

Star Gate 661

Chapter 661: Martial Masters Cultivate the Heart (V)

“I’ve been wondering,” Li Hao sneered, “if the world would be worse off with the three great organizations as the rulers instead? Not necessarily, I think! The three great organizations have killed many, which was why I thought they were too wicked to be pardoned before, but now it seems that more innocents may have died in ministry hands. What right do the nine ministries have to criticize the three great organizations?”

“You’ve got some nerve!” Yao Si straightened in his seat, rather surprised by the response. He wasn’t angry, just astonished that Li Hao would prove so bold. “Keep in mind that I call the shots here!” He looked at the young man. “Not even Yellow Dragon would dare speak to me in this manner.”

“That’s right, someone who doesn’t dare speak to you like this has fouled up the entire agency.” Li Hao grinned widely. “I know, you’ll say that you’re letting him do this on purpose. But you have to know that biding your time to accumulate your strength like this has only let the Night Watchers turn completely rotten!

“What does it mean when a law enforcement agency is corrupt and a shell of what it should be? It means that regular people no longer have a venue to raise their grievances! That means there is no longer any fairness or justice to speak of in this world! You guys bear great responsibility for the declined state of the dynasty!”

“Li Hao.” Puzzled, Yao Si looked at the young man. “Is all this that important to you? I’d thought you’d take advantage of this meeting to ask me for help. Why... do you choose to approach in this way?”

“Because I’ve sensed a hint that subordinates are following the bad example set by leadership!” Li Hao looked at him. “Lacking ability is one person’s problem, but if a general lacks boldness or ability, that becomes the entire army’s problem!

“You are a general, the leader of the strongest agency outside the nine ministries! I would fawn over you a bit if you were a secluded powerhouse, one of the Silver Moon martial masters, a lord of the seven divine mountains, or even a leader of the three great organizations. But you are not!

“You are the leader of the Night Watchers, yet you ignore your duties and allow Yellow Dragon to swagger around. You permit the Night Watchers to sink into depravity. In my eyes, your sins eclipse that of many others!”

“Sins?” Yao Si blinked. Sins... He stared at Li Hao. “Are you saying that I have sinned?”

“Yes!”

Yao Si started. He... really hadn’t thought that Li Hao would criticize him like this. He was a sinner? Never had he imagined that one day, a youngster would declare him a sinner to his face. The source of sins!

“Li Hao, you don’t understand,” the director replied softly. “Staying quiet and accumulating my strength is in pursuit of a greater eruption...”

“No, laying low just permits bad guys to grow more arrogant,” Li Hao refused calmly. “It causes the extinction of good people and dissipates morale. It will plunge the world into darkness! Your fire is gone after so many years of quiet, so what is this talk of a greater eruption?”

“When you reach Arcanus, you’ll say that there are too many Arcanus supernaturals around. The nine ministries are too strong, as are the three great organizations too strong. You won’t be able to withstand them, so you need to bide your time a while longer. Once you exceed Arcanus, so will others have done so as well. You’ll say then I need to wait a little longer.

“Then a few years later, when you’ve got one foot in your grave, you’ll tell your descendants that you were waiting for an opportunity your whole life. What a pity that it never arrived...”

Li Hao laughed jeeringly. “Indeed, it never arrived! It would be one thing if this was the only matter, but because of you lying low, the entire Night Watcher agency has become completely rotten inside and out! What is that, if not a sin?”

Yao Si's thoughts churned swiftly. Indeed, he hadn't thought that this would be the kind of conversation they would have. He was growing tired, so he said softly, "You can leave for now, I'll think on this. I... never thought that someone would say this of me. I thought... I thought you needed my help..."

He chuckled sardonically at himself. And here I thought Li Hao would come to me for help. I thought people like Hou Xiaochen and Li Hao would sense how strong I am. I had no idea this would be the conclusion instead!

Li Hao rose and looked at the old man, saying softly, "I did think I would need your help, but once I thought of the vows I took at the Night Watcher induction ceremony to safeguard the peace and safety of a certain area, to safeguard our homeland and nation... and then I look at you sitting here, drinking Water of Life with an air of being prepared to sit back and watch the world change around you... I... find myself disgusted!"

He turned and left, leaving the old man in a daze. He... was disgusted? The young man was disgusted!

Yao Si's expression flickered rapidly. He slammed his hand down on the table after Li Hao was far away, shattering it and bringing Little Ye to the door.

"Get out!" raged the old man like he was a rampaging lion!

Little Ye jumped with surprise and quickly turned to leave. The old man suddenly called out to her, "Let me ask you something, Little Ye. In your eyes, is it right or wrong that I do not actively oversee the Night Watchers?"

The secretary started and looked back at her superior officer, not sure of what to say. Yao Si maintained a fixed stare at her and grit his teeth. "I ask you, are the Night Watchers rotten or not?"

"No... of course not..." Little Ye said nervously. "How could they be..."

“Is the world more chaotic after these five years or better?”

“Um...”

“Speak!”

“More... more chaotic,” the petite woman answered apprehensively. “But it’s all Director Yellow’s fault. When you were in charge, sir, you could somewhat corral the unstable elements of society. The same could not be said after Director Yellow took charge. The battles against the three great organizations have been waged in the haphazard manner. Not that many of their members have died, but a dozen of our cities have been destroyed and several million people dead. Tens of millions have been displaced from their homes...”

The old man sagged and waved her off listlessly. “I understand, you may go!”

“Y-yes!” Her heart in her throat, Little Ye quickly took off. She slightly regretted her words, maybe she shouldn’t have said all that.

The old man, on the other hand, was weary down to his bones. I am disgusting? he laughed at himself. I am the source of all evil?

But... but... it was just as Li Hao had said. Indeed, the young man had spoken correctly. Yao Si had indeed wanted to wait a bit longer because he felt there was no hope. He wanted to bide his time until he became Arcanus, stabilize his cultivation, then emerge to bring the world back into order again.

Yet, just as Li Hao pointed out, that sentiment was a joke. He would think that Arcanus was not enough when he finally reached that level. He would want to wait a bit more! Wasn’t that enough? He would be an Arcanus at that point! But would he think that was enough?

No!

The covers were abruptly yanked back from his thoughts, shining an uncomfortable light of shame on them. He was irate and also felt aggrieved. Indignation churned through him and he ground his teeth in fury!

“Responsibility?! How are you fit to speak to me of these matters! I founded the Night Watchers with an attitude of sure death when circumstances were their most difficult! I fought hundreds of battles to suppress the three great organizations and lost count of how many I killed. I forged the Night Watcher name through fire and blood, managing to ultimately occupy a seat at the supernatural table.

“How... you... call me disgusting??

“I kept the world in check for fifteen years and only gave Yellow Dragon this chance in the last five years because I need to stabilize my cultivation level. Someone else stands behind him, so I don’t wish to erupt in open hostilities with him. How dare you talk about me in that vein?!”

He was both furious and felt unfairly wronged, as well as not wanting to accept the situation. However, Li Hao’s words stabbed into him again and again.

You are not a secluded powerhouse, you are the only agency with actual power outside the nine ministries. You are the only agency with the power to step forward and protect the people. But if you batten down the hatches and bide your time... You represent not only yourself, but all hotblooded supernaturals!

“Have I made a mistake?” Yao Si sprawled on his chair and curled up on it. No one had ever said these words to him before because they all thought that his actions were normal.

Indeed, normal.

They knew that he was consolidating his Arcanus realm, so weren’t his actions normal? Yao Si wasn’t even a supernatural, he was a martial master. Granted, he was on a similar footing because

his cultivation level was very high. It eclipsed even He Yong and the others, making it understandable that he was viewed as an Arcanus.

His organs were so strong that they could deploy the battle strength of what others could bring to bear after breaking their supernatural locks.

But, had he made a mistake?

His noncommittal mindset abruptly collapsed. It was one thing if Li Hao was spewing bullshit, but the key was that the young man spoke the truth. Even Little Ye said that in the five years that Yao Si had taken a backseat, the world had gone to the wolves. Millions were dead and tens of millions displaced.

And this was just the central region.

The old man curled up in a corner, unmoving, like he was dead. Martial masters cultivate the heart while supernaturals cultivate strength. His heart was in disarray, and it was thanks to the question from an exceedingly young martial master.

Do you have a clear conscience? You are a sinner, Yao Si! You... are very disgusting!

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Li Hao was in the highest spirits when he walked out of the director's office. Damn it felt good to cuss out the director! The young man was highly dissatisfied with the senior executives who enjoyed the privileges of their position, yet did not exert themselves to commensurate action. He boiled with rage!

He was unfamiliar with Yao Si, so there wasn't much that could be said about the man. But the Night Watchers were indeed rotten, yet also somehow stronger than the other nine ministries.

That was it!

As the head of the agency, Yao Si's inaction also caused great displeasure in Li Hao. He could identify some of the undertones from the man's words.

I thought you guys would need my help.

The man was saying that he was willing to help Li Hao and the rest, but the young man told him that they didn't need his help! Even if he did, it was to be expected. And it wasn't help, but Li Hao was enforcing the law!

I represent the Night Watchers in enforcing the law and laying down order. This is what you should be doing, so why do you think you're helping me? That's completely wrong!

Chapter 662: That Person Is Too Crazy! (I)

Li Hao gave full vent to his bottled-up fury when he saw that the leader of a law enforcement institution thought of it as helping or giving charity to a subordinate agency when trouble was at hand. That was wrong, gravely wrong!

"Hmph!" The young man snorted when he heard the sound of something breaking and left in a merry high. He didn't care what the results of this meeting would be. Those who didn't care wouldn't pay heed to his words. If he said the same thing to Inspector General Liu or someone similar, they'd probably just laugh merrily and forget about it in the next breath.

That Yao Si flew into a rage meant that he still cared. Li Hao's words from the heart that jabbed at the listener's core would be ineffective on politicians. Only those who still gave consideration to these matters would question their conscience.

Do you still have that heart, Yao Si?

Li Hao put the meeting out of his mind as he walked off to the side. Perhaps the man no longer did. Who will eternally honor their original ambitions? Do I even know what my intentions were in the beginning? People change, we all do. Yao Si did, I do.

Perhaps I cannot bear the sight of this darkness and murkiness today. Maybe I can't stand the sight of this man eat man era. But perhaps after a year or three, I might be part of them.

Such thoughts flashed through his mind. It was enough to take care of oneself in this age. That already made one a good person. It would take a saint to extend that mindset to the rest of the world.

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Leaving all that behind, Li Hao returned next door to the campground of the Silver Moon Guards. He'd been gone for less than twenty minutes, but there were nearly one thousand Guards present. They made quick work of two thousand storage rings. Two to three each was the perfect division of work.

When Li Hao arrived, all of the Guards were immersed in the joy of counting money. A small mountain of mysterious power stones stood in the center of the yard. Another group of people walked up, hauling a large bag in their wake.

"Ten thousand pieces!" they reported with hard swallows.

Mu Lin took note of the number and called out, "We're at one million and seven hundred sixty thousand. Any more?"

"There's a bit more over here, give me a sec..." Another group of people walked over with a large bundle. "There's 9271 pieces here..."

They were about to pour it onto the small mountain when Li Hao held up his hand. "Wait!"

The assembly looked at him, puzzled. Most were envious, jealous, worshipful, and lusted after his riches... It was a complicated mix of emotions that left them slightly numb. Just mysterious power stones alone had been so numerous that it tired the Guards from counting them all.

