

## Star Gate 711

### Chapter 711: Return (II)

“I don’t want to be like this either, Brother Wang,” Lu Chuan said in a loud voice. “But the three northern provinces are too cold and there’s truly no hope of survival there if they stay. In the central region... even if they’re nabbed for a ghastly life in the mines, they still stand a chance for survival.”

Li Hao blinked at his response. He knew this perspective well. Plainly, Lu Chuan was no ignorant bumpkin. He knew that there wasn’t necessarily a good end in store after he ferried people to the central region, but he knew even more that they were doomed without a hope if they stayed in the three northern provinces.

The inspector in the distance fell silent before quickly shouting, “Fool! I told you before that you should take these people to the north, to Silver Moon even further north! You might be able to survive there...”

“I want to, Brother Wang, but I’m just one Starlight and I’m several provinces away. Near River has even sealed off the roads to Silver Moon, so there’s no way of passing. They kill anyone who tries to press the issue. At least there’s Brother Wang here giving a hand, helping me stow away the people. Near River... is even more vicious than the rebels in the three northern provinces! There’s nothing I can do about it either...”

Their conversation traveled into Li Hao’s ears. This inspector didn’t seem like a bad person, he just wanted Lu Chuan to take the people to Silver Moon in the north. Yet, Silver Moon was separated from the three northern provinces by quite a few other provinces, and Lu Chuan had to cross Near River to be in Silver Moon proper.

Near River had sealed off the roads leading to Silver Moon and didn’t permit anyone in or out. When it came to a water path, there were plenty of pirates in the North Sea. Even though the North Sea King was dead, pirates yet abounded in the waters. The Starlight Pirates were also still present, as were the other seven pirate factions. How could a small fishing vessel enter the Moon Sea?

Li Hao had wanted to directly cross the North Sea and head to Silver Moon, but a thought occurred to him and he vanished on the spot.

The inspector had been conversing with Lu Chuan when his expression froze—a young man had suddenly appeared in front of him. Lu Chuan also stiffened and turned around for a look. He breathed out more readily when he saw that it was the fellow admiring the view from earlier.

“Greetings, sir!” He raised a cupped fist salute.

“Do you know me?”

“No!” Lu Chuan kept his head down. “But your speed is so fast that you must be a powerhouse. We will leave immediately and not disrupt milord from enjoying the view.”

Dressed in threadbare clothing, the dozen civilians nearby looked over with fear. While Li Hao wasn’t dressed opulently, he wasn’t wearing clothing that ordinary people could afford either.

The inspector off to the side looked at Li Hao a few more times, finding the young man a bit familiar, but unable to recognize him. He just felt that the newcomer was very strong and carried himself with an uncommon demeanor.

Li Hao took a quick glance, seeing that the inspector was not a supernatural. He was a martial master, a Slayer of Tens. Li Hao could still detect the exact cultivation strength of weaklings.

“Have the three northern provinces fully fallen into disarray?”

Lu Chuan nodded. “Complete disarray! They’ve been rocked with unrest ever since the death of General Kou. Things were fine enough before, but after the north was caught in a cruel grip of winter, there is barely any harvest this year! Large sums of civilians have been forced into joining the rebel army or become bandits... The three northern provinces are completely rotten and decayed!

“It’s also just turned into winter,” Lu Chuan breathed out. “It will be colder later on. There’s nothing I can do other than send a few people past the sea into the central region. Our only hope is that they

have a chance of survival here. Even if it's the dead of winter, they can still find some food to eat from the waters.

"That is not a possibility this year, however. The North Sea pirates are in pitched battle and fighting over territory. We don't dare go into the seas to fish."

"You are a supernatural. Although you are just a Starlight, you shouldn't get hungry, shouldn't you?" asked Li Hao.

The young Lu Chuan laughed at Li Hao's question. "Sir, supernaturals are people too, not to mention that I'm only a Starlight. We're born from other people—I have family, friends, and neighborhoods... Supernaturals are not gods, I can't just watch my friends and family starve or freeze to death at home, can I?"

"True that." Li Hao inclined his head. "Right, I heard you say just now that the road to Silver Moon has been sealed off?"

"Ai!" sighed Lu Chuan. "Silver Moon is not in a good position among the nineteen suffering provinces of the north and it's even colder in the winter. But at least there's law and order there. Silver Moon martial masters are famous and they have many powerhouses, not to mention that the province has been stable enough all this time. At least there's a chance of survival there! But Near River's sealed off Silver Moon and refuses to let anyone out or in..."

"Such has been the case these years." Lu Chuan shook his head. "Otherwise, we'd go to the north since Silver Moon is there. As such, we can only come to the central region in hopes of survival."

He looked up at Li Hao and said softly, "You are from Silver Moon... are you not, milord?"

"How did you know?" Li Hao laughed. Citizens of the north all appeared the same.

"You seem to be in a much better mood whenever Silver Moon is mentioned..."

Li Hao couldn't help but grin. Was that so? To be honest, he hadn't thought much of Silver Moon before. But upon hearing that all nineteen provinces in the north were engulfed by unrest and only Silver Moon retained order... that people thought there was a chance for survival if they trekked through the bitter cold to reach the province...

That was a tremendous seal of approval!

Li Hao couldn't help but be happy at hearing outsiders speak of his home in such a way when he was in a foreign land. He looked at the civilians nearby and at the inspector who hadn't spoken all this time. "The central region is a place that eats people," he said slowly. "You might not have a good ending if you come here..."

"I know, but it's all the same in this day and age!" Lu Chuan laughed ruefully. "It's truly all the same! At least the central region is more prosperous and begging is less of a freezing affair."

The inspector raised an eyebrow. "The central region is indeed decent. Some matters have developed in Skystar City recently and a large group of nobles and powerhouses have died. That scared a lot of people, and the central region Night Watchers are coming alive. The three great organizations have stopped a lot of what they were doing, so things are better than before. However... the influx of refugees is probably hard to handle." He looked at Li Hao. "Is milord here from the central belt?"

"Why do you ask?"

"I'm just curious." Inspector Wang lowered his head. "Will there be greater changes in Skystar City?"

"That's hard to say." Li Hao shook his head, that was indeed difficult to say.

The inspector sighed and didn't continue the conversation. Each instance of unrest affected the civilians the most, not the nobles. Supernaturals weren't impacted either as they did not lack sustenance.

Lu Chuan remained looking at Li Hao without a word, then turned his eyes to the civilians waiting around him. "Then... I will not disturb milord from viewing the sea. I... will send them on their way and return after we pass the coastline..."

He didn't feel a need to converse too much with Li Hao, but of course kept his tone polite as he couldn't afford to offend these people. He had other matters to attend to. After sending these people off, he needed to return to his duties as a ferryman.

"Are there many supernaturals like you?" Li Hao couldn't help but ask.

"What?" Lu Chuan hesitated, then realized something. "A few. There's more than me in this area, there's also a few friends doing the same. We come from humble backgrounds and no one's particularly strong, so we can't offer more help. Guiding ships is about all we can do."

"Have you ever considered the future?"

"The future?" Lu Chuan smiled without a word. What future? What future was there to speak of? He was taking it one day at a time! "Then... I'll be off, milord?"

"Go on!" Li Hao nodded. Lu Chuan raised his weak energy shield again to escort the dozen up the coastline. Li Hao didn't offer help as it was useless to help only one person. His thoughts were preoccupied with the Near River province. It'd sealed off the road leading north, cutting off Silver Moon from the rest of the world. Although Director General Zhao and the others were in residence, they still permitted Near River to do as it would.

More numbers of refugees grew from the unrest in the three northern provinces. Though they wished to travel north, there was no path for them to reach their destination. Not to mention, Silver

Moon was so poor that it couldn't save too many people. Too many refugees pouring through their borders would be the downfall of the province. They would need food, drink, clothes, and shelter...

They would need everything!

Seeing that Inspector Wang still stood by his side, Li Hao asked after some thought, "What do you think is the most pressing need that everyone is desperate to be fulfilled?"

"Huh?" The inspector didn't know what this great one was asking or wanted to know, so he didn't know how to respond.

"I'm asking what you guys want most right now," Li Hao laughed.

