really can’t survive on so little everyday! I can’t sleep at night and have to enter the mines after I finish washing clothes in the morning. Sir, please give me one more bun...”

“Get out of here!” An inspector in official uniform kicked the woman away. “Ingrate! We give you a chance for survival, otherwise all of you would’ve long died! How dare you ask for so much! Do rations not cost money?! Do you know how much they cost now?? What kind of times are we in for you to think of having children?? And three of them?! So what if they die? You’ll have a few meals of meat if one of them dies! Is your brain confused or what??”

Li Hao started and looked down below. So this is the central region, the incomparably prosperous and rich central region. For a second... I thought I was hearing a pirate.

He’d seemed to meet the White Shark Raiders under similar conditions.

“Pirates... local army... inspectors...” He looked back at the city. It was bustling and flourishing! And here? There were a lot of people, but they seemed to belong to a different era.

Here, he saw history. He saw the end times of those dynasties in which lives were not worth anything. But there was a thriving city roughly thirty kilometers away from here. Lights, food, and drink abounded there.

Li Hao shook his head. He seemed to have traveled through time and space for a quick moment.

“The central region is the picture of prosperity...” The oft-quoted saying floated into his mind. He promptly thought of what Hong Yitang once said. “The dynasty is about to sink into chaos and chaos churn through the world. The people will suffer in misery. There is no hope for this era!”

His first foray into a central region had taught Li Hao a lesson. What he saw may not be true; there were unspeakable matters hidden beneath the glitz and glamor. There was no word of these

destroyed cities and refugees in the central region. How many mines like these were out there? How much of this darkness?

Li Hao smiled, but didn't know why he should smile. His bare minimum was lowered again and again, sparks of hope repeatedly extinguished when they flared to life!

He wanted to think that the central region was quite nice, but these people told him in the next breath that it was much darker than one thought. Evil lurked behind the prosperity!

An inspector of the Inspectorate told everyone not to have children in this day and age. It was nothing if one's child died, that just meant a few meals of meat... Everyone seemed numb to this, apart from that woman! It was as if the world itself was shades of gray here.

"The Inspectorate..." Li Hao murmured with some pain. His first job had been at the Inspectorate and so he was very kindly disposed toward inspectors because the ones he knew set good examples in their roles. He thought of Liu Long, Liu Yan, Wu Chao, Kong Jie, Wang Henggang, and many other inspectors...

He was proud to wear the official uniform. As a public servant, he was paid by the government and didn't have to do much. Those at the desks did their jobs and those in the field caught thieves and solved some cases. The benefits were good and they saw to the security of the city.

Some danger might come to the Night Watchers since they had to fight supernaturals, but the Inspectorate was a decent place. There might be some risk in their line of duty, but there wasn't that much violent crime.

Various thoughts floated into Li Hao's mind. He felt that Near River was an exception since Fan Chang was not a good person. He also felt that the Steadfast Duke in Calm Borders colluding with pirates was an exception since the Xus were not good people.

But here... who wasn't a good person? Was everyone in the Inspectorate in the wrong here? What about elsewhere?

Li Hao took a deep breath and flew away. Indeed, he flew away. What could he do? Nothing at all. Kill these inspectors? What would that do? Absolutely nothing! Not to mention, there were tens of thousands of people on the mines. This was the central region. Was he supposed to send them all to Silver Moon?

That would be the greatest joke of all!

Therefore, he might as well kill their inspector general or all of their senior executives. Maybe the next batch would be better.

In spite of his strength, the young man didn't know what to do. He was helpless when it came to a mine of ten thousand people. There was absolutely nothing he could change and killing those inspectors might cause greater trouble to arise. He knew what the consequences might be in order to cover up events here. Perhaps the entire mountain would collapse and all of the people disappear to cover up these happenings.

He wouldn't have thought this was possible before, but now he knew that everything was possible.

Chapter 623: I Am About To Arrive (IV)

Only if Li Hao killed the city's senior executives would it not lead back to the mines. It might be better if the city's entire senior leadership was shuffled. If things weren't improved, at least they wouldn't be any worse. This was the first place of its kind that Li Hao was encountering, but it definitely wouldn't be the last.

He really couldn't directly intervene for the lives of these countless people. There was nothing he could do.

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A batch of people died soundlessly in a small city of the central region on this night. The fatty and accountant pointed them out one by one for Li Hao. He killed every single person involved in the

evil. The strongest among them was at the Solar level, which meant that no one escaped from the young man.

When he left later that night, Li Hao also burned the fatty and fake accountant's corpses. He continued down south. He would not know about the future fate of this city or the thousands of refugees on the mountain. For a moment, he experienced Hong Yitang's struggles and difficulties. It was not hard to save a person, the difficulty came in helping them settle in and bring hope back to their lives again.

The difficulties further came in the form of thousands, tens of thousand, and hundreds of thousands of people that needed help. Ten thousand people were in trouble from a small city—how many would need help from one thousand cities?

The potential figure gave Li Hao heart palpitations. This dynasty seemed more like a cage, yet Hong Yitang had decided to be the savior of the times. It was a mind-boggling thought that made Li Hao shudder. It was too horrifying.

He admired Hong Yitang's purpose, resolution, and boldness of vision, but felt that there was no hope of the man accomplishing his goal.

"There's absolutely no chance! The larger problems can be extrapolated from the minor areas. Even though I'm seeing only a small portion of the picture, this is still part of the bustling central region. This is only a small city of one million strong! Ole Hong... should just stick to being a martial master," Li Hao mumbled as he traveled elsewhere.

His master had the right idea! He traveled the world with a beauty by his side. Master's right, my most pressing task is to seek out Red Moon for revenge. Hong Yitang can worry about his heroic mission. I'm just a minor martial master!

When he killed pirates a few days ago, he'd felt that he had the potential to be a savior. It was a job well done when he killed officials, slaughtered pirates, and threw those he rescued at the Sword Sect. But now... that budding thought was snuffed out.

Instead, fury rose in his heart. How could the central Inspectorate conduct itself this way?? I am of the Inspectorate as well, how can the senior levels of the Inspectorate permit this to happen?!

“Does the inspector general eat shit for food?! Why doesn’t he intervene in this? Our oath is to protect society’s security and safeguard the people’s peace. It’s become complete bullshit!” Li Hao grumbled a nonstop litany of complaints. He thought back to the oath he’d taken when he first joined the Inspectorate. He, and a group of others, had loudly proclaimed their oath with extremely high fervor.

“I think I’ll take a look at Skystar City!” He adjusted his bearing to the center-south. I’d like to see what kind of people are in charge of this dynasty. All of this is happening right beneath your noses, are you blind?! You instantly know of a battle in the east and immediately know of a supernatural death in Silver Moon. You’re not blind!

You sniff out new ruins faster than dogs and the entire world knows of a treasure one hour after it’s found. You’re so eager to build a useless bridge spanning one hundred and fifty kilometers of the sea. How can you turn a blind eye to a mining mountain that wants people to eat their own children?!

“Skystar City... wait for me!” Li Hao suddenly didn’t want to seek out Red Moon members anymore. He wanted to visit the place that was the richest, strongest, most vibrant in the world. The one with the highest population and greatest sum of powerhouses. Would it be dangerous?

It would be very dangerous!

But... so what?

His teacher had said to travel the world and take a look around, that it was a fascinating place. Indeed it was, it was so fascinating that he’d witnessed such a show as soon as he entered the central region.

Li Hao grinned. Then I’ll visit the most prosperous and fascinating place in this world!

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At the same time.

Skystar City.

The Inspectorate.

“A small city in the Far Sea province—the city of Utmost Joy—saw the deaths of its inspector general, deputy general, captain of the law enforcement team, and vice captain of the law enforcement team in one night! Their report says that it might be the doing of a powerhouse that is at least a Solar.”

“Oh, I see. Have Far Sea put out an order for the culprit’s arrest!”

“Understood!”

The matter was over with a few simple words. No one mentioned it again. This matter was too small for the vast Inspectorate. It oversaw ninety-nine provinces and thousands of cities. The Inspectorate of a small city had lost its senior leadership. That could be taken care of locally, no one cared.

In an era like this, lives were utterly worthless. Someone like Mu Sen of Silver City might draw some attention from Silver Moon if he died in the city, but who in the distant Skystar City would care?

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At the same time, in another locale.

“Do we have news of Li Hao’s whereabouts?” Hou Xiaochen paged through information and looked at Manager Yu.

“No.”

“That lad...” Hou Xiaochen frowned. “He’s just vanished without a trace, huh? Hong Yitang and the rest aren’t going back and apparently Yuan Shuo’s been traced coming for Jadelight Sword. But Li Hao’s gone missing!”

How ludicrous! The entire world had its eyes on Li Hao, but the young man had gone missing and no faction was able to track him down.

“He might’ve gone back to Silver Moon. He’s no fool and knows that it’s dangerous outside,” said Manager Yu.

“The kid disappeared near East Shore, has he possibly come to the central region?” Hou Xiaochen asked uncertainly.

Manager Yu broke out in a rare smile. “How could he! The central region is so dangerous and so many people want to kill him! He would be walking on thin ice even with the director here. I say this guy’s crafty as heck and won’t come here.”

“But he ran off to the east before, who would’ve believed that?” Hou Xiaochen laughed. “Forget it, so he’s disappeared. He won’t come to Skystar City even if he’s come to the central region. It’d be nice for him to take a spin around outside, witness the splendors of the region, and then go home. After being promoted to peacemaker commissioner, Ole Zhao and the others will probably have him take my spot. That’s just as well.”