One million and seven hundred sixty thousand! This didn't include some of the more unique ones. Those bigger or filled with more energy were tossed off to the side as another type of resource.

"That's all the mysterious power stones?"

"Yes!" Mu Lin nodded. "One million and seven hundred sixty thousand standard size pieces. No, wait, there's another 9271 pieces. They're all here with not a single one missing. Don't worry, Commander Li. I promise that no one would dare take one for themselves!"

Li Hao nodded, then frowned after some thought. "These guys are so damned poor!"

"....." Mu Lin blinked. What did the young man mean?

"A dozen Novas, three metamorphoses, the Four Seas Company, Skystar Colosseum, and thousands of nobles amount to one million and seven hundred sixty thousand pieces?"

What were they if not damned poor? This was impossible! Li Hao was confused why there were so few stones. These were two exceedingly rich factions that he'd raided. Even if most of their riches were usually turned in to the Ministry of Finance, they couldn't have not left some for themselves. Setting the Colosseum aside, this truly was too little from the Four Seas Company.

It shouldn't be that different compared to the Xus! And the nobles! There were so many nobles out for a lark at Four Seas Island. What kind of nobles were they to not have several hundred pieces of stone on them? A major noble such as Mu Xiaorong would have even more.

If each person averaged ten pieces, Li Hao's hostages of several thousand would amount to several tens of thousands. One hundred pieces each would be hundreds of thousands...

His lack of a bountiful harvest was apparent when the numbers were averaged out. Of course, the fault wouldn't lay with the Silver Moon Guards. Could the Ministry of Finance have taken it all ahead of time?

The mysterious power stones that he'd collected before were all in a storage ring that Yang Shan was taking back to Silver Moon. This pile here would be the entirety of his resources in the days to come. He also wouldn't be able to claim it all as those such as Hou Xiaochen would have to be given part of the loot. It wasn't good etiquette to pronounce all of it for himself. Hou Xiaochen had a thousand Silver Moon Guards to support, which put him under a lot of pressure as well.

Not only that, but Li Hao might have to turn in a bit more to the Night Watchers... even if it was just a token of his sentiments. Hence, he felt that the count was low.

"There's more over here," Mu Lin hastily said. "It's the kind used by the armies in the ruins. One piece of those is the equivalent of ten of ours. There's a decent amount at roughly twenty thousand pieces."

"So that makes for approximately two million mysterious power stones?" Li Hao nodded.

"Yes!"

"If I trade them for Water of Life at the Nine Dragons Pavilion, that would only be twenty drops," the young man chuckled.

Wow, it's that expensive? Mu Lin clucked his tongue. "We've also counted some Water of Life. I've put it away since it's more precious—there's twelve drops that were mostly concentrated in a few storage rings."

Li Hao nodded again. He understood the situation. Mu Xiaorong and the other metamorphoses were the only ones with the right to possess such a treasure. Regular Novas did not.

Twelve drops were neither a lot nor too little. Of what he'd had before, he'd given four drops to He Yong and one drop each to Yang Shan and Qin Lian. He only had three drops left, but was now greatly replenished to fifteen.

To him, Water of Life was worth only ten thousand mysterious power stones each. But if he sold them or someone took them from him, he would value them at one hundred thousand stones each.

"There's also quite a few origin weapons—twenty-two of them. But... they're almost all gold rank... That makes them lower rank... There's only two arcane rank and not a single earth rank..." Mu Lin looked at Li Hao.

"Some of them were broken in battle." Li Hao smiled. "And some are still in people's bodies. It's one thing to seize their storage rings, I can't actually dissect someone to take their origin weapon. That would be beyond the pale."

Mu Lin was speechless. That wasn't what I meant. I mean that you have so many origin weapons here, are you sure you're not going to return some of them? Li Hao thinks I'm saying that there's too few! Mu Xiaorong and the others must have origin weapons in their bodies, but just like the kid says, there's no way to take it from these guys. We'd have to split them open.

"Twenty-two origin weapons... that'll do!" Li Hao shook his head with a sigh. "That's still too few. So it seems that one's gains aren't up to par if I don't uproot a major faction. So many people, but so few riches. Their combined total is only a little better than the Xus. No, strictly speaking, there may not be a difference."

The Xus had had three earth rank origin weapons and the Goldensky Lotus in their treasury, as well as the mirror fragment... These items could not be assessed in terms of money. There was also the sky rank weapon that the little sword had swallowed. When those were added to the sum, what he'd netted from the Xus was just as much as his gains from this operation.

This was the drawback of not pulling someone up by the roots. Whether it was the Four Seas Company or Skystar Colosseum, their main wealth was with the Ministry of Finance, not them. It

could be readily seen from this how wealthy the ministry must be. It would be decent if these establishments could retain a year's worth of gains. Most of it was handed in at the end of the year.

"There are many other treasures, most of which we couldn't recognize," Mu Lin continued. "I put them all into a storage ring. There are also a few dao comprehension weapons with mediocre effect. I've put them away separately as well..."

He handed a few storage rings to Li Hao and then turned his gaze to the small mountain of mysterious power stones. "You should store all of this too. I discovered that some of the rings are pretty big and spacious enough to hold all of this."

Li Hao nodded, then looked at the martial masters holding onto the last remnants of mysterious power stones. "Split the remaining nine thousand among yourselves! It's a token of my appreciation and your bonus for hard work. When one of us eats meat, the rest get some soup!"

Mu Lin wanted to say something, but the martial masters roared with excitement, "The commander is just and generous!"

Nine thousand pieces meant that each person would receive approximately ten pieces each. Although there was a small mountain of that resource behind Li Hao, they knew it wasn't theirs. Instead, they were very excited by the fact that Li Hao would offer so many rewards. Stones and a storage ring each? How wonderful! These were tremendous gains!

Mu Lin didn't know whether to laugh or cry, there was nothing else to say. Nine thousand pieces might have been an astronomical figure before, but compared to the small mountain beside him... Mu Lin suddenly thought nothing of it.

I'm getting too full of myself! Mu Lin knew that it was because he'd seen too many truly precious objects that mysterious power stones were nothing anymore. I counted two million of those today!

Li Hao was truly astonishing. He'd taken just one month to seize more than a combined total of three million mysterious power stones and fifty-some origin weapons.

Roughly two dozen Novas had died to his hands in this month alone, as well as a couple of metamorphoses. Seen in that light, this level of harvest seemed reasonable. If he included the earlier drops of Water of Life, his total income was more than ten million mysterious power stones. This was more astonishing than raiding a medium-sized ruin!

From this, he could tell that this era was a very prosperous one. However, only the upper echelon of society flowed with milk and honey. The dregs of society were struck with poverty. Just take a look at Yao Si—he'd washed his hands of matters for many years, but could still drink tea brewed with Water of Life. One such cup would be worth one hundred stones in the Nine Dragons Pavilion. Yao Si was very rich!

Chapter 663: That Person Is Too Crazy! (II)

Li Hao swept all of the mysterious power stones into a storage ring without further word. This greatly alleviated his burdens, but Mu Lin swiftly offered up a thousand more storage rings. These were the ones that remained after the Guards chose their own.

The young man himself already had nearly one hundred rings. They were all from prior operations. He smiled ruefully at the long string of storage rings. Since when did he become someone who received a headache for too many storage rings?

He accepted them after some thought. He could keep them for now. There was a pocket inside the armor. Although it was a bit full at the moment, that was fine. Li Hao swept a glance over the Silver Moon Guards.

They'd possessed almost one hundred half step Dominators before, but didn't have many actual Dominators. Those were only the nine centurions, Golden Spear, Mu Lin, the captain of Golden Spear's personal guard and the disciple of Berserk Blade, as well as Kong Jie's daughter.

Li Hao didn't see the latter on his visit. I wonder where they've gone off to? It was rumored that Berserk Blade had also come to the central region, but Li Hao hadn't caught a glimpse of that man yet.

The Guards' overall strength seemed to have increased after a month in the dynasty capital. There were nearly two hundred half step Dominators and many more Dominators had appeared amongst the teams.

Li Hao studied them for a while, thought about his words, then began with, "Life is difficult in Skystar City, isn't it?"

That's true. Mu Lin looked back sheepishly. Things had been fine back in Silver Moon. The Guards were very strong; a team of one hundred could certainly handle a Solar. When working in tandem to manifest the formation of one thousand people, the regular composite of the Guards could face a Nova.

But what was that worth in Skystar City?

Absolutely nothing!

Strictly speaking, half step Dominators were barely the equivalent of Plenilune. They were less than Sunflares. Granted, they were outfitted with black armor—the Guard had nearly five hundred sets.

Hou Xiaochen had taken the most when one thousand Battle Heaven troops fell in the battlefield. Li Hao had claimed one hundred, leaving the rest for the three great organizations to squabble over. Unfortunately for those factions, they didn't have the authorization to fully activate the black armor.

In this regard, the only aspect that the Silver Moon Guards held an advantage in was that their defenses were slightly stronger. Li Hao also had one thousand sets of Voidbreaker armor, but he hadn't found the right way to accessing them. Perhaps his authorization was insufficient, or some other reason was at play.

"That's exactly it!" The heir to Mountain Ax picked up the conversation. A note of suffering crept into his voice. "Let's leave it at that since this is the central region. There are too many supernaturals here—Sunflares and Solars are available by the handful and Novas are frequently seen as well. We are naturally invincible compared to regular troops, but when it comes to the elites that major factions have raised... Well, they have people, money, and a stunning amount of resources. We do not measure up to that!"

A mere Silver Moon could not support so many, but the central region was where the wealth of the world collected. It was far beyond the capabilities of those such as Hou Xiaochen to compare to.

Li Hao had originally found the benefits of the Silver Moon Guard to be stunningly incredible. But now he realized... they weren't much. No one would know how prosperous the central region was without making a trip for themselves.

"That's just as well," Mu Lin said with a mixture of emotions. "Mysterious power is much more dense here and while we cannot rely on this energy like the supernaturals do, it being present in large quantities results in a faster rate of progress in our daily cultivation.

"You see it as well that we have many new half step Dominators and a few who's made the breakthrough..." Mu Lin chuckled. "At least we'll be impressive enough against the Skystar Colosseum!"

Li Hao laughed and looked at the others. "Think on it, everyone. I am about to establish a Skystar Commander Office. Why don't you come help me there?"

"....." The crowd blinked with incomprehension, as did Mu Lin.

"Um... what about the director?" he ventured after a pause.

"The director?" Li Hao merrily stroked his chin. "He is the principal commander, I am his vice commander. Of course the director is still the boss."

"Then... is there any difference in treatment?" Mu Lin looked carefully. What do you mean by all this??

“There’s a bit of a difference.” Li Hao bared his teeth in a smile. “The elites of the Silver Moon Guard can choose to join my Demon Hunters troop. You will receive some additional benefits and treatment. I won’t be taking too many, just five hundred at most!

“The overall structure won’t change, but my Demon Hunters might expand and move up in ranks. Our full complement would be one thousand people per formation...”

Mu Lin listened with aching teeth. He sized up Li Hao again and again without saying a word.

“Think about it!” Li Hao declared happily. “We’re all on the same team so there’s no rush. Ah, yes, there are so many benefits to joining the Demon Hunters.

“For example, the defensive capabilities of your black armor will be greatly enhanced due to it being fully activated. That’s just one such benefit! Second, your chances of becoming a Dominator are immensely increased! Third, everyone stands a very strong chance of becoming a Summoner of Spirit after that stage. That’s right, my teacher has fully understood Summoner of Spirit and everyone can cultivate it.

