

Star Gate 671

Chapter 671: Arcanus! (II)

How much longer did he need? Would he want to wait for his next breakthrough after achieving Summoner of Spirit?

The lock of my heart is saturated...

Li Hao thought back to a short conversation he'd held with Manager Yu. Martial masters released their potential when they broke their locks, a potential that devoured their internal force. However, supernaturals had a hope of converting back to martial dao, so long as they did not break their locks of the five organs. If the source of their internal origin, the source of a martial master, remained, then there was a chance of converting back.

Or perhaps, one still had a chance of converting back if only one lock of the five organs was broken. But for someone like Sky Sword who'd broken two and fully set foot into Arcanus, a return conversion was exceedingly difficult. It would be very, very hard for him to return to martial dao!

Various thoughts floated through Li Hao's mind. There'd always been someone to help him—Silver Moon martial masters unsealed themselves again and again for him. He would've died many times over if not for sword energy. Each time, someone else paid the price of keeping him alive.

Why?

Had they ever given thought to what might happen if their locks completely shattered and weren't suppressed in time? Wouldn't that mean all of their previous cultivation efforts were down the drain? There was a grave risk every time Hong Yitang and the others took action. Had they truly never given thought to the consequences of Li Hao not being able to help them in time?

Outsiders only knew that they'd benefited from each instance of disaster. How many considered the dangers contained?

Li Hao chuckled softly after some moments of furious thinking. People were willing to ride into danger for him, but he was overcautious about taking any action. How was he supposed to follow his heart in this manner?

Crack!

A chain snapped, the one of his left arm! Energy surged out as a vast quantity of energy gathered upon his left arm. Li Hao had encircled himself with a variety of high rank mysterious power stones. He devoured the vast energy emanating from them.

The young man had come to a decision! Today, he was going to break his locks and become a supernatural! He would break the ones of his limbs, spine, and zifu. Six locks were needed to set foot into Arcanus—he would leave the ones of his five organs to retain some chances of converting back.

Regular people couldn't locate the locks of their zifu and spine, but Li Hao could. Therefore, most people had to break two locks of their organs to set foot into Arcanus, but the young man did not need to do so.

Indeed, Li Hao was about to commence the unthinkable. Though he was a premier existence on the path of martial dao, he chose to break six locks and ascend to Arcanus! He would keep only the lock of his organs to contain the source of his internal force!

He instantly snapped the second lock—the ones he was breaking weren't saturated. Supernaturals didn't need to consider that step and Li Hao's locks were also exceedingly strong. His were much stronger than a regular person's.

With two locks broken, Li Hao was a bonafide supernatural as mysterious power once more rushed into his body.

Darkmoon!

As for energy attribute... It was unattributed. The energy wasn't part of the five elements because Li Hao hadn't broken one of the locks of the organs.

Panther abruptly appeared at the door. Shock was written across its doggy face. It didn't choose to absorb the mysterious power for once. Instead, it gaped at the human. What... are you doing?

"Go keep watch. Devour whatever energy leaks out and don't let it spread. I can't have any attention drawn here!"

"Arf arf arf!" Panther called out, as if reminding Li Hao not to do this.

"Get out!"

The dog slunk off with its tail between its legs. Despite its unwillingness to move, it was forced to back down by Li Hao's glare. It reluctantly shuffled out of the mountain cave, slapping the rhinoceros down with an angry paw.

The chains could not be broken! Even if a return conversion was possible, Li Hao would find it more difficult to progress in martial dao in the future. Take Hou Xiaochen and the others, for example. Although they had broken through their bottlenecks, they'd spent a very long period of time before connecting the supernatural locks again, due to having undergone a conversion process back in the day.

Li Hao did not need to take this step. His road ahead was very long since he'd yet to encounter any bottlenecks.

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Panther couldn't dissuade the young man from his chosen course. In fact, Li Hao believed that his teacher would support him if the old man was here. It wasn't like he was fully severing his path.

Three locks, four locks...

The first four of the limbs were easily broken. Strong unique power rushed out of the limbs to devour his internal force. Four locks meant he was a Solar, a cultivation realm out of reach for most. However, it was as easy as drinking water for Li Hao. The special power surging out was very violent, but the young man's highly fortified body permitted it to rampage where it would.

Tremendous mysterious power roiled within his body. His four limbs were furiously devouring internal force to convert it to formidable mysterious power. Li Hao's Solar cultivation level was different from regular supernaturals. It was stronger!

Rumble!

Blood circulated at a faster speed as the sound of waves crashing upon the shore traveled through the air. The first four locks were simple, the fifth and the sixth would be much harder. One of them was of his spine, the other of his zifu. The latter released energy of the body and might have something to do with the wind attribute.

Li Hao had enhanced his body after absorbing wind energy. The lock of the spine could possibly be traced to the thunder attribute. He'd fortified his bones after devouring that attribute's energy. Both of these locks were tied to elemental attributes. If both were broken, it might give rise to a wind and thunder Arcanus.

However, the collision of the two elements would be the greatest problem faced by numerous supernaturals. On the other hand, this thorny issue was of no significance to Li Hao's organs, body, and bones.

He swiftly converted internal force to mysterious power. The power released by the breaking of a lock was very special—it wasn't just mysterious power. There was no time for Li Hao to study it in detail as he had his eyes set on the fifth lock of the spine!

Breaking a lock of the bones would make him a thunder supernatural. He would be a Nova after this lock. The young man locked onto his target with his mind. It'd been bullshit when he told He Yong that he couldn't do so—he just didn't want to deal a blow to Southern Fist's confidence.

Li Hao hesitated in this moment. It would be so much harder to return to the path of martial masters after he became a Nova.

However, he proceeded with resolution and smashed through the lock. When it came to power, all power was power, whether it came from the self or outside sources. There were people who took the ancient path of energy to its peak all the same.

Crack!

BOOM!

Thunder and lightning danced through the sky.

Outside the mountain cave.

Thunder ripped through the firmament, along with the sound of chains breaking. Panther smacked the rhino into howling with pain. The monster spirit's roars intimidated the rest of the mountain so much that everything fell silent.

There were powerhouses keeping an eye on the proceedings from the foot of the mountain. When it came to these major monster spirits, those on the ground still kept a careful eye on them. It wasn't out of a desire to kill, but to ensure that they knew as soon as possible when a monster spirit left the mountain.

At the foot of the mountain.

Numerous people were hiding in a small dip in the terrain. “This Jade Moon Rhinoceros sounds a little different its usual. What’s going on?”

“It sounds like thunder on the mountain peak!”

“Is the major monster spirit about to ascend?”

“Who knows, perhaps it’s having a good moment with a female monster spirit, heh!” The group of people chortled, but didn’t dare go up for a look. That was a Nova level monster spirit! As for thunder and lightning at the mountain peak... That was a very normal occurrence. It was also the monster spirit’s territory, so they would leave him to it. They just needed to know where the monster spirit was going when it left the mountain.

BOOM!

That last discharge was very loud, but the crowd chose to ignore it, knowing that a major monster spirit lived on the mountain.

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Inside the mountain cave.

Lightning crackled around Li Hao. As he thought, thunder supernaturals were part of the unique attribute system. They might have shattered the locks of their spine at birth, which gave the young man some other thoughts.

Wind, thunder, and other unique supernaturals might be able to set foot into Arcanus if they broke just one lock of their five organs. The strain on their five organs wouldn’t be too great. Only Arcanus of the five elements would endure unimaginable pressure. Perhaps the unique supernaturals would be much more stable as Arcanus.

Of course, the wind and thunder attributes also required mighty bone structure and physical bodies. That was a difficult prerequisite for supernaturals and overloading their capabilities was a normal occurrence.

Li Hao understood full well that, compared to the rest, it was easier for these unique supernaturals to ascend to Arcanus. Therefore, there might be Arcanus like them in existence at the moment who were moderately strong, but endured much less strain on their bodies. Not everyone would be like the old Steadfast Duke. His cultivation level was truly unstable.

It was now that Li Hao truly sensed the might of supernaturals. Thunder and lightning exploded within his body, racing through internal force to transform it into thunder mysterious power. The unattributed mysterious power in his body began its transformation as well, shaking the young man with the tremendous impact!

If it wasn't for his formidable body, he might've been burned to a crisp by lightning the second he set foot into Nova. Mysterious power stones crumbled around him and transformed into current son power that surged into his body. Thunder mysterious power raged through Li Hao; Stellaris emanated rays of sword energy to pacify, calm, and suppress it.

The young man's bones vibrated as he momentarily turned purple, lightning shooting out from his hair.

Chapter 672: Arcanus! (III)

"I'm a Nova!" Li Hao laughed. He'd required only an hour to cross the threshold that most found impossible to attempt. His thoughts turned to Hao Lianchuan, someone who was possibly still stymied by an act as simple as breaking five supernatural locks. I... took only an hour to go from nothing as a martial master to becoming a Nova.

The fifth lock hadn't been too hard, the true test would come at six.

The subsequent clash and conflict between thunder and wind would be the most troublesome. Of course, Li Hao had a trump card to play in the form of sword energy. As violent as the clash might be, he could neutralize it with sword energy.

However, he wouldn't utilize it unless he had no other choice. While sword energy could neutralize mysterious power, the calmed power lacked its inherent domineering qualities. It was transformed to a gentle current. However, the strongest aspect of supernaturals was in their dominating power!

He could rest and recover from his injuries with sword energy, but it was best not to use it in battle. That would turn the overbearing mysterious power into a fluffy sheep.

Li Hao was in no hurry to break the sixth supernatural lock. He focused on swiftly devouring energy instead, pulling from large sums of mysterious power stones to strengthen the energy inside his body.

Not only that, but his five organs were in operation as well. He was building the true five bridges between them—five chains slowly melded into each other. Yuan Shuo hadn't wanted him to rush this process because it might strengthen the five organs beyond control. Li Hao didn't care about that anymore. The circumstances would also be different after he transformed into a supernatural. Perhaps he wouldn't need them anymore.

Even if he did, he most likely wouldn't need to be concerned about them raging out of control.

He focused on building the five real bridges because he needed to seal off the organs to prevent mysterious power from invading them. Otherwise, the previous bridges of internal force would soon be swallowed. When mysterious power invaded the five organs, they would easily turn even the organs into an amalgamation of mysterious power.

Chains shot through the air; five crystalline chains stood side by side. There was a ferocious tiger crouching on one of them, a willow tree swaying on another, a stalwart mountain peak firmly planted on one chain, and one with waves rearing over it...

Li Hao wanted to completely fuse these five into one chain. That would shut off all access to his organs, saving them for the day in which he converted back to martial dao.

Two chains crashed into each other. Fuse!

BOOM!

Mind intent erupted as their auras clashed with each other. It gave Li Hao a preview of how auras with different attributes conflicted with each other. Their collision created an effect that was very close to Arcanus suffering.

Water and fire intermixed, giving rise to rumbles of explosive energy within the mountain cave. Sword intent enclosed the area with a protective dome. The Eternal Sword emanated sword intent to suppress the twin auras. For the moment, these auras could not rip through another aura that the young man had comprehended.

Panther opened its mouth outside the cave, devouring everything in the four directions. No energy remained; all of it found its way into the dog's stomach. The more it took in, the more agitated it became. This meant that the mysterious power in Li Hao's body was growing stronger. That was not good!