"Full bellies, warm clothes, and no more war. Whether it's supernaturals or martial masters, it's best if they come under some restrictions. War shouldn't be declared at a drop of a hat anymore!" Inspector Wang answered frankly. "It always frightens a ton of citizens into abandoning the outskirts when battle breaks out. They no longer reclaim open land and even refuse to leave the cities. They simply wait for death.

"Neither supernaturals nor martial masters find anything wrong with their actions. They think that not randomly killing people is good enough. But what they don't know is that once they start fighting, the fields are ruined and people refuse to set foot outside. That leads to even greater disaster sooner or later!"

Inspector Wang was more talkative than usual because he knew that the person in front of him must be noble. It might not have an effect, but it would at least let those of the upper echelon hear their cries for help.

"I see!" Li Hao nodded and looked at the North Sea. "So everyone still craves peace..."

No shit! Who doesn't? The inspector inwardly rolled his eyes. We have no desire to conquer the world. It's all the same no matter who's at the top, just leave us a way to survive.

### Chapter 712: Return (III)

Li Hao looked into the distance instead of speaking further. He set foot through the air with Panther, deciding to immediately return to Silver Moon. What he'd seen this time left some regrets in his heart.

Although people knew that the central region was a land that ate people, they still poured in ceaselessly. Survival was the only thing on their mind, and at least it could be found here. Remaining in the three northern provinces might lead to utter annihilation.

Silver Moon had been sealed off on all sides, but it had not fallen yet. Like Hong Yitang once said, the people would suffer in misery and there would be a shortage in food if the situation in the world continued as it was. All of that had come to pass. Although this was a localized area, it was a sign, a harbinger of things to come.

When he traveled to the east, he'd passed through large swathes of territory occupied by rebels or bandits. An era of chaos was upon them!

All of this was in certain people's hands. It wasn't a natural disaster, but a man-made one.

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Li Hao left through the air, leaving Inspector Wang marveling at his prowess. He frowned as he realized something next—was it that one? Surely not. Didn't they say that he was still in Skystar City?

But... a young man, a dog, being from Silver Moon... Demon Sword? The Skystar commander?

The inspector was confused and uncertain, but shook his head upon further thought and didn't seek to dig deeper. Although Li Hao had quieted the central region by killing a few people, that only

addressed the symptoms and not the cause. The situation would worsen once Demon Sword was suppressed by others and result in a greater backlash.

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“Panth, not every supernatural is a bad guy. Did you see that?” Li Hao murmured to himself over the sea. “That Lu Chuan is only a Starlight, the lowest of the supernatural, but even so, he doesn’t lack for food or drink. He can find a decent job wherever he goes. However, he risks the danger of being killed by pirates or chased down by central region powerhouses to escort people from one fire to another. This might be the reason why supernaturals exist. He is a supernatural, so he can ensure everyone’s safety in the crossing.”

The dog didn’t understand his meaning. What are you trying to say?

“I’m saying Panth, that this is an explanation of power just being a type of attribute. It’s not the foundation that decides everything. Be it martial masters or supernaturals, it all comes down to the heart!”

The dog remained silent, still not understanding. So... what?

“Silver Moon might be able to save some people if they break the blockade. It’s early winter and the season is long in the north. Countless people might die if this situation continues. Resources and whatnot will be hard to transport into Silver Moon. Director General Zhao and the others may have their own thoughts in mind, but I do not think that we need to allow the blockade to continue!

“Of course, we need money, labor, resources, rations, clothing...” Li Hao murmured to himself as Panther continued to be quiet.

“I’ve always valued cultivation resources and killed nobles, powerhouses to collect them. I’ve never cared about their mundane businesses, rations, clothing, and other resources. But can people go to sleep with full bellies without those? Will they be able to live?



“I seem to have lost touch with the real world at some point,” Li Hao sighed with emotion. “You too. Remember when you were a stray and played cute for me or passersby for a meal? When did you start only caring about cultivation resources?”

Panther lowered its head.

“When I visit Battle Heaven, I want to ask them how they fed a city of five hundred million back in the day. Do you think they’ll tell me?”

The dog was surprised. Ask them that? Won’t the strong guys there laugh at you?

Li Hao didn’t care. He started contemplating the matter of five hundred million citizens. Even powerhouses needed to eat and drink at some point. How did they do it to support a city of five hundred million? Where did all the food come from? Battle Heaven must have its ways, he’d just never thought or cared about the issue before.

He ought to ask this time. And also, were plant spirits only meant to kill others or be used in wars? Plant spirits, life force, accelerating growth, and accelerating the growth of plants...

Various thoughts brewed in his mind. He’d gained new reflections after traveling from north to south and south to north again. To not forget his original intentions was much easier said than done! He had to defeat the nine ministries and three great organizations in his current state before he could do anything.

Hong Yitang wished to gain some experience from Skystar City, whereas Li Hao felt they might be better off asking the ancients.

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Li Hao didn't clash with anyone after this. He erupted with both wind and thunder attributes, sweeping past cities like he was a hurricane. The north was deep in the onset of winter and there was no sign of green to be seen. There were even frozen carcasses by the side of the road.

The young man continued northward, reaching the outskirts of Silver Moon after a day. The province was as quiet as ever, as poor as ever.

But the air suddenly seemed warmer the second he set foot into Silver Moon. He landed in one of the border cities of Silver Moon's thirty-two. There weren't many people on the streets, but they were solidly bundled up against the elements. Faint sounds of clamor could be heard.

Li Hao hadn't thought there was much difference between those of Silver Moon and other places before, but now he found them to be a bit more alive than the rest. There was a bit more to look forward to in their lives.

"Our Silver Moon martial masters are really something. Have you heard? Demon Sword has cowed the four directions from his position in Skystar City..."

Whispers and gossip about Li Hao rose from the streets. It'd only been a few days since his matters in the royal city, but those of Silver Moon were still discussing them. The young man grinned, then looked at the quiet city. His thoughts turned to a city in Near River that he'd just passed by on his way here. It had been a ghost town.

More reflections filtered into his mind.

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Li Hao once more left through the air. Ever since Silver Moon started cleansing the province of the three great organizations, communication was restored between the cities. There were people walking on the roads now, as well as merchant companies. They were no longer afraid to venture out as they'd been before.

Previously, the people had been terrified to set foot outside. They no longer seemed to carry those apprehensions. Li Hao also heard the name of the Demon Hunters along the way. They seemed to be active in cleansing the province of troublemaking supernatural and martial masters. Their efforts had built a burgeoning reputation for them in Silver Moon.

A smile finally appeared on Li Hao's face. Instead of heading for White Moon City, he turned to travel straight to Battle Heaven. He wanted to go to Rift Canyon first. Perhaps there was something to be had there.

As for the rest, he could meet them later.

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Battle Heaven.

It was as quiet and deathly still as always. The Silver and Black Armors by the city gates were very quiet. The patrols continued; only the footsteps of the Black Armors could be heard throughout the city.

Everything was as if before.

It wasn't until a ripple of energy traveled in that Director General Wang looked out from the city lord's manor. An image manifested in front of him. A young man and a dog were entering the cliff face.

"He's back..." murmured the director general. "He seems to be... hmm? He's become an energy cultivator?"

"Yes..." sighed the big turtle. "What a pity... Ask him what happened. Why is he in this state?"

“I will,” assented Director General Wang. He didn’t say anything as this wasn’t a significant development. Some looked down on the path of energy, some felt that there was no future in it. That was all normal. Director General Wang and the others didn’t care about that.

It was just a different dao. Not to mention, Li Hao may not make it to that step. There was no point in caring about it too much. One walked the path of martial dao by themselves. The director general’s reaction was mild as he simply didn’t care about it much.

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Inside the army barracks.

A Gold Armor suddenly opened his eyes, faint light exuding from them. He looked outside the city and waved a hand, summoning an image in front of him. A young man and a dog were approaching the city gates.

“The path of energy... So you’ve grown stronger from it, but what’s the point in that? But it’s not the pure path of energy either, it’s neither here nor there. Is he here to seek a solution?” The Gold Armor fell silent after some murmuring. He couldn’t be bothered! Whatever path the young man took, all that mattered was that he was aware of the pros and cons.