“Fourth, I have a unique army formation that requires only five people to operate. Your combined strength will improve immensely! Currently, a team of one hundred can only take on Solars. After you join the Demon Hunters, I am confident that a team can handle initial Novas with no problem!

“This is all based on our current foundations. Once everyone breaks through, I dare promise that a one hundred person team can fight enemies at least two cultivation levels higher! For instance, if everyone’s a Dominator, they are the equivalent of Sunflare at most. But if they coordinate well, they’ll be able to fight metamorphoses, if not Arcanus!”

One hundred Dominators fighting in unison, their blood qi intermixed and their armor activated... Was there hope in taking down a metamorphosis then?

Yes!

Li Hao was well aware of the possibility and if he helped a martial master set foot into Dominator, then they wouldn't be far off from Summoner of Spirit. The accomplishments then would be even more incredible.

Too few Demon Hunters had stayed in Silver Moon! Li Hao hadn't wanted to recruit more before, but now he realized the benefits of strength in numbers. What use was there in individual Sunderers? But what about one hundred, one thousand, or ten thousand Sunderers?

Didn't Liu Yunqing say that the people's heart wasn't good for anything. Bullshit!

One hundred thousand ordinary people in armor could intermix their blood qi if they knew the most basic of operating methods. All humans possessed blood qi. At that time, one hundred thousand people could kill a Nova! And he was talking about mundanes!

One about one million, ten million people? One hundred million? Mundanes abounded in this world!

Granted, sufficient armor and equipment would be a very big problem. Li Hao didn't have many available sets left on him—a dozen black armors at best. The Silver Moon Guards, though, had five hundred more.

He painted a grandiose picture with mundanes, but he couldn't really send mundanes against Novas. However, any with a bit of martial foundation that didn't need to start from zero could easily set foot into Slayer of Tens. In this era, it was easy to reach Sunderer of Hundreds. There were no bottlenecks below half step Dominator.

In that case, ten thousand Sunderers were sufficient to easily suppress a metamorphosis. There wouldn't be any difficulty to it—they could even battle Arcanus!

Liu Yunqing's words rankled Li Hao, the young man didn't accept it! Who said that the people's heart was worthless?? Bullshit! It was useful! If they dared and were willing, ordinary people could still go against the current and rise up!

He even had some thoughts about the thousand in front of him. They were decently strong with numerous half step Dominators. If they all learned the Ten Rings Mountain Seal Formation and incorporated their blood qi into his body, he would dare fight an Arcanus if he was the heart of the formation!

He'd thought that these guys weren't reliable before. Now that he looked at them, mm, they were alright. At the very least, they were more dependable than those not of Silver Moon.

Li Hao was thinking of staging a coup—bah, he meant to say that he wanted to tend to Hou Xiaochen's army for him. Ole Hou seemed to be poor. As for why he hadn't told Hou Xiaochen of his intentions earlier... The young man couldn't be bothered since Hou Xiaochen seemed to be standing outside of the complex walls, listening in on them.

It looked like the man wanted to rush inside to beat Li Hao up.

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The crowd's breathing grew more rapid as they listened to Li Hao. Setting foot into Dominator, then Summoner, a unique formation, activated armor...

Oh my heavens!

Even Mu Lin was slightly moved. He quickly came back to his senses and smiled with difficulty, turning down the young man's proposal. "Ah... we can't make the call in this... Commander Li, you... you should go ask the director and Boss Golden Spear... We can't do this on our own..."

Multiple faces dimmed with his refusal, but they didn't make a sound. That was right! They wanted to grow stronger, but they were raised by Hou Xiaochen. Could they bite the hand that fed them and turn on their own master?

It was also due to Li Hao speaking these words that they considered it. The young man was part of their system and a fellow Silver Moon martial master. He was the acting ranking officer in Golden Spear's absence, a deputy director of the Night Watchers... And he was on good terms with Hou Xiaochen.

They wouldn't be tempted otherwise.

"Are you sure you won't think about it?" Li Hao chuckled. "As for the director, he won't say anything since we're all here. I don't need everyone at present, just half. Only those with armor need to come. If you want to stay, you can give your armor to those who want to leave. Don't we all eat out of the same pot?"

"Um... it's better to ask the director first!" Mu Lin said hesitantly.

Li Hao grinned.

Chapter 664: That Person Is Too Crazy! (III)

"What nonsense are you cooking up now, Li Hao?" someone chuckled outside the door. Accompanied by Manager Yu, Hou Xiaochen walked in with his hands behind his back. He was smiling, but looked like he wanted to kill the young man when he looked at Li Hao. What do you think you're doing, kid?!

"Director!" The assembly snapped to attention. Their superior officer was here.

"I'm seeking a future for our brothers, director!" Li Hao chuckled. "You know how much I've collected lately. I have no place to spend all of this extra wealth. Money is money only when it's spent. It's just worthless rocks if not! Here I am, wanting to fight for some extra benefits for everyone because we're colleagues."

"Then you can just outright give it away!" Hou Xiaochen curved his lips in a half smile.

“I’d like to, but Silver Moon martial masters are not the sort to accept handouts. I know everyone and understand everyone. People won’t be able to accept something that I hand out for free. It will leave an internal demon in their hearts!”

No it won’t! The group roared internally. It won’t create internal demons, you can just give it to us!

But how could they voice those sentiments after Li Hao spoke those words? Were they supposed to be so thick-skinned as to say that they loved handouts? It wasn’t like they were all He Yong...

Ahem, He Yong wouldn’t take handouts either. He would fight for another so long as he was paid.

Hou Xiaochen had nothing to say. What was he supposed to say to that?

“Right, Commander Li is right.” Mu Lin smiled awkwardly. “Our brothers aren’t like that. We come by our gains only after putting forth the required effort. We should adhere to this spirit of ancient martial dao!”

“You hear it too, director.” Li Hao spread his hands with resignation. “So... can I not give thought to everyone’s heart of martial dao?”

“.....” Hou Xiaochen looked at him for a very long time. “You can just give it to me...”

“It would be a waste on the director!” Li Hao sighed. “Mysterious power stones aren’t of much use to you and they wouldn’t be converted to battle strength in the short term. We need time, but we happen to be short on time!”

Hou Xiaochen wanted nothing more than to roll his eyes! This little bastard’s trying to steal my Guards!

His thoughts flew rapidly and he said slowly after coming to some conclusions, “Are you really going to establish a Skystar Commander Office?”

“Eh?” Li Hao blinked. “Didn’t you say that yourself, director?”

Hou Xiaochen was truly speechless. That’s what I said, but I didn’t mean to actually establish a place. I just wanted to hang my hat somewhere. So it sounds like you’re really going to conduct an epic undertaking and not leave after that?

“I am currently focused on being alert against certain powerhouses,” he said after a while. “I do not have sufficient time to oversee this. The nine ministries and royal family will show certain upheaval in the days to come...”

He looked at Mu Lin and the rest, searching his thoughts again. “If they are willing... it is fine that they join your Demon Hunters. But you must promise one thing...”

“What?”

“You cannot needlessly send them to their deaths.” Hou Xiaochen looked at Li Hao. “You are too much in the public eye, which is both a good and a bad thing. At the moment, however, your strength isn’t enough to support your arrogance. You can run away if you encounter danger, but they aren’t able to!”

It was actually a great idea for these people to follow Li Hao. The young man had money, methods, and could teach them the true path to Summoner of Spirit. The road that Hou Xiaochen and the rest walked was not suited for universal adoption. It was a way meant for elites! Only the greatest among martial masters could learn it, whereas Li Hao had mentioned that it was possible to popularize Summoner of Spirit.

Hou Xiaochen didn’t mind the young man trying to steal his people, just that the boy made enemies too quickly. He could get away, but the Silver Moon Guards could not.

“You have operated by yourself thus far and have no ties concerning you apart from your master. You are brazen and unscrupulous. A true general, Li Hao, does not abandon his comrades! You led

troops in Silver Moon, if only a few dozen of them. But you had them stay in Silver Moon, likely because you know full well how dangerous your enemies are...

“When you really lead one thousand, you must remember that they are people, martial masters, comrades, and colleagues. They’re not just your subordinates or tools. Therefore, you must consider their safety and future. This might be a limitation placed on you!”

Would it be good or bad?

“You worry about too much, director!” Li Hao laughed. “I understand things quite well that in this day and age, we have to put everything on the line in order to break free of our place in society. If we wish to do something or become outstanding, then full effort is required! They can come if they wish to take this risk and put in hard work, or they can decide not to.

“I will consider them when possible, but I am not a nanny. Risks are inevitable in our line of work. If I lose, I will do my best to arrange a way out for everyone. But if the situation is impossible, I might run away...”

Hou Xiaochen frowned slightly at him.

“This is putting our lives on the line to fight for our future!” Li Hao remarked calmly. “I don’t know what the future holds or if the path ahead is this dark, and I also don’t know what will happen to me in the future. It might be good, it might be bad. A general achieves his success on a mountain of ten thousand bleached skeletons! People will eventually die, director. It’s up to everyone to see if it was worth it!”

The young man turned to the martial masters. “Martial masters are carefree in Silver Moon’s martial world. They are unrestrained in both manner and style of living. They also pursue strength, but martial masters also have motivation. We can give it a try if there’s motivation, but leave it behind if you are afraid of death!”

It was deathly quiet on the premises. Hou Xiaochen looked at Li Hao for a while before saying, “Everyone is free to make their own decisions, I will not interfere! You cannot be a deserter since Silver Moon invested a great deal for everyone’s current accomplishments. But if you wish to be a Demon Hunter and join the Skystar Commander Office, there is no problem with that.”

“Everyone can do as they see fit!” Li Hao smiled. “I won’t force anyone to join me. The heart is the most important and nothing forcefully done is agreeable. For instance, I wouldn’t agree to it if Manager Yu wanted to join me right now...”

Manager Yu blinked, looked at Li Hao, then at Hou Xiaochen. She kept her eyes fixed on the latter. Never!

The assembly held in their laughter. Hou Xiaochen was extremely speechless. They were talking about proper business, but that little bastard just had to touch on Little Yu. What did he mean by that?

“You handle those nobles first!” Hou Xiaochen didn’t want to continue the conversation.

“No problem!” Li Hao laughed heartily. He could now freely stand in front of Hou Xiaochen and talk with ease. This was a kind of confidence and a sign that he knew his true heart.

When he decided to leave Silver Moon and visit Skystar City, he’d felt that he didn’t need to fear anything. Whether it was danger or death, his heart saw the path ahead.

I know that I should probably do something, so there is no need for me to be afraid. If I can face myself and my original intentions, then I have no need to fear anyone. When even death does not give rise to fear, what else can I be afraid of?

Nothing at all!

Perhaps it is as you said, teacher. There is no need to consider what other people may be thinking. It is enough if I want to take action.

Everyone had their own path to walk. Living a carefree life of freedom and taking revenge in a dashing manner was one such way. But perhaps I, Li Hao, want to leave something behind in this process. Maybe there will be those who remember the great Li Hao of Silver Moon!

Perhaps the leader of the ninth troop of Battle Heaven would no longer assess him with such poor marks the next time they saw each other. Perhaps he could stand up straight the next time he saw Hong Yitang and casually tell him that, “Little Hong, you won’t do. You shrink in on yourself and cower within Silver Moon. I have seen the world and still retain a clear sense of self after my travels. This isn’t a revenge plot or a rescue mission. My heart is turned to the light—killing others or hatred didn’t send me to hell.”