Manager Yu didn't say anything, but found the idea of Li Hao succeeding Hou Xiaochen to be... slightly uncomfortable. Of course, that had to do with Director General Zhao and the others. It was none of her business.

Not even Hou Xiaochen thought it possible that Li Hao would come to Skystar City. This was the heart of the dynasty! The nine ministries, royal family, aristocracies, divine mountains, and various factions were entangled in a complex web. A group of devilish Heaven Favored youngsters ran rampant and even he had to exercise prudence. Arrogance could only be flared under the auspices of the rules.

Countless people wanted to eat Li Hao. The young man would have an impossible time of things in the city. He had room to maneuver before, but now that the uses for his family's sword were revealed and he'd killed Xu Qing, Hou Xiaochen felt that it was actually good the lad hadn't come to the central region with him. Otherwise, the man would end up paying the price of his life while cleaning up after Li Hao.

Various thoughts rose in Hou Xiaochen's mind as he rubbed his temples. Life was difficult here. He had to gingerly place down each foot—the waters of Skystar City were too deep. He lacked an opportunity to change the situation. Should he have those devils step way over the line?

But... was that doable? Would they dare?

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The calendar ticked over to November as Li Hao traveled straight to Skystar City. He didn't stop along the way; he didn't do anything that a mundane wouldn't do. He calmly walked past even when he saw more evils visited upon others or supernaturals committing crimes.

He didn't kill anymore people. There were too many villains to exterminate in the world, the root cause was not here.

Where was it?

He didn't know either. In Skystar City? Perhaps. His supernatural locks were slowly being saturated and his bridges of the five organs taking shape. The five auras were slowly receiving feedback from some of the locks and thus growing stronger as well. He continuously operated the breathing method, which worked in the background to strengthen the young man.

The roads in the central region were wide. Although they were a bit disorderly, the central region was mostly passable. He arrived at East Peak province after a few days. He would cross it to reach the Jade Sea province, then arrive at Skystar City.

The central belt of provinces around the capital city was an interesting notion. The four peaks were the outer perimeter and there were more provinces on the inside. Those provinces surrounded Skystar City. The largest inland sea surrounded Skystar City. Only after crossing the Skystar Sea did one reach the heart of the dynasty.

The Skystar Sea was a safe place. Being surrounded on all sides by powerhouses and situated in the central region, whoever dared sail its waters as a pirate was a true pirate. Though it was called a sea, it was more similar to Silver Moon's Moon Sea.

It wasn't too wide—quite dissimilar to the East Sea—and was one hundred and fifty kilometers at its widest. Although it was called a sea, it could be quite narrow. It was only two kilometers across at its narrowest.

#### Chapter 624: Arriving at Skystar City (I)

As he continued forward, Li Hao mentally referred to a map that he'd once seen. The conditions here changed once more. There were more cars on the roads, which meant more people. The roads were wide and voices rose and fell. The sides of the roads thronged with pedestrians and supernaturals were no longer a rare sight. They could be seen everywhere.

Li Hao drove a shabby car and listened to the voices that filtered into his ears. Their words carried a hint of central pride and official terminology. Here, even mundanes spoke with more confidence. It was unlike other regions in which conversation was conducted with some lack of assurance.

"There are more cars headed to Skystar City lately!"

“It’s an increase in supernaturals! This is normal since the Academy of the Nine Ministries and the Royal Academy will be recruiting new students at the end of the year. The new students will be phoenixes and dragons as soon as they matriculate!”

“I hear that the Night Watchers have a new deputy director too—a savage from the north. He’s vicious as hell and says that he’s going to lead the academy students against the three great organizations. Is that true? Will I have to join that force if I sign up for the academy now?”

“It’s hard to say, but no matter how ruthless he is, he’s just a deputy director of the Night Watchers. Apparently, he’s even been demoted to high rank chief commissioner. He’s not a peacemaker commissioner anymore. I bet you he ends up in the dungeons sooner or later!”

Groups of people chatted idly along the road. Living in the heart of the central region, these mundanes had swift sources of information and dared speak their mind more. They even dared give their opinion of high ranking officials.

It looked like Hou Xiaochen had made a small name for himself a month after arriving in Skystar City. Since Li Hao didn’t possess a transmission pendant, it was only now that he learned Hou Xiaochen had been demoted. Those pendants belonged to the various factions and had tracking devices on them. He didn’t want anyone to know his location, so he naturally didn’t travel with one.

So Hou Xiaochen was the same grade as him now! Li Hao smiled faintly. He hadn’t been in a good mood the past couple of days, but couldn’t help a smile now. The young man was suddenly in a better mood.

Ole Hou had done so well for himself that he was the same rank as Li Hao! The young man’s thoughts turned to the academies. When He Yong invited him to Skystar City, he’d mentioned that there were a few famous supernatural academies in the capital. One of them was the Royal Academy, another was an academy founded by the nine ministries.

Only supernaturals were accepted and large sums of Heaven Favored gathered in them. They were imitations of the martial universities to be found in the ancient civilization. There were also high numbers of supernaturals and Heaven Favored to be found in those. So the Skystar academies were open for matriculation at the end of the year?

Li Hao suddenly felt very far removed from that scene. Students... he was a student himself a year ago. The ancient civilization had possessed many academies—they were called martial universities then.

He stopped at an intersection and waited for his side's turn to drive when suddenly, the cars on both sides started shifting to the shoulder of the road. Li Hao turned back for a look and saw a convoy of cars coming down the street. A driver next to him called out when he saw the young man remain unmoved.

“Oi! Are you not from here? Get out of the way! That's the convoy of a Nova family! No one will be responsible for your death if you don't move soon!”

Li Hao raised an eyebrow and swiftly drove his car off to the side. Moments later, the convoy of a dozen cars threaded through the center of the road. The other side had a green light, but no one moved. They were all waiting for the convoy to pass.

There was a luxury car that Li Hao didn't recognize in their midst. It looked very opulent, at least. The window was down, revealing a driver and a young man and woman. The young man wore an aloof expression on his face, while the girl peered around with curiosity. She didn't seem to know much of the world as she rapidly looked around to take in the sights. They were too far away for the crowd to make out what they were saying, but Li Hao could catch a few words.

“Brother, brother, look, someone's driving such a battered car...”

Li Hao ignored the comment at first, then suddenly realized that the other seemed to be looking at him. He blinked and subconsciously looked at his car. Alright... the car that he'd taken from the fatty and accountant was in pretty poor shape. He'd kept it in his storage ring before and only taken it out because there were more people around. It'd been changed beyond recognition.

In order to avoid detection that it was the same car, Li Hao had snapped the license plate in half and caused some other damage to the vehicle. No one could match it to its former appearance.

The young man in the luxury car took an indifferent glance and saw that the car's driver happened to be looking their way as well. He didn't mind and said calmly, "Such is the life of the poor! Remember, if you and I don't work hard to maintain the family's honor, the two of us may be someone like this in the future."

"No way!" The girl trembled. "That's too scary! Brother, how are there poor people like that in the central region? We're very rich here. It'd be more common to see someone like this in the north."

"There are poor people everywhere, you just don't see them. Now you do, right?"

"Mmhmm!" The girl nodded. "So we have to make sure we join the Skystar Academy this time!"

"....." Li Hao listened quietly. A poor person's car... Of this brother and sister duo, the younger sister was completely ignorant and the older brother just as ignorant, despite pretending otherwise.

How could someone poor afford to drive a car?! Anyone who could was not poor. On the other hand, the more inward that one delved in the central region, the more prosperous the environment became!

When everything that one came in contact with and saw was ostentatiously sumptuous, and everyone belonged to the same social circles, that created a certain blind spot in one's worldview.

Was the brother and sister duo wrong?

Li Hao didn't think so. He just found them... ignorant. It wasn't an ignorance limited to one or two people, but that of the entire upper echelon of society. Some were truly ignorant, some pretended ignorance, and others viewed everything with indifference. They'd never been educated otherwise. Whether it was a long standing family or an aristocracy, perhaps none of them would instill this kind of knowledge in their children.

The convoy of cars slowly drove off and bystanders started speaking again. “Which Nova family was that? Are they going to Skystar City?”

In the twenty years since the appearance of the supernatural domain, Novas were the patriarchs of their families. They were indeed powerhouses no matter where one went. With a Nova in residence, great wealth and fortune were not a problem. It gave one solid footing and enabled the family to dominate wherever it was.

The crowd gave way to these heavyweights in such a matter-of-fact way that it plainly wasn’t the first time they’d done so.

“They look to be from the East Peak Developers, I think.”

“Oh, that family. Then that makes sense. No wonder it was all luxury cars. These are regular cars for that family.”

“Apparently their patriarch’s grandson and granddaughter have reached the age to matriculate at the academies. They’re probably going to sign-up at Skystar City.”

“Those two Heaven Favored?”

“Yeah! One of them is a connate Darkmoon and the other a connate Sunflare. I envy them so much!”

“Who doesn’t? How do the rich do it? They’ve even got a higher proportion of Heaven Favored compared to us...” The crowd quickly dispersed. Li Hao continued forward in his small car.

Heaven Favored.

The two had both been Sunflares. One was a peak Sunflare, the other an initial Sunflare. He could tell that much, but hadn't thought that they were Heaven Favored. Both of them weren't old as the academies only accepted those beneath twenty-two years old. The Sunflare cultivation realm that Wang Ming had been so proud of... Well, he was an initial Solar now. But the Sunflare that he had been was a cabbage by the side of the road here.

Incredibly young Sunflares could be met everywhere! To think that Wang Ming had once been so proud to be the youngest Sunflare in the province! A random two Sunflares that Li Hao had bumped into were stronger than him, and they even looked younger than him.