At the very least, the dog's limited heritage memories from its bloodline painted a picture of the Human King as a martial master. The ancient path of energy had ultimately been defeated! Perhaps that was too far off for Li Hao, but Panther felt that they could walk to that step!

Of course they could! Would Li Hao be able to surpass the ancients if he could not convert back?

Back in the mountain cave, Li Hao focused on perfecting the bridges of the five organs while absorbing mysterious power at the same time. He needed to be unequivocally strong before he broke through the barrier of the zifu and truly became an Arcanus.

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Li Hao disappeared.

The second day.

No one had seen Li Hao all day and no one knew where he'd gone. Perhaps he'd run off!

This possible development quickly made the rounds, perpetuated by those who wanted everyone to know that Li Hao had disappeared after a trip to the Nine Dragons Pavilion.

Within Skystar City.

“Apparently, Demon Sword ran away in the middle of the night!” someone roared with laughter. “Isn't that interesting? He said he was going to behead nobles, but he's run off!”

People rushed to and fro on the streets. Some wore wooden expressions, others tightened their fists.

“They said that he ran off a few days ago as well,” someone snorted. “And then the Four Seas Company was no more!”

They didn't believe it! Those bearing hope didn't believe that Li Hao had deserted them. They weren't willing to believe it. He'd just lit a spark of hope for them. Everyone wanted to see nobles being brought to justice. But... what if Li Hao really had run off?

Then this world would utterly be without hope. It would be such a dark and dim place. The hope that'd just flared to life in their hearts would resolve into an even bleaker abyss.

“Just wait and see if you don't believe me! He might actually be dead instead of running away. He's offended the three great organizations and might've been assassinated!”

“Hmph!” No one was in the mood to debate. They were all a little worried and somewhat expectant. Three days... no, it was two days now. Would Demon Sword come back? He wasn't really dead, was he?

No one was willing to believe that he'd truly left them behind.

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Night Watcher headquarters.

Hou Xiaochen leaned back against a chair, wordlessly contemplating something. Li Hao hadn't discussed his plan of beheading nobles ahead of time. Hou Xiaochen had cursed the lad for a few words at first, then quickly understood the young man's intentions.

And yet, this was when Li Hao disappeared.

Hou Xiaochen thought for a while longer before taking out a transmission pendant. “Sky Sword, has Li Hao gone to Sky Sword Mountain?”

Last time, Manager Yu went in person to pull Sky Sword out of seclusion. After that, the two sides exchanged transmission pendants to facilitate communication. Thus, Hou Xiaochen decided to still ask the man first.

“No!” The response was simple and to the point.

Hou Xiaochen furrowed his brows. No? Then where had Li Hao gone?

“Will you come?” He sent after some quiet moments.

“We’ll see.” With that, Sky Sword turned his pendant off. Hou Xiaochen didn’t know whether to laugh or cry; the guy was so haughty!

“Little Yu, where do you think Li Hao’s gone off to?”

Manager Yu shook her head, but her thoughts traveled to Li Hao’s visit yesterday. He’d come to ask about supernaturals converting back to martial masters. That gave her some ideas, but she didn’t know if she should voice them or not.

She didn’t dare say anything because they were too horrifying. The young man they spoke about was a Silver Moon martial master, the hope of this generation and of countless people. He stood a chance of continuing to smash through more obstacles and continuing forward. There was more hope resting on his shoulders for him to even surpass the older generation.

Martial masters were the key and core to Silver Moon. Not to mention, Li Hao would need to break six locks to stand a chance against his enemies. That would be those of the four limbs and two of the organs. But once he broke two locks of the organs, that would mean he had almost no hope of converting back. Such were the straits that Sky Sword found himself in.

Of course, that might not apply since he could possibly be a unique supernatural. No one was certain of what attribute he was.

Manager Yu truly wanted to relay the conversation to Hou Xiaochen, but she recalled how Li Hao had grinned so radiantly at her last night. “Don’t tell Ole Hou, I’m here to speak to Yu Luocho, not Secretary Yu. Yu Luocho is an eccentric, high-handed person who doesn’t run her mouth.”

Manager Yu attempted to say a few words, but ultimately stayed quiet instead. She was beginning to regret her actions from last night. She shouldn’t have said anything to the young man! If things had progressed according to her expectations, then... many people would be disappointed.

“Little Yu, are you alright?” Hou Xiaochen’s question brought her back to the present. She lifted her head and responded somewhat guiltily.

“I’m fine, just a bit worried that Li Hao seems to be getting himself into increasingly greater trouble. We don’t have time to breathe between the incidents. The guy’s too tyrannical, he’s different from before!”

Hou Xiaochen glanced at her and didn’t say anything. “It might not be that dangerous. Most in the world are unstable Arcanus.”

“The nine ministries may be willing to pay a hefty price if they wish to kill Li Hao,” the manager whispered. “They’ll whisper in Arcanus ears that so long as they take action, the ministries will pay large quantities of Water of Life. Red Moon might offer up large sums of blood pearls. They won’t be sitting on their hands! Ying Hongyue can absolutely offer high quality blood pearls to some Arcanus if they could kill Li Hao for the organizations.

“Some Arcanus might take the risk because they lack these resources to begin with. Some metamorphoses might be tempted to do the same or force themselves to ascend for the sake of a promise or tangible benefit!

“Certain metamorphoses can absolutely be Arcanus. Those who haven’t chosen to make that leap refrain because it is too dangerous. The various institutions only need sufficient resources to quickly create a batch of Arcanus!”

“Have you not thought about this, director?” Manager Yu looked at Hou Xiaochen. She didn’t believe that he hadn’t.

The man sighed without a response. He had! There weren’t many Arcanus in the world yet, but there were plenty of metamorphoses. Would they be willing to take the risk of ascension if the various institutions were willing to pay a hefty price, such as fifty drops of Water of Life?

The opportunity was right in front of them. Ascending to Arcanus might not lead to death, but future attempts to advance after missing out on this opportunity would most likely lead to self-detonation. Fifty drops of Water of Life more or less guaranteed nearly complete stabilization of the five organs.

One could not underestimate the ability and riches of these major organizations. Fifty drops were quite a lot, but Hou Xiaochen believed that everyone could stand to offer it. They wouldn't need to risk their own Arcanus at that point in time, they could just use outsiders.

Chapter 673: Li Hao Returns (I)

Were there many metamorphosis experts in the world?

Yes!

Some provinces possessed them, some pirates had them, and some of the deputies of various institutions were at the metamorphosis level. These people were one step away from breaking through, but that one step obstructed a lot of people.

Few were those who could decline an opportunity to soar to the heavens with one step.

Hou Xiaochen breathed out heavily. He didn't voice these thoughts simply because he didn't want to. It would be quite a blow to morale if he did. Li Hao might find many more Arcanus facing him if he returned in two days, rather than the few that he expected now.

Hou Xiaochen once said to Li Hao that he would handle everyone over metamorphosis and indeed, the man was ready for such a fight. But there was so much pressure on his shoulders that he had to call up Sky Sword and ask if the man was coming! He wouldn't have done so before.

"Director," Manager Yu offered upon seeing Hou Xiaochen remain quiet. "Can I stand against an Arcanus if I fully unseal myself? Just... how strong are they?"

“They’re very, very strong,” Hou Xiaochen responded with a close look at her. “You won’t be able to match them unless you fully snap multiple supernatural locks. In our current state, it will take... nine saturated locks for a martial master to stand against one if they don’t completely break their locks. Nine saturated locks is a completion of a basic circulatory loop. Martial masters under that condition will be able to battle Arcanus!”

Nine locks!

Manager Yu blinked and sank into deep thought. She’d just saturated her fifth lock and could just barely unseal herself. She was closer to the He Yong of before. In this state, it would be a grand enough feat for her to fight metamorphosis experts if she didn’t fully snap her locks. She had no hope against Arcanus.

The only possibility was if she fully snapped her five locks. That and the innate ferocity of martial masters meant that she might be able to battle Arcanus straight off the bat when she ascended as a supernatural. But she was also likely to die from the violent impact of her sudden mysterious power. After all, her foundations did not run that deep.

“Don’t think so much, be at peace, it will be fine!” Hou Xiaochen exhaled softly. “I’m here, as is He Yong. He’s an opportunistic guy, but he’s a Silver Moon martial master at the end of the day, so he should step forward...”

“Li Hao set the deadline as three days later—there’s only two days left now,” Manager Yu said softly. “That’s so little time. Otherwise, Northern Fist, Tyrant Blade, and Earthturner Sword and Light Sword in Silver Moon might have rushed over to help. He... didn’t leave much leeway for us.”

Indeed, there was too little time! A distance of more than twenty thousand kilometers in three short days meant that one would have to travel seven to eight thousand kilometers a day. That was a tall order even for Earthturner Sword and the others.

What are you thinking about, Li Hao? Are you unwilling to let everyone come? Or do you think that it doesn’t matter if they’re present since they won’t make much of a difference?

Hou Xiaochen closed his eyes, finding his emotions rising in this moment. Kid, I just hope that you can handle more of what you bit off. I don't want you to constantly have a death wish as even I find the situation difficult this time.

If I had known this would happen, I wouldn't have made you a vice commander. I underestimated you! You said you wanted to see the world in coming to Skystar City. Perhaps you can truly see clearly this time, but I worry that you'll gain only unlimited disappointment after you see your fill! The nine ministries and royal family might be your enemies as well now. Do you still carry hope in your heart?

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It was another day in the blink of an eye. This was the second day, Li Hao's time would be up the day after tomorrow.

Bam!

Wind energy swirled in a mountain cave; the young man vomited blood as wind and thunder crashed against each other. Despite how strong his body was, he was finding it difficult to endure the strain. His organs shook, but a massively thick chain had them all locked together.

Li Hao slowly snapped his sixth supernatural lock, gradually releasing wind energy! Wind and thunder collided with each other as they melded together. Cracks fractured Li Hao's body, bright-red blood instantly evaporating when it came in contact with the air.

"Show me what is true Arcanus!" Li Hao grinned radiantly. I, Li Hao, am about to set foot into Arcanus!

Let's go!

Let this storm rage even fiercer! I'd like to see how many Arcanus in the world can rival me when I'm at their level and wield two heritage weapons! I won't need anyone to rescue me in the future. I will rescue myself!

Crack!

The chain of his zifu fully snapped.

"Oof!" he grunted as bones and muscles tore and were reborn, broke and were reborn... Drops of Water of Life surged into his body. A tremendous amount of sword energy repaired his body. As good as the Arcanus level was, it posed too much of a strain on the body.

But I'm an Arcanus now!

Wind and thunder rose, rain descended. Rumble! Thunder and lightning ripped through the sky around the mountain cave. Gale winds howled and rain smashed to the ground. A furious storm arrived near the mountain.

The sky shifted with the rain. Li Hao made it to Arcanus on this day. He was no longer the weakling that needed his master to bitterly fight off a Solar pursuer on that rainy day.

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The third day, Skystar City.

Tomorrow would be the first day after Li Hao's imposed deadline, the day in which he beheaded nobles. The atmosphere within the city today was too stifling.

Li Hao had run off!