How proud he was of that!

.....

Li Hao walked forward with pride, moving as if a dragon or tiger. He was no longer the timid and cautious innocent hidden in the shadows. There seemed to be a ferocious tiger superimposed on his body. A tiger bounded through the mountain forests, loftily overlooking the mountain ranges around it.

Hou Xiaochen was watching him. He’d been watching for a while and uncertain of how to describe the feelings in his heart. Li Hao had changed so incredibly much in one short month. He’d tried to persuade the young man to come with him to the central region. Li Hao had spent a long time thinking about it, grappling with the idea before ultimately deciding to stay.

Hou Xiaochen had been slightly disappointed, but also resigned. Yet, here Li Hao was a month later, and he seemed to be someone entirely different. The man suddenly felt rather lost.

Manager Yu was watching Li Hao as well and said softly, “He seems like someone...”

Hou Xiaochen blinked. Who?

“Yuan Shuo! Yuan Shuo of twenty years ago...” Manager Yu said softly. “This was how he was then, incomparably domineering and running rampant through the world. Perhaps his strength wasn’t the greatest beneath the heavens, but he dared challenge heroes from the four corners! He felt that a man should be without fear in both life and death. Master and disciple are becoming ever similar to each other!”

Yuan Shuo?

Hou Xiaochen blinked, thinking back on things. Was that so? He’d almost forgotten the old man. Had Yuan Shuo been like this back in the day?

“Ah, he has something else that Yuan Shuo didn’t have...” Manager Yu continued.

“What?”

“He... looks a bit better than Yuan Shuo...”

Hou Xiaochen blinked, staring at her. “Who do you think looks better, me or Ying Hongyue?”

“.....” Manager Yu looked at him with confusion and surprise. The director... was crazy, was he not?

You’re obviously not as good looking as him...

“The director is masculine and he is feminine, so of course he’s less than the director!”

Hou Xiaochen thought silently for a bit. Was that so? But... if I remember correctly, I was called Sickly. Everyone said that Sickly was unmatched when it came to feminine qualities, so when did I become masculine?

This response is so fake!

Chapter 665: That Person Is Too Crazy! (IV)

At the same time.

Li Hao once more returned to Night Watcher headquarters. One of the moderately sized buildings in the back, equipped with a large yard, was stuffed full of people. It was over capacity and guarded by only a few Night Watchers. They looked at Li Hao respectfully when they saw the young man.

There were a lot of people in the yard—they were very fearful of Li Hao when he came into view.

“May we go, Commander Li?” someone asked urgently. It was daybreak and they’d been kept here for a day. It was one thing to go without food or water, but many of them stunk. There was no place to take a shower or change clothing. They couldn’t even relieve themselves because there were too many people present.

It was a hodgepodge of disgusting smells and a lifestyle that some noble misses had never experienced before. They were on the verge of a mental collapse—they covered their faces or wrapped their heads with clothing. If anyone smelled them and then recognized them, they wouldn’t want to live.

It was an exceedingly difficult task to examine the particulars of several thousand people. Not to mention, Li Hao lacked a complete intelligence system. Some of them had volunteered information, but who would paint themselves in a wicked light?

They couldn’t continue holding several thousand people here, however.

“I need to make an example out of some of you,” Li Hao cut straight to the chase. “I’ve just arrived and it’s difficult to find one’s footing in Skystar City. Whether it’s Four Seas Company or the Skystar Colosseum, those concepts are too far removed from ordinary people. They’re not enough to make my name known throughout the world and establish my authority!”

“I’m someone who speaks whatever’s on my mind. If I kill all of you, I’m certain to execute some innocents. But if I kill nine out of every ten, some evil will still walk free!”

Eyes widened at his words.

“I can’t be bothered to examine all of your backgrounds, so you do it yourselves!” he declared coldly. “There are four thousand of you here, choose one hundred for me to publicly behead as an example! All of you are from great families and have the requisite channels, labor, and resources to choose.

“Select one hundred—and not just people from the Colosseum or regular people from the Four Seas Company. I want one hundred nobles! I want certain evidence why they should be killed! The kind where evidence and witnesses are present, in which the information is so complete that a single glance brings understanding why this person should die!

“I will then drag them to the marketplace to chop off their heads. The rest of you can go home after that!”

“.....” There was a split second of silence before the screams started.

“You’re going to kill us?!”

“Remember, I’m killing just one hundred! The evidence needs to be clear and real, don’t think of forging it. I can’t be bothered to verify all of what you guys say, but I have my ways of looking into one hundred people. You guys choose the candidates yourself. I will not be involved. If you can’t select one hundred, then you’ll all stay here. Let’s see if your backgrounds are good enough to get you out alive!”

Some people's mouths dropped with dismay and some gasped with horror. Li Hao was so vicious as to make them choose themselves!

Mu Xiaorong couldn't help herself anymore and gabbled, "You... this makes us offend one hundred families..."

"That's right!" Li Hao nodded with a smile. "Have you only just discovered that?"

"Do you know that this will..."

"Mean that I offend one hundred families as well?" Li Hao grinned. "I'm not afraid! They can come for my head if they have the guts to! You're the ones who chose the victims, I wasn't set on killing them. Also, killing them is a consequence of them breaking the law. There is reason for their deaths. If you don't choose and wait for my investigations to complete, then there may be more than one hundred dead in the end. Some of you still won't make it out at the end of the day!"

Terror, fury, and killing intent rose from the prisoners!

Li Hao was an absolute madman! It was one thing for him to offend people, but he wanted to drag them down with him! If they made their selections, the families associated with the one hundred would certainly hate Li Hao, but they might even hate the survivors more!

Why is it my son, my daughter that is dead, and not you guys?! Why was my child pushed out to be a scapegoat?!

Any with sharper wits about them knew what kind of storm was to come. Color drained from their faces and some people almost couldn't stand straight.

"Commander Li... in this case... the smaller families... won't dare... defy the greater families..." someone warbled with panic.

“The evidence must be there,” Li Hao responded firmly. “If you are a good person and the bigger families unjustly wrong you, then I’ll seek justice for you! But if you are a bad person, then it doesn’t matter what kind of family you come from. Villains should be executed, there is no issue with that.

“All I can say is that some might slip through the cracks in this process to come, that those even more evil than you guys might survive. That’s fine, with one incident comes a second. Those of you who walk out of the Night Watcher headquarters should watch yourselves. Pray that you don’t bump into me while I’m alive or it’ll still be your day of reckoning!”

“Are you that unafraid of death, Commander Li?” Fear of death flashed through someone’s eyes while they spoke in stern terms. “In all these years, no one’s dared to kill one hundred nobles at once in Skystar City or even the entire dynasty!”

“Now there is!” Li Hao pointed at himself with a radiant smile. “I dare! So you can stop threatening me. I’ll return all of your transmission pendants in a bit so you can contact your family, parents, and others. Find evidence for me to chop off one hundred heads—unless I die before that. You can also have your families send Arcanus to come kill me. It’s fine if they don’t, but I’m really looking forward to Arcanus assassins!”

The assembly froze. Send Arcanus to kill him! Li Hao’s cockiness was on full display and completely unmatched. Mu Xiaorong gave up on all hope and said nothing further. She only sighed; there was likely nothing that could be done to stop the young man.

Arcanus?

At this current point in time, where were there Arcanus willing to take such a risk? And how many could come? Li Hao was so conceited that he probably had certain reason and confidence to be so! Who was willing to stick their neck out first?

The Ministry of Finance had given up and the three great organizations didn’t dare brashly enter the royal capital. They were also wary of underhanded retaliation from the nine ministries. The nine

ministries and royal family countered each other, so how was one supposed to produce enough Arcanus to kill Li Hao?

Thus, Mu Xiaorong clearly understood that there was nothing stopping Li Hao from chopping off these heads! And the key was, he was borrowing their hands to kill these people. Once their transmission pendants were returned and their messages transmitted, Skystar City would fall into massive chaos. If the various families could not eliminate Li Hao, then their thoughts would turn to who should die. Anyone can do, just not my children!

Good friends could turn on each other!

Many in the crowd were already swaying on their feet, their faces pale with horror. They knew what scandalous blemishes marked their record and that their families may not be able to protect them. There were many families here stronger than theirs.

In these circumstances, everyone would offer up those from smaller families first. That wouldn't affect the rest as much. It wasn't the patriarch of a family being beheaded, just a son or a daughter. In the presence of concrete evidence, people wouldn't care if the person in question died. This was the choice that minimized losses the most.

Some knew they were about to die, so they grunted through furiously clenched teeth, "Will Commander Li dare kill Mu Xiaorong if she's one of the names put forward?"

"Vote!" Li Hao smiled. "If she's among the one hundred and there's indisputable evidence for her crimes, I will behead her first for the rest of you to see! I'll hack at her father and grandfather if they come too. Do you believe me when I say I'd like to see how many Arcanus there are in the Ministry of Internal Affairs?"

"....." No one responded to him.

Mu Xiaorong was as pale as a sheet before suddenly smiling. “I’m not afraid of this, Commander Li! True nobles may not be the evildoers and violators of the law as you think. You’re right, the innocent have nothing to fear!”

Li Hao snorted and didn’t think much of what she said. He tossed out some transmission pendants and turned to leave.

“Three days,” his voice came back upon the wind. “You have three days at most. I want results after that! If there are none after three days, it may be more than one hundred who die. Think on it carefully!”

Li Hao left. Shouts, curses, and roars of fury exploded from the yard behind him. Some even tried to make a break for it! But they couldn’t as they discovered that the number of Night Watchers had suddenly increased exponentially around them.

These Night Watchers who’d feared them before seemed to be different today. Some visibly exulted in schadenfreude, others ground their teeth in anger, and some more... fearfully looked at Li Hao in the distance. They didn’t dare let anyone go. Li Hao had said that one of them would be buried for each person they let go, so who would dare do anything for their prisoners?

.....

Skystar City exploded with reaction when news traveled through the noble families.

“Crazy!”

“He’s seriously crazy!”

“Does this animal want to be enemies with the entire dynasty??”

“No, my daughter can’t die. She hasn’t done anything wrong and this has nothing to do with our family. It’s other people at fault, so why do they hold my daughter??”

“We need to plead our cases at the nine ministries and royal family. Li Hao can’t be allowed to do this!”

“.....”

It took only a moment, but the entire city truly shook in the wake of the news. Further information circulated as too many knew the particulars, they couldn’t be concealed. It was almost on the same day that the tens of million residents of Skystar City learned of the news as well. They were all stunned beyond belief!

The Skystar Commander Office would publicly execute one hundred guilty nobles after three days—one hundred!

Heavens above!

Could nobles be... executed?

News that Demon Sword Li Hao, Skystar Commander Li Hao, would be executing one hundred nobles was more shocking than the demise of the Four Seas Company and Skystar Colosseum. Li Hao was the only topic in the marketplace on this day.

“This Skystar Duke is too brash. There won’t be a good ending in store for him if he kills nobles!”

“There haven’t been many nobles arrested in the past decades, to say nothing of being beheaded!”

“This isn’t real, is it? Maybe they’re just saying this. The nobles have so much power, would he really dare do that?”

“It’s best if he dares! Killing them is for the good! Those bastards have committed so many crimes, they all deserve death!”

“It’s easy to speak of, are you going to kill them yourself? If you do, I say this Skystar Duke will probably die himself!”

“Ai, it’s hard being a good person. The nobles grasp the reins of power in the dynasty. This northern savage is really... really... too brash! Killing two or three would do, but killing so many... What a pity!”