The convoy proceeded at a slow pace; Li Hao saw it again after a while since he was also heading to Skystar City. He wasn't the only one, almost everyone on this road was headed that way. This wasn't the only convoy, however. Another one came along before long, the second or third generations of yet another family.

It quickly convened with the convoy ahead as the latter proceeded at a snail's pace. Everyone behind them could only follow suit. Some cursed beneath their breaths, but everyone had to watch and wait. No one dared overtake them!

Those ahead didn't put on cocky airs, but no one dared go past them. This seemed to be a grave taboo in the central region as the hierarchy of power was more clearly defined. If there was a car blocking the way ahead in Silver Moon... No one would care whose car it was. They would just pass the offender.

"That's a convoy from the Four Cardinals Bloc... and now they're chatting! If they keep this up, we won't reach Skystar City even by nightfall!" Complaints abounded.

They were out of East Peak, but had to cross Jade Sea before reaching Skystar City. It was morning at the moment, but night would descend before they reached Skystar City if their speed didn't pick up.

"What are you in a hurry for? How long can they chit chat? They'll be gone in the blink of an eye once we reach the highways because their cars can travel fast. You won't be able to catch up to them even if you wanted to," someone laughed in a car.



“Just wait it out, there will be a lot of convoys like this along the way. The various academies are open for recruitment on November 15 and the selection will continue into December. They’ll take a break, then prepare for the new year, and then the new students will begin their studies afterward. Skystar City will be full of people during this time with supernaturals and aspiring students everywhere...”

“What are they going to Skystar City for? Go to the City of Supernaturals! There are more academies there and I hear that some schools are even secretly supported by the three great organizations.”

“Don’t spout nonsense!”

“What nonsense? The city has Arcanus in residence, what are you afraid of? Not to mention, this is no secret. The nine ministries probably know all about it, much less us, but they don’t say a thing.”

“That’s true.”

“And don’t be fooled by the fact that the three great organizations are wanted criminals now. In a few years... heh, they’ll be legitimate overlords of their territory. Maybe they’ll be made princes or something.”

“That’s the business of big characters. It’s none of ours.”

## Chapter 625: Arriving at Skystar City (II)

Li Hao raised an eyebrow. So the three great organizations had almost legitimized themselves in the central region? Celestial was an organization of assassins, Yama killed just about anyone, and Red Moon was brutal and insidious. How could these organizations have a good name for themselves?

But judging from the reactions of these mundanes, this was a very normal occurrence.

“Ignore all that, it’s not for the likes of us. Anyone with any sort of background or status comes to Skystar City. Only those without an impressive identity go to the City of Supernaturals. The Arcanus realm is pretty impressive, but it’s not like Skystar City doesn’t have any on that level. Have you not heard? The first generation inspector general is still alive and supposed to be an Arcanus! Hot damn, how old does that make him? He was the inspector general eighty years ago, so he’s got to be more than one hundred!”

“Heh, I’ve got news for you then. Apparently they’re all immortal. There were people who could live thousands of years in the ancient civilization...”

“Bullshit! Thousands of years? That would mean they’re still alive!”

“I heard it from other people myself. Who knows how many years it’s been since the ancient civilization? There’s no definitive explanation, so no one knows what the situation is. Perhaps there’s some exaggeration involved when they talk about the ancients, but it’s true that they could live for thousands of years!”

“.....” What these people discussed would be classified secrets in the north. But here, every street and back alley held conversations about this information.

Li Hao couldn’t help but laugh. He knew too little of the world, alright! Those of the central region knew much more than he thought they would.

The convoy up ahead spent some time exchanging pleasantries. Once they were done, they continued forward and the flow of traffic picked up. Li Hao was in no hurry and slowly followed behind everyone.

The roads were big here, but they were too congested. There were cars everywhere. He’d never seen so many cars before, not even in White Moon City. Li Hao suddenly looked up above him—there was a massive hole in the roof. He happened to catch sight of a group of people steering an origin weapon that looked like a flying ship. They sped off into the distance.

“Those are Solars and Novas!” People exclaimed around him. “Are they coming in person?”

Li Hao almost burst out laughing. Were Solars and Novas not allowed to leave their homes? But judging from the sound of this, it seemed that only Solars and Novas were permitted to fly.

In the next moment, a massive bird soared through the sky. It was ponderous and seemed to be bearing people on its back.

“That’s... people from the Sky Roc Bloc!” identified even more agitated voices. “Isn’t that bird one of their most famous Galewind Birds? Apparently they’re all Sunflare or stronger!”

“Sky Roc Bloc... The group that does business for the Sky Roc Mountain?”

“Yeah, who else other than them can manipulate these bird spirits?”

“The seven divine mountains... Are they going to Skystar City as well? They’ve always been an independent faction, so why aren’t they going to the City of Supernaturals? The seven divine mountains don’t need to learn from the academies, they’ve got business at the City of Supernaturals. They’re even the financial backers for some of those academies...”

All of these people were well informed. Li Hao happily eavesdropped on everyone. He was unfamiliar with the central region since he lacked a transmission pendant, but the mundanes on all sides were giving him a thorough education!

Sky Roc Mountain!

He recognized this name. Apparently, the mountain lord was a major monster spirit that was a sky roc. It was rumored to be a formidable presence that once swallowed a Nova. That was such a long time ago, yet Li Hao had heard this gossip a few times.

Yuan Shuo had wanted Panther to kill it before he left—the old man was afraid that the dog wouldn't die and would just eternally mooch off his disciple. Panther lazily lifted its head and regarded the bird sleepily. So weak! It couldn't be bothered with a second look.

The bird in the air suddenly sensed something and wobbled, flapping its wings mightily to stay aloft. Someone's presence flared on its back to stabilize the plummeting monster spirit.

.....

In the sky.

There was more than one person on the bird's back. A middle-aged Solar frowned slightly. "What's going on?"

Why had the Galewind Bird almost fallen out of the sky? He scanned the premises with a frown and didn't sense anything. Had a powerhouse ambushed them? But that shouldn't be the case. They represented Sky Roc Mountain and this was the core of the central region. Who would dare ambush them here?

The big bird's mind was in a haze, but it continued forward. Once it exited the previous area, it returned to normal. Unfortunately, a bird of the Sunflare level couldn't transmit thoughts and explain the situation to the group on its back. The bird, however, knew that there had been a premier major spirit beneath it just now!

Though it only sensed a little, what it experienced was enough to terrify it. The bird swiftly vanished without daring to linger.

.....

Inside the car.

Li Hao looked sternly at Panther and frowned. “Tamp down that ancient monster spirit bloodline of yours! Stop showing off! You’ll expose yourself at Skystar City before I do! What, is a random monster spirit passing by supposed to stop and kowtow to you first?”

“.....” Panther looked on innocently. I didn’t mean to do that! I’m not interested in these minor spirits! But ah, forget it, I can’t explain myself.

The dog wagged its tail; Li Hao took that to mean it’d retracted its presence. “Turn yourself smaller, like the size of a puppy.”

Panther didn’t move.

“Don’t think I don’t know that you can change your size!” Li Hao snorted. “I’ve spent time in your stomach and know that your organs have been refined to an utmost! You turn smaller when you compress them and grow bigger when you relax them! Hurry up!”

Panther whined and howled. Not doing it!

“Hurry up, you’re well known now.”

Panther was beyond dejected, but had to swallow its tears when it thought of the good days to come. It’d compressed itself to a small puppy moments later. Li Hao cackled. As for himself, he didn’t make too many changes. He changed clothes to appear more like a central region denizen. It was enough that he wasn’t immediately recognized as a northerner.

His short hair had grown out lately and he’d started keeping a mustache. Those who weren’t familiar with him wouldn’t recognize him at first glance. Even those who did would treat him as an artist. Equipped with a pair of glasses, long hair and a small mustache, as well as a puppy on a leash... He could be an art teacher at any school.

Not only that, he had the silver armor block He Yong. This was to prevent He Yong from messaging him and so that the man wouldn't know that Li Hao was within five hundred kilometers of him. He Yong could not lock onto Li Hao's position, but Li Hao could lock onto his. The fellow seemed to have returned to Skystar City. A bronze armor troop leader had a very low clearance level.

And so Li Hao slowly drove his way to Skystar City, listening to gossip on all sides as traffic started and stopped. He didn't obtain much actual information, but there was definitely a lot of gossip.

That the people were in the mood to gossip meant that life was good. In actuality, those who could take cars to Skystar City all lived decent lives.

.....

At the same time.

A great hustle and bustle filled Skystar City. The capital of the dynasty always thronged with activity. There were people in all of the streets and alleyways, as well as cars. Compared to Silver Moon, Skystar City was full of skyscrapers. There were so many people that the city had to rely on tall buildings to divert their flow.

However, there weren't skyscrapers everywhere. There were no such buildings in the center of Skystar City. A massive palace sat in the center of the city, guarded by soldiers in black armor on all sides. They were the famed Black Armaduras of yesteryear. They no longer roamed the battlefield, but safeguarded the royal family that had retreated behind the scenes.

Avenues bisected the area outside the palace. There were multiple low-rise buildings on either side of the avenues. No one remembered what they were called back in the day. These days, everyone knew them as the Avenues of the Nine Ministries.

The nine ministries surrounded the palace like nine dragons feting a pearl. This configuration occupied a large amount of territory within the vast Skystar City. There weren't tall buildings here

—the tallest was no more than six stories high. They'd all been built in recent years and most of them were in a vintage style—or rather, they were ancient architecture.