Disseminated by countless nobles, the news spread far and wide. Some nobles jeered, “Li Hao’s just all talk! He’s doomed to die himself if he really does execute nobles in public!”

The families of those who’d been taken ran straight for the Night Watchers, demanding that the agency release their people. Li Hao the butcher was already gone, were they going to persist in this course of action?

The Silver Moon Guards had sealed off the yard holding the prisoners and taken the Night Watchers’ places, but that transferred all of the pressure to their shoulders instead. Even some deputy directors within the Night Watchers called for them to release their prisoners.

The situation couldn’t continue like this! It was one thing when Li Hao was present—he was a perfect scapegoat. But since he was gone, they had to release the nobles!

Yellow Dragon was one such person agitating for release. His sarcastic mockery dwindled somewhat only when Hou Xiaochen appeared.

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The Night Watchers.

The headquarters was nearly overrun by people. Not only did those outside raise a fuss, but so did the nobles being held inside the yard for multiple days. Some received news of the happenings on the outside.

“Let’s see how long he holds us for!” one sneered.

“He’s crazy. Nothing good comes from showing off one’s edge that keenly!”

“Weren’t you guys scared to death two days ago? Are you not afraid anymore?”

“.....” Nobles grinned happily, ignoring the stench of their bodies. Li Hao had run away! Granted, similar circumstances had occurred last time and he’d shown up in a full force again, but he faced only one ministry then. This time, he faced the entire world.

The circumstances were very different.

Some people looked merrily at Mu Xiaorong. “Miss Mu, is it about time that we leave now? Minister Mu is probably anxious as well. Why not come out with us? I bet those northern savages won’t dare do anything to us!”

“Brother Yu.” Someone else addressed the grandson of the North Sea King in a friendly manner. “Senior North Sea King is probably waiting for Brother Yu to reunite with the family.”

The youngster smiled and didn’t say anything. Calling pirates their brothers... Li Hao had mentioned this before and it was on full display now. This was because the youngster’s grandfather was the North Sea King!

The North Sea King commanded tens of thousands of supernaturals beneath his banner, as well as numerous powerhouses. There were instances when nobles submitted, even in this age. When the other was very strong, for example. The nobles would’ve been willing to bend the knee had Li Hao not insisted on killing them.

Since he had, then no one would play by his rules.

The two being addressed possessed the loftiest identities among those present. But when they didn’t concur with the proposal to leave, that caused hesitation among the various nobles.

“Are you two not leaving yet? There’s nothing to be had here, just a bunch of people looking at us. Thousands of people being crammed into a space like this makes everything stink to the high heavens...” A voice rose in complaint, but fear yet marked the depths of their hearts.

A young man walked out the next moment with cold haughtiness on his face. “I’ll leave if none of you do! I’ll see who dares stop me!”

He strode forward. There were Silver Moon Guards standing at the yard entrance, ones who looked coldly at the young man approaching them.

“Open your idiotic eyes wide!” sneered the young man as he took out a medallion. “I am Zhou Chao, a high rank chief commissioner of the Night Watchers! My father is a deputy director of the Night Watchers! Does Li Hao have any evidence that I have committed crimes after so many days of locking me up? Obviously not! Hurry up and step aside, or no one will be able to protect you guys!”

None of the Silver Moon Guards gave a response, and neither did they give way. They unsheathed the blades in their hands.

Step aside? Never!

Silver Moon martial masters were not stronger than others or in possession of a third hand or extra courage, but they were indeed more arbitrary and domineering than the rest! They were less afraid of death!

Chapter 674: Li Hao Returns (II)

Chen Jin walked over from his post nearby and bared his teeth at the youngster. “I’ll hack you into two if you come out! Commander Li isn’t here and Director Hou hasn’t said anything, so you can just try putting a foot over the line!”

“Chen Jin!” The youngster plainly knew Chen Jin and snapped back, “Remember that you are in Skystar City! This is not the savage wild lands of Silver Moon! I gave Li Hao face and allowed him

three days to make his investigations. It's been three days. You don't have the right to hold me anymore!"

The hubbub raised quite some attention and everyone in the yard looked their way. Some Night Watchers watched from a distance. Big Eyes and the others looked observed from even further away. A strange look filled their eyes—Deputy Director Zhou's son wanted to leave.

Li Hao wasn't here. He'd disappeared after Hou Xiaochen showed himself. Deputy Director Zhou, however, was among the group of Night Watchers watching from the outside. He was in the same clique as Yellow Dragon. With Director Yao abstaining from operations, these two deputy directors represented the Night Watchers. Deputy Director Zhou's son, however, was detained to present day.

Zhou Chao's anger was not an impulsive reaction. The trio immediately ran through the possibilities. This might be a probing of Li Hao's capabilities or forcing him to acquiesce to their will. Regardless, both deputy directors were nearby. One was a metamorphosis, the other a peak Nova. They were both confident that they could prevent Li Hao from taking action when he returned.

"Zhou Chao is a peak Solar, Chen Jin is just a Dominator," Big Eyes transmitted to her comrades after a quick look around. "The difference between them is obvious to see. On the Silver Moon Guard side, Golden Spear seems to be in seclusion and Mu Lin is strong enough, but he focuses on defense. There's probably no one else among the Guards who can stop Zhou Chao."

She looked around the premises and saw that many Night Watchers were present. There were Novas, Solars, and those beneath Solar. Powerhouses abounded at the Night Watcher headquarters. The deputy and principal directors were peak Nova at the very least, or metamorphosis. Apart from Hou Xiaochen and Yellow Dragon each being the commander of a cardinal direction, the other three were also staffed by peak Novas.

There were also a lot of other Nova heavyweights, such as Hu Qingfeng and Big Eyes themselves.

Everyone was watching with bated breath. There were eleven directors total at the Night Watchers—one principal and ten deputies. They were almost all sitting at their posts in headquarters. Those who weren't had made it back in the last two days.

Deputy directors walked out of their office buildings and frowned in the yard's direction. Could Yellow Dragon and the rest not contain themselves after Li Hao left? Hou Xiaochen actually exerted less authority over the scene than Li Hao.

Everyone knew that Hou Xiaochen was a veteran official and would be wary of certain things at times. But Li Hao was a pure martial master, his titles spontaneously given and the young man didn't have the experience to back them up. Therefore, people were cautious of Hou Xiaochen, but being cautious didn't mean being afraid of him.

Instead, they were afraid of Li Hao! That was definitely a person who killed without blinking!

Yellow Dragon and Deputy Director Zhou convened not too far away. They watched silently without a word—but their presence also levied a certain amount of pressure. The others standing by their side weren't Night Watchers, but senior officials from other ministries. A deputy minister from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, for example, and another from the Ministry of Armed Forces, a peacemaker commissioner from the Ministry of Foreign Relations...

When they walked out together, they seemed to bolster Zhou Chao's confidence. "Don't you dare run completely lawless, Chen Jin! This is Skystar City and I am a high rank chief commissioner! And you are? What right do you have to stop me or hold me? Stand down!!

"Does the Silver Moon Guard wish to mutiny?!" roared the youngster.

A light danced in the eyes of the nobles on the scene. So it began. The internals of the Night Watchers were beginning to force Li Hao's hand and demand Hou Xiaochen to release the people. Even if the young man came back after the fact, was he going to go to everyone's homes to capture his prisoners again or kill them?

Powerhouses stood in the distance, a sight that did not go unnoticed by the crowd in the yard.

"My grandfather's here!" someone muttered with excitement.

“My dad’s here too...”

“Hahaha!”

“We can finally leave... It’s been awful the past couple of days and I never want to come to this forsaken place again.”

“Same!”

“.....”

The nobles were highly excited when they saw their family. These days had been such an arduous hardship! Their family had wanted them to wait since they would try to brainstorm a solution. The prisoners grew frantic when no news was forthcoming. Tomorrow was the last day of Li Hao’s imposed deadline, so they should be deciding on the list of names tonight.

No one had come to a decision, if for no reason other than they could not do so because it would give too much offense. They needed to wait for news from outside.

Some minor nobles were also excited, despite not seeing their family. They were most likely to be part of the one hundred. Now that the nobles were striking back at Li Hao, they could benefit from the sides and wouldn’t have to die.

Who wanted to die?

Their lives were so comfortable in the laps of luxury and they could seek out some fun at the Four Seas Island when they were bored. Who wanted to die?

.....

The director's office building.

Yao Si silently watched the proceedings as Little Ye introduced softly, "That's Zhou Chao, Deputy Zhou's son."

Yao Si lifted his tea cup for a sip. There was no longer Water of Life in his tea. He simply watched events unfold and asked gently after a moment, "What is his crime?"

"Um... ah... no crime..." Little Ye was very nervous. She'd come to the Night Watchers five years ago and rather understood this old director. What she understood was that he liked to drink tea and read newspapers everyday, he didn't care about anything else.

She'd thought this one was a hero among heroes five years ago. She didn't think so five years later. This one... was old!

"It's just us two here, what are you afraid of?" Yao Si said softly. "Forget whatever his crime is. I just want to get to know him. What do you think of him as a person?"

Little Ye was a bit nervous. The old director normally didn't berate people; he'd only suddenly lost his temper once a few days ago. She lowered her voice when her thoughts traveled here and whispered, "Zhou Chao... is nothing good. I don't know much about anything else, but he's forced many... sisters... in the Night Watchers... to his will. No one dares make a fuss about it and his father, the deputy director, knows about it too.

"We don't have many with power or influence among our ranks. Many of our members are powerhouses recruited from the general population. There are some minor martial masters, some Starlight and Darkmoon. Everyone knows that the Night Watchers are a legitimate organization, which prompts their submission. They just close their eyes and bear the happenings when it occurs."

This was the Night Watchers, not the nine ministries. There weren't many nobles among the Night Watchers as the agency had been formed to be a scapegoat. The nine ministries were powerful, but they weren't willing to battle the three great organizations.

The Night Watchers were the original cannon fodder. It was due to Yao Si's strength that they found their footing after fifteen years. They absorbed large sums of martial masters and supernaturals from the general populace to reach their current heights. The agency possessed sufficient strength to go toe-to-toe with the nine ministries now.

"We're all on the same team with the supernaturals among us being the vanguard," Yao Si remained calmly. "There are whorehouses if he wants women. What is he thinking in acting against his own?"

It wasn't like the young man couldn't locate women for consensual relations. He had money and authority to spare, as well as women offering up themselves to him. He was the son of a deputy director and a peak Solar in his own right. How would he lack for women?

Little Ye was disappointed when the director didn't say anything, but she quickly concealed it. She squeezed out a smile. "They're all nobles, perhaps... this is what they like."

She smiled and didn't say anything else, but couldn't process the disappointment in her heart. She'd said it! She'd taken such a great risk and even accepted the possibility of Deputy Director Zhou learning what she'd done. Zhou Chao was a villain, a sinner that didn't even refrain from acting against his own.

And yet, the director asked only one question. Why?

Why?!

How do I know why?! I just know that you are definitely all the same. Thank goodness I didn't say anything else or speak of what else he's done. I didn't mention the even worse matters and just talked about the one that everyone knows.

Little Ye laughed at herself. She'd known this would be the outcome. Since she'd known, she shouldn't have said anything at all. What were a few Darkmoons and Sunflares worth in the director's eye?