As for a solution, there was no easy solution. There would only be some hope if he fully converted to the ancient martial dao.

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Battle Heaven was an old haunt; Li Hao experienced a rare moment of peace as he walked through the outer city. The three troop leaders landed from the city walls.

“Leader of the Twelfth Troop!” The ripples from this voice were immediately recognizable—Jiang Shixun, leader of the Seventh Troop. The three troop leaders seemed to be more human than before. They recognized Li Hao and the Seventh Troop leader spoke with some enthusiasm, “You’re back!”

“That’s right, Seventh Troop!” Li Hao smiled and summoned his silver armor. “Has everyone been well?”

“Same old. No one comes from outside anymore.” The Seventh Troop leader was the most talkative out of the three leaders. Those of the Eighth and Ninth Troop spoke very little, but the Ninth Troop leader had given him some reminders before he left last time that he could trade for some Water of Life with General Pagoda.

Li Hao had then paid a very low price to obtain one drop.

“Why have you entered the path of energy?” asked the Seventh Troop leader. “It’s a bit at odds with the Battle Heaven Army. This isn’t necessarily a bad thing, but that a lot of our battle methods are built on a foundation of blood qi. Energy cultivators are unable to make use of them and you’ll even face some restrictions when it comes to your armor.”

“It was an accident and couldn’t be helped.” Li Hao looked up at the sky. “Will I be attacked if I fly?”

“That you won’t be. You’re a troop leader, so you won’t be attacked.”

That was good!

Chapter 713: Entering Battle Heaven Once More (I)

The Seventh Troop leader quickly changed the subject. “Are you going to visit the commander? He’s at the barracks...”

“There’s no rush, I’ll pay a visit to Director General Wang first,” Li Hao said sheepishly. Forget him, I still remember that one hitting me. “Then I’ll head into the city. Will you come with me, troop leaders?”

“No, we have a mission at hand and cannot easily leave our posts.”

Alright then, Li Hao ended the conversation. These were all soldiers, so it was already quite a feat that they spent some time in idle chit chat with him. He walked into the city with Panther. He didn’t jump in—the city gates opened of their own accord to let him in.

The massive characters of “Battle Heaven” were still clear to read over his head. He didn’t rashly look at them as there wasn’t much he could understand from them. It would be a waste of an opportunity.

The Seventh Troop leader turned back for a look when the young man was gone. “There seems to have been a great change in the Twelfth Troop leader. Do you two feel it?”

The other two didn’t respond audibly, but inclined their heads. There was indeed a very big change in Li Hao. It hadn’t been long, but the young man of prior had shown a bit of glum reticence. There’d also been impulses of naive killing intent. There was something different about him this time, but they couldn’t immediately identify where or how. They just felt that he’d suddenly matured by quite a bit.

“Perhaps he’s improved after going out to see the world,” came the Ninth Troop leader’s ripples. “He’s plainly undergone some trials since he’s become part of the path of energy. That is just as well!”

The troop leaders fell silent after discussing their colleague. Quiet once more returned to the city walls.

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Li Hao was in the mood to take in the sights as he walked around. Battle Heaven wasn't big at the moment, but it was laid out in a very ideal way. The sectors were clearly delineated and there was no doubt in one's mind between the commercial, industrial, and military areas. He hadn't noticed the number of schools before. It was only after Hong Yitang mentioned it that he paid attention.

This time, he made sure to take a closer look. There were indeed a lot of schools, and with that enormous library... perhaps everyone in the city could read.

Li Hao paused at various points along the way, taking a good look around. It was slow going to the middle of the city. The massive turtle pagoda was as usual, standing upright in the city center. Panther shook in this place, recalling unhappy memories. It stuck close to Li Hao's legs and refused to strike out on its own.

"Li Hao, leader of the Twelfth Troop of the Ninth Division in the Reserve Defenders requests to meet with Director General Wang!"

The doors to the city lord's manor creaked open.

"You may enter!"

Li Hao strode in; the doors led straight to the manor's great hall. There were almost no obstacles in between. He could even see the golden splendor emanating from the director general as he walked in. Perhaps the young man would see him busy at his desk if he stood outside the door.

Inside the great hall.

Director General Wang sat on a chair and sized up the young man. "You seem not bad." He inclined his head.

"You praise me too highly, director general!" Li Hao laughed.

The director general wore gold armor and his features were impossible to discern. However, Li Hao could easily identify the differences between him and the commander. The commander was coldly aloof, whereas this one was much more warm-hearted. If he was to strike up a simile, the director general was as if Hao Lianchuan and the commander was similar to Golden Spear.

It made sense as this one was the chief of city security and the other a major commander in the army. It seemed that all military officers were distant and proud.

“You got the Windchaser Boots?” The director general was surprised when he glanced at the boots.

“Mmhmm.”

“It looks like your travels have been fruitful,” the director general waxed eloquent. “These boots... the Windchaser Boots are somewhat famous in themselves. They were once utilized by the Battle King’s family, then came to the Human King, who then gave them to your ancestors. They eventually found themselves to the Lius, and now you grasp them...”

“These boots have something to do with my ancestors?” Li Hao was rather startled. The Battle King’s family... He recalled the “break” incantation of one of the golden booklets. It broke anything and everything.

“Yes.” Director General Wang nodded. “None of this is important. Do you have business to take care of with this trip?”

“I do have some small matters that I’m hoping the director general can help me with.” Li Hao nodded.

“Speak of them.”



“I am curious about the ancient civilization, particularly its societal structure. There are certain things that I find hard to understand.” The young man furrowed his brows. “There were powerhouses in the ancient civilization, as well as supreme powerhouses! Was the hierarchy of power strictly adhered to? Did those in higher positions oppress the people and exploit them? How did they manage conflicts between superhumans and mundanes? How were communications handled and status and ranks determined?”

Director General Wang blinked. He’d thought that the young man would ask about the path of energy, but these were his questions instead? He was silent for a while before asking, “Why do you wish to know about this?”

“I would just like to understand them more.” Li Hao thought for a bit. “I’m very confused! For example, if a mundane offends a powerhouse and then I kill the mundane, does the mundane deserve it? How were the laws of the ancient civilization established?”

“There was division of labor in society, powerhouses were not the one and only!” the director general answered faintly. “Powerhouses were invincible only in terms of martial might, they weren’t omnipotent! Keep in mind that dao rules the world, no matter how major or minor it was.

“If only pure strength is left, then this world will fall! If everyone is a powerhouse, there would be no one working the fields, no one raising children, no one building cities... Civilization would be very quickly destroyed!

“You started in the wrong direction to begin with. It is not a division of weak versus strong, but a difference in delegation of tasks and how to balance them. Society labels according to division of labor and function, not weak and strong.”

Li Hao seemed to understand—so the profession was the key!

“As for how to manage the strong, that is even simpler. The same treatment is extended to all, the law is the law! Of course, powerhouses paid quite a price to reach the heights they are at, so they receive more special privileges. However, with that comes more duties and obligations!

“For example, when it comes to war, the strong must join the army and obey orders. Neither can ordinary people use the law to bully powerhouses. The necessary respect must be there. They cannot make use of the fact that there are no exceptions to insult and humiliate the strong. That is not permitted either...’

Director General Wang spoke of a lot, but he was only the head of security, so he could only give a general overview. He wasn’t able to go into the details because he wasn’t familiar with them either. This was due to a delegation of labor. He was not the city lord. The director general was also rather surprised by Li Hao’s questions.

“Director General, why do you think the ancient civilization was so strong?”

“Why?” The Gold Armor thought for a while. “It’s hard for me to say, but there were many reasons. The most fundamental can be found in the four major areas of culture and education, economy and infrastructure, military, and technology.

“The strong belonged to the area of the military. Whether or not they served in the army, they were part of the military’s foundations. You would be wrong to think that having a lot of heavyweights is the key to success. It’s just one part of the four areas.”

“One part?” Li Hao raised an eyebrow with surprise.

“Correct, but it is also the core!” the director general continued. “One does not grow stronger without a strong army, but control must be maintained over it. An army that is out of control may be strong, but it is also useless. It will only result in greater harm!”