The sky began to dim, but there was no sign of Skystar City following suit. Lights flared to life and lit up the metropolis like it was day. People rushed to and fro on the nine avenues; everyone was in a great hurry. They were almost all supernaturals, if not, they were martial masters.

Powerhouses were as abundant as the clouds here. An inconspicuous person might be a Solar or Dominator. Power had been concentrated in the royal city for two hundred years. They'd gathered endless fortune and countless elites.

At this moment, in the Night Watcher seat of administration, Hou Xiaochen's office.

Three youngsters casually strolled in. One with a blade, one with a spear, and a young woman with a small face and big eyes.

“You sent for us, director?” Big Eyes blinked rapidly and played cute as soon as she walked in. “It's evening, are you going to treat us to a meal? The director hasn't taken us out since he's arrived at his post. I know of a place that's delicious...”

Big Eyes chattered on, an innocent expression on her face. Hou Xiaochen smiled and didn't say a word. Manager Yu poured a cup of tea for her superior and looked at Big Eyes. Killing intent suddenly flashed through them. Big Eyes' heart shook, but her expression didn't change. She simply cursed to herself, this old woman... is really mean! I'm so cute, what are you glaring at me for?

But Yu Luocha had killed countless people in her time, so it was normal for her to have more of an edge.

“What's wrong, big sister Yu? Do your eyes hurt? Do you want to go to a doctor?”

“There’s no need for you to worry on my behalf,” the manager chuckled. “You are all treasures of the Night Watchers and the director wanted to catch up with you. He also wanted to see if you are as... exemplary as the rumors say.

“You are the Four Talents of the Night Watchers, but I’ve only ever seen three of you.” Her tone sharpened. “Where’s the other one?”

### Chapter 626: Arriving at Skystar City (III)

“Do you mean the little priest?” Big Eyes fluttered her lashes. “Don’t you know, big sister Yu? He’s gone into closed door cultivation. The little priest was late Nova before and almost at peak Nova. He’ll probably be peak Nova when he emerges, or even metamorphosis. He’s really something...

“Do you want to get him out of seclusion, big sister Yu? The little priest is really something.”

Hou Xiaochen smiled before Manager Yu had a chance to respond. “Alright then, let him stay in seclusion. That’s just as well.” He smiled benignly at the three. “What are you guys up to lately? I hear that you’re tracking down Indigo Moon?”

Spear and Blade didn’t respond.

“That’s right,” giggled Big Eyes. “Everyone should kill those of the three great organizations! We received word that Indigo Moon has come to Skystar City. Perhaps there’s a plot brewing, so we’re hunting her. What a pity that she hides herself well and we’ve been unable to catch a glimpse of her.

“Indigo Moon is apparently from Silver Moon too,” she giggled. “As fellow martial masters from back in the day, big sister Yu and Deputy Hou both know her exact identity and appearance, don’t you? Why don’t big sis join us...”

“There’s no rush, Indigo Moon by herself won’t raise a fuss.” Hou Xiaochen smiled widely. “Upstairs has given me additional missions lately that I’m sure you three know about.”



“We do. Is the deputy director sending us to kill members of the three great organizations?” Big Eyes beamed merrily. “We can do that, we’d like that. But the three great organizations are gathered at the City of Supernaturals and there are Arcanus supernaturals holding down the fort there. How about the deputy director run interference for us while we have some fun at the city...”

Manager Yu’s eyes sharpened with a cold look. She didn’t like these kids, especially Big Eyes. They were so unruly! The girl had interrupted before Hou Xiaochen could finish, that was very bad. Even the renowned Demon Sword of Silver Moon wouldn’t talk to Hou Xiaochen this way.

Of course, she knew this was the central region. But so what?

She looked sharply at Big Eyes; all three Heaven Favored shook when they suddenly felt a hint of killing intent.

“Cough cough cough...” Hou Xiaochen coughed a few times and looked at Yu Luochoa. She retracted her killing intent and refrained from looking at the trio. She sat down to continue her business.

The three continued to be inwardly surprised. Intelligence reports indicated that Yu Luochoa was only mid Nova. The three of them were late Novas and steadily progressing to peak Nova. They were also Heaven Favored who’d already killed peak Novas. Once they entered peak Nova, they might be able to fight those above their level of strength, such as metamorphosis experts. But just now, they’d been frightened by someone’s killing intent.

As they thought, these veteran martial masters weren’t easy characters to consort with! They’d killed so many that their killing intent was truly abundant. Yu Luochoa was also different from Yellow Dragon and the others. Yellow Dragon adopted a half fawning attitude against these youngsters; Hou Xiaochen seemed ready to do the same. Yu Luochoa, however, showed them a bad attitude.

Hou Xiaochen coughed for a while to interrupt the awkwardness and started anew with a smile on his face. “The City of Supernaturals is a bit far and we’ve yet to find our footing in Skystar. We can leave the city be for now...” He paused and smiled when Big Eyes didn’t interject again. “We’ll be concentrating our attentions in Skystar City instead...”

“What does the deputy director want us to do?” asked the young man with the blade. He was utterly fearless. “We will not shirk our duty in what can be done, but ask that you look elsewhere if it is something that we cannot do!”

“It’s nothing much, I just wanted to secure the duties of Skystar commander. The Night Watchers are the only official supernatural agency recognized by the nine ministries and royal family, the only one approved for law enforcement over supernaturals.

“The Skystar commander oversees all of the supernatural agencies in the central region. However, now... You may be unaware that we arrested some people a few days ago, but they weren’t that useful as we didn’t take anyone with sufficient standing. Those who we killed didn’t grasp enough authority.”

The trio’s hearts quailed! Not enough?! You killed the Steadfast Duke’s younger brother and put many Xu clan members in jail! You took down the vice headmaster of the Skystar Academy, how is that not enough?

Who else was higher than them? The first and second-in-command of the nine ministries? Or the other dukes, princes, or descendants of the royal family? Or headmasters of the other academies??

They didn’t understand what Hou Xiaochen wanted to do. Did he just want to consolidate his authority? What good would that do?

They weren’t even aware of what goals Hou Xiaochen had in the central region. What did he want to accomplish? He’d kicked up such a disturbance that it really seemed like he thought of himself as invincible!

The three of them were brash, but not stupid. There was too much involved here and the situation was exceedingly perilous. After the Arcanus cultivation realm was revealed, the trio was well aware that further disturbance might provoke action from the sixth cultivation realm!

And Hou Xiaochen?

He didn't rival an Arcanus after he unsealed himself, did he?

"Director Hou, who... do you have your eyes set on?" Big Eyes stop tittering.

"Not I, but the laws, the rules, our duties!" Hou Xiaochen smiled. "These aren't my own thoughts, but that of the entire Night Watchers! This is how things should be done. We should cement our right to administer the law instead of milling about with confusion. Do we even look like the only supernatural law enforcement agency at the moment?"

The trio fell silent.

"Forget it, it looks like you do not have this kind of courage," Hou Xiaochen sighed. "This kind of daring and resolution lies with your fourth member, the one who dared kill the grandson of the Yama leader. You can discuss this after he emerges from seclusion."

It was a very blatant attempt to egg them on, but the youngsters chose silence. Hou Xiaochen narrowed his eyes with some regret. It looks like the fearless act they put on was truly just an act. That made sense as they wouldn't have lived to present day were they truly this foolish.

"Go about your business then."

"Director, we..." The one with the blade was conflicted and wanted to say something.

"It's fine, go on!"

Big Eyes was no longer beaming. She also struggled with her thoughts before nodding. "Then we take our leave!"

When the three left, Manager Yu said faintly, “They lack a bit of resolution...”

“We can’t say that!” Hou Xiaochen smiled. “We’re not familiar with them. Those youngsters don’t lack for potential, strength, and courage. It’s just that we’re strangers to each other. They’re not fools—they won’t so easily be a weapon in our hands.”

“Why didn’t you say a few more words, director? Perhaps you could’ve persuaded them.”

“The three of them are not the heart of their little group. The one in seclusion is. He’s the one who killed Yama’s grandson and stole the Heaven’s Dictate. If he doesn’t emerge, these three... will see small matters through, but won’t put a toe over the line in more serious matters.”

Manager Yu found the outcome regretful, then smiled when she thought of something. “Too bad Li Hao’s not here, otherwise...”

“Don’t!” Hou Xiaochen laughed. “I’d have such a headache if he was here! He looked so apprehensive and shy before, but I knew he was a second Yuan Shuo when he visited the eastern continent. No, he’s even crazier than Yuan Shuo. If he came with me, he might cause trouble for me before I say a word!”

“That’s true.”

.....

At the same time, outside Skystar City.

Li Hao crossed the Skystar Sea and smiled at the splendid, sprawling metropolis in the distance. “I’ve come to see you, Director Hou!” He didn’t know that many people in the vast dynastic capital. The young man didn’t want to seek out He Yong, so that left only Hou Xiaochen’s group.

Indeed, Li Hao didn't plan on skulking around in the shadows. What could one see of the world if their status was too low? He had to find someone placed in a high position!

Therefore, he'd thought of a plan before he came. He would have a tearful reunion with Hou Xiaochen. He'll be so happy to see me! And Golden Spear, Mu Lin, Manager Yu... They'll be delighted to see a familiar face in a strange place.

"I'm a month late, but thank goodness I'm not too late!" He could already sense the excitement, agitation, happiness, and worship that the others would greet him with when they saw him. They must be so jealous that I wrecked the Steadfast Duke's complex!

When he set foot into Skystar City, it was like he'd traveled to another world. It was so flourishing and crowded with a raucous din! Some flew, others walked, and cars drove along the streets. Skyscrapers forested the city and roads traveled everywhere. People bustled to and fro, a veritable hotbed of activity.