They were all from the general population, a few minor Heaven Favored or weaklings lucky enough to direct energy into their bodies. Deputy Director Zhou was Deputy Director Yellow's cherished general and a peak Nova...

Her thoughts wandered to the person who she'd found laughable and comical at first glance. Dressed in a trench coat, top hat, and twirling a staff... she'd only found him hilarious and interesting when she saw him as she walked down the stairs.

Now that she thought of him some more... What a domineering man! Would the world be in this state if there were a few more like him?

But...

The fire in her heart extinguished. He was not long for this world. Everyone wanted to kill him and no one was helping him. None of the nine ministries were taking a stand for him, not even the Inspectorate. Apart from Hou Xiaochen who'd come with him, not a single person inside the Night Watcher senior executives were stepping forward to give him a hand.

His bedraggled running away might be a very bleak sight, but could he be blamed for his actions?

No!

He was only twenty years old; perhaps he'd gone to the Inspectorate in hopes of help. He received none as no one was willing to take a stand for him.

Little Ye's heart turned to ashes in this moment. The Night Watchers was just a place to draw a salary and live out their days. I'm better off being the old man's secretary. At least he's not like the others who treat female supernaturals as hookers they can play with!

Perhaps those guys liked it even more when the female supernaturals resist, but who dared resist?

There had been a spark of light in Little Ye's eyes; it immediately dimmed. A smile returned to her face, much like the attitude that the female manager had adopted. Such was the way of the world. Since she could not resist it, then she would remain alive.

Chapter 675: Li Hao Returns (III)

"Little Ye, do you know of someone?" Yao Si asked softly after considering his secretary for a while.

"Whom do you speak of, director?"

"Yun Haoran."

Little Ye blinked and paused. Her cheeks flushed, but her expression quickly turned sorrowful. It was an incredibly fast change that transformed to a deathly quiet moments later. She managed to squeeze out a smile in the end. "Of course, Yun Haoran was the headmaster of the Skystar Ancient Academy. He was a leading scholar of civil subjects who championed general education for the people.

"His fondest wish was that everyone would have a chance to attend school. He threw his weight behind widespread propagation of ancient technologies. He voluntarily shared some, such as the method of making concrete, how to reclaim wasteland as fertile fields, and mechanical reforms that revolutionized the world's technological capabilities...

"In the year 1725 of the Star Era, Yun Haoran wanted to contact the ancient academies of the various lands to establish ten thousand middle and elementary schools. They would enroll ten million students total. However, he died as soon as he submitted the proposal to the nine ministries.

Powerhouses from the three great organizations snuck into Skystar City to go on a killing spree. He died at home, and his entire family with him.

“All technology rollouts halted with his death!” Little Ye was very calm at the end. “The Skystar Ancient Academy shuttered its doors, and all teachers and students were expelled. It became what is now known as the Skystar Supernatural Academy. It’s said that there aren’t many left of the original batch of teachers. They’ve all either died or fled for their lives. Most of the students have also left Skystar City...

“Actually, I... wanted to join the Ancient Academy five years ago.” She smiled. “I wanted to learn some skills. The academy was no more later on and I happened to be able to induct mysterious power into myself. This is how I came to the Night Watchers and was lucky enough to find favor in the director’s eyes. I then became your secretary because I can recognize a few words, so I am quite fortunate.”

“Do you know? I knew him and was very close to him.” Yao Si inclined his head.

Little Ye blinked.

“Would you say he was a supernatural or not?” asked Yao Si.

“I’ve never heard he was, so he was probably a mundane?” Little Ye furrowed her brows.

“No no no, he was a supernatural, and one ascended from martial dao. He set foot straight into the Nova level five years ago.”

Little Ye started. A Nova from five years ago! Novas then were probably on par with Arcanus now? Even if there were some differences, they would at least be metamorphosis, no?

But... she was still in a daze. “No, wait, they say that they caught some members of the three great organizations that day and killed a few. They were all Sunflares, but... there... was also a Solar. Solars then were incredibly strong and everyone felt that the headmaster was so unlucky as to encounter one...”

“That’s right,” Yao Si chuckled. “They caught and killed his murderers, giving an account of the situation to the rest of the world. Therefore, people quickly forgot about him. The authorities wouldn’t have been able to explain themselves had they continuously failed to capture the killers.

“Yun Haoran was a grandmaster of knowledge known throughout the lands. Skystar’s Ancient Academy led the educational field and was the vanguard for technological reforms. It was devoted to pursuing advancements for the people. Every one of its moves affected all ancient academies elsewhere. In those days, intellectuals focused on absorbing the knowledge from the academy’s cultural technology research...

“Therefore, change took place rapidly up to a few years ago. We built cars, houses, machines, planes, rockets, televisions, communication systems... Everything one could need when it came to food, clothing, shelter, and transportation.

“It was all being set into motion when it suddenly came to a halt!” Yao Si sighed and looked ahead, saying with emotion, “I relinquished my grasp on the reins of power after he died. I felt that this era had become too dangerous and my strength was too weak. An arm will not stand against a thigh.”

Little Ye had been listening with bated breath. What did this mean? Had the director and Headmaster Yun been good friends?

Yun Haoran had died five years ago. The director officially relinquished power five years ago and no longer concerned himself with Night Watcher affairs. He let Yellow Dragon do as he wished.

Yao Si said nothing further and simply looked into the distance. He seemed to see the famous grandmaster of knowledge die a grisly death. His death had been inevitable and his name now forgotten. Back then, information wasn’t readily exchanged throughout the dynasty. It was a far cry from the open lines of communication in modern times.

Yu Haoran had created and popularized many things; he had a certain number of protectors. One of them was an old man called Yao Si, but the old man later gave up and sank into quiet, biding his time. That flash of light was gone with Yun Haoran’s death.

Yao Si could not withstand the enemy. Today, someone else stepped forward, someone even more vicious and ruthless than Yun Haoran!

Yun Haoran had simply wished to progress incrementally through technological development. The newcomer wanted to establish his authority through killing people and use martial might to force upstairs to give way.

Which was a wiser course of action?

Yao Si didn't know. He just knew that Yun Haoran was dead and Li Hao was more dangerous!

Off in the distance, the conflict was growing more heated. Zhou Chao's presence flared as he shouted, "Get out of my way or I'll execute all of you for insubordination!"

Killing intent flashed through Chen Jin's eyes as he tightened his grip on his great ax. However, he was a bit rooted to the spot. He was a Dominator, not a Summoner. He felt that he could kill peak Sunflare, but Solars were difficult. That would take the Guard formation to do so. He also stood no chance in dealing with a peak Solar.

Several Dominators rushed over. Chen Jin took a deep breath when he saw them; his weapon shook his hands.

"What, are you going to attack me?" Zhou Chao asked coldly. "Think carefully about your next actions. Insubordination is a death sentence!"

He's doing this on purpose! Anger rose in Chen Jin's heart. A death sentence?? You're the prisoner!

His great ax trembled fiercely as he wanted to kill people. He wanted to hack through all of these bastards! Zhou Chao was a regular when it came to all manner of base acts. The Guards had arrived at the central Night Watchers for only a month, but they'd already heard all sorts of rumors!

A variety of information flowed freely within the Night Watchers, some even warned the female martial masters of the Guards to be careful of Zhou Chao. It was only after Hou Xiaochen demonstrated his might that others came to be wary of them instead.

"Get out of the way, do you hear?!" Zhou Chao stepped forward with an arctic demeanor. He wasn't afraid of being attacked—their captors had to have the courage to make a move for that.

Yellow Dragon and the rest stood nearby, exerting wordless pressure as they towered like mountains. Their gazes were fixed on another structure—Hou Xiaochen's office building.

.....

A deputy director's building.

Hou Xiaochen watched silently as Manager Yu burned with fury. She wanted to charge downstairs to kill people!

"Wait, there's no rush!" Hou Xiaochen said softly.

"Director!" Manager Yu flared with killing intent. "I want to kill people!"

Who dared provoke Silver Moon martial masters in this manner? Who dared push them to the brink like this? How dare a piece of trash, a worm do so!

“Wait a bit longer,” Hou Xiaochen calmed her down. “I want to let them know that this is what happens when one is too weak. They will suffer beatings, they will be humiliated, they will be entirely without dignity!”

Who did he mean?

Chen Jin and the others. Martial masters were too weak—this was a commonly held viewpoint. They were too weak, so they couldn’t achieve what they wanted.

A spear slowly materialized in Hou Xiaochen’s hands as he said softly, “Wait a bit... I want to wait for Chen Jin to act before killing those guys!”

Since Li Hao was gone, then Hou Xiaochen would provide an example for the young man.

Yellow Dragon, do you think I don’t dare kill you? Or do you think you can do as you wish just because you have a few more metamorphoses by your side?

.....

Chen Jin waved his great ax around. He had a fiery temper to begin with and it raged even more out of control now. He suddenly roared in the next moment and hacked with his ax. “You piece of shit, I’ll kill you!”

Bam!

Zhou Chao jerked back, astonished. So you really do dare take action?? His father and some other deputy directors were in the back of the crowd. Yellow Dragon was also present as well. These were all premier powerhouses, so Zhou Chao had thought that the Silver Moon Guards wouldn’t dare do anything.

Of course, it was best if they did. Hence, Zhou Chao suddenly smiled. This was good! As expected, the northern barbarian that was Chen Jin couldn't keep his cool in the face of simple provocation. That he'd chosen to make a move now meant that even Hou Xiaochen would find it difficult to save his people.

Metal mysterious power erupted! BOOM!

A punch illuminated the air with metal energy as Zhou Chao sneered, "You've got some nerve! The Silver Moon Guards have committed the offense of subordination and have dared attack me! As the saying goes, the tone is set at the top! Today, I will execute you first to cleanse the Night Watchers of traitors!"

Yellow Dragon and the rest looked into the distance, at a Hou Xiaochen who'd already revealed himself. A light danced in the eyes of the deputy ministers.

"Be careful," transmitted the deputy director of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. "This guy isn't weak and may even have the power to kill metamorphosis experts. Our minister speculates that he is near Arcanus. We don't need to kill him, just hold him back..."

"Don't worry, I know what to do!" A vicious look appeared in Yellow Dragon's eye as he looked at Hou Xiaochen. If you dare make a move... I'll borrow the strength of the nine ministries to end you!

Chapter 676: Li Hao Returns (IV)

Yellow Dragon looked forebodingly at Hou Xiaochen. It will be perfect if you dare make a move, I can use the strength of the nine ministries to eliminate you then!

A loud collision sounded in the distance! Chen Jin stumbled back, his palm covered in blood. He remained as berserk as before and howled with anger, raising his ax to the sky.

Mountain Ax!

BOOM!

It was as if the mountains were shattering and the earth fracturing. The blow was domineering beyond compare, and yet, a peak Solar was much stronger than the internal force of a Dominator. Zhou Chao exploded with might and punched outward, throwing off rays of light in all directions.

Several Dominators in the surroundings looked on with unpleasant expressions. Zhang Yang of the Five Tigers Broken Blade Sect, Xie Lan of the Jade Sword Sect, Wu Yue of the Heartdestroyer Palm...

A violent light shone out of their faces. When they saw that Chen Jin was about to be defeated, they looked at each other and nodded in unison. Several Dominators acted at the same time with overwhelming momentum and unbounded ferocity!