“Education, economy, technology...” Li Hao committed these terms to memory. “Was the literacy rate in the ancient civilization high?”

“Hmm?”

“I see that there’s a lot of schools inside the city...”

“Isn’t that a fundamental basic of life?” asked the confused director general. “How is one supposed to cultivate without knowing how to read? How does one do work? How does one invent, think, receive more technology and knowledge? A universal literacy rate was present at the start of the New Martial era and it was developed to a further extreme in the later stage. Can there be anyone who doesn’t know how to read? You must know that New Martial was strong because of education!

“The education department was most important in New Martial. Whether it was martial dao, technology, or others, the amount of resources and capital poured into this area exceeded what we invested in the military!

“There were a lot of martial universities back in the day and there were even more to be found after a period of expansion. This was to create a batch of well-rounded talent that was both promising in military aspects while possessing immense knowledge capabilities...”

Li Hao understood! This was a common core curriculum.

“Then what of food?” the young man continued. “If so many people ran off to learn martial dao, that means significant consumption of resources. They’ll eat more than regular people, so how do you satisfy their needs?”

“The agriculture department was in charge of this. They later modified crops and raised animals that could be eaten. The more meat that people ate, the less they needed of grain. Added to that raising vast quantities of plant spirits that collected the essence of heaven and earth as their primary function...”

A light danced in Li Hao’s eyes. “The director general is referring to... modified seeds?”

“That’s just one aspect!” explained Director General Wang. “All sorts of modern technology are employed in tending the fields and superhuman methods are used to nurture the seedlings. With plant spirits as the base... How is food an issue when all of this is employed in conjunction?”

He found the line of conversation odd, why were they spending so much time talking about this?

“Isn’t this how it is in the outside world? I see that you have superhuman cultivators too. You can control the wind, rain, thunder, and lightning. Under such circumstances, how are these matters an issue? Just arrange for some energy martial masters to summon the wind and rain. That easily takes care of life’s necessities. You are no primitive society!”

#### Chapter 714: Entering Battle Heaven Once More (II)

“Supernaturals are lofty, eminent beings.” Li Hao shook his head. “Are they supposed to till the fields?”

“Haha!” Director General Wang gave a bark of laughter, more or less understanding the situation. “It seems that the outside is worse than I thought, but that is only to be expected. Grasping strength, yet lacking the mentality for it leads to power eventually ranging out of control!

“What is wrong with tilling the fields? Tilling the fields is also a type of dao. One can become divine or holy through tilling the fields, or even be a saint of the ages. You guys don’t understand because you are too weak. The weaker you are, the more you care about issues of dignity, face, noble, and being poor...

“The great dao is limitless, so what is the true dao? Even in New Martial, we didn’t dare say that the path the powerhouses walked was the correct dao. There is no right or wrong in dao, just a matter of suitability. There is only exploration and future. The dao is not important, what is important is one’s actions!

“The action of movement and application!”

The director general looked more closely at Li Hao when he sensed that the young man seemed to catch his drift. “I thought this was basic knowledge, but it appears that this is not. Does this mean that you came up with all of these thoughts by yourself?”

“No, someone gave me pointers.” Li Hao grinned. “I am learning and reflecting as well.”

“That is good!” Director General Wang quite approved. “From practical application comes true knowledge! Whatever it is you’d like to know or understand, be a part of it yourself. It doesn’t matter whether or not you understand it. Observe more, listen more, learn more! Of course, human vigor is limited, so learn to use others and use them well! You cannot be all-knowing or all-capable.”

Li Hao nodded continuously. As he thought, the director general was easy to speak to and delivered his messages clearly.

“Director General, I know that the rise of the ancient civilization has much to do with outside enemies. We can be united in the face of strong external enemies, but what if inside enemies exist?”

“Isn’t it best that there are no external foes?” The director general looked wordlessly at him. “Cleanse the inside if there is no one hovering on the outside. Take advantage of the respite to swiftly develop your economy, commerce, culture, and conduct all manner of technological reform. And who says you have no outside enemies?”

Li Hao started.

“Do you think it’s a simple matter that New Martial is no more?” asked Director General Wang. “I don’t know the full story, but I do know that the truth is anything but simple. This is a hard fought period of peace and development for you, what a pity that you don’t seem to cherish it!”

Li Hao frowned slightly and didn’t respond to that.

“Director General, the central region... which is to say, the Skystar Island of old, seems to have a portion of sleeping ancient plant spirits or monsters. They appear to wish to enter Silver Moon. Why is that?”

“The hell does that have to do with you?”

“.....” Li Hao blinked. What did the director general mean by that? He’d always been easy to talk to, so why was he suddenly cursing?

“You don’t understand?” laughed Director General Wang. “I mean that it has nothing to do with you. Where have you gotten in the world, is it your turn to stick your nose in this? As opposed to worrying about this, you might as well worry about how to grow stronger, how to reach your goals. Those entities won’t be coming out in the short term. They can’t. If they did, there would be someone along to take care of them, so is there any meaning to worrying about this?”

Li Hao couldn’t help but laugh.

“Of course, it’s another story entirely if you quickly grow stronger,” smiled the director general. “If you come to me then, I will tell you more. You do not need to strategize for something which you do not hold the post for. In your current state, you do not need to think about this.”

“Understood!” Li Hao nodded, having gained something from their conversation. However, he still had some goals he’d yet to complete. “Director General, General Pagoda is still alive, right?”

“Yes, the general is asleep.”

“Can the general be revived?”

“Of course.”

“Will that require large sums of energy or life essence?”

“Correct.”

“How many cultivation energy stones?”

“.....” Director General Wang looked at him. “You sound like you’ve had some gains and want to complete the general’s revitalization?”

“I do have the thought, yes.”

“That will be very difficult! It’s impossible to fully awaken the general, you can only arouse its sentience and help it partially recover. It can take over from there. Based on the standards of your trash mysterious power stones, it will take at least ten million stones. Don’t mention it if you don’t, it’s meaningless otherwise.”

Ten million stones!

Li Hao actually did have that sum. He had seven million stones and many more origin weapons. If the little tree could use them, then so could General Pagoda. Should he give them to the little tree or the general? That was a very important question. He also needed to consider the potential payoff, he wasn’t giving them away for free! These resources were useful to him as well, he couldn’t afford to simply give them to another.

“Do you know about the imperial palace, Director General Wang? The one shaped like a cat...”

“Oh?” The Gold Armor jumped. “The imperial palace? You’ve seen one? That’s impossible... there are none in Silver Moon. No, wait... there seems to be one. It’s just... it’s just an abandoned imperial palace! You’ve... seen an imperial palace?”

“Yes!” Li Hao nodded. “There’s a plant spirit there, but the old plant spirit is dead. A sapling sprouted from its roots after that. Is this kind of plant spirit good or bad?”

“That’s hard to say.” The director general was both surprised and not too surprised. “Plant spirits that can grow near an imperial palace won’t be evil, but even human hearts change with the passage of time, much less that of plant spirits.”

“It’s guarded the imperial palace all this time and never left or let anyone else in. I think that it’s stayed true to its duties all this time...”

“I suppose so.” The director general thought it over. “Since the imperial palace has been abandoned, that plant spirit shouldn’t be too strong. The stronger it is, the harder it is for one to reawaken! That it’s done so now means that... its strength is mediocre.”

Li Hao was surprised by the declaration. What did he mean?

“Can you explain more, sir...?”

“The current concentration of energy in the world is very low. Under such conditions, those who awaken now will not be too strong, such as those like myself...”

Li Hao coughed. What did he mean by that? Was he looking down on himself?

Director General Wang didn’t mind and laughed. “What? It’s very normal! Remember that I’m just the head of security, there are plenty stronger than me. Why am I here and the others not? Take your reserve defenders—only your divisional commander has awakened. What of the commander of the city defenders?

“General Pagoda is immensely powerful, so it has yet to awaken or even shows signs of awakening. It is stronger than me.”

Li Hao nodded. Very well then.

“What if... I supply ten million mysterious power stones to the general? What will happen then?”