“Northern savage” wasn’t used in a derogatory way in this moment. It was simply punctuated with some regret and pity. The people did not think well of one person going against the entire ruling class. They felt that Li Hao would not be long for this world.

The news spread in all directions. It might be Li Hao’s moment of death in three days, not these nobles.

Chapter 666: Not Looking For Anything (I)

The world shook when the news spread. Li Hao’s latest actions were more reprehensible than his elimination of the Four Seas Company. This wasn’t just a matter of killing one hundred people. If he wanted to kill people, the various institutions wouldn’t mind it if he destroyed an entire city!

The strong had such privilege—he possessed that privilege now.

However, killing nobles—no matter how minor or major, no matter how many, and a public beheading at that, was an upheaval of class. That was exceedingly deplorable! This meant that the authority of the ruling echelon might be overturned! Everyone would know afterward that there was no difference between the emperor or a peasant committing a crime!

Before that, even though the royal family had retreated behind the curtains and the nine ministries formed, there was no such thing as sentencing nobles for their crimes. The Steadfast Duke's brazen initiative to lob city annihilation missiles had only resulted in a demotion.

Hou Xiaochen had killed the Steadfast Duke's younger brother in private, giving rise to rumors that circulated among the nobles. Where Li Hao was most terrifying was that he wanted to behead his victims in public!

.....

The Avenues of the Nine Ministries.

Every ministry was packed with people. A crowd of aged nobles knelt on the ground, howling and wailing with outrage.

"We cannot let this northern savage publicly execute the descendants of various families! He can kill them all if he wants, but in private! He can use them to establish his authority if he wishes, but he cannot pass judgment on them and execute them in front of crowds!

"Minister, this is a subversion of authority and a sign of the dynasty toppling!" A grief-stricken old man presented a petition requesting that nobles could not be judged and sentenced in public. The world would be thrown into disarray!

Li Hao could kill people if he wanted to, but he couldn't do so openly. It would be enough that everyone knew he killed a few of them in private. Whether it was out of intention to intimidate his enemies or to cut down some people against him, it didn't matter.

But this time, the young man thoroughly encroached on their bottom line. When this happened, the nobles would no longer be able to maintain their dignity, authority, and privilege.

So it turned out that nobles could also be sentenced and die! Their heads weren't prettier than the rest when they hit the ground. Li Hao was breaking through the blockades of the heart! The nobles

themselves also knew that once this happened, everyone would realize that the ruling class could be overthrown!

It would pull down a wall in the hearts of the people, a barrier that they should not cross!

.....

The Ministry of Finance.

Liu Yunqing had wanted to go into closed door cultivation, but opened his eyes when he heard the wailing outside. It came from more than one ministry—it originated from all nine. There were even people kneeling in front of the palace with petitions upheld.

Li Hao could not be permitted to succeed. The dynasty would be over otherwise!

A cold sneer appeared in the depths of Liu Yunqing's eyes—a sarcastic bent. I'd thought that I'd need to wait for a very long time, but it seems that the other nine ministries will be regretting their actions today. They'll see that they shouldn't have permitted Li Hao to have his way yesterday!

Liu Yunqing leered and gave no reaction. He didn't say a word or appear in front of the crowds. What did it have to do with him? No one said anything when the Ministry of Finance lost so many powerhouses, but now they were in a rush?

"I knew it, the kid wouldn't rest easy after that. If he dares ignore royal power and act against us, then he'll also dare turn this world upside down. Just wait and see!" Liu Yunqing snorted and chose to turn a blind eye.

Let the world wail itself to exhaustion, let those old men cry their eyes out!

.....

The Inspectorate.

The inspector general didn't seem as excited or happy today as he was yesterday. Sobs and shrieks echoed outside while Yellow Dragon raged inside.

"Inspector General, Li Hao is completely insane with this move! He wants to drag the Inspectorate and Night Watchers down with him! It's one thing to destroy the Four Seas Company and Skystar Colosseum like he did yesterday, but now he wants to publicly execute one hundred nobles! He's even arrested thousands of them! He's... an absolute lunatic!

"I want to depose him from his position of Skystar vice commander. Didn't he say that this was his right?!" Yellow Dragon shouted with veins bulging in his forehead. "Then I'll remove that right from him! He will implicate the entire Inspectorate and Night Watchers when he slaughters innocents. He's too selfish!"

Everyone was as quiet as could be; no one said a word. Even the inspector general was reserved—he would've censured Yellow Dragon in times before when the man raged like this. At this moment, he hesitated.

He knew that Li Hao's group was unbridled and arrogant, but he truly hadn't thought that Li Hao would choose to execute hundreds of nobles in public. This matter could be big, and it could be small. If it was big, this matter was a subversion of two hundred years of dynastic law and rule.

Revolution!

That was the term that came to the mind of the well-educated inspector general. Li Hao was conducting a revolution. He was bringing about the downfall of the bourgeois and privileged.

All of them, including the young man himself, were part of this social class. As a peacemaker commissioner and proposed-to-be deputy director of the Night Watchers, Li Hao himself was a noble. The royal family had also just made him the Skystar Duke.

Does the royal family regret their actions? The inspector general laughed. Perhaps they did. They wanted to use him to suppress the nine ministries, but the first thing he did was something that would make the royal family draw back in horror as well.

“Sir!” Yellow Dragon couldn’t help but chide when he saw his superior officer suddenly laugh. I’m talking here—are we removing him or not? Tell me outright. “You see it too, sir. Nobles are gathered at the doors of the nine ministries and royal palace. These people are the key to maintaining the dynasty’s operations. The nation will fall if anything happens to them!

“Li Hao isn’t using his brain at all!” Yellow Dragon frowned. “That’s exactly how brutes are. He doesn’t understand it’s not that the Night Watchers refuse to take action, but we cannot be so impetuous! We need to take things one step at a time. Once hearts shake from terror after the nobles are dead, it won’t be long before the entire dynasty collapses!”

Some agreed with his words, while others sighed, “That’s right. The Inspectorate wishes to go all out in improving ourselves and also wants to strictly enforce the law, but has Li Hao given thought to what he should do when he rocks the world with his actions?”

Despite benefitting from the young man’s actions before, the Inspectorate also found Li Hao’s radical methods to be inappropriate now.

“Inspector general, people will easily think that we’re secretly supporting Li Hao. Where else would he get the courage to do something like this?”

“His position of Skystar vice commander needs to be reconsidered. He won’t have the authority to conduct himself like this once he is removed!” There were those who approved of the young man’s actions, and those who disapproved. It was too difficult to truly accept responsibility for this.

“Ole Yao, what do you say?” the inspector general said slowly when he looked at the distracted Yao Si.

It was only then that Yao Si seemed to awake from his reverie with the big teacup. “What did you say?” he asked blearily.

The inspector general nearly rolled his eyes. “You’re the one who gave him the position of Skystar vice commander. The entire office of the Skystar commander is an internal Night Watcher contraption. It does not come under the Inspectorate umbrella. We approve of the principal appointment whereas you determine the secondary ones. So I ask you, how do you view Li Hao’s matter!”

He explained himself a bit more because he had a lot of thoughts in mind, but didn’t find any of them particularly appropriate. Otherwise, with his personality, he wouldn’t have asked Yao Si. Clearly, he had his doubts.

Do they continue?

Li Hao’s actions might bring a lot of authority to the Inspectorate and even help the institution fully find its footing to set its cap as the greatest ministry, but it also brought a lot of trouble down on the Inspectorate’s head!

He’d approved of and supported the young man before this. Though he didn’t say so openly, he promoted Li Hao while demoting the Steadfast Duke. Regardless of whether or not it was in pursuit of strengthening the Inspectorate, it bestowed support to Li Hao’s faction.

But now, he hesitated. This was a revolution, one that would cost him in his life!

Yao Si didn’t seem to be fully focused on the meeting at hand. “It’s just the execution of one hundred wrongdoers...” he responded in a rather... senile manner after a long moment. “So they die, what’s the matter when there are so many nobles?”

“It’s not just a matter of killing one hundred people,” Yellow Dragon immediately rebutted with dissatisfaction. “He can do so privately or for different reasons. Nothing will be a problem so long as he doesn’t openly execute them. It’s not like the dynasty lacks for nobles.

“Does the director not see things clearly in your old age or think that the matter doesn’t have to do with you? You shouldn’t have given him the position of Skystar vice commander! You also signed the order without saying anything! Why didn’t we have a meeting about it? I only learned after the fact that Li Hao had become vice commander!

“It’s clear to see that I didn’t think much about it.” Yao Si smiled and coughed gently. “Hou Xiaochen isn’t weak and he had someone send over a document. I’m old, is there a need to start a feud with him?”

“He’s just an outsider, you could’ve pushed it all to me, director,” Yellow Dragon snapped irritably. “What are you afraid of him for?”

Yao Si breathed out gently and looked around the gathering, ignoring Yellow Dragon’s impertinence. He whispered to the inspector general, “Do you want to remove Li Hao from his position? That can be done as well. However, the arrow is notched and we have finally increased our authority after so long. If we switch out Li Hao now, I’m afraid we’ll have even less dignity than before when the dust settles.

“Ole Huang makes sense,” the old man continued slowly. “But he also forgets that our current position comes from the Inspectorate and Night Watchers. If we remove Li Hao now, that also means we hand over the authority to enforce the law to someone else. We would be offering it up with both hands.”

Yao Si spoke softly without the intent to censor anyone. He simply rambled slowly.

Chapter 667: Not Looking For Anything (II)

“Even if we don’t fully agree with Li Hao’s actions, we’re not in a good position to oppose them. Opposing Li Hao is opposing ourselves. If even the Night Watchers and Inspectorate don’t support our own, what will outsiders think of us?” Yao Si coughed for a while before continuing with a slight smile. “It’s just an execution of one hundred juniors who’ve broken the law. It’s not that

serious. You've elevated it to a level too high! So long as we are justified and have evidence, nothing is a problem when the law is on our side. What do you think, inspector general?"

The inspector general looked at him with a glint in his eye.

"You don't understand, director!" Yellow Dragon agitated. "Not to mention, there's no need to explain this much when it comes to removing Li Hao. There are so many people in this world who want his head. People will only applaud us, who will question us?"

"At the very least..." Yao Si hesitated, "at the very least, some civilians in Skystar City will question us..."

"Director..." Yellow Dragon started before snorting with laughter. "You think too much! It's just a bunch of peasants! What do their words count for??"

Was Yao Si losing his mind in his old age? On one side was the inconsequential questioning of ordinary people, on the other were the protestations of the other eight ministries and possibly even the royal family. What was he even talking about??

Was he using his brain?? The old thing was getting more befuddled in his old age!

Yao Si took a deep look at this deputy director and inclined his head. He smiled, but said nothing further. Instead, he lifted his tea cup with an inscrutable expression.

Yellow Dragon thought that the old man had been won over by his logic from the reaction. He looked at the inspector general again. "I think we should take care of Li Hao first before the matter blows up in our faces. It's best to take out even Hou Xiaochen, or the problems will be severe!"

The inspector general remained silent for a bit before saying, "Let us just observe the developments!"

“What?”

“I said we will observe!” The man frowned. “Are you deaf? You make sense and so does Ole Yao. We are caught between a rock and a hard place, with neither course of action being appropriate. In that case, we shall observe and leave it to Li Hao and the rest to handle their own problems. They can respond of their own accord. Is something wrong with your ears?”