“Kill!”

“Kill!” echoed several hundred Guards. They waved around their blades and spears with unusual bloodthirstiness. They were such a violent sight that it actually intimidated the nobles watching. This was a bunch of trash on par with Darkmoons, but they dared raise their weapons!

“Come at me then, trash!” Zhou Chao shouted coldly. You’re just a couple of Dominators, do you think the strength of peak Solar is a joke?!

“Break!” He unleashed a punch, but his eyes widened when Chen Jin refused to back down.

The latter’s ax swung down with repeated roars. There was only incredible aggression coming from Chen Jin, he wouldn’t retreat! He needed to endure the punch so the rest could kill Zhou Chao!

Sword, spear, and blade appeared as the Dominators moved with enormous coordination. Their auras flared in unison—boom!

The look in Zhou Chao's froze for a moment, as if he was petrified from fear. Even Hou Xiaochen paused when he saw this; he slowly withdrew the spear that he'd been ready to deploy. Yellow Dragon's side also blinked in collective unison.

It was only five Dominators in the field at the moment—in other words, it was five Sunflares against one peak Solar. The two sides were completely mismatched, but it was Zhou Chao who seemed to be frozen in place. The formidable auras of martial masters and their utterly dauntless charges actually intimidated the supernatural dandy.

Deputy Director Zhou furrowed his brows, finding his son's reaction to be embarrassing. His son was a peak Solar! It'd taken endless resources to lift him to that step, but now he was stunned in place by a few oafs. This was mortifying!

Seeing that Zhou Chao was floundering to the point of vomiting blood after having taken a palm strike to the chest, the deputy director grew angry and anxious. His son might really be beaten to death if this continued...

Deputy Director Zhou looked at a Nova not too far away. This was one of his men—an initial Nova. That cultivation level was sufficient! These people wouldn't be able to hold on if another Solar came along. But just in case, he looked meaningfully at the man.

Take care of these fellows! They're nuisances!

.....

BAM!

Five Dominators managed to claim the upper hand when they fought together. The Heartdestroyer Palm smashed right into Zhou Chao. As he vomited blood, his golden fist suffered a blow from Chen Jin's ax and sprayed blood from its wounds as well.

The supernatural shrieked with dismay and backed away. Behind him, Mu Xiaorong and the others looked on with some contempt. You're a peak Solar, but you can't overcome five Dominators? You talked such a big talk earlier!

All of the noble descendants were likewise speechless. Some were afraid of the martial masters and some were disdainful of Zhou Chao. The guy was so trash! Did he spend all of his vitality on women?

Eyebrows raised through the crowd—someone was coming!

A solemn Nova dressed in the Night Watcher uniform marched over. "What are all of you doing?! Stop immediately, Chen Jin! You are all Night Watchers! Are you going to kill your own so that others can have a good laugh?!"

Chen Jin and the Guards burned with fury!

Asshole! It was Zhou Chao who wanted to make a break for it. He's a transgressor, but you guys are sheltering him so blatantly!

"Back away..." Xie Lan urgently transmitted to the others. "There's killing intent coming from this guy, he wants to kill us!"

A Nova!

They had trouble fighting a peak Solar and wouldn't have pulled it off if it wasn't for their opponent being too weak. But with a Nova on the scene, this wasn't someone they could contend against no matter how weak their opponent may be.

"Retreat my ass!" Chen Jin roared through transmission. "I'm not backing down! He can just kill me!"

This was entirely too aggravating! They were at the Night Watcher headquarters and they were the law enforcers. These guys were ones who'd broken the law and resisted arrest! But the Guards were the ones who were supposed to back away?!

Not happening!

Xie Lan and the others said nothing else. They continued deploying moves and put more force behind their blows. Loud impacts rang out—they wanted to kill Zhou Chao before the other side reacted! That would be a worthwhile trade then!

“Bastards! I told you to stop, didn't you hear me?!” The Nova narrowed his eyes and shot through the air. These martial masters were so crazy! They'd been given an order to stand down, but these Dominators ignored even a Nova!

A large hand slammed down on the offenders. Chen Jin and his comrades could feel death nipping at their heels and sense the incoming energy explosion, but they didn't care. They wanted to kill!

Around them, the other Silver Moon Guards roared with fury. Blood qi erupted as several hundred Guards assembled into formation and flung themselves at the Nova!

The scene stunned onlookers. Were they all crazy?

A bunch of Darkmoon-equivalents pitting themselves against... a Nova? There was the Sunflare and Solar cultivation level in between them! That was a difference of two major cultivation levels and seven to eight minor ones. Did they really think superior numbers were enough to overcome that?

“Ants that court death!” The Nova slammed his palm down on the Silver Moon Guards. They could all die since they didn't wish to live anymore! As for Hou Xiaochen, there would be someone who came along to handle him!

Spear light sparkled in the distance. Hou Xiaochen had chosen to act. He was answered in kind by Yellow Dragon's group. Presences shot for the horizon from the Night Watcher headquarters, as if the complex was about to be blown apart.

A figure broke through the air, traveling at the extremity of speed. Light shimmered around his boots as the newcomer landed in front of the Nova. The latter blinked and identified with fear, "Li..."

Bam!

One punch!

One simple punch landed with an explosion of five auras, blowing the head to pieces with a loud impact! The young man whirled around and punched once more. Bam! Zhou Chao split into several pieces before he also detonated.

Off in the distance, Deputy Director Zhou blinked and roared with anger, "Li Hao!"

"How dare you kill a high rank chief commissioner in Night Watcher territory!" roared a shocked Yellow Dragon.

Li Hao regarded them coolly and ignored them. He turned to Mu Xiaorong and the others, declaring frostily, "Come. Take one step forward, set one foot out of the yard. Show me your courage!"

There was no sound. People backed away in fear! Mu Xiaorong and the others quailed, their hands growing clammy with sweat. Li Hao had come back! He hadn't run away!

Li Hao turned around to see a maddened Deputy Director Zhou charge at him. Cruel amusement glinted in the young man's eyes before he looked at Yellow Dragon. A deepening sardonic look shone out of his eyes.

Yellow Dragon immediately returned to his senses!

“Retreat, fast! This guy is destined to die, so don't go head to head with him! Since he's come back, he'll die tomorrow, so come back!”

As full of fury as Deputy Director Zhou was, it was as if a tub of cold water was dumped over his head in the next moment. An icy fist clenched around his heart.

That was right.

Li Hao had come back, which meant he hadn't given up. That, in turn, indicated he was dead without a doubt. If he's provoking me to kill him right now... I'll absolutely die if I go for it. The deputy director abruptly came to his senses and halted, bitter resentment shining out of his eyes.

Li Hao smiled, looking at him and then at Yellow Dragon's group. “What a bunch of trash! I'm disgusted by the fact that the Night Watchers keep you useless lot around! You wouldn't dare take a step forward even if I gave you the courage to! Zhou, Yellow, you guys grew a lot bolder after I left to take a walk.

“Do you fancy yourselves as somebody just because there are some more metamorphoses around you?” jeered the young man. “All of you come at me then! I'll make sure that none of you leave this place alive!”

“Hmph!” A cold, scornful snort was the only response. The other deputy ministers were very quiet. They dared attack Hou Xiaochen, but not Li Hao. It was a very strange and laughable circumstance, but it was reality.

They knew that Hou Xiaochen was very strong, but they weren't afraid. They also knew that Li Hao wasn't necessarily on par with Hou Xiaochen, but... they were afraid of the young lunatic! Not to mention, Li Hao was designated to die tomorrow. It was a waste of effort to erupt in open hostilities against him now.

"Today is the last day!" Li Hao's voice rang through the premises. "If there is no list of one hundred names by night, I'll behead one thousand tomorrow! That's one out of every four of you! Don't think of counting on that trash outside. Whether it's Yellow Dragon or Yellow Bug, I'll send him to the underworld first if he dares take one step closer to this place!"

The young man was wholly unconcealed in his ruthless cruelty!

Chapter 677: The Hour Arrives (I)

"Write up a document for me," Li Hao transmitted to the peeping Yao Si. "Declare that Yellow Dragon is guilty of collusion with the three great organizations. I'm going to behead him tomorrow to establish my authority!"

Yao Si started. He looked at the young man and didn't make a sound.

"Write that document for me if you're still Yao Si. If not, I'll chop off your head tomorrow as well!"

"....." Yao Si was in a complete daze. He was incredulous at what he'd heard. What was that from Li Hao?

No one was aware of the transmitted conversation between Li Hao and Yao Si. All they knew was the young man's thick contempt for Yellow Dragon. Little Ye clenched her fists, a light dancing in her eyes.

He was back! He hadn't run away!

But her excitement quickly morphed into worry and reluctance. You should've run away! You're too silly, too much of a fool! Even if he was laughed at for deserting the battlefield, that was still better than going to his death tomorrow!

Li Hao ignored everyone as his voice rang in the surroundings, "I will be beheading some people at the northern city gates tomorrow at 10am. You don't need to come watch the show, I'll have someone project it to all of Skystar City. Nearby residents should evacuate, in case noble blood dirties your floors!"

A hushed silence stole through the city before it erupted with an uproar.

"He's back!"

"Northern savages are really brave. Damn, I thought he ran off, but he's back..."

"Holy fuck, this northern savage has balls of steel!"

"Hahaha yeahhhh this is nice. Look at that face slapping! What are those wusses who said he ran off saying now?"

"What you laughing for? He's come back to his death!"

"Death your ass! I'll chop your head off!"

"How dare you cuss at me!"

"I'm also going to chop your head off! The northern savage is executing nobles tomorrow, I'll execute you since you're their dog!"

“You’re... you’re crazy!”

“Better than being a dog like you!”

“.....” The city boiled over with the intensity of various reactions, whereas the nobles went completely dark. Those jeering at Li Hao for running away were all silent now. No one said a word because they knew this might be his last bout of insanity. It would be a waste of one’s death to provoke him, since he was destined to die tomorrow.

Everyone was waiting for tomorrow.

.....

The Night Watcher headquarters.

Mu Xiaorong and the rest warily backed away. No one raised any sort of hue or cry. In the distance, Yellow Dragon glowered and a livid Deputy Director Zhou brooded.

Li Hao wiped off his hands and looked at the Night Watchers in the distance. The looks in their eyes shifted rapidly.

“What are you looking at?” he barked with laughter. “Dismissed! I’ll treat you as Yellow Dragon’s dogs if you keep sticking around. I’ll help you on your way to hell, how about it?”

Everyone swiftly vanished from the premises, including the deputy ministers.

“Commander!” Chen Jin and the others were overjoyed. Commander Li was the best! He started killing as soon as he showed up! He killed the Nova, the son of a deputy director, and most important of all, no one dared make a peep of protest about it.

He'd killed Zhou Chao right in front of his old man! The commander's might was unparalleled! In this moment, they even felt that Director Hou was a little... just a bit... well he'd hesitated a tad. Of course, they could understand the difficult straits he was in, but it was still such a thrill to have Commander Li act like this!

"What are you in a hurry for?" Li Hao smiled and transmitted to the Guards, "Watch how I beat Yellow Dragon to death tomorrow. You can admire what it means to be a martial master and what valor from head to toe looks like!"