“Ten million stones... will help the general awaken a little and recover some basic intelligence. It might be able to complete autonomous operations of its cultivation methods and draw energy from its surroundings. The city should also be able to reawaken some more.”

“That’s it?”

“What else do you want?”

“.....” Li Hao looked glum. Was that really it? That... would be such a waste! He hesitated before asking further, “If I supply ten million stones to that little tree, will it fully awaken?”

“It depends on its strength. If its strength is mediocre, then it will mostly reach that condition. But if it’s strong... ten million will not be enough. But as you said, it’s simply sprouted from the roots of the old tree and inherited some of its dao. At most, it will be a new Apex...” The director general paused. “That’s not too strong. But if it fully awakens, it will be an invincible existence to this world in your current state of development.”

“Apex?” Li Hao blinked.

“A cultivation name from the core origin dao path. This is what humans call it, whereas monster spirits call it the True Divine realm.” Director General Wang looked at Li Hao. “It won’t have much of an issue for beating someone like you.”

“I’m an Arcanus now.” Li Hao raised an eyebrow. “I’m much stronger than before.”

“I know!” Director General Wang burst out laughing. “You’re much stronger, but you’re still not strong enough! Let’s put it this way. When there comes a day that you can tear through the void from five hundred kilometers away and instantly bridge the distance, you will have reached that level! Whether it is through aura, mind intent, or supernatural abilities, whatever it is, you will be at that level when you can accomplish that.”

Li Hao sucked in a sharp breath. “Cross five hundred kilometers to... tear through the void?”

“That’s right!”

“Was... the director general at this level back in the day?” The young man swallowed hard.

“Of course!”

“.....” Li Hao’s teeth ached from the implications. That strong?

“There’s nothing to it,” Director General Wang continued chuckling. “Looking at your current condition, you just need to break a few more of what you guys call your supernatural locks. Another three to five locks will help you reach that level!”

Li Hao’s head ached as well now!

“Three to five more? I’ve already broken six locks!”

“I know. The supernatural cultivates strength, which you lack. Your body also isn’t strong enough, so break a few more locks! Your cultivation method might be different when you reach that stage, but the path will be the same. The results will be the same! I’ve sensed the strength of the current void and it is as before.

“After you tear through the void and sense a distance very far away, there is a certain perception. You will be able to cross through the void and instantly arrive at your destination. You will be a powerhouse then! You will count as such even in New Martial, a true entrant to the ranks of the strong!”

Li Hao was at a complete loss for words. So that would mean his path had only just started at that stage?? Upon considering that the one in front of him was also part of those august personages, the young man had to marvel, “So... how did the troop leaders... compare to me when they were in their peak?”

“They were just a hair stronger than you, not by much. They died a long time ago and do not have a physical body or blood qi anymore. In our age, the Battle Heaven Army primarily relied on blood qi and the physical body. They were just run-of-the mill then and worse off now. But there’s no need to be discouraged, you’ve only just started cultivating for a few days. Not to mention, most of Silver Moon’s energy has been absorbed by those ancient existences...”

Thoughts flitted rapidly through Li Hao’s mind.

#### Chapter 715: Entering Battle Heaven Once More (III)

“Do you want to revitalize that tree?” Director General Wang thought of something. “You can do that... take a medallion of the army with you. That tree may not know much, so make sure to warn it not to run around during this period of time! The world has not fully reawakened and the path of core origin has fallen silent. Brashly venturing out may easily result in full collapse as it will not have a great dao to cleave to. Otherwise, revitalized powerhouses would’ve long ventured into the world.

“And another thing, have you comprehended its path of core origin?”

“Yes.”

“Don’t!” the director general rumbled with some dissatisfaction. “You can know about it and come in contact with it, but do not study it in detail. That would not be a good development and you will easily lose yourself to become the next plant spirit...”

He issued a few more warnings before concluding, “Additionally, you need to learn to protect yourself in case that little tree has ulterior motives. The times have changed and both the Monster Spirit and Sea Pacification Envoys are no more. Who knows what the situation is with the monster spirits now?”

Li Hao nodded and didn't ask further. Instead, he hastily asked when another thought occurred to him. "Ah, yes, do you happen to know the dragon transformation method, sir?"

"The dragon transformation method?"

"I know of a snake that's about to become a scaled-dragon, but it doesn't know how to become a full dragon. It would like to evolve and take another step further."

"A snake?" The director general rummaged through his memories. "I don't know the method, but... what level is its strength at?"

"A little weaker than me."

"Then the hell it wants to become a dragon for?!" Director General Wang stared. "It's delusional, isn't it? What's the point of becoming a dragon at that level of strength? To look prettier? Dragons and snakes are not of the same race, why must it add feet to itself? It's easy enough to ascend, just purify its bloodline.

"Eliminate the impurities, cleanse the blood. When it comes to a more sophisticated level of being, the dragons are indeed stronger. It can consider the ascension then, but it won't be an easy process. There is absolutely no need at its present stage, it would just be a laughingstock!"

Li Hao was sheepish, was that so?

"Then, how should it purify its bloodline..."

"Is your Stellaris a pretty vase?" Director General Wang really didn't know what to say. "Haven't you been using it all along? The sword energy inside it can purify the bloodline, it's very simple. If that wasn't the case, how come this dog's bloodline is becoming ever more pure?"

He pointed at Panther. “Where would such fortune come from if it didn’t follow you? Even if its ancestors were uncommon and occupied a lofty status, this mixed blood descendant of untold generations... is absolutely nothing at all!”

Panther wagged its tail. Indeed, sword energy could purify the bloodline. It could sense so, but it’d forgotten to say so. Granted, it couldn’t talk.

Li Hao blinked. So this was the case?

“Don’t ask me such idiotic questions in the future!” sniffed the director general. “It’s a waste of our time! As for the snake... do as you see fit. I can’t be bothered.”

Alright then! That was enough.

Li Hao felt that he’d gained quite a lot, but still hesitated before he left. “If I supply ten million stones to General Pagoda, will it give me some benefits so I don’t leave empty-handed?”

“Where are they to come from?” laughed the other. “Don’t even think about it, unless you supply one hundred million stones so it fully reawakens! The city will come back to life then and you’ll be able to bathe in Water of Life. For the moment, you can only awaken a portion of its surface sentience. The effect will not be great. Do as you wish if you want to save that little tree.”

Very well then! Li Hao was truly disappointed. He’d wanted to offer some help to Battle Heaven and receive something for his efforts, but it now looked impossible. Since Director General Wang had said so, he would not continue to insist.

Li Hao paused again before departing. “Director General, I found two golden booklets that speak of the ultimate techniques of core origin. One is of offense, the other of break. Can I learn them?”

“If you want!” answered the director general. “I didn’t recommend you study them last time because you knew too little. It looks like you’ve gained a lot more knowledge this time around, so it’s up to you if you want to learn them or not.

“You can ask the Seventh Troop leader about the break incantation. He has some involvement with the Jiangs and counts as an auxiliary branch. His branch has produced five generations of descendants, so they’re tangentially related. He knows a bit.”

Li Hao was startled by the connection.

“But these are all techniques of core origin, do not lose yourself in them. Comprehending their nature is the key, nothing else! These were simply techniques that some powerhouses used to hoodwink their descendants back in the day. When it comes to true ultimate knowledge, it is the Battle Heaven Army’s Voidbreak Incantation that is the real treasure! You are a sword cultivator, so you should trade some merits for a chance to comprehend it.”

“But I am no longer a martial master...”

“Fool!” snapped the director general. Or perhaps he valued Li Hao more than before and was willing to explain more. “What you mean by no longer being a martial master is that your aura has been sealed away and your energy is intermixed, correct? This has nothing to do with you being a martial master or using a sword.

“Remember, your ancestor melded everything together back in the day. Whatever energy, blood qi, mental spirit it was, all of it came together in his sword! Other than one’s life—no, life is included as well—everything is a type of energy. Energy does not care about all this, just use it!”

Li Hao looked around in a daze. “But... the supernatural uses energy outside of the body. Only internal force is born of the body.

“Then figure out a way to incorporate it into your body!” Director General Wang answered with decreasing patience. “Energy is afraid of the strong and bullies the weak. Beat it into submission if

it doesn't listen to your commands! Isn't it yours in the end once it assimilates into your flesh and blood?