Yellow Dragon’s heart jolted with shock and surprise. He wanted to break out in curses! You’re the one who summoned everyone for a discussion, so aren’t I discussing? Why are you picking at me instead??

The man said nothing further. It was likely that the inspector general would fly into an all-out rage if he continued talking.

The inspector general rose and heaved a slightly disdainful sigh. “Forget it, I stand by what I said. Either tell me when Li Hao executes one hundred nobles or tell me when he’s dead...”

He said those words to Xu Qing at their last meeting, and now he repeated them. His declaration drew internal grumbles from the assembly. What did their superior officer mean? It wasn’t a good decision to wash their hands of the matter at a time like this.

Sometimes, staying neutral was the most frightful decision. There were no benefits to be had whether the situation turned out to be a win or a loss. Was the inspector general growing confused lately?

The others didn’t have a chance to say anything before Yao Si rose with tea mug in hand and turned to leave. A frowning Yellow Dragon felt compelled to catch up to his superior. “Sir, although the inspector general’s given his take on the situation, we still need to bring Li Hao under control!”

Yao Si nodded with a smile.

“Then let’s hold a meeting when we get back and coordinate our actions,” Yellow Dragon continued upon seeing the old man’s reaction. “What do you say, director?”

“Whatever you wish.” Yao Si continued walking forward. He lifted his head to see someone majestically striding toward them. Yellow Dragon looked in the relevant direction as well. Uniformed inspectors on both sides immediately fell silent when they saw the newcomer. The entire Inspectorate seemed to turn quiet, deathly quiet.

The inspector general on his way out also stopped and looked back. Someone was making his way to the lobby, a dog by his side. No longer dressed in the comical trench coat and top hat, or holding the staff, he wore only silver armor with a sword equipped at his waist.

At the door, Li Hao announced himself without looking at Yellow Dragon. “Li Hao of the Skystar Commander Office from the Night Watchers greets the inspector general!” he boomed. “We eliminated the two poisonous nests of the Four Seas Company and Skystar Colosseum yesterday. As a result, we seized a great deal of illicit money and I have come to deliver it. There are five hundred thousand mysterious power stones, five drops of Water of Life, and ten origin weapons!”

His voice echoed through the premises, drawing looks from everyone in the Inspectorate.

Yellow Dragon frowned and looked at the young man. The distance between the two was very close, so he muttered frostily, “Li Hao, this matter needs to undergo Night Watcher approval first...”

Li Hao tilted his head at the man and shouted angrily, “Get out of my way!”

Yellow Dragon blinked with astonishment!

“Is there room for you to speak here?!” Li Hao rebuked. “The Skystar Commander Office is under the jurisdiction of only Director Yao and the Inspectorate! Who do you think you are to point fingers at us??”

“.....” A livid Yellow Dragon glared hotly at the young man.

Li Hao looked coolly back at him and also muttered, “Don’t stick your nose where it doesn’t belong. The more you jump around in front of me, the more I’ll make sure I kill you before I die! You’re just a metamorphosis, I’m not afraid of whoever stands behind you. Be careful of dying without a complete corpse if you continue to poke at what you shouldn’t offend!”

Yellow Dragon’s face shifted rapidly through a variety of expressions. He sneered after a moment and didn’t make another sound. And let’s see how much longer you can jump around! When the heavens wish to end a person, they will drive them to the heights of ignorance first! Li Hao was completely lawless and godless!

“Trash!” A disdainful snort echoed upon the air—it came from Li Hao!

An exceedingly unpleasant expression hung on Yellow Dragon’s face as he stalked off. There was no need to say anything else. Li Hao was out of control with how cocky he was. As for the war spoils... it was up to the Inspectorate to see if they accepted it or not.

Li Hao possibly had a few ideas in mind with his delivery of the loot. If the Inspectorate accepted it, that meant they tacitly agreed to certain things. If they didn’t, then the ministry didn’t agree.

Yellow Dragon waited for the Inspectorate’s response as he walked. There were many people kneeling within the main plaza outside the building. They were all waiting for something and quite a few looked at Li Hao with eyes full of hate.

However, no one dared kick up a fuss. Li Hao was too brazen! Even Yellow Dragon had been hectoring in such a manner. If they roused the young man’s temper with their words, it would be such a loss if he killed them on a whim.

Next to Li Hao, Yao Si briefly glanced at the young man before walking off without a word. Everyone seemed to be waiting for something.

Inside the Inspectorate lobby.

The inspector general halted his footsteps and contemplated something. The entire Inspectorate was eerily silent while they waited for response. Several long moments later, he declared faintly, “Take the items to the storerooms!”

Faces tightened with consternation!

“Li Hao has rendered exemplary meritorious service and accomplished great deeds upon his initial arrival at the Inspectorate,” the inspector general continued. “He is hereby awarded one million mysterious power stones and one sky rank origin weapon. I am not feeling well today and am not at liberty to receive guests. We can discuss any matters on the morrow!”

The assembly collectively blinked when they heard these words and vaguely grasped the inspector general’s meaning. This was an exchange of roughly equal value!

Five hundred thousand mysterious power stones and five drops of Water of Life were worth roughly one million stones. One sky rank origin weapon would only exceed the value of the ten that Li Hao had delivered.

I accept the items, but I return them to you again. I accept them because I approve of you eliminating two major organizations. But I bestow them to you again because I do not quite approve of you killing nobles.

I neither support nor set myself against you. Come find me again if you survive. I will not speak to you today.

These simple words held a great deal of meaning.

Li Hao smiled, not minding the outcome. “My thanks to the inspector general’s bequeathment!”

He turned and left instead of heading to the storerooms or truly handing in what he'd collected. Since he'd received rewards of equal value, then he just needed to register his gains, that was all. There was no need to make a trip on account of this matter.

He understood the Inspectorate's intentions—they intended to remain neutral!

Some of the nobles kneeling on the ground outside the building relaxed with relief. It was enough that the Inspectorate didn't condone Li Hao's actions. Granted, there were also those indignant because they felt that the institution should suppress the young man instead!

.....

The lobby of the Inspectorate.

The inspector general sank into deep thought when he saw Li Hao walk off. The young man was... too forthright. He didn't insist on anything or voice any other words. He'd simply come to show himself before leaving. Was this good or bad for the inspector general?

"Li Hao ignores the rules a bit too much!" someone grumbled.

"Then you go capture Li Hao," mentioned the inspector general upon flicking a glance at the speaker. "Teach him what the rules are. Go now, or I'll kill you!"

The speaker blanched with dismay. "I... didn't mean it that way, inspector general..."

"Then what did you mean? That you have a big mouth? Don't you know how to shut it?" snapped the irritated man. "Get out of here! I don't want to see any of those things outside either! I'll kill anyone who continues to annoy me! Out of sight, do you hear me?!"

The speaker in front of him swiftly ran off. Alarmed expressions crossed the faces of the nobles outside as they quickly rose to leave. That one didn't have a good temper. He hadn't spoken before, but if they stayed now that he had, they might not be alive for much longer.

The inspector general snorted after everyone was gone, then headed to the rear yard. The backyard of the Inspectorate was his home. No one dared come, apart from his family.

He walked through the various hallways and minor streets of the residential complex until he came to a small house deep in the depths. Rather than a secret chamber, it was a small house open to access. An old man was reading inside it.

"Tell me, old man, did I decide correctly or incorrectly?" agitated the inspector general.

The old man turned to him with a smile. "What?"

Chapter 668: Not Looking For Anything (III)

"Are you hard of hearing?!" The inspector general's anger was almost palpable. "What's with the act, your ears are keener than mine! You're around one hundred years old, but slipped out to have a good time with prostitutes a few days ago. Do you really think I didn't see you?"

"You think too much, how would I ever do that?" the old man burst out laughing.

"I thought that being neutral was a good idea since I'm not afraid of anything." The inspector general ignored the old man; he focused on his confusion around his decision. "I fear neither Silver Moon nor other people. They're all inconsequential! But... Yao Si is a bit off today. This Li Hao... also seems highly assured of himself! Old man, where do you think his confidence comes from? Will those of Silver Moon really pit themselves against the world for his sake?"

The old man paged through some books and smiled. "I don't know, I've stayed out of these matters for many years. How would I know? But I've come to a few new revelations over the past years of perusing ancient tomes."

“What?”

“To embrace Buddha’s feet in one’s hour of need—to seek help in the last possible moment!”

The inspector general had thought that the old man was about to impart some words of wisdom. He blinked. Was that it?

“As for where the Buddha’s feet is, I don’t know. But... we’ll see in three days. I don’t demand deeds of merit, but I do ask for no faults. See to things yourself after three days.”

The inspector general thought for a bit before he nodded. “Fair enough, so the old man has the benefit of some experience after all. I more or less understand what you mean. Very well then!”

He said no more and turned to leave, but mentioned after further thought, “Do you think Hou Xiaochen’s made it to that step or not? Can he fully stabilize his cultivation?”

“I don’t know, you can try him yourself or ask him.”

“Ridiculous!” cursed the inspector general. The old man liked to be mysterious in his old age! This was how he spoke all the time now, quite an irritating experience for anyone on the receiving end.

Another thought occurred to the inspector general in the midst of his annoyance and he suddenly smiled. “It’s fine, I know what to do now! Ah, right, don’t go anywhere for the next couple of days. Something might happen in Skystar City and I’ll need you to show your face and calm the situation in critical moments!”

“You make it sound like your father is only good as a tool...” the old man started laughing.

“I would be more polite if you didn’t keep making younger siblings for me,” sneered the inspector general. “You should take it easy at your age. My youngest brother is younger than my grandson! This is highly embarrassing!”

“You don’t understand,” sighed the old man. “This is called listening to the heart. What is the true heart of martial dao? I have grasped some of it these years as well. It is to be carefree and unfettered. When I am free and unrestrained, I find heaven on earth. That is martial dao!”

“Heh!” The inspector general quit the conversation and left. Whatever you say. I won’t deny anything you say.

The old man looked into the distance when he left and chuckled. “A carp leaping over the dragon’s gate has appeared in what was a quiet, noiseless place. We were in a pool of stagnant water. There will be fun times ahead!”

He looked outside with a slight furrow. Yao Si... something was off about you today!

The Yao Si of twenty years ago was clearly emblazoned on the minds of the older generation. That wasn’t a man who spent his days hugging a tea mug. Yao Si back then had been an extremely domineering, cruel individual.

Had he stabilized his cultivation level? He’d become inscrutable to some after these five years.

.....

Skystar City, the slums.

A group of children was engaged in heated discussion.

“That demon’s going to chop off noble heads after three days! Are you guys going to watch?” exclaimed a kid with excitement.

“What should we watch for? Aren’t you afraid of dying too? I’ve also heard that the demon will be done for after three days because he dares chop off noble heads! They have a lot of strong guys and the demon is a northern savage. There’s no one helping him here...”

“Didn’t he just wipe out the Four Seas Company and Colosseum?”

“What good does that do?!” A child that was noticeably more fragile than the rest shook his head. “You guys don’t get it. The books say that this is an encroachment on fundamental interests. He’ll be taking the first step in class warfare! In the ancient times, this was the first step to political reform! Since the ancient times, those who initiate political reform die without being able to be buried. It’s a horrible death!”

“Political reform? What’s that?” asked a group of curious children. The fragile youngster smiled.