He would've never known that a city could be so prosperous if he hadn't visited Skystar City. Lights blazed in the darkness and supernaturals put on magic shows not too far away. There were even some prodding minor monster spirits elsewhere to entertain the crowd. Was this the lives of lofty supernaturals and monster spirits in the capital? Did they have to demean themselves to this level for a bite to eat?

A troop of people in Inspectorate uniforms walked over from the end of the street. A dozen of them were led by a first rank inspector. He was a Sunflare! So a Sunflare... could only be a first rank inspector?

Li Hao was bewildered by the sight and suddenly felt that his knowledge of the world was too shallow! He didn't find the Night Watcher headquarters after a look around. Where was he supposed to go in such a vast city?

There should be someone who knows where the headquarters are... The young man led the tiny Panther into the city proper. Just the outskirts alone stunned him.

Skystar City, here I come!

.....

Skystar City was incredibly enormous. The newly arrived Li Hao was as if an idiot. There was no helping it, he was completely lost and had to ask for directions. Passersby were perfectly willing to tell him which road and which bus to take, or where to transfer and then which road to take...

He understood their instructions, but there were too many damned cars and people. He was turned around and around by them all. Just as he floundered around, a short girl of roughly sixteen years old winked at him.

“Hey there, want a guide?”

“.....” Another fatty?

#### Chapter 627: Finally Seeing Brother Hou (I)

Li Hao frowned when he thought of the fatty that he'd met before. Do I look that easy to con? Does everyone want to drag me off somewhere to kill me? Damn it, is everyone in the central region like this? This is the heart of Skystar Dynasty! Do people like that live and operate in the open like this??

Killing intent flashed out of his eyes. This kind of evil from such a small kid... Although Li Hao himself was only twenty years old, he still felt that for someone of the girl's age to be so malicious meant that the entire city abruptly invited his hatred!

The girl wore slightly tattered clothing, but they were clean and the holes properly patched up. There were even flowers embroidered on them, albeit slightly ugly flowers... She was startled by Li Hao's look and mumbled, “You can just say no if you don't want a guide. Why scare someone like that for?”

Li Hao heaved a long breath. Once bitten, twice shy. He'd trusted the fatty very much so at first and felt that the world was filled with love. He'd almost been hauled off for the mines for it, so he was much more wary now. But upon thinking that he was in the royal capital... he could not think that the girl was all she appeared to be.

However, the young man was indeed rather befuddled at the moment. He didn't care if she was a fraud. "Do you know where the Avenues of the Nine Ministries are?"

"Of course!" The girl's eyes lit up. "I'm a walking map of Skystar City! I'm very familiar with them. Are you going to one place or many places?"

"Just there. I'll decide what to do next if I don't find who I'm looking for."

"One hundred star coins! You have to pay for any additional expenses you incur along the way."

One hundred star coins... Li Hao would've thought that to be a princely sum before. It wasn't until he reached the central region that he learned it wasn't much. As for hailing a taxi... a country bumpkin such as him didn't know about taxis.

There were actually taxi stands nearby, but whether it was White Moon City or Silver City, cars were reserved for the rich. The rich did not drive others around, so the possibility didn't occur to Li Hao.

"Alright!" Li Hao nodded.

The girl looked at him. He's not an idiot, is he? Is he a foreigner?

Probably!

She'd thought that there was no hope of doing business when the young man said he was going to the Avenues of the Nine Ministries, so she randomly quoted one hundred star coins. Taking a taxi there would cost only seventy or eighty, but the fool agreed to her price!

Well, on the other hand, perhaps foreigners didn't know how much the taxis cost.

"Then come with me." The girl's radiant smile broadened. "The Avenues are pretty far away, so I'll find you a cheap way to get there. I promise I'll save you money!"

Li Hao didn't care; he took a deep breath. I really don't want to come to this lousy place. It's so big that I, the vaunted Demon Sword, got lost in here! No one would believe it if word got out!

He followed the girl off the bus platform and walked to the side. Li Hao was completely fearless at the moment! He was in Ole Hou's territory. Whoever tried to swindle him next would be served with a slash from his sword. He'd leave them all to Ole Hou to handle! There were a lot of people who wanted to kill him!

The young man knew even more so that these large factions gave certain consideration to face. As part of the nine ministries and a high rank chief commissioner, these people had to give consideration to his rank. They wouldn't touch him out of that concern!

It was why he'd dared come to Skystar City. As for ambushes from the shadows... that was a possibility he'd considered as well. There was He Yong and Hou Xiaochen here. If a struggle truly broke out, he would be in charge of suppressing their seals after the fact. Those two unsealed could match Arcanus supernaturals.

With that in mind and a sneer on his face, he followed the little girl into an alley. The smirk quickly faded away, replaced with wordlessness. The girl wheeled out a battered bicycle from the alleyway!

"There's traffic!" she quickly explained at seeing Li Hao's reaction. "Don't you know that it gets crazy congested on the way to the Avenues of the Nine Ministries? It's at least two hours by car and much faster to bike—half an hour at most! You can just give me ten star coins for the ride!"



“You’re taking me there?”

“Yeah!” the girl responded matter-of-factly. “Of course I am! Ten coins is the same fare as the buses, but the buses will get caught in traffic too! You don’t look like you’re from around here, so you’re not familiar with the city. I’ll take you on my bike and also introduce Skystar City to you!”

“.....” Li Hao didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. I rode a bike all the time when I commuted to work. Oh, that poor bike of mine stuck in the big house in Silver City. I wonder if anyone’s squatting in it. “That’s fine, take me there!”

He couldn’t be bothered with saying anything else. Traveling via bike was just as well, he could take a look around on their way to their destination. He definitely needed to study the streets, otherwise, he wouldn’t know which way to run in this blasted place if someone wanted to chase him down.

Possibilities for retreat were constantly on Li Hao’s mind. As for why someone would be hunting him in Skystar City... Who knew?

The girl was overjoyed and flung a leg over her bike, then patted the back seat. “Get on! Oh yeah, you need to hold your dog... What about your luggage?”

“Don’t have any.”

“You don’t have luggage?” The girl quickly recovered from her surprise. “You’ve got a place to stay here, don’t you? You’ll have to come back after your business is concluded... You can look for me then too!”

Li Hao smiled and climbed onto the backseat without a word. He didn’t offer to pedal as he’d spent money for this service. Additionally, he didn’t recognize the roads. The little girl was spindly enough that she probably couldn’t move him. He and Panther together had to weigh at least four

hundred kilograms. Therefore, the young man hovered slightly in the air when the girl started pedaling.

“You’re so light...” She turned back for a look.

“Eyes on the road!” Li Hao barked. A large car zoomed past them. Do you not look at the roads when you ride?!

Utterly fearless, the girl whipped her head back to the front. As bold as she was, she didn’t forget that she’d been hired as a guide. She lifted her chin at a nearby structure. “Look, that’s the most famous establishment in the eastern quadrant of the city—the Elysian Fields. Hehe, you men like to go there. It fills an entire block and is apparently not that expensive...”

Li Hao was unmoved. The girl stopped and started along the way. Although he was nearly completely hovering in the air, she steadily grew more fatigued. It looked like her physique wasn’t much to look at. She took her duties as a guide seriously and introduced everything they passed by.

Li Hao listened quietly and committed everything to memory. Soon enough, there were a few less buildings around them.

“There are nine avenues that we’re headed to, which one do you want? Which location along the avenue are you looking for? They’re all very, very long and run in different directions.”

“The Inspectorate, the Night Watchers.”

“Oh? You want to go there?” The girl was surprised. “That’s where supernatural powerhouses gather. Are you looking for someone?”

“Yes.”

“Are you a supernatural too?” she answered herself before Li Hao had a chance to. “No way. Most supernaturals don’t dare go there. Are you looking for a friend or a relative?”

“Friend, I’d say.”

“Then be careful,” she lowered her voice. “I’ve heard people say that the Night Watchers welcomed a new director a few days ago. He’s mean as heck! He killed a lot of people a few days ago and even caused a mess at Skystar Academy! That’s the royal academy! I hear people say that he’s not long for this world. Your accent sounds like you’re from the north... You’re not looking for someone he brought, are you?”

The girl turned fearful. “Let me give you a warning, you probably shouldn’t. People say that no one he brought with him will make it back to the north alive!”

“This is the royal city, are people that bold?” Li Hao frowned.

“So what about the royal city?” dismissed the girl. “There’s plenty of darkness below the ground. Some major hotshot died outside the palace last year. Apparently, he drowned to death in the sewers. Pfft, we all know that he was a supernatural, so who believes that? No one dares look into it, he’s just dead. They say that he had something to do with the royal family...”

The girl suddenly snapped her mouth shut. “That was just some gossip, you shouldn’t don’t believe me. If you’re really from the north, leave after you see your friend. Your friend’s not some major hotshot, is he? He should be fine if he’s just a minor cog.”

Li Hao smiled. The girl liked to run her mouth. She spoke of anything and everything. He’d thought that he’d leave her behind after reaching his destination, but couldn’t help but ask, “How did you know I needed a guide just now?”

“You look like an outsider!”

“.....” Was it that obvious? “Am I wearing the wrong clothes or something like that? I feel like I was the same as the rest waiting at the bus stop.”

“You were so different!” the girl snorted. “The others were either nose deep in newspapers or waiting patiently. You were the only one looking around like... ahem, like you didn’t know how to get where you were going.”

She’d almost said like a country bumpkin entering town.

“Also, we take the crosswalks when crossing the street, but you change straight into the roads. Judging from your actions, you’ve never seen such a large road before, haven’t you?”