"There is no good or bad to energy, it all comes down to how you use it. You can decide for yourself how you wish to proceed. I am not of your time period and our physical structure may even be slightly different. Read more, learn more, comprehend more. You'll figure it out sooner or later!"

Li Hao abruptly felt that an entirely new world had been opened up to him! There were suddenly a lot more thoughts flooding his mind.

"Don't just ask whatever you think of." The director general was plainly short on patience now. "Try to learn and experiment first, then ask. If you ask from the beginning, what you hear is wasted on you! Only after you personally experience the subject can you ask the critical question and not one of basic knowledge."

"Mmhmm, I understand. Thank you, sir!"

"Go on then!"

"Eh?"

"To the barracks!" sighed Director General Wang. "Are you not going to let your commander know that you've returned? Someone without discipline or organization will be punished in the army!"

Your commander has come calling many times, why do you think I kept trying to have you go?

Li Hao's head ached. I'm scared of that one! He'll hit me! Will I be able to match him at my current level of strength?

It was hard to say.

Battle Heaven had awoken more than before. Perhaps the other was stronger now. In the past, he was likely on par with an unsealed martial master and less than an Arcanus. That was not necessarily the case now.

Li Hao had gained a lot from his conversation with the director general and didn't find there much to be afraid of. But that commander... was truly cold and aloof!

Although his thoughts were thus, Li Hao had no choice but to proceed toward the barracks. Director General Wang suddenly smiled as he walked off.

"He really has changed quite a bit upon his return to ask me these questions. What do you think, Guardian?"

"We will keep observing."

"Mmhmm," nodded the Gold Armor. The city lord manor once more sank into quiet in the absence of anything else to say.

.....

The military barracks.

"Reporting in!" Li Hao called out stiffly.

"Enter!"



“Understood!” Li Hao sharply marched into the office. The commander was busy as always—there didn’t seem to be an end to his duties. He was browsing documents again. Who knew what documents there were to handle after the city had fallen countless years ago?

“As a soldier, your first task of order when you return is to report to the military barracks. It is not to run around randomly, do you understand?”

“Understood!” Li Hao did not argue.

“Has your strength improved?”

“Yes!”

“You seem to have activated some armor?”

“Yes!”

“You must know that you cannot accept random recruits. The army is not a trash can, understood?”

“Understood!”

“.....” The Gold Armor commander looked at the young man. So he’d learned his lesson, huh. Therefore, his tone softened. “Is there anything you need help with?”

“Huh?”

“Do you require your superior officer to repeat himself?”

“No sir!” Li Hao barked out. “Sir, I need some more Battle Heaven armor. I can trade for it as I have two thousand sets of Voidbreakers and three hundred Black Armaturas. I would like to trade for some Battle Heaven armor!”

The young man quickly took out what he’d mentioned so his superior officer could take a look.

“The Voidbreakers... is the defending army of Tranquil Star. The military sent them these supplies. So it looks like you’ve gone to Tranquil Star.” The Gold Armor paused. “You can trade them in. It’s only the settings that are slightly different. They just need to be modified before they become Battle Heaven armor! However, you can only activate one thousand sets of armor as a troop leader...”

Li Hao deflated.

“But I can give you a temporary special privilege and treat your troop as reinforcements!” The Gold Armor didn’t say much as this was just a small matter. “Is there anything else?”

Chapter 716: VIP Customer (I)

“Yes, sir!” Li Hao quickly responded. “Sir, my silver armor places restrictions on me because I am a supernatural now. I am no longer a martial master!”

That made sense.

The Gold Armor thought for a bit before responding, “Battle Heaven armor does not differentiate between energy or blood qi at the gold armor level. It is personal armor, but your rank is not high enough for a set.”

Li Hao drooped.

“But since you are one of the eight families... How about this, we can temporarily lend you a set of gold armor. However, it will come with a condition.”

“Please go ahead, sir!”

“Since the armor of the Skystar Army can be activated, that means that their military system still exists. Investigate why they cut off the energy supply to the eight main cities back in the day,” the commander said coldly. “If they hadn’t done so, the eight cities would not have stilled so quickly. One hundred thousand defending troops vanished without a trace or word. These matters may have fully disappeared, or there might still be hints to discover!”

“Understood!” Li Hao assented loudly.

“That is all, go to Military Supplies for what you need!”

Li Hao rushed off without hesitation. It was always a nerve-wracking experience to talk with this guy.

The commander was equally resigned to see the young man speed away so quickly. He’d wanted to say a few more words, but Li Hao had run away so swiftly. It’s not like I’ll hit you!

At the very least, the young man was much more pleasing to the eyes this time. He pulled out Li Hao’s file after some thought. It was covered with assessments, to which the commander added, “Average growth capacity. To be placed under further observation for evaluation of future effect.”

.....

Li Hao heaved a sigh of relief when he escaped the commander’s office. That had been such a high pressure situation! Even though he was an Arcanus, the stress had been unbearable. Thus, he’d immediately acted on impulse when he was dismissed.

Director General Wang was so much better! He answered whatever he was asked, albeit sometimes reluctantly.

.....

Military Supplies.

The Silver Armor was once more playing dead. He showed signs of life only after Li Hao came through the door. This was an old acquaintance—Deputy Commissioner Zhang Liang of Military Supplies. Apparently the old commissioner had perished, but the deputy commissioner hadn't had time to be promoted before the entire city fell silent.

“Troop Leader Li!”

“Commissioner Zhang!”

“Deputy Commissioner!”

“Deputy Commissioner Zhang!” Li Hao swiftly amended with a brilliant smile. Zhang Jiang wanted a promotion, but insisted on being addressed by his proper title. What a shame for him that the city was inert. There was no hope for him to be promoted.

“The commanders just sent word that you obtained some treasure outside?”

Li Hao nodded and took out his armor.

“Voidbreaker and Skystar standard issue.” Zhang Liang glanced casually at it. “They’re just basic armor. And here I thought it was something good!”

These were mass produced equipment, they were indeed no treasures.

“Can they be traded for Battle Heaven armor?” Li Hao remained in merry spirits.

“Of course.” Zhang Liang put everything away with a wave of his hand. “They were uniformly designed, so their structure is similar. They differ only with different branches of troops, color, and system loaded. If there really is a need, they can be reset and programmed with the same configuration to facilitate coordinated action between various armies! So you want to trade them for Battle Heaven armor?”

“Yes.”

“You’ll receive armor of the same level.”

Seeing that Zhang Liang was about to head inside, Li Hao quickly added, “Commissioner Zhang...”

“Deputy Commissioner!”

“Alright, alright, Deputy Commissioner Zhang, I’d like to ask something. I’m a Battle Heaven troop leader, so can I activate this equipment?”

“No.” Zhang Liang shook his head. “You’re a different branch of troop and do not belong to the same army. You cannot exert your authority over other troops! Of course, this also depends on your rank. As a troop leader, you cannot command other soldiers. But if you are a commander, such as the Battle Heaven commander, you will be able to do so.

“You would be able to make adjustments and order deployments. Whether it is the Skystar Army or Voidbreak Army, those are minor armies. Battle Heaven is a major army. Their commanders must listen to our commanders.”

Hot damn! Li Hao ran some quick calculations. His next title was division leader, then commander of the reserve defenders, then commander of the army proper. That didn't sound like a big gap! It was just three levels!

But... what about the deputy positions? If he counted the deputy positions as well, that would be six levels. Would it be that easy?

Of course not.

He needed ten thousand merits for promotion to division leader and at least one hundred thousand for reserve commander. Army commander would require at least one million... and merits wouldn't be the only requirement at that rank.

He'd obtained ten merits for killing one Nova—would one Arcanus bring in one hundred points? Li Hao estimated that he might be able to secure a promotion by killing ten thousand Arcanus!

Once he was an army commander, he might be able to insert himself into the Skystar Army system and successfully seize command of the royal family's Black Armaturas!

"Deputy Commissioner Zhang, lately there's a bunch of guys wearing Skystar armor who want to attack me." Li Hao had to be more direct since his previous line of questioning wasn't working. "Can I do anything about them? They're just soldiers even if they have activated armor. Isn't there anything that can be done about them attacking a major army troop leader?"