He would've had to reveal certain trump cards if he killed Yellow Dragon today. The man was a metamorphosis, a level that the prior Li Hao should not have been able to handle!

"The commander is mighty!" roared the Guards after a beat of utter surprise.

Hou Xiaochen laughed ruefully in the distance. Manager Yu was also waving her arms around with great excitement. Hou Xiaochen sighed. Yu Luochoa... you're almost fifty! What are you so worked up for?

Shouts from the Silver Moon Guards rang throughout the Night Watcher headquarters. They all knew that the commander... was Li Hao. Even some of the Night Watchers waved their arms around, privately delighting in the kills. The demon Zhou Chao was dead! What a pity that Commander Li hadn't executed his father as well. That was a damned shame! And Yellow Dragon too!

But of course, they understood that that would be a tall order. A mixture of excitement, disappointment, and worry washed over them. Commander Li should not have come back. He wouldn't be able to get away now that he had.

.....

Outside.

Li Hao grinned radiantly at the group of people leaving quietly, then looked at Yao Si even further away. “I’m waiting for the director’s document... I’m a Night Watcher, a law enforcer. I don’t kill innocents! Ah, yes, it’s best if you send me the official Night Watcher seal as well. I can just stamp whoever I want to kill!”

“.....” Yao Si slammed his window shut without a word. Are you crazy?! Do you want to experience a bout of complete insanity?

But he suddenly smiled to himself and looked at Little Ye. “Li Hao wants me to give him the official seal. He’ll be able to approve whoever he wants to kill. What do you think, should I send it over?”

“I... don’t know...” Little Ye stammered.

“Then send it over!”

A thousand thoughts rose in Little Ye’s heart as an official seal appeared in her hand. This was the symbol of Night Watcher legitimacy. She stared at it, lost in a daze, then suddenly hugged the seal to herself and ran off. She was going to deliver it to Commander Li!

She didn’t care what the director thought. All she knew was that this might make life easier for Commander Li.

.....

Li Hao was back!

The news swept through the entire city. No response was forthcoming from the nine ministries and royal family. Everyone soon learned that the young man had gone completely mad after he returned. He'd killed Zhou Chao and a Nova!

It was one's last struggles and his final madness before death. It was an unbelievable madness! If he dared kill even Night Watchers, then what of the others?

All sides quickly came to a decision to hand over a list of names first, just in case Li Hao made good on his threat. They would give him a list and see if he really killed them! It was just a list, so what if they handed it over?

.....

Li Hao was back. The young man who'd just arrived at Skystar City and had apparently run off, then suddenly come back, seemed to ignite something with his return. The numb masses appeared more... alive.

They didn't know what they were being lively for or what they wanted. To kill nobles?

They didn't know.

They were furious, resentful and numb, and directed hatred toward the nobles. Nobles were as lofty as the skies, as were powerhouses. The people weren't interested in fights between powerhouses and treated them as casual gossip at most.

But for some reason, some happiness floated through them today. They'd neither read many books nor recognized many characters, but they were happy, joyful, and delighted in this moment. Some were even so excited that they couldn't sleep.

Although they were in the dynastic capital, the royal city, many were those who weren't literate. The literacy rate was acceptable when schools were first established. But a large sum of them shut

down when the supernatural rose twenty years ago, and another significant batch were closed five years ago. Not many of the younger generation received education these days.

So why were they happy?

.....

In the slums.

The north wind howled. Some empty yards of various houses were devoid of all furnishings; the bitterly cold wind stole in through cracks in windows.

A bonfire burned in one of the yards. A dozen children crowded around it. The short and thin Yu Ming bobbed his head around like he was an aged scholar. "You guys don't know why you're so happy, right? The granny who sells sweet potatoes gave me an extra potato today. She probably doesn't know why she's in a good mood either, but she gave me an extra when I bought sweet potatoes!"

"That's right, Auntie Liu next door gave me a piece of candy this morning. She never did that before!"

"Yeah! A customer that rode my cart today gave me an entire coin in tips. I usually get only five extra cents at most!"

"....." The children were also very excited. They didn't know why all of this was happening, but a lot of people seemed to be very happy today. It even felt like the new year.

Why was this? It'd be so nice if life was like this everyday.

“This is called an awakening! An awakening of the consciousness!” Yu Ming waggled his head while voicing extremely mature words. “We know that our lives aren’t good, but why is that? We live in the royal city and there’s a lot of rich people here. There’s opportunity and money everywhere, but why aren’t our lives good? We live in a numb haze, like we’re the living dead.”

“I know!” a child rushed to answer. “It’s because we’re not nobles!”

“I know, we need to be Heaven Favored!”

“Heaven Favored isn’t as good as nobles!” another kid refuted. “I saw it last time, Ah Shan from the street over became a Heaven Favored, but he’s coachman for nobles! If I’m a noble and you’re a Heaven Favored, you’ll have to pull my carriages for me!”

“No way! I’m going to be like Demon Sword and kill you!”

“Nuh uh!”

“Uh huh!”

“.....” Squabbling interrupted Yu Ming’s words.

Yu Ming sighed, but he wasn’t angry. He smiled faintly and accepted a sweet potato that Yu Qing had finished roasting.

“You’re not allowed to buy any next time!” she snapped. “Cooked sweet potatoes are very expensive, we can do it ourselves. Why did you waste money!”

Chapter 678: The Hour Arrives (II)

Yu Ming bobbed his head up and down to indicate that he heard his sister, but also said softly, “I just pity the granny who sells sweet potatoes. It’s almost winter and the winds are piercingly cold.

She doesn't sell that many and has two grandchildren to feed. Her son was caught in the supernatural war when traveling for business a few years ago and died. Her daughter-in-law's run off, so she supports the entire family through selling sweet potatoes."

Yu Qi bore a mulish curve to her lips, but thought about matters after hearing her brother's response. "Then... you're not allowed to buy sweet potatoes everyday. You can buy one every three days!" She suddenly added, "If... if Commander Li kills those people tomorrow, you can buy one as well!"

Yu Ming nodded with a smile. "Big sis," he whispered, "You've gone to school before. Do you know why everyone is so happy?"

"How would I know?" Yu Qi rolled her eyes, but lowered her voice with some glee. "Because someone dares to sentence and kill nobles! The nobles suppress us and cut off our path forward, wanting to put out our light. Someone is here to break through that layer and pierce through their monopoly..."

She sighed as she looked at her brother. "Honestly... I know that there's no hope, that this is just a start. But this is worth being happy for. Look, he didn't run away!"

Yu Ming nodded and said softly, "But since he didn't run, he's going to die."

Yu Qi's body stiffened and tears welled up in her eyes. Not running means he's going to die. The words stuck in her throat like fish bones, filling her with unspeakable sorrow. She seemed to see fresh blood splattered over the ground, Li Hao's corpse being hoisted into the air, his eyes full of grief...

Yu Qi violently shook the images out of her head and smacked the back of Yu Ming's head.

"Don't you speak nonsense!" Her voice was so shrill that it scared the surrounding kids into looking their way.

Yu Ming clutched his head and didn't dare make a sound.

"What are you lot looking at?!" Yu Qi blustered when she saw the others look at them. "I'll beat you guys up too if you keep looking at us!"

No one dared say anything and muttered to each other in voices that they thought were too quiet for Yu Qi to hear, "Sis Yu Qi is being so mean it's like she's a noble!"

"Pfft, why would a noble live here with us..."

"That's true!"

"....."

Yu Qi said nothing further and rubbed her brother's head comfortingly. "Don't say such unlucky things next time!" she complained.

Yu Ming quickly nodded, cowed after his sister hit him. He wouldn't dare say anything like that anymore.

Yu Qi rubbed her brother's head while looking in a certain direction. He... wouldn't die tomorrow, would he? She could only keep the thought to herself as she didn't know who to ask.

.....

The Night Watcher headquarters.

Li Hao didn't care what outsiders thought. He wasn't that grandiose of thinking or that heroic. Everything he did today was purely because he wished to, for martial dao, and because he couldn't bear to continue standing aside.

Bringing deliverance to the people?

This wasn't part of his considerations at the moment. He knew that was too far away from him and too hard. He was just a martial blockhead, he was no creator of a new era. There were too many things that he couldn't do. The only thing that he could do was to raise this sword and cut down all matters that were unfair. He could do only that, despite the possibility that even more vile things might arise the next time the spring winds blew.

No one knew what he really wanted to do because Li Hao himself couldn't say. He only knew that his blood still ran hot!

I am a martial master of the martial world and will pound down any bumps in the road! If no one else can do it or no other shovel can hack it, then I'll do it!

At the moment, Hou Xiaochen sat across the table from him. Manager Yu was present off to the side, listening quietly. She was very solemn and quietly reverential, as if bearing witness to something. Perhaps... it was a transfer of power between two martial world leaders.

Li Hao and Hou Xiaochen, however, were not in that frame of mind. The young man took out the official seal that Little Ye had just brought over. She'd been very excited, but Li Hao didn't say anything. He placed it in front of Hou Xiaochen.

The man looked at him, wanting to know what the young man wanted to say.

"Don't do anything tomorrow, Director Hou!"

The man's eyes widened.

“Of course, you can take action if there is room to maneuver,” Li Hao amended calmly. “If not, if I cannot kill them all or am powerless to achieve my goal, then what is the point of a few more dying with me?”

“The Silver Moon Guards are still inside the city, so if all hope is lost and there are too many enemies, then the director should hunker down and bide your time. Our opportunity will come again once you return to Silver Moon!”

Hou Xiaochen quietly lifted his tea cup for a sip.

“I owe the director a favor that I do not wish to continue to stand.” Li Hao looked straight at him. “I would not be able to repay these debts—favours are the hardest to return. Everything I do is because I am of the martial world, but the director is not! Officials should be good officials, those of the martial world have our rules and customs. My master says that in the martial world, we kill whoever doesn’t listen to us. The same should not go for officials!”

Hou Xiaochen was still silent.

“This is an order from the Night Watchers!” Li Hao raised the official seal.

“You’re an interesting one, Li Hao,” Hou Xiaochen chuckled.

“There’s not much to it,” Li Hao laughed as well. “It’s just that there are still one thousand people in the Silver Moon Guards who are all Silver Moon martial masters. They are too weak. If there are no openings for them to take advantage of tomorrow, why have them go to their deaths? They can fight again another day if they are of the mind to. Martial masters will not die so long as the martial world stands!”

Hou Xiaochen grinned and took a long look at Li Hao. “When do you think such a space to maneuver around in will form?”

“When I behead them, hang their heads on the city gates, when Arcanus fear me and the nine ministries give way... that is when the director can come fight!”

“Pfft, then there will be nothing for me to do then.”

“That’s hard to say.”

Hou Xiaochen laughed and furrowed his brows at the young man. He searched his thoughts for something before asking, “Something... seems... different about you... There have been some changes. Why? Has your strength improved?”

He was baffled as Li Hao gave him a peculiar feeling. The young man seemed to be a raging thunderstorm, but also gale winds whipping up the waves. It was hard to articulate.

Li Hao remained fully clad in armor, he didn’t dismiss it. He smiled at the question. “You have good eyes, director. How would I be so cocky without some improvement? For martial masters, strength is our foundation!”