“.....” Li Hao laughed. He was being thought less of! But he didn’t mind. “You’re out earning a living at such a young age?”

“Who’s young??” The girl scowled, but recalled that Li Hao was paying her. She immediately giggled, “Isn’t it nice to earn money as soon as possible to support your family?”

“That’s true, but don’t you want to study?” asked Li Hao. “The royal city has a good education system and you’re of the age to study.”

“Study... pfft!” the girl dismissed. “That would’ve been useful twenty years ago, what good is studying now? It’s only worth something if you go to one of the supernatural academies. If not, there’s absolutely no point even after graduating! They don’t care how many books you’ve read or if you can read and write, they only care about how strong you are when it comes to being an official!

“Everyone will want you if you’re strong. No one cares about your abilities if you’re not. One of the teachers at my old school knew everything from geography to astronomy. But the school closed down and I saw my teacher selling vegetables in the market a few days ago.

“It looks like you’ve done some studying too, haven’t you? Are you here to look for a job?”

## Chapter 628: Finally Seeing Brother Hou (II)

“Don’t hold out for too much hope,” the girl murmured. “With the rise of the supernatural, there’s no hope for ordinary people like us. If you want a job, one of them supernaturals can be one hundred of you! People are even using supernaturals for hard labor. Workers were needed to build houses before, but now supernaturals can do it in a few seconds.

“What’s the point of studying? Do you want to study to be a teacher, then have your school shut down so you can sell vegetables in the market? If you’re an accountant because you’re good at math, a supernatural is still stronger than you. They finish their calculations in the blink of an eye while you’ve spent half a day messing with numbers. People can hire supernaturals to come once a month—they’ll finish the same amount of work that you do in an entire month and they’re cheap.

“So... don’t look at all these tall buildings and the general picture of riches. Life has gotten so much harder for us ordinary people after the rise of the supernaturals. We could fill our bellies before, but now it’s so hard to make money!”

Li Hao started, then nodded. That was true! Hong Yitang once said that supernaturals should do things for the ordinary citizens. But after Li Hao arrived in Skystar City, the girl’s conversation helped him suddenly realize that the abundance of supernaturals resulted in compressing the room for survival for mundanes instead.

There were no jobs involving hard labor or mental tasks available. Thus, there was no purpose in an education and it was harder than before to put food on the table. Li Hao sank into deep thought.

“Do you think supernaturals are good or bad?” he asked after a moment.

“It’s good if I have those powers and bad if I don’t!” the girl responded without hesitation. “If I don’t, then my life is awful. If I do, then it’s comfortable. Those officials should prevent the supernaturals from taking our jobs!

“Or they should find new jobs for us. Not everyone can be supernatural. We’re almost starving on the streets now.”

Li Hao inclined his head; that was true. The bike rolled into an area with ancient flair.

“We need to get off here,” said the girl. “Only officials can drive or ride a bike around the nine ministries. We can only walk on the ground and make sure you don’t look around. We might be arrested, that would be really bad.

“Oh, don’t look at anyone who’s dressed in luxurious clothing. Those are all important people, so you might be taken away or even killed. Nothing will happen to them as all they need to do is clap onto you the crime of being one of the three great organizations. No one will plead your case for you.”

“They can do this right in front of the nine ministries?” Li Hao frowned.

“Of course! They just need the proper background!”

The young man’s tightly furrowed brows relaxed. That was true, it just took getting used to. It seemed that everyone was familiar with the state of affairs. Special privileges were an accustomed part of life.

Li Hao alighted from the bicycle with no further questions. The girl pushed her bike to a parking spot while he looked ahead of them. There was an avenue that led to the depths, so deep that it resembled an abyss that would eat him. As long as the avenue was, it was not one of the Avenues of the Nine Ministries. It wasn’t the Avenue of the Inspectorate either, that was just what the people called it.

The official name as written on the road sign was the Nine Dragons Street. The nine dragons feted a pearl and enveloped the royal family with a cocoon of protection. These days, the protectors of yesteryear had turned their safeguard into a besiegement.

The little girl parked her battered bike and swiftly trotted back. “I told you it wasn’t far away.” She beamed merrily. “It would’ve taken an hour if you took a taxi. You would’ve just about died in traffic!

“Oh, keep your dog close. Don’t let it pee or poop anywhere. You’ll be in big trouble then!” she offered a few more reminders before pointing ahead. “That’s the Avenue of the Inspectorate, a lot of agencies under the Inspectorate are on this street. The Night Watchers are up ahead, they’re not too far from the Night Watcher headquarters.”

She set foot on the street and kept to the side instead of walking down the middle. “Remember to stay on the side.” She turned back to tell Li Hao. “The middle is reserved for those big hotshots. Do you see that? Those who can walk in the center are very different. If we can walk in the center one day, we won’t have to be like how we are now.”

The sides of the street were dimmer. There were also residences and storefronts in addition to the official agencies. However, the most central of this prosperous locale didn’t seem to be a good location for business. The stores were devoid of customers, yet there were people on both sides of the street.

It seemed that most of the passersby were like Li Hao, just here for a visit to see the stately Avenue of the Inspectorate. Meanwhile, Li Hao was almost going blind! There were so many balls of light around him, such dense clusters that he could no longer discern the weak from strong. He only felt that it was brighter than day in front of him—the balls of light disappeared when he blinked.

He would likely truly go blind if he kept watching.

This was a new trick that he’d recently mastered. Previously, he could only passively take in information around him. That could be somewhat controlled now as he could block out the balls of light if he didn’t want to see them.

There were too many powerhouses around! As expected as the heart of the dynasty’s core. This was also where the central headquarters of the Inspectorate and Night Watchers were located. Who knew how many Novas there were, and possibly even Arcanus?

But as Li Hao walked the streets, he sensed something different. Someone—or rather, something—was scanning him. Was there a surveillance system similar to what had been in place at the Steadfast Duke's?

It would make sense since this was an important area, but people could freely walk through it. Plainly, the nine ministries were confident that they could handle all instances of trouble.

Whatever it was, it had no effect on Li Hao since he was a martial master—and a very powerful martial master at that. He was also equipped with the bronze mirror and had absorbed a lot of dark energy. Scanning him wouldn't turn up anything.

His head swiveled from side to side as he blatantly ignored what the girl had said about not looking around. Being curious was the normal reaction when one was here, what did a child know?

The girl didn't seem to be that familiar with the premises. She seemed to know the agencies' general layout, but rarely came to this part of the city. She cautiously led Li Hao forward. "It's all noble and respectable people around us. You'll be at the streets that lead to the palace if you take this avenue to the end. Don't go there, you aren't allowed there! The royal family... Just stay away from them, or you won't even know how you died!"

Li Hao inclined his head and fished out two paper notes from his robes. "We're here and I know how to proceed. Here's two hundred star coins, you don't need to give me change!"

The girl was overjoyed and hastily accepted the bills. She patted her pockets and found that she didn't have any change to offer either.

"Then... I accept!" she said awkwardly. "You're such a generous person, big brother! Look for me if you ever need anything. My name is Yu Qi! I primarily guide people at the eastern quadrant. It's a bit... scary here... Ask any child showing customers around if you're in the eastern quadrant, they all know where I am!"



She ran off without a look back, plainly having wanted to go for a while now. She wouldn't have come here if it wasn't for the job bringing her here. Li Hao smiled; he'd had a chance to be generous for once—a full two hundred star coins. It was rare to bump into someone who wasn't rotten throughout, so he was in a good mood. At least the girl really had brought him to his destination.

The young man set Panther down. Despite the dog shrinking itself to the size of a puppy, it was still pretty heavy. Li Hao fished out a top hat and placed it on his head, then summoned a sword that immediately turned into a walking cane. No, a staff!

This was how the aristocracy dressed itself, wasn't it? Who knew?

Li Hao smiled and set off toward the mass of light that'd been present in the distance before. There were some people on the streets and a few inspectors patrolling in uniform. When they saw Li Hao's outfit and an unleashed Panther... They didn't arrest him like the girl said would happen. On the contrary, they ignored him.

People walking dogs on the streets weren't usually an ordinary person, so no one really dared run afoul of him. The young man grew bolder when he saw this and strode to the center of the street. Panther docilely followed behind him.

One young man and one dog openly walked down the Avenue of the Inspectorate without reservation. They proceeded until a large complex appeared in front of them. It occupied a large expanse of land and people were on duty outside. They wore Night Watcher uniforms. These uniforms were slightly different from Inspectorate uniforms, but the difference wasn't great. Only a professional like Li Hao could identify the differences with a single glance.

The young man approached the front gates. There were six supernaturals on duty who were moderately strong at Sunflare. This array of force demonstrated the strength of the royal city. In Silver City, Sunflares could be deputy directors.

The supernaturals on duty frowned to see Li Hao walk over with a dog. But seeing at how coolly composed he was, they didn't immediately erupt with outrage.

“This is a zone restricted to Night Watchers, trespassers are not allowed!” one of them rumbled. “If you have business or a case to discuss, report to the Inspectorate...”

Li Hao displayed a medallion with a flip of his hand—a token of a high rank chief commissioner. The group paused when they saw the medallion; high rank chief commissioner wasn’t a low level official, but the one in front of them was an unfamiliar face!

Was he not from central headquarters? From nearby provinces, maybe?

“Sir, are you...” One of them stepped forward.

“I’m here to report for duty.” Li Hao smiled. “The director had me come. Am I a little too late?”

“The director... Might I ask... which director?” He was here to report for duty?

“Director Hou Xiaochen!”

The speaker blinked with surprise, but didn’t dare say anything. “Director Hou is in his office at the directors’ building! Do you need a guide?”