"Out with it, what do you want to do to them?" Zhang Liang saw right through him. "I already said that you're of different armies. There's naturally countermeasures built into place for those of the same army, but different armies will have different management styles. Are you looking to restrain someone else instead?"

"So... there's nothing that can be done?"

“There is!” Zhang Liang’s mental ripples rang clearly. “I already said that you can utilize the armor system to confine them if you’re an army commander. Apart from that...”

“Yeah?” Li Hao perked up. He wanted to lock down the Black Armaturas through his identity as a troop leader, but the royal family may have one too. However, surely they didn’t have the same advantages as he did with the living antiques that he could converse with.

At the same time, it wasn’t impossible either.

“Our army is ranked higher than theirs, so your words will have an effect if you can get an order from the army commander or a deployment order!”

“.....” Pretend I didn’t say anything.

“What, do you think that’s hard?” Zhang Liang snorted. “It’s not hard at all! All you need to do is to produce evidence that there are rebels in the Skystar Army, that they’ve attacked humans, or violated military discipline. You’ll absolutely be able to obtain a military order from the division leader after that!

“Our army commander may be gone, but that doesn’t mean the army’s orders grind to a halt. Anything that triggers emergency actions can still lead to military orders being issued.”

Li Hao blinked. So this was a possibility as well?

“The evidence that you speak of...”

“You can turn on the recording function of your armor when you see someone randomly killing people or violating military discipline. Record it and hand it in next time you return to Battle Heaven. So long as it is confirmed, it will be turned over to the Supervisory Office and ultimately trigger the application of an emergency pact once they are deemed rebels. You will be able to sanction them in a fair and legitimate way then!”

“Wait, I can do that?”

“Why can’t you do that?” Zhang Liang almost rolled his eyes. Wasn’t this very reasonable? Were they supposed to be nice and polite to rebels? Granted, no one had ever dared mutiny before. That was why it was an emergency, temporary pact and not part of the regular military discipline. No one thought it would ever be put into use.

“What if the other side has existences such as troop leaders or even division leaders?” Li Hao asked. “Can he sanction me as well?”

“No!” Zhang Liang replied faintly. “Skystar is a minor army and their highest ranking officer is a commander on par with our reserve commander. They have no right or authority to sanction us. they can only make reports to a major army to take any action against you...”

Alright! Li Hao beamed. He’d had no idea of this possibility before!

“Don’t think of passing judgment on anyone, there’s not much meaning to it. Tell me more about the kind of general’s armor you want. They were individually forged before—made to order given the specifications that you would furnish. We no longer have the ability to do so, so I can only give you a standard issue reserve set. It’s our daily use general’s armor.”

“Is there a difference?” Li Hao was very curious. “Aren’t they all just golden in color?”

“.....” Zhang Liang responded after a while, “Of course there is a difference. As one’s personal armor, only powerhouses are equipped with the general’s armor. Everyone’s fighting style is different. Granted, there is no ability for such customization now, so I’m just talking about the differences in the armor that we already have in stock.

“We have three kinds of regular issue in storage. The first is suited for regular martial cultivators. It is equipped with both mental and physical defensive systems, but they’re all middle-of-the-road. It’s suited for regular martial dao practitioners.



“The second is suited for powerhouses of the mental discipline. Their mental strength is strong and they don’t need mental defenses, so their armor focuses on physical defense. There are almost no mental defense systems in their equipment.

“The third is suited for physical body cultivators. This type of armor has almost no physical defenses. Most of its defensive systems are centered in the head to prevent most mental attacks.

“These are the three that we keep in regular stock and represent the three mainstream cultivation philosophies of my time. Their focus is in different areas, so unless one has special requests, most choose from one of the three.”

Chapter 717: VIP Customer (II)

Li Hao understood!

Come to think of it, there weren’t many who focused on mental strength at this stage. It was known as mind intent and the aura in the modern era, but there weren’t many who concentrated on training them. Any who did so were martial masters.

Well, that... wasn’t necessarily the case either. There were also people like Ying Hongyue.

“Let’s go for the regular type,” Li Hao said after some thought. “Are their defensive capabilities strong?”

“Of course! It will be very strong for you, but it also depends on personal strength. The stronger you are, the more of its defensive capabilities will be activated. It’s not realistic to expect yourself to be invincible simply because you’re wearing armor.”

“Understood!”

.....

Zhang Liang said nothing further and walked back out after a few moments. He tossed a storage ring to Li Hao. “There are twenty-three hundred sets of Battle Heaven Armor inside. This is a set of general’s armor...” He brought out golden armor and looked at it admiringly. “Only those ranked at generals and above are qualified to wear this. In the past... the commissioner of Military Supplies was assigned one...”

I could have a set if I was promoted...

“Since Military Supplies has extra sets and we’re in special circumstances...” Li Hao whispered, immediately understanding the deputy commissioner’s meaning.

“Do you want me to lose my head?!” Zhang Liang jerked his head up. The boy was no good soul. Li Hao was trying to tempt him into villainy!

Li Hao looked sheepish and continued to whisper, “Ah, yes, Deputy Commissioner. Can my twenty-three hundred sets of armor be further outfitted with two sets of silver armor and twenty-three bronze armor?”

“No... Silver armor requires commander-level approval and bronze armor requires clearance from the Supervisory Office. You can put forth nominations, but we lose contact with you after you depart the city and cannot assess your people. You’ll have to bring them in.”

Well, that was a bit of a pity. Li Hao put the notion out of his mind. He looked at the gold armor and dripped a droplet of blood onto it without being prompted. The armor vanished, reappearing over his body!

A great deal of new knowledge flashed through his mind—the basic functions of the armor. Other than the functions that the silver armor contained, there were a lot more that could be found within the gold armor.

Its range of communication was enlarged to fifteen hundred kilometers. That was incredible as five hundred kilometers usually encompassed one province. Fifteen hundred kilometers spanned an

enormous amount of territory. It would not be exaggeration to say that Li Hao would be able to contact any Battle Heaven soldier within Silver Moon bounds. No matter where one stood, Silver Moon land did not seem to stretch beyond fifteen hundred kilometers.

The northernmost city was only one thousand kilometers away from White Moon City.

An enhanced communication range was only one of the benefits. There was another major difference between gold and silver armor in that gold armor could be transformed into anything. Silver armor could only remain as silver armor, but gold armor could be turned into a weapon.

Li Hao had fun testing the functionality of his new equipment, turning it into a spatula, a small knife, and then regular clothes. They all appeared remarkably lifelike and perfectly normal. He wouldn't need to wear a trench coat over his armor next time, he'd just turn it into the trench coat.

"This is incredible!"

"Of course!" Zhang Liang seemed quite envious. "They were all forged by premier craftsmen, not regular people! This isn't much either. Powerhouses above army commanders don't even use armor. They have unique weapons personally forged by emperor-level existences. If they have the background for it, they might even have the Divine Forge Emperor make one himself."

"The Divine Forge Emperor?"

"Yes, an ultimate powerhouse who was renowned for his prowess in craftsmanship. Other than those from Tranquil Star, all were welcome to go to him. The caveat was that they had a deep enough relationship to do so."

"Why was Tranquil Star the exception?"

"Because they shared a feud with each other."

“A feud?”

“You wouldn’t understand it if I spoke of it!” Zhang Liang wasn’t willing to go into the specifics. That was the conflict between the big guys. There was nothing to be said about that. Besides, it’d been so long that no one knew the situation now. Perhaps there was no feud anymore because... the big guys were all gone.

He didn’t pursue that line of thinking as that would only induce despair. Everyone firmly did not believe that this would be so. Such a massively powerful group of beings could not all perish like that! Perhaps they’d gotten lost, or perhaps it was so fun outside that they’d become completely distracted. Perhaps time flowed differently in the depths of space...

No matter what, no one in the Battle Heaven Army would believe that that group of people had lost the battle. They were invincible emperors! The Human and Martial King led them. No one could stop that assembly, absolutely no one!