“I told you guys to read books, but you don’t want to. Political reform is... it’s... um... well, it’s making it so that nobles aren’t always nobles and gives hope to the rest of us. There is hope, there is light. It means that our generation and the one after ours have a chance to climb to the top or become solidly middle class. They won’t live like us—picking up trash, skulking through tiny alleyways, running small cons, trying to get a bite to eat...”

“Hahaha, you’ve lost your brains after all that reading!”

“That’s right, your brains are gone! They have money, power, so many powerhouses, and generations of accumulation. They’re more noble than us from birth, how can we possibly catch up to them!”

“That’s right!”

“Big sis Yu Qi, your brother’s lost his brains from all that reading. Hit him!”

“.....” A group of kids laughed raucously and called out to Yu Qi not too far in the distance. She was staring off into space.

“You’re the ones who lost your brains from too much reading...” huffed the little girl with an upward jerk of her head. “No, none of you guys know that many words, so what do you know! I don’t understand some of what Yu Ming says either, but I know that if that strong guy really kills the nobles... then there’s hope for us!”

“Is that so?”

“Should we go watch then?”

“But it might be really dangerous!”

“.....”

The children chattered loudly among themselves before quickly changing the topic. They didn’t have the same patience as adults might to continuously discuss the same subject. Their thoughts quickly turned to daydreams of flying through earth and sky as supernaturals and martial masters.

The thin and weak Yu Ming walked over to his sister and sat down. “Sis...” he whispered. “This Demon Sword from the north is so ferocious!

“What a pity...” he then sighed. “I took a spin around today and found that most people don’t think too highly of his chances. He’s so impulsive! The books say that matters must be pursued in an unhurried manner, that they can’t be accomplished in one go!

“This Demon Sword must not like to read. He doesn’t know what the books say or that reading confers wisdom!”

Yu Qi smacked his head. “Don’t talk in such an unlucky way! Not to mention, I heard people say that he was a student before, that he attended a university. He was apparently the student of an ancient academy...”

“Then it must be an ancient academy of the north, one without much cultural foundation to it.”

Yu Qi glared at him, but felt that her younger brother made sense upon further thought. The young man had been like a fool before and didn’t even know how to take a taxi. Perhaps he didn’t recognize that many characters, maybe the ancient halls of knowledge in the north really weren’t worth much.

“That’s right... I’ve heard people say that his background is ordinary. What kind of decent education could he have received since he’s not a noble? A lot of ancient academies have closed up shop around the dynasty. We used to have some chances before, but now even that has been snuffed out...” Yu Qi grumbled and finished in an inaudible voice, “I hope he succeeds. It’s been so many years and no one like him.”

“Me too, but... sis... we shouldn’t hold out hope,” Yu Qi answered just as quietly.

“I can’t be bothered talking about it with you!” Yu Qi decided to ignore her brother and left the house.

“Sis, where are you going?”

“To earn money! What are we going to eat tomorrow if I don’t earn more money? You spent 180 coins out of 200 to buy a bunch of paper scraps. I’m so pissed! I’m not giving you the money next time!”

“Sis, that’s knowledge!”

“Bullshit!” Yu Qi cursed, already out the door. Yu Ming remained in a merry mood since he knew that his sister would still give him money next time she earned some.

However, he sighed as he looked at the books behind him. He couldn’t be so wasteful next time. He’d been gripped by impulse yesterday and was familiar with the teacher who sold the books. The teacher was almost out on the streets and his family had nothing to eat. That was why Yu Ming had spent 180 coins to buy these books that’d almost become waste paper.

“Demon Sword... does Demon Sword know what political reform is?” murmured the little boy. Perhaps he didn’t and just wanted to kill people. Oh big sis, don’t hold out too much hope.

.....

Skystar City agitated with a fury; so did the rest of the central region as news spread. Word even reached the four cardinal continents.

Beheading nobles, one hundred of them! The story shocked every corner it reached. Everyone’s eyes were gathered on the central region, on Skystar City.

.....

Silver Moon, White Moon City.

Director General Zhao’s expression shifted rapidly; Huang Yu sank into deep thought.

Kong Jie's forehead was furrowed tightly and he said after a long moment, "I was thinking he'd be quiet for a few days, but now... Ole Zhao, do you think Ole Hou can protect him? Why doesn't he advise the lad? He'll easily get himself into trouble with how he's proceeding..."

The director general remained silent, focusing on the pen in his hand. He wrote and drew certain things—no one knew what. Kong Jie began to fidget impatiently. It was so much effort talking to educated people sometimes!

"Do you have any ideas, Ole Huang?"

"What?" Huang Yu lifted his head with bafflement.

"I said that Li Hao must be in a lot of danger! He was already a public enemy to begin with, but people gave him chances because they were wary of certain things or rules. Not to mention, they were also on guard against each other. He can still find his footing if he withdraws now. Why must he create such an uproar?"

Chapter 669: Not Looking For Anything (IV)

"I just feel that he really might be the death of himself," Kong Jie sighed. "With how he's proceeding and us being far away... Even if we were close at hand, we'd have to fully unseal ourselves to be able to handle an Arcanus. We won't be able to do anything otherwise!"

Kong Jie punctuated his words with another sigh and continued in a plaintive tone, "My daughter's in Skystar City, I almost forgot about that! I hope she isn't dragged into Li Hao's matters. It'd be horrible if she died... ai!"

It was only now that he remembered his daughter was at the royal city? Director General Zhao looked speechlessly at him and said faintly, "I thought you recalled her presence a long time ago."

"I've been brainwashed by Li Hao over the past few days and all I can think about is his name. I don't have the capacity to think about anything else," Kong Jie grumbled. "Forget it, all is fine if she doesn't die. If she does... I'll go kill whoever kills her! I'll take down as many as I can!"

The director general couldn't be bothered to dignify that with a response.

"We can't advise him otherwise or stop him," he said instead after some thought. "I don't know what exactly Li Hao has in mind, but I know that it will be a new beginning whether he succeeds or not. The only thing we can do now is spread the news far and wide! Whether it's to create a bigger audience or give rise to more rumors, at the very least, we need to let people know that Demon Sword Li Hao is commencing some things in Skystar City that no one else dares attempt or has the ability to attempt!"

"And he comes from Silver Moon!" The director general raised his head to look at the other two. "We need to let everyone know that those from Silver Moon have the most spirit and backbone! Others of the dynasty need to know that in this vast world, if we are left out of it, then no one will dare declare themselves first beneath the heavens!"

Director General Zhao stood up with a smile. "As for everything else, let's leave that for him!"

"You... aren't going to do anything?" Kong Jie asked with a wordless look. What use was just advertising? He'd thought that Old Zhao would have some good ideas.

"Go about your business!"

Kong Jie had no option available other than to just leave. Old Zhao was so useless!

Huang Yu shook his head when the inspector general left. "Old Kong's been a bit restless lately. It looks like he wants to head to Skystar City, probably because he's being affected by Li Hao and Hou Xiaochen. He probably finds it uncomfortable standing guard here."

"Standing guard sometimes is an even more difficult choice," the director general commented faintly. "Forget it if he doesn't understand. Where were we? Skystar is just the beginning—the true problem lies in Silver Moon! Can you make it to Skystar City in three days if you travel at full speed?"

The dynastic capital was too far away from them. Hou Xiaochen's convoy had taken seven days by car, and they'd traveled at a decent pace. Martial masters might make it there in three days if they traveled at full strength, but they wouldn't have enough time to recover once they arrived.

"I'll be faster if you give me a partial ride with the helicopter..." Huang Yu looked at the director general. "Do you want me to go?"

"You can go take a look around."

"I thought you'd send Ole Kong," Huang Yu smiled.

"He won't be of much use if he goes."

"Then I'll get there as soon as possible."

"Mmhhh." The two exchanged a few brief words before Huang Yu hastily took his leave. Time was of the essence. Since Ole Zhao had made a decision, then he should make due haste.

.....

As various sides were embroiled in discussion, the subject of their conversations—Li Hao—didn't mind at all. He currently sat in a private room on the ninth floor at the Nine Dragons Pavilion.

Just him.

And a dog.

He was eating food and drinking tea. The female manager from his last visit was serving him, placing choice morsels on his plate and pouring more refreshment. Contrary to his previous visit, she didn't have any complaints this time or find anything untoward about the situation. The only thought in her mind as she watched Li Hao gobble down food was that... the uncommon conducted themselves in an uncommon manner!

She had a lot of questions and doubts, as well as confusion that she wanted to clear with the stunning young man in front of her. However, she didn't dare voice any of them.

"Delicious! The only con is that it's too expensive here." Li Hao heaved a comfortable exhale after he cleared the table.

"Please have as much as you'd like, Commander Li. Someone else is taking care of the bill," chuckled the manager. "Our pavilion master is buying. Apart from precious items such as Water of Life, everything else is free."

"Your pavilion master?"

"Yes, the master of the Nine Dragons Pavilion."

"Isn't that someone from the royal family?"

"That's right, our pavilion master is from the royal family."

"Then my thanks!" Li Hao roared with laughter. "How nice of him. Very well, get me ten more servings of everything I just had. I'm honestly not full yet!"

The manager didn't mind the enormous order; she quickly left the room to give some instructions before returning to her honored guest.

Li Hao burped and lifted his tea cup for a sip. “It’s said that the Nine Dragons Pavilion can do anything. How about a transaction?”

“Please go ahead, commander.”

“The... massive projection that He Yong put together last time, that really large thing. Do you guys have something like that? The kind that can project to thousands and thousands of people and can’t be broken. I want the entire city to see me chop heads off!”

“.....” Weariness washed over the female manager again. Why did this one always voice such... horrifying words! “Yes, but completely avoiding interference is nearly impossible. No one wishes for this matter to become public knowledge.”

“So not even the Nine Dragons Pavilion can accomplish it?”

“We can, but we cannot!”

“I’ll pay.”

“Not even if you pay.” The manager looked at Li Hao with a complicated expression. “This isn’t a matter of money, but whether or not this course of action is permitted. It may not be protestations from others, it could be that we ourselves don’t wish for this to come to pass either.”

“In that case, let’s change to a different reason,” Li Hao laughed. “Say it’s to broadcast my failure and death! You guys need to learn how to bend the rules, it’s not like I’m guaranteed to win! Is a newcomer like me assured to succeed against those guys? Just announce that you want the world to see how Li Hao dies!”

“This... could work!” The manager thought rapidly. “But we’ll need to put in an application for it. After all, the commander is incredibly strong. Not even the nine ministries may be able to easily take you down.”

“Are they that cowardly?” Li Hao burst out laughing. “If they’re such wusses, then it’s all the same whether I project the beheadings or not. How are they to rule over the world if they don’t have even this level of confidence? You’re joking!”

“I’ll do my best,” the manager emphasized. “As for costs... we can waive that. If the request goes through, I think a lot of people will want to see how the commander dies.”

“Yo, the beauty’s gotten more straightforward!” Li Hao tilted his head at her with a smile.

“Someone like the commander might like a more straightforward nature better,” chuckled the manager.

“Good ass kissing!” Li Hao nodded. “I like what I hear! As expected, it’s easy to lose sight of what’s real and important after one comes into power and authority.”

His laughter was echoed by the manager. “Then I’ll put in the application for the commander. In addition, if I may be so bold as to ask a question...”

“Ask away!”

“What does the commander wish to achieve?” She didn’t receive an answer to her question, but didn’t mind. The manager left after a few beats of silence.

What do you wish to achieve? Your actions will plunge you into the depths of despair and danger more perilous than before.