“That’s alright!” Li Hao turned him down and took a few steps inside before turning back. “Do you need to verify my identity?”

The group blinked and someone laughed drily, “No need!”

Was he joking? Would anyone dare pose as a high rank chief commissioner of the Night Watchers at their headquarters? If so, they could go straight to their deaths!

Li Hao smiled as well. They were confident, but also damned idiotic! If I'm really an enemy, I would still be a threat even if I died in the end. I can take a lot of people with me! They didn't even bother checking my identity.

Well, that's just as well. I can surprise the director!

### Chapter 629: Finally Seeing Brother Hou (III)

Just as Li Hao entered the central quad of the Night Watcher complex.

In the rear, a particular director's building.

The principal director of the agency, whose special talent seemed to be that of resembling a buddha statue, was steeping tea. Night Watchers worked at night, so their work day started at night. The director, however, spent his nights drinking tea and either attending meetings in the day or going home to sleep.

He suddenly looked outside as his tea brewed. The man gently knocked on the table. "Little Ye!"

A young woman walked in moments later and responded respectfully, "Director!"

The old man focused on his tea leaves and said slowly, "Go check outside to see if Old Qin has come. He said he would come by for a cup of tea, but there's still no sign of him. Go and see if something's happened to delay him..."

"Understood, I'll go immediately!" The woman walked out with confusion swirling in her mind. Was that so? When did Director Qin say that he was coming over? The director's getting turned around in his old age and his memory's going.

Little Ye walked out of the office and down the stairs, taking a look around outside. Although she felt that it was the director with a faulty memory, it would still be best to take a look around the

perimeter. There was no sign of Director Qin to be found. She was just about to visit another building when she noted the visitor headed straight for her.

This guy... is crazy to dress like this in the middle of the night! A trench coat, top hat, and a staff? What is he thinking?

Little Ye inwardly laughed at the stranger as the director's voice came from upstairs. "Come back up, Little Ye, I seem to have misremembered!"

The old man stuck his head out a window, prompting a sigh of relief from the woman. It was good that he was back to the present. Since he was already looking out the window, the old man scanned the premises and caught sight of Li Hao.

The very oddly dressed Li Hao.

Both surprised and confused, the old man looked at the puppy behind the young man. His brows gently knit together despite himself. Where had this young man come from, and with a major monster spirit in tow...?

Li Hao also seemed to sense someone assessing him and raise his head for a look. There was a head of white hair leaning out of a window of a small building not too far away. He frowned after his quick glance. The Night Watchers were more than met the eye! He didn't see anything, not even with his special eyes, but he sensed the distinct presence of a powerhouse.

The young man inclined his head, further surprising the old man. This young man had sensed his strength! Who was he? Openly sauntering into Night Watcher headquarters and looking to be headed to Hou Xiaochen's building from his direction... A martial master, major monster spirit, young man, sword intent...

The old man was visibly astonished now. Him?! Surely not! That was impossible!

The coolly composed old man retracted his head with amazement. He settled back down on his chair and broke out laughing while sipping tea. Demon Sword? Surely not! Even he hadn't thought

that Demon Sword would openly appear in Skystar City and the Night Watcher headquarters. But the lad was a peacemaker commissioner, so it was logical that he reported for work here. There was nothing wrong with his actions!

But... you just created so much trouble in the east...

“Hou Xiaochen is quite bold!” murmured the director before he continued laughing quietly. Incredibly bold! Hou Xiaochen had summoned the lad, hadn’t he? The man was crazy! Not only was Hou Xiaochen crazy, but so was this Li Hao. Everyone from Silver Moon was crazy! Li Hao had been summoned to Skystar City in preparation for something big, hadn’t he?

Killing just a Steadfast Duke isn’t enough for you, is it? Are you going to declare war on all sides?

“He seems strong enough, as does that major monster spirit... It’s apparently the descendant of an ancient monster spirit! But even so, this is not Silver Moon or the east!” The director drank another cup of tea. His secretary Little Ye walked in again.

“Director, shall I contact Director Qin?”

“No need.” The old man smiled. “Is Director Yellow around?”

“He’s out.”

“Has Dao Sword come out of seclusion?”

“Not yet.” The secretary grew confused. The old man didn’t care about any of this normally, it was Director Yellow Dragon who oversaw affairs. Directors Yellow and Hou had been vying with each other lately, was that why the old man was paying attention to affairs now?

An even more surprising development happened next.

“Tell Director Hou that we should share a meal when he’s free,” chuckled the old man. “The agency didn’t even prepare a welcome banquet for him when he arrived. I’ve grown too old to keep tabs on everything these years and Little Yellow has been lax in his duties. We should host one for him...”

Secretary Ye was dumbfounded, but she quickly recovered. “Alright, I’ll go find Director Hou later...”

“Mmhmm!” The old man nodded. “Let’s wait a while. Also, send me the latest personnel transfer files.”

“They’re... all with Director Yellow.”

“Go request them so I can look at them.”

The secretary was astonished beyond belief. What... did the director intend by this? Despite her incomprehension, she nodded again. “Alright, I understand! If Director Yellow doesn’t agree...”

“How would he not? Or should it be said... that it’s time I retired?” laughed the old man.

The secretary didn’t dare say anything else. The tiger may be old, but his majesty was still present. The director had held sway over the Night Watchers for twenty years; he’d only grown quiet in the last couple of years and drank tea or read papers if there was nothing else to do. He completely appeared as if he was ready to be put out to pasture, whereas Yellow Dragon charged forward at full speed.

These days, many Night Watchers didn’t even know the name of their director. What was going on tonight?

The secretary left with boundless confusion swirling in her mind. Meanwhile, the old man looked outside again. How nice it was to be young! Youngsters were terrifying! Their strength may not be the pinnacle of their potential, but their boldness and spirit were certainly the best! This one even came with hints of killing intent.

Who are you going to kill? Who do you want to kill? Are generations of Silver Moon martial masters each crazier than the last?

The director took a sip of tea; a faint presence of vitality wafted from it. Anyone who saw it would be bowled over by shock. That was Water of Life!

The old man breathed out comfortably. How nice! One's organs came under enormous strain in their old age. His were mostly under control after several years of nurturing. He felt much more comfortable!

"Don't torment an old guy like this, it's almost time for me to retire. Promoting that one to peacemaker commissioner... All of you have too much time on your hands!" The director shook his head, a headache brewing in his temples. How would they arrange matters if that peacemaker commissioner came to him as well?

Forget it, Hou Xiaochen could do as he saw fit.

Yellow Dragon, ah Yellow Dragon. It looks like you may not be able to do much anymore. The old man closed his eyes with a chuckle and put everything out of his mind. The Night Watchers still answered to Yao! Whether it was Yellow or Hou, they were all ranked beneath Yao. You guys can have your own fun, little fellows!

.....

Knock knock knock!

A knocking sounded at the door. Manager Yu looked at it curiously. Who was visiting so late at night? Hou Xiaochen frowned and looked uncertainly at the door, not daring to confirm his thoughts.

Knock knock knock!

The knocking rang out again. The manager stood up; there was nothing to worry about since they were at Night Watcher headquarters. It was just... who would come for the director so late at night?

She walked up, opened the door, and immediately had her field of vision filled with a top hat. Manager Yu blinked before her expression shifted slightly. She tensed and her internal force almost rushed out when a familiar voice echoed in her ears.

“Long time no see, Manager Yu!” Their visitor spread open their arms and grabbed Manager Yu with a hearty laugh. “I’ve missed you so much! Not seeing you for a day feels like nine months have passed! I bet the manager misses me too!”

Yu Luochoa stiffened with shock! Am... I.... hearing things? Is that Li Hao?? This is Li Hao’s voice! She was just talking about the young man and was suddenly hearing his voice. This was a delusion!

Li Hao let her go and strode forward, taking off his top hat and executing a graceful bow. “Minor officer Li Hao greets the director!”

“.....” Hou Xiaochen raised his tea cup for a sip to suppress his spontaneous anger. Or rather, it was an incredulity, a confusion and bewilderment that almost raged out of control. For a split second, he thought he was back in Silver Moon. Li Hao was here!

A person hunted by the entire world was here! Completely out in the open and not a care in the world, the lad knocked on his office door to say that he was here!



Yu Luocho rubbed her stiff cheeks and closed the door to focus on the room again. It was shoved open before she could close it. A dog looked innocently at her.

Are you blind? I'm not inside yet!

Manager Yu seemed able to read the meaning in the dog's eyes and stiffened. This dog... Panther... Was it the descendant of the ancient monster spirit? But why... was it a puppy now?

Contrary to her usual aloof composure, Yu Luocho teetered on the edge of a mental breakdown. She quietly returned to her seat and looked at Li Hao, then at Panther, and finally at the director. Director... stop drinking tea, will you? Are you surprised?

Li Hao rose when he didn't receive a response. "Is my etiquette not up to par?" he asked with confusion. "Is the director not happy to see me?"

"I'm happy..." Hou Xiaochen put down his cup with slightly stilted motions. "I'm quite happy. How did you get here?"

"By car, and then by bike."

"Then... have you eaten?"

"Not yet."

"Do you want some dinner?"

"Alright then." Li Hao nodded after some thought. "You haven't eaten either, have you? My treat then, director! It's just that Skystar City is a bit expensive. I had to pay two hundred coins to have someone bring me here via bike!"

It was Hou Xiaochen's first time meeting someone like the young man and he was at a momentary loss for words. "That's fine, put it down for reimbursement!"

"Hahaha, you're so generous, director!"

This was being generous?