Hou Xiaochen mused over his response and looked at the young man again. “Don’t pull too much from the mysterious power stones. Being unable to digest an excess of energy isn’t a good thing either.”

He could vaguely sense a kind of mysterious power leaking from Li Hao, but didn’t think further on it—for no reason other than it was impossible. Someone who’d reached the young man’s level would not break his supernatural locks. His future potential was unparalleled. He might be the first martial master in their era to fully match an Arcanus through martial strength alone.

He didn’t need a transition or recovery period; he was an Arcanus martial master in the true meaning of the term. Would such a martial master destroy his own future?

A lack of energy from the five elements prevented Hou Xiaochen from going down a deeper mental path. He simply thought that Li Hao had absorbed too much from mysterious power stones in his haste for results, resulting in the accumulation of energy in his body.

“I won’t, don’t worry,” Li Hao chuckled and nodded. “Then we’ve agreed, director. You should give up the fight if it looks lost. I’m not an idiot, I’ll run if failure is staring at me in the face. They won’t catch me that easily, I have the Windchaser Boots.”

“Very well.” Hou Xiaochen nodded. As for how he truly thought, he was the only one who knew.

“Then I’ll return to the yard and see if that list of names is out yet.” Li Hao rose and left with the official seal. Manager Yu continued to look at him after he left.

Hou Xiaochen laughed softly. “Are you still looking at him?”

“Ah, director.” An awkward Manager Yu quickly recovered. “Li Hao said that tomorrow...”

“I’ll make my own judgment call,” Hou Xiaochen said softly. “He said his part, I’ll do mine. There are naturally arrangements in place for the Silver Moon Guards. Don’t worry.”

“Understood.”

“I’m worried that he’s too focused on quick results,” Hou Xiaochen raised again after some thought. “Yuan Shuo’s Summoner of Spirit path is not necessarily complete—Li Hao is leaking mysterious power. That’s not a good sign. It means he’s accumulated so much power that he can’t digest it all.”

Manager Yu’s eyes widened and she asked carefully, “Can he have... broken his supernatural locks?”

Hou Xiaochen thought for a bit and shook his head. “He shouldn’t have, there’s no need for that unless he breaks six of them. The increase to his power won’t be significant enough otherwise and mysterious power will devour his internal force instead. That will make his internal force rage out of control! I didn’t sense any power of the five elements, just some faint power of thunder and lightning.”

“That’s good!” Manager Yu heaved a sigh of relief. That was good. Just as Li Hao had said, he could still run away. There was no need to put everything on the line in Skystar City. If he really had run off to ascend as a supernatural, the manager would also find it an incredible pity.

“Li Hao has the Windchaser Boots and the sword of the Lis. He should stand a chance of escaping if the situation turns sour, right?”

“That’s correct.” Hou Xiaochen nodded again. He would nod even if the assumption was incorrect. As the nine ministries wanted to move against him, they would’ve taken this into consideration as well.

The Windchaser Boots could outrun metamorphoses, but not Arcanus.

Granted, he didn’t need to say that explicitly.

Chapter 679: The Hour Arrives (III)

“Then I shall retire for the rest of the night,” Hou Xiaochen ended the conversation. “Don’t be too distracted with being happy. You used to prepare a good meal the night before a big operation. Why isn’t there one tonight?”

Manager Yu blinked. That was right! I forgot! Li Hao had flexed his muscles and swept through their enemies as soon as he came back. Although it wasn’t much to kill a Nova—it was a feat that the director could easily accomplish, I’m still happy that he’s come back...

Very well then.

“Then I’ll make the meal. Just wait for a little while, director!” The woman rose to her feet.

“Go on!” Hou Xiaochen nodded, waiting for the feast to come.

Manager Yu almost asked if she should set a place for Li Hao, but ultimately decided not to voice the question. The director seemed a bit off lately, so she should refrain from saying so.

.....

The backyard.

Large sums of nobles drooped in the stench around them. Yellow Dragon and the rest had gone into hiding, the deputy ministers had run off, Zhou Chao was dead...

It was a big impact to morale, particularly as it was time to vote. They needed to choose one hundred people! Although no one felt that they would truly die since there was plenty of resistance outside, what if... they really did die?

Who wasn’t afraid of death?

“I do not approve of this kind of voting!” someone shrieked. “This kind of voting isn’t fair! I think it needs to be made anonymously to prevent retribution! Please say something, Miss Mu. Is an open vote fair?”

The nobles were due to cast their votes from a list of names that greatly decreased the range of consideration. Their families outside had produced a list of three hundred for those inside to choose from. People like Mu Xiaorong were certainly not on the list since it was the result of discussions between the noble families. A variety of compromises had gone into creating the list. Who would dare put a legitimate daughter of a minister on it?

With the preliminary work done, the actual one hundred would be chosen by those inside. Words of bracing comfort were spoken, emphasizing that it was just a formality, that it was all the same. They wouldn't let Li Hao actually succeed.

But... those on the list were afraid all the same, particularly as someone had proposed an open vote. A name would be read off the vote. Those who agreed that they be part of the final one hundred would raise their hand. Wasn't this a proposal that would blatantly give offense?

Who would actually follow the spirit of the vote? It would shelter those from larger families and bring down misfortune on those from smaller families!

Mu Xiaorong frowned, also finding an open vote to be inappropriate as it would cause certain friction.

"Anonymous is good." She nodded. "We're just going through the motions, so there's no need to be too worried."

The noble who'd made the suggestion heaved a sigh of relief. A minor character like him would easily make the final cut. Anonymous voting was good. People might not even know his name because he was so insignificant. Perhaps they'd want the ones from the larger families to die and clear the way!

Reality was this practical at times!

People wouldn't dare cast their votes if their voting record would be made known, but they wanted nothing more than the deaths of their powerful rivals. Only those at the top like Mu Xiaorong were kept off the list. If someone like her was on it, she would be guaranteed the highest number of votes.

Someone stiffened as the conversation continued and an increasing number of looks turned outward. Li Hao was here!

The young man calmly walked in and looked at the crowd. “Is the list ready?”

Mu Xiaorong’s expression shifted and she rose. “It’s almost ready.”

“Hurry up.” Li Hao randomly grabbed a person. “Give me the list of three hundred names you received! I’ll make a roll call and put down the one hundred with the highest votes.”

“Commander Li, we’ve just come to an internal decision...” Mu Xiaorong hastily said.

“What I say goes.” Li Hao stared her down. “I’ll put you on the list if you say another word!”

She frowned, but said nothing else. It’s just a formality, just a formality. There’s nothing to be afraid of. And yet, she was still uneasy.

The man that Li Hao had stopped quickly took out a list of names. Li Hao scanned it, finding it quite interesting. Each name also came with information about their family, faction, title, and government appointments. It was all clearly laid out!

Even the families were divided into Nova and Solar factions. There were also those connected to bigger families, such as vassals of the Lius or Chens from the nine ministries...

It was a complicated web of relationships that stretched between the three hundred. There were strong nobles and there were weak nobles. How did the son of a centurion at the Ministry of Armed Forces have the money to cavort on Four Seas Island?

Li Hao paused at that particular name, finding it odd. A centurion... was a very lowly ranked position. It didn’t even count as a noble in this day and age. Centurions were neither bestowed with titles or wielded actual power. Did they count as nobles?

How could a minor centurion's son go to a place that splashed around money? Perhaps he'd been present in the capacity of a servant?

Li Hao was unsatisfied after he scanned the list. It was all a bunch of fringe characters, but he didn't say anything. "Where's the evidence?"

Everyone looked at Mu Xiaorong. The girl woman nervous when Li Hao looked her way. "I... have it... but we need to decide on the final list first..."

"Give it here!" Li Hao sharpened his gaze at her.

Fearful, Mu Xiaorong doggedly repeated, "We need to confirm the final list first. I'll give the evidence to you when we have our one hundred..."

"One!"

"I..."

"Two!"

A thick sheaf of papers materialized in Mu Xiaorong's hands. Li Hao immediately yanked it from her and started dragging through it, ignoring her furious glare.

"Wu Yu, son of Wu Hao, deputy commissioner of the ninth section of the eastern division under the Ministry of Administration..." The young man quickly scanned Wu Yu's identity. The subject's crimes were listed next.

"Wu Yu raped and killed a young girl in the year 1721 of the Star Era. He was discovered when he disposed of the body and killed an eyewitness. He later used the crime of stealing classified

information and colluding with Celestial to arrest the girl's parents when they filed a report. They were held at the Ministry of the Judiciary and died in the dungeons three months later..."

Li Hao read on a bit more. This Wu Yu seemed to have a distinct taste. His cases were all like this, related to young girls. Some died, some survived. Those who didn't raise a fuss usually lived, but any who filed a police report or sought him out died. It wasn't just his victims who died, but the entire family that was dragged in.

Hence, his victims filed reports at the beginning, but as time went on, no one sought out the authorities anymore. If one wanted to file a case, one either went to the Ministry of the Judiciary or the Inspectorate. However, both institutions resulted in the same outcome. There was no trouble if a report was not filed, but once it went on Wu Yu's record, then the victim's entire family would soon disappear.

The deputy commissioner was one of the divisions under the Ministry of Administration, which made him only the equivalent of a low rank chief commissioner at the Inspectorate. Li Hao reached that position a long time ago, as had Chen Jin and the rest. Wu Yu's identity wasn't the loftiest and he'd come about his position only through his family.

In reality, he was an idle loafer if he didn't rely on his father's background. But here, Wu Yu seemed to be able to do whatever he wanted, whenever he wanted.

How interesting!

Li Hao smiled as he read the information, a smile without any hint of warmth to it. He turned to the assembly. "Who's Wu Yu?"

He didn't expect to see a weak and scrawny young man with a pale countenance. Wu Yu was less than thirty years old and nervously raised his arm, appearing quite pitiful. "Commander Li, that's me..."

“Not bad!” Li Hao inclined his head with a smile. Having a record in 1721 meant that he started his deeds nine years ago. He was only twenty years old then.

Wu Yu didn’t know if this was a compliment or meant something else. It couldn’t really be a compliment... could it?

Li Hao ignored them and continued reading. He perused the names one by one. Wu Yu wasn’t the most wicked among them. He was small fry compared to some of the others. These people didn’t have the loftiest positions or authority, but each new name outdid the rest that came before it when it came to villainy.

A ranking officer of the Ministry of Armed Forces once led his army of one thousand soldiers to exterminate a trading company that secretly supported the three great organizations. He killed everyone in the trading company, roughly one thousand in total.

And yet, the material in Li Hao’s hands indicated that there was no collusion. The trading company had been destroyed because its leader had unexpectedly found a gold level origin weapon. News about the weapon had leaked somehow, spelling doom for the trading company.

After that, the officer auctioned off the origin weapon instead of keeping it for himself. He handed in seventy percent of the profits, keeping only thirty for himself. Hence, that reprieved him from punishment.

All of that was clearly detailed too, making Li Hao curious about the people who’d collated this evidence and material. Were they crazy, or did they think that Li Hao wouldn’t have a chance to read it? Or perhaps they thought he wouldn’t page through all of it, or that there was no chance of it leaking.

“Where is Zheng Liang of the Ministry of Armed Forces?”

A middle-aged man with some authority around him sheepishly raised his hand.