Li Hao barked with laughter right before she exited the private room. “I wish to achieve clear thoughts! Such is martial dao, such are Silver Moon martial masters! You are neither a martial master nor a Silver Moon martial master, so you don’t understand the willingness to endure a

thousand cuts just to pull the emperor off his horse. Didn't the nine ministries accomplish that back in the day?"

The manager nearly tripped over her feet; she quickly rushed out of the room. These weren't words that she could listen to!

Li Hao grinned widely and caressed Panther's head. "I'm not a dog. If I were, I'd eat and sleep and sleep and eat. I wouldn't care about anything. Isn't that right, Panth?"

"Arf arf arf!" Panther shook its head. Dogs had their worries too! Right now, for instance, Li Hao's hand on its head wasn't too comfortable. The noble descendent of a mighty ancient monster spirit shouldn't be treated in such an irritating fashion!

"As I thought, you agree too!" Li Hao laughed and pressed the dog's head downward, giving Panther no choice but to nod.

Forget it, a dog could only bow its head when under someone else's roof. It was enough that it had food to eat, there was no need to consider too much else. All of the mighty ancient monster spirits were no longer, so what did their descendants count for?

At least, this was how Panther tried to comfort itself.

.....

Within the Nine Dragons Pavilion.

Dishes were constantly brought to the table; Li Hao ate some and gave the rest to Panther. The fare of the Nine Dragons Pavilion was quite up to par. It went without saying that it was a feast for the senses, but also contained a great deal of energy.

The chefs here are really good.

The manager returned after a while; merriment could be heard in her voice. “Commander, upstairs has agreed to try. We might have to discuss with the nine ministries for a bit—upstairs is very interested in what the commander said. The nine ministries are not interested in executing nobles, but beheading the commander might be something that a lot of people wish to see.”

Li Hao grinned and nodded without a word. The manager hesitated upon seeing his attitude.

“If someone does attack the commander, it might be powerhouses from the three great organizations apart from the nine ministries and royal family,” she ultimately said. “In addition, the City of Supernaturals might send people. Apart from Sky Sword Mountain of the seven divine mountains, the rest are hard to gauge. There’s also other princes and dukes to consider...”

“You might as well say that everyone in the world, apart from those of Silver Moon, wants to kill me,” Li Hao laughed. There was no need to name so many people.

The young man rose and called out to the black dog. “Panther, we’re going!”

There was no need to linger since his goal had been accomplished. Li Hao patted its head when he saw the dog take a long gulp of all the energy in the room.

“We’re being treated by the pavilion this time, it’s not appropriate for you to do this!” he said with resignation.

“It’s fine!” the manager hastily said. “So long as Master Panther likes what he finds.”

Li Hao smiled. Fear and respect developed when one grew famous or became ruthless. Look at the difference in the pavilion’s treatment of him compared to last time!

Chapter 670: Arcanus! (I)

“Very well, my thanks! I’m off then!” Li Hao tightened his trench coat and strode off. The female manager followed him, not saying a word as she accompanied the young man downstairs. She watched the young man and dog disappear into the darkness.

After a long moment, someone behind her asked faintly, “What are you thinking of?”

She whirled around and ducked her head. “Pavilion master!”

There was an elegant, poised woman behind the manager who held herself with an extraordinary bearing. “Have you learned anything new after conversing with him for a while?” she asked faintly.

The manager thought for a moment before responding, “Brazen, unscrupulous, and unprincipled. He’s a complete lunatic who will sooner or later die without even a burial place. If not this time, then next time. People like him don’t meet with good ends.”

“Is that it?”

“Yes.” The manager nodded. “He’s also extremely cheap and can give Southern Fist a run for his money in that regard.”

“Then we don’t seem to need to worry about too much given what you say,” chuckled the elegant woman. “Do you think he’s being overly confident when it comes to the projection screen in three days, or is this how he wishes to save himself? Some people might have reservations about killing the boy if the entire world is watching him. But of course, it is only due and proper that he is executed to restore order throughout the lands.”

“This subordinate does not know!” The manager shook her head. “Milady, I only think that he is young and hot-blooded. He will stop at nothing, but doesn’t seem to be as thorny of a problem as we once thought. Does he really know the consequences of killing nobles? Perhaps he hasn’t thought about this yet, why not send someone to discuss it with him?”

“You’re the one thinking about things too simply!” the woman commented casually. She was unwilling to say more and vanished on the spot with a flash of her body.

The manager waited for the pavilion master to be gone before lifting her head and looking in the direction where Li Hao had disappeared. He... should understand the consequences!

But will you succeed?

She was suddenly rather expectant and yearned for his success. No one wished to be born a servant or lesser than others. No one wished to be assigned the role of a toy for nobles at birth, their puppet to pull the strings of.

Nobility controlled everything about them—their life, death, sickness, and old age. One could not escape this fate even when they reached Nova. Whether it was the royal family or the nine ministries, who was stronger?

The nine ministries had been the dragon slayers of old, but now they were the evil dragons themselves. With individual families holding the reins of the ministries, everyone had become their servants.

Can you succeed, Li Hao?

Despite how benevolent the pavilion master appeared, the manager didn’t say anything else to her. That woman was part of the nobility at the end of the day, she didn’t know what the people thought.

I’m not as brave as you, no one else. There were once true resistors in Skystar City, but they’re all dead. Those who survive are those who’ve resigned themselves to a life of hardship. Li Hao, can you light the fire of hope for everyone? Even a spark will do! We can’t, but we hope that someone can overturn the oppression from this class hierarchy that is as weighty as Mount Tai. But... is it possible?

The manager quickly turned back to the Nine Dragons Pavilion, dimpling in a charming manner as she welcomed the next guest. The establishment was as lively as ever tonight, full of hustle and

bustle. Although they were short a few of the usual faces, such as the nine ministers, they did not lack for business.

A ball of fire was stuck in the manager's throat. It sputtered, threatening to go out any time. Could that young man fully set it alight? Perhaps... there were countless people like her, craving and hopeful that he would succeed. But this hope might go out at any time and drown in an even deeper darkness.

There are too many mountains over your head, Li Hao. Can you level them all?

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The vast Skystar City seemed like a volcano ready to erupt. On this day, fires arose in countless hearts, whether those of insight or others who refused to accept their lot in life. All of them yearned for something and they shared the same identity—the common people. Although life was difficult in this age, some ordinary people were still required for their labor. The nobles weren't all-powerful.

The threat of sophisticated might had turned the capital into a swamp of stagnant water. It wasn't until today that someone was willing to step forward and break the stalemate. While the rest of the people were not brave enough to join him, he was reinforced by prayers and hopes that this flame of hope would not go out.

If it did, an even darker era awaited them.

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Within the gloom.

Li Hao walked down a street and looked around, saying calmly, “Why don’t you come out and kill me now, or I’ll kill all of you if you continue following me! Do you have a death wish in tailing a peacemaker commissioner like this?”

Nothing answered him from the dark. Li Hao sneered and reverberated the ground with a stomp of his foot, shaking someone into meat paste. Sword qi raced into the air and immediately ripped another person to shreds. Panther disappeared like a hunter in the darkness; several low screams quickly sounded from the dog’s direction.

After that, Li Hao left with the dog.

“He’s completely out of control.” Someone appeared in the darkness after a while. There’s no need to follow him, he’ll show himself again in three days, no matter what he’s going to do. Perhaps he’s gone to look for help, perhaps he’s in closed door cultivation. No matter what, we’ll make a clean sweep of everyone who comes. Let him go!”

A figure swiftly retreated in the darkness. Just as the speaker had said, it didn’t matter who Li Hao went to visit. Even if it was Sky Sword, he would be captured if he dared buy into this operation!

All they needed was some time to reach an accord. The only answer to their plans was if Li Hao ran off. But if he did, he would become the laughingstock of the world, so he could just try doing that.

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Li Hao broke through the void in the darkness, exiting the city before long. The atmosphere within the capital was too stifling. He continued forward and crossed the Skystar Sea. No one followed him now.

Perhaps his absence was better for Skystar City. If that came to pass, it would result in less effort required to thoroughly erase the influence that Li Hao exerted before. Otherwise, moving against the young man now wasn’t a good idea for some people. The Arcanus cultivation level was not yet stable.

Li Hao put everything out of his mind and flew a very, very far distance away. His eyes sparkled meaningfully when he saw a large mountain start to loom closer in his field of view. A ball of light within the mountain indicated the presence of a Nova level major monster spirit.

This mountain had an owner.

“Panth!” Li Hao looked at the black dog. “Go have a friendly chat with it. Kill it if it’s ever eaten humans. If not, have some fun playing with it!”

“Arf arf!” Panther vanished on the spot with a twinkle; it also moved very quickly.

Shortly afterward, the ball of light within the mountain flickered in and out of sight. When Li Hao landed, he saw a major monster spirit that resembled a rhinoceros; it was several dozens of times the size of Panther. Shaking violently, it meekly permitted the dog to sprawl on its head. It didn’t dare move.

“I’m just borrowing your wonderful home for a few days. I’ll leave after that.” Li Hao grinned.

“Please do as you wish, milord!” The rhinoceros’ thought ripples quavered. “Commander... Li... could you ask... this ancient monster spirit lord to... slightly retract the power of its bloodline... This minor spirit cannot endure the stress.”

“You know me?”

“Milord’s name has traveled throughout the central region. Minor spirits will recognize you as soon as they see you...” the rhinoceros answered carefully.

Of course they did! A dog spirit, sword cultivator, formidable, and cruel. Who else would it be if not Li Hao and Panther? These days, who in the central region did not know of this name, be it powerhouse, monster spirit, or human?

The only detail they didn't know was why Li Hao had left Skystar City to come here. It'd almost scared the rhinoceros spirit out of its skin.

"How interesting. Indeed, it would be difficult to make my name widely known if I did not visit Skystar City!" Li Hao laughed and walked into the cave in the rear, leaving Panther to gently smack the rhino's head.

Be quiet and less bullshit!

The rhino spirit didn't dare defy the ancient monster spirit. It was just an initial Nova and swaggered around in ordinary times. But... there was nothing to do but submit when these two. How many Novas had they already killed?

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Inside the cave.

Li Hao wasn't thinking much. He freshened up the air with a casual wave of his hand. The young man hadn't gone to anyone, not even the nearby Sky Sword. The rest of his acquaintances weren't on his list of potential recruitment. Li Hao set the fateful date for three days, not seven or ten, because he didn't want anyone to make it in time.

For the group in Silver Moon, ten thousand kilometers was almost impossible to cover in three days. Li Hao knew full well that danger lay ahead—it wasn't his desire that they were repeatedly dragged into the muck.

Three days was a deadline for himself and for the nine ministries and royal family. As for Hou Xiaochen... he was already caught in the jar, and that wasn't from Li Hao actions. The young man couldn't decide how Hou Xiaochen would think about everything.

"All of you think that I can only rely on others and wait for death. Is being brash or ensuring that my victories don't result in any deeds of merit the best you can do?" Li Hao chuckled. He could afford to wait and keep waiting... and waiting...

But he didn't like that course of action. It was maddening and frustrating! At the same time, it was a rare opportunity. Who knew when another chance would come around, if at all? If he acted, he needed to be swift and sure to clean house. On the other hand, small and consistent accumulation would not lead to such results.

At this stage, they should call upon their fortitude to break everything! Otherwise, I can easily seek out Ying Hongyue, then return to Silver City to finish perceiving sword intent and perfecting the melding of the five auras. I can think about what's to come only after I enter Refiner of Spirit, but that will make me the next Yao Si!