Quite resigned, Hou Xiaochen breathed out after a long moment. "It... is... so... good... to... see... you..."

#### Chapter 630: Nine Dragons Pagoda (I)

"Mmhhh, I think so too. I knew that the director would be happy to see me!" Li Hao smiled radiantly. "Even though I'm a month late, I'm still here. I feel so at ease at seeing the director again!"

"Heh!" Hou Xiaochen laughed. Manager Yu did so as well, with a hint of resignation in her mirth. What kind of conversation was this? The director was probably all turned around!

Three humans and one dog stared at each other in an office. No one said a word. Li Hao was waiting for Hou Xiaochen to get up to go to dinner. There were too many people here, they should find a quieter place for dinner. It would be reimbursed, anyways. But... why was the director just sitting there?

Hou Xiaochen was digesting the latest developments, gearing up for motion, and thinking. He smiled after a long moment. He's already here... it's not like I can throw him out. It's just as well that he's here!

The director heaved a long sigh and looked at Li Hao with a smile that was much more natural this time. "Let's go to dinner! I am so comforted that Little Li Hao is here. Little Yu, make a reservation for a grand meal at... the Nine Dragons Pagoda!"

Manager Yu sucked in a sharp breath. The director was crazy! What kind of place was the Nine Dragons Pagoda?? That was where the major personages of the nine ministries went to make merry and seek entertainment.

You want to take Li Hao there? Don't you think we have enough trouble on our hands? Her head ached fiercely and she suddenly wanted to go back to Silver Moon...

Meanwhile, Hou Xiaochen had decided to throw caution to the wind. The lad was here already, was he supposed to send the boy away? Since the young man was here, they might as well have a grander time of things.

Of course, the duties that they should carry out still needed to be completed. As the Skystar commander and a deputy director of the Night Watchers, he had some responsibilities to uphold.

"Li Hao." Hou Xiaochen laughed before they set out and swiftly scribbled something on a piece of paper. "You achieved certain merits before this, so the Inspectorate promoted you to peacemaker commissioner. You are to patrol your territory and ensure that peace and tranquility reside within it. This means you have important duties at hand now as well.

"Since you've just come to the central region, it will be troublesome for you to apply for some other positions. You'll need to pass many checks..." Hou Xiaochen finished writing on the paper. "Therefore, in my position as the Skystar commander, I recommend you as the Skystar vice commander. The vice commander doesn't need to be audited by the Inspectorate, it can be an internal decision through the Night Watchers. You will be the vice commander so long as our director agrees!"

Li Hao blinked. The Skystar vice commander? What did that do? That wasn't important—more importantly was that he'd been promoted and didn't know about it! Peacemaker commissioner! Didn't that place him on the same level as Hou Xiaochen?

No wait...

The look in Li Hao's eyes grew odd as he recalled a certain detail. "Director... I heard people say on the road... that you've... been demoted to high rank chief commissioner?"

Hou Xiaochen halted and looked at Li Hao. What do you mean by that?

“And I’ve been promoted to peacemaker commissioner?” the young man laughed dryly.

“That’s right, you’re higher rank than me. What are you trying to say?” Hou Xiaochen smiled at him.

Li Hao looked around sheepishly. I didn’t want to say anything, I just wanted to say... that your rank isn’t as high as mine after several decades of service. Damn, doesn’t that suck!

Hou Xiaochen couldn’t be bothered to continue the conversation. A knock sounded on the office door moments later. Everyone knew that someone had come—Li Hao didn’t know who the visitor was. Hou Xiaochen did and smiled in the direction of the door. You’ve got such sharp ears and eyes. Your people arrive as soon as Li Hao does.

“Enter!” Little Ye pushed the door open and looked at Li Hao—the weird person she’d noted earlier. She didn’t recognize the young man, so she didn’t greet him, but she did seem a bit wary of Hou Xiaochen.

“Director Hou, the director says that we didn’t host a welcome banquet for you and wishes to take you out to dinner sometime during these two days...” She bent at the waist.

“Sounds good!” Hou Xiaochen agreed readily—so readily that, despite this being a natural course of action, it made Little Ye uncomfortable that he didn’t ask anything.

“Take this back with you.” Hou Xiaochen directed a sheet of paper to drift over. “Have the director look it over and sign it.”

Little Ye regarded it doubtfully.

“Just take it back for the director to look at.”

“Understood!” Little Ye didn’t dare ask further. This person was a serial killer, a heartless man! He’d confiscated anything he wanted from the Steadfast Duke’s manor at the drop of a hat. She didn’t dare object to whatever he did, particularly as the old director primarily ocused on keeping himself in good health these days. He didn’t have much authority in the Night Watchers anymore.

As for what Hou Xiaochen wanted signed, she had no idea. Little Ye tried looking at the paper, but her eyes watered at the sight. It delivered even more shock to her. So even Hou Xiaochen’s written words delivered such an impact? That was terrifying!

Little Ye didn’t linger; she took another glance at Li Hao and the puppy before she left. Confusion still swirled in her heart—who was visiting Director Hou in the middle of the night?

She left with unanswered questions. Li Hao waited for her to be gone before asking with confusion, “That’s... our director’s secretary?”

“Yes.”

“How nice!”

“.....” Hou Xiaochen blinked. What was nice about that?

“So I can have a female secretary when I’m a deputy director, and it’ll be the dynasty that pays her salary. I’m a peacemaker commissioner now. If I hire a secretary, the agency will pay her wages, right?”

“.....”

Li Hao... why are you always so... different!

Hou Xiaochen had absolutely no words. What in the world are you cooking at a time like this??

Manager Yu completely ignored them and lowered her head, busy with unidentifiable work. Li Hao is as rich as a nation after raiding the Xu family treasury. Why is he always so cheap?

As much as they were joking, Li Hao was still considering some more serious topics. "The director is the old man with white hair, right?"

"You've met him?"

"I saw him when I came in just now." the young man flashed a grin. "He's very strong!"

"Of course." Hou Xiaochen nodded. "He was the director when the Night Watchers were formed twenty years ago. The nine ministries and royal family didn't want to devote additional resources to fighting the three great organizations. They wanted a blade, and the director was that blade! Keep in mind that in that age, even a blade needed to be worthy and capable of its position. I was a blade once, but I could only be used in Silver Moon. He, however, was the entire dynasty's blade!"

"Then he's definitely strong." Li Hao nodded. "He seems to be a pure martial master! I wonder how many supernatural locks he's saturated." He looked at Hou Xiaochen again. "Director Hou seems to have perfected something. Have you improved in your cultivation again?"

"What makes you say that?" The man smiled, to which Li Hao responded smilingly as well.

Because you hurt my eyes before, and now you no longer do. This meant that the drawbacks or latent injuries left from converting from supernatural back to martial master had been overcome.

They were suppressed or completely buried. It meant that Hou Xiaochen had undoubtedly improved and returned to being a martial master in both name and meaning.

Therefore, he must have improved. Otherwise, he would be like Manager Yu to the side, slightly searing to the eye. That was a sign of an incomplete conversion. Part of her energy couldn't be fully withdrawn into her body. That residual energy stuck out like a sore thumb to Li Hao.

Hou Xiaochen didn't mind this much and rose to say, "Come on, let's head to the Nine Dragons Pagoda for dinner. The director should sign the paper soon. You'll be a Skystar vice commander by the time we come back."

"What good is that for?" asked Li Hao.

"Plenty of good!" Hou Xiaochen laughed as they walked. "It's useful so long as there is a day in which the dynasty stands. Of course, the caveat is that you need to have enough strength for your position. Otherwise, you'll be killed like Xu Qing. That won't be much good then."

"It's very useful in Skystar City. This isn't the eastern continent, this is the territory of the nine ministries and royal family. If anyone dares kill a Skystar vice commander... the various factions will have to save you even if they want nothing more than your death. Of course, their response times may vary, so they'll exact revenge for you if you're killed."

Li Hao smiled with resignation. Was that it? He'd thought it would be much more useful.

"There's another benefit in that you'll be assigned a house in Skystar City," Manager Yu added in a chilly tone. "Although it'll be very small, real estate is hard to come by in Skystar City. It'll have a prime location of being on the Avenue of the Nine Ministries."

"....." Hou Xiaochen wanted to roll his eyes. You talk of that at a time like this?

"That's great!" Li Hao grinned. "That's a fantastic benefit! Do I get the deed to the house?"

“.....” Hou Xiaochen couldn’t be bothered with these two. Was Little Yu being affected by Li Hao’s weirdness as well? “Let’s go!”

Li Hao followed by the manager’s side as they talked. “If I’m a peacemaker commissioner, do I get a car?”

“Yes.”

“When?”

“Tomorrow.”

“Do I have to find my own driver, or do I drive myself?”

“Up to you.”

“I’ve never remembered to ask, but what rank are you, Manager Yu?”

“.....” The woman ignored that question. You just want to know who’s ranked higher. You’re higher, happy now?

Hou Xiaochen continued to be speechless up ahead.

“Ah, yes. Where are Senior Golden Spear and the others?”



“Out on patrol of Skystar City,” Manager Yu explained. “Keep a low profile here and be careful. You need a legitimate pretext for any actions you undertake. You’ll be in grave trouble if you don’t! It’s a good thing that the Night Watchers are thus far the only officially recognized supernatural law enforcement agency. We have the right to administer the law, remember this well.”

Nothing else mattered.

“So, no one will be able to bring me in if I commit a crime, is that so?” Li Hao asked, deep in thought.

“Yes,” the manager answered. “But Director Hou calls the shots only inside the Night Watcher. We have no recourse if someone else puts out a warrant for your arrest.”