A ranking officer! Li Hao took a quick scan and found him to be the equivalent of an initial Solar. This meant that he didn't command a regular army, but troops of elites. It was too rare for a ranking officer to have the strength of a Solar. He was one of the higher ranked ones on this list.

"You're not bad either!" Li Hao smiled.

Zheng Liang narrowed his eyes instead of responding. He was quite curious what was recorded in those files. They'd been given to only one person—Mu Xiaorong. The rest of them didn't even have the right to read them.

Li Hao quickly scanned through the material. There wasn't that much for three hundred people, most of it was just simple introductions. There weren't many details as it was approximately one page dedicated to one person. His mind intent was so strong that he finished in roughly half an hour.

Chapter 680: The Hour Arrives (IV)

"We don't have to go with one hundred, let's go with three hundred," Li Hao breathed out. "I'll save you the trouble of having to choose and fighting or disagreeing about it. It's all just a formality and there may not be a Li Hao tomorrow, wouldn't you say so?" He laughed and looked at Mu Xiaorong. "Why aren't these documents stamped by the nine ministries?"

"Ah... that's not needed, is it?" Her eyes widened. What did Li Hao mean by that?

"Forget it, it's fine," Li Hao laughed. "I'll visit Yellow Dragon and have him stamp the documents. That makes it so that the Night Watchers have agreed to execute them. That will be all, you guys can rest well tonight. When we walk to the plaza tomorrow, those who are to be executed will walk in front and those who are not can walk in the back."

"Commander Li, didn't you say you'll spare the rest?" someone asked with alarm. There might be a massive battle tomorrow, who wanted to be in the thick of things? As for those on the list... they were the unlucky ones!

It was hard to say if everyone's safety could be guaranteed. Misfortune would arrive for some, at least; a certain number would be dragged into the mess. The others didn't want to be present for it.

“It’ll be fine, I’ll have the Silver Moon Guards escort you,” Li Hao continued laughing. “Your people will be there, my people will be there. Even if someone wants to attack me, I’ll make sure you guys aren’t dragged in. You can trust me, I’m a man of my word!”

The assembly relaxed upon hearing that the Silver Moon Guards would be escorting them. That... seemed acceptable and it appeared that Li Hao truly didn’t intend to drag them into his conflict, if for no reason other than he wouldn’t be able to face their families if they were killed by the aftershocks!

.....

Li Hao ignored his captives and went straight for Yellow Dragon’s office building. It was completely illuminated with lights and the Night Watchers on duty at the entrance greeted him with wide-eyed shock.

“Greetings to Commander Li!” someone called out in a voice much shriller than normal. A window opened upstairs.

Yellow Dragon looked down with an unpleasant expression and assessed Li Hao. The young man chuckled and took out a sheaf of papers. “Stamp these to indicate that the Night Watchers have agreed to execute these people due to clear and concrete evidence!”

“You go too far!” Yellow Dragon bit off. The brat wanted his stamp on those documents?

“Are you going to stamp them or not?” Li Hao bared his teeth. “Yellow, it’s my business alone tomorrow if you stamp these. If not, it’s our business right now!”

Yellow Dragon’s gaze sharpened—this was a threat! A blatant threat! Li Hao was so out of line that one’s soul might depart the body out of sheer horror! He gave repeated offense to Yellow Dragon again and again in Night Watcher headquarters, humiliating the man! People would still laugh at him in private even if the brat died tomorrow!

And yet, Yellow Dragon still agreed. “Give them here!” he snapped out.

The documents flew out! Yellow Dragon took out his seal and stamped the papers; a faint ripple of mysterious power emanated from the mark. This was a special seal that could not be forged. It represented authority.

When the documents returned to Li Hao’s hands, they brimmed with a slight ripple that the young man easily crushed out of existence. He raised his head to look at Yellow Dragon and smirked, “How childish!”

Yellow Dragon’s face flitted through a variety of expressions.

“The Night Watcher senior executives will stand by my side as they participate in tomorrow’s affairs.” Li Hao walked off without looking back. “This is a major occurrence for our agency and our chance to establish our authority. You need to come as well, so you can see how I behead them!”

“I don’t need you to tell me that!” sneered Yellow Dragon. “I’ll naturally be there!”

Of course I will! How am I supposed to watch how you die if I’m not?

Would Yellow Dragon be able to command any respect in the Night Watchers if a cocky brat like Li Hao didn’t die?

The young man continued walking off; he paused when three people barred his way.

“Commander Li.” Long Blade looked at him with a slightly complicated expression. “Killing those people won’t change anything...”

“Not killing them will change even less!” Li Hao looked coldly at him. “You think so, he thinks so, which is why this world is always so dark and cold! The three of you will never know what it means to be a martial master because you are not one!

“Martial masters train the heart, supernaturals train strength! Whether it is martial masters or supernaturals, it is not necessarily the distinction of strength that separates the two, but of the heart! Supernaturals will never reach lofty peaks because they lack a heart!

“Get out of my way!” the young man barked out.

The three quietly stepped off to the side, remaining silent even after Li Hao was gone. Martial masters train the heart, supernaturals train strength. The commander had said that the difference between supernaturals and martial masters wasn’t necessarily in kind of strength, but the heart.

The trio had wanted to give him a few words of advice—not out of malicious intent. On the contrary, they really wanted to help. They rather admired what he had done, but also knew that it was a path of no return.

The trio knew that they couldn’t dissuade him otherwise, this was just a try. And yet, Li Hao declined their kind intentions and lectured them. They were all older than him, but felt only extreme shame at the moment.

Spear looked in the direction where Li Hao had disappeared in and said softly, “The spear walks a straight path and always deals with matters in a straightforward and forthright manner, as opposed to skulking in the shadows and using illegitimate means...”

“Ole Spear, you...”

Spear spoke no further, sinking into deep thought as he kept his gaze trained in Li Hao’s direction. Spear wielders were mostly comprised of direct and candid individuals. It was hard to find any accomplishment with the spear if one’s bearing did not resemble the weapon.

Spear left, his rumination providing much food for thought. Big Eyes and Long Blade quickly caught up to him, a foreboding feeling developing in their hearts. Big Eyes set her jaw and muttered, “You can’t do it, Ole Spear! That’s a death wish! Arcanus are invincible and an existence that no one can match at this current stage. He’s crazy, but you don’t have to be!”

“There might be hope if one Arcanus comes, but his death is guaranteed if two come. There won’t be enough of him left to bury if there’s three!”

It wouldn’t matter if even Hou Xiaochen made a move in the event of three Arcanus; Li Hao would be dead all the same. Although he had Southern Fist, Hou Xiaochen, Yang Shan, Yu Luochoa, Golden Spear, Qin Lian, and Panther on his side, his enemies had taken all that into account. Southern Fist and Hou Xiaochen were the strongest, but they could not fight Arcanus.

Just one Arcanus alone could dispatch those two. It’d only taken one when Li Hao, Panther, and Yang Shan fought in unison. As many of his other helpers might be left, they did not measure up to one Arcanus.

Thus, Li Hao’s group would be wholly exterminated if there were just three Arcanus present tomorrow. The various institutions and ministries would not leave things up to chance. Anyone who was careless at this stage of the game was an utter fool, so there might be more Arcanus sent to the battlefield!

A wide-eyed Big Eyes was a bit skittish and transmitted, “Everyone wants to kill him. Other than the Inspectorate being ambiguous, the other eight ministries and even royal family want his head! The three great organizations, seven divine mountains apart from Sky Sword Mountain, and the City of Supernaturals will certainly be involved!”

“They’re also taking into account that Silver Moon martial masters might come to reinforce him, such as Northern Fist, Tyrant Blade, Yuan Shuo. Those in Silver Moon proper are too far, but these ones that are closer might be able to make it. There’s also Sky Sword as well...” Big Eyes swiftly analyzed for the Spear. “In consideration of all these factors, there might be five, six, or even more Arcanus sent against Li Hao tomorrow!”

“So don’t go to your death, Ole Spear,” she said nervously. “Don’t lose your mind with him, alright?”

The fire in Spear’s burning heart slowly extinguished. He heaved a long sigh after a while and didn’t say anything. Big Ears sagged with relief. She didn’t even dare imagine how tomorrow might turn out, what all sides would bring to bear against the Silver Moon crew. There might be old ministers who reappeared to kill the young man.

If there were, these people would ninety-nine percent be Arcanus with their cultivation level stabilized. The wealth of the nine ministries was not a false front. When it came to foundations, the three great organizations might not compare to the ministries. After all, the nine ministries had been established for eighty years and the ruins existed for tens of thousands.

There just hadn’t been supernaturals before, that didn’t mean there weren’t ruins. Too many conflated the two, thinking that the awakening of the supernatural came with the awakening of the ruins.

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Sleep was elusive for everyone on this night. It felt like insomnia had struck all of Skystar City. Across the Skystar Sea, Huang Yu heaved for breath. He’d made it. He’d finally arrived! Even he couldn’t digest such a quick journey of thousands upon thousands of kilometers. He’d lost weight over the past couple of days.

“I’m here!” Huang Yu chuckled at the Skystar Sea. How could Silver Moon be absent from such a major event?

I’m here!

.....

Less than fifty kilometers from where Huang Yu was.

Jadelight Sword by his side, Yuan Shuo looked at the Skystar Sea, at the city that didn't sleep on the other shore. There was no smile on his face, just killing intent.

"My disciple... is the biggest troublemaker in the world! But... I like that!" Yuan Shuo threw his head back with laughter. "If he doesn't run tomorrow, I'll kill all of his enemies for him!"

Heroic sentiment swelled! Yet Jadelight frowned solemnly. "Don't run your mouth. How is a half-baked Refiner of Spirit like you supposed to match an Arcanus?"

"It's fine, I'm ready!" Yuan Shuo set his jaw. "Don't underestimate me, I grow stronger when I meet strong foes! Hahaha, what do you think of my disciple, Jadelight?"

The woman was quiet for a while before slowly saying, "He is a true hero!"

Those of the martial world respected persons of unusual courage and ability. In her eyes, Li Hao was no Night Watcher. He was a gallant champion of the world, one worthy of being hailed a hero! If the Record of Thirty-Six Heroes was reorganized right now, he would absolutely be in the top three!

"Hahaha!" Yuan Shuo roared with laughter. This was the greatest compliment possible to him! My disciple is famous throughout the thirty-six and is admired by the Seven Swords! Who among Silver Moon martial masters will dare say that he does not have a place in the record?

"Two conquerers in one discipline, the Five Styles reigns supreme!" Yuan Shuo crossed the sea in high spirits. I'm coming!

Jadelight didn't say anything. I'm still so weak, but... here I am as well. Yuan Shuo hadn't wanted her to come, but Wu Hongshan felt that this might be her first and only chance to ever see Li Hao. I

want to see Demon Sword, this eighth sword of Silver Moon. I would highly regret it if I never got to catch a glimpse of him.

Thus, here she was as well.

Swordsmen, particularly Silver Moon swordsmen, should have more pomp and circumstance around them even if they were just going to die! Gallant champions of the martial worlds converged over the water or flew through the air. They were all headed to Skystar City!

All martial masters stem from Silver Moon. One of us is going to change the world! We send them on their way and fight on their behalf!