Li Hao regarded the other with resignation. If you weren’t going to tell me anything, then don’t mention it at all. He was in a good mood after obtaining the gold armor, so he didn’t haggle with the deputy commissioner.

“Ah, I’ve also collected some treasures outside. Can I trade them in here?”

“We don’t accept trash!” Deputy Commissioner Zhang refused brusquely. “This is the army, not outside! You can trade them in only if you’re settling some missions. That’s why you were able to trade in the armor, because they were relevant to the missions at hand...”

“But if you have no use for those items, you can search for a martial university that possesses its basic functionality. You might be able to trade them in there. Martial universities recycled trash back in the day! Some students weren’t strong enough, so they could only pick through garbage and trade it in for some resources...”

“.....” Li Hao nearly choked on his own spit. I killed so many people, but what I’ve collected is trash? You’re joking! But the deputy commissioner had pointed out a path to him, he could trade them in at the martial universities.

“Martial universities...” The young man thought of the information that the Inspectorate had conveyed to him before. “Were there universities on Skystar Island?”

“Probably, I can’t remember. It would be very normal for it to have one, they were everywhere. The university’s scale and scope also remained to be seen. While there were martial universities everywhere, there weren’t truly premier ones. Skystar Island didn’t seem to have one. I would definitely remember if it did.”

Alright then, Li Hao was slightly disappointed. As expected, a ruin that the Lius willingly gave up was no good. He chatted a while longer with Zhang Liang, but he was the type to ignore visitors once they completed their trade. Since Li Hao had no further merits to his name, the deputy commissioner wanted to talk even less with him. Toward the end, he slumped over the table and refused to respond.

Li Hao inwardly cursed to himself—just you wait until I’m a real general! It’ll be too hard to make it to division leader since the one of the Ninth Division is still alive. I’ll just become the commissioner of Military Supplies and be your commanding officer! Just like Light Sword said, you can’t be bothered with me today, and I can’t be bothered with you tomorrow!

Inwardly keeping up a litany of complaints, Li Hao walked out of Military Supplies. His gold armor manifested as soon as he did so, appearing particularly domineering. Some Red Armors of the Supervisory Office and other soldiers immediately halted to salute when they saw him.

Damn that feels good!

It was nice to be wearing a body of gold armor. He didn’t return to the commander’s office to be scoffed at. Instead, he headed out of the barracks and straight for the city gates.

.....

“Congratulations!” chorused the three troop leaders at the gates.

“Although it is just a reinforcement troop, it’s still very rare!” offered the Seventh Troop leader. “But... you have too few people under your command! You need to recruit more people, Troop Leader Li!”

Li Hao’s Twelfth Troop only had three people in it. He hadn’t officially recorded the others, so only three were on the rolls. That was indeed a dismal number.

“I’ll bring my people back next time there’s a chance to,” Li Hao laughed. “I have three thousand sets of armor now, which means I can recruit three thousand in reinforcements!”

“Make sure they’re of high quality!”

“Of course!” Li Hao turned to the Seventh Troop. “Troop Leader Jiang, I accidentally obtained a ‘break’ incantation booklet in the outside world. Director General Wang said I should ask you...”

“The ‘break’ incantation...” Jiang Shixun thought something over before saying, “That requires the coordination of core origin dao. It borrows strength from a compatible great dao! It was strong before because it leveraged the mighty daos of those premier powerhouses. It probably can’t be used now to great effect.

“It’s not hard if you want to learn it, the hard part is making it powerful. This era likely doesn’t support core origin anymore, but some accommodations can be made...”

“You know the aura, don’t you?” He glanced at Li Hao. “I see that you’ve grasped some sword auras. You can use the sword aura to nurture the break incantation. Whether it is the break or sword incantation, they focus on killing and offense. It’s a very good match with sword aura!

“You can also modify it appropriately. The old battle methods of our age are not a match for this era anymore. You do not need to learn in the prescribed order. In our era, even methods created by the Human King were sometimes swiftly outdated. Modifications were very normal.”

He felt that Li Hao’s powers of creation weren’t enough. There wasn’t a rule that said one must learn from the ancient books; ancient knowledge wasn’t automatically powerful. No one of the New Martial era continuously propagated old technology. Instead, they constantly innovated on a base of the known.

“I can nurture it with aura?” Li Hao raised an eyebrow.

“Indeed!” Troop Leader Jiang replied matter-of-factly. “Just give it a try. “If not, nurture it with the supernatural locks. If not, use your blood qi, use flesh and blood, use mental strength... Try them all and see which leads to the best outcome. If worst comes to worst, you’ll just die from your body exploding.

“Powerhouses exploding in the pursuit of creating new martial achievements was a common sight back in the day. There’s not much of a problem if you prepare more life essence. Don’t be afraid. If you make a mistake, you make a mistake. Just give it a try. If you succeed and a new discipline of martial dao is taught, you’ll reap in both material and spiritual rewards! Isn’t that wonderful!

“Back in the day, the governor general of Southern Jiang created all sorts of martial disciplines. He named his system God Slayer, Immortal Slayer, Emperor Slayer, King Slayer... Just listen to how ludicrous those names sound! Yet, they became mainstream later on. It’s fine to be weak, just be daring enough to do what you think!”

These words provoked a reaction out of the other two silent troop leaders.

“That eminent senior suffered his fair share of jeering,” the Ninth Troop leader said coldly.  
“Therefore, I do not recommend choosing such... mortifying names!”

“That was because he wasn’t strong enough at the start,” snorted the Seventh Troop leader. “Look at the martial discipline taught by the Human King. Do you dare jeer at it?”

“.....” No one responded to him.

Chapter 718: VIP Customer (III)

“So the Human King also has his own martial legacy?” Li Hao asked with curiosity.

“Of course, who among the powerhouses doesn’t?” responded Troop Leader Jiang. “But I recommend that you... just ignore the specific terminology used. Pay attention only to the core knowledge. What you have right now is normal enough, but some disciplines... have... really embarrassing names!”

“What is the Human King’s legacy?”

“Not telling you!”

“.....” Again??

The Seventh Troop leader rummaged through his memories to satisfy some of Li Hao’s curiosity. “We’re not at liberty to discuss the teachings of the Human King and others, but we can talk a bit about the monster spirits. It might also have something to do with your dog...” He looked mischievously at Panther. “What do you think about the method name ‘Eating In All Directions’?”

“The hell?”

“Hahaha, you think it sounds silly too, don’t you?” Troop Leader Jiang roared with laughter. “But I tell you, this method counts in the top three of monster spirit history, even if we start counting from the beginning of time!”



Off to the side, Panther blinked with faint recognition. It... seemed to have some memory of this name, it had something to do with devouring. However, all it had was faint remembrance and nothing about the actual cultivation method.

Eating In All Directions?

What a good name!

“Top three in monster spirit history?” Li Hao sucked in a sharp breath.

“Yes!” chuckled Troop Leader Jiang. “What do you think? Some battle methods are so much stronger than you can imagine, but their names are mediocre. They sound like something you’d find by the side of the road, but they’re actually powerful beyond belief!”

Li Hao was at a loss for words. This was gossip, wasn’t it? So it seemed that even soldiers like to gossip. He understood Jiang Shixun’s meaning.

“The Seventh Troop leader is correct. Experimentation and innovation is what those of us in this age all lack. It’s only my master who likes to study and do research.”

He could somewhat sympathize with other people now. Creating new martial methods was a monotonous, uncomfortable, and incredibly difficult affair. Whether it was martial masters or supernaturals, they liked to follow a prescribed routine. It was best if there were ready-made methods to study.

This age lacked innovation because no one liked to engage in it!

Or rather, no one was aware of the need to do so. It might have something to do with the environment, or it might have something to do with the lack of education. There were few with such ideas around Li Hao—his teacher was one of the very few.

Take Ying Hongyue and the rest, for example. They only knew to seize the Five Styles if possible. They didn't create anything for themselves.

While Jiang Shixun hadn't given him any cultivation pointers, he gave Li Hao a direction. The more the young man came in contact with these people, the more he felt that New Martial was truly a great time period. Even a troop leader would tell one to modify and create their own material, not to just outright ask about everything, that one was not a child.

They would tell you that the times were different, the human body was different, and the focus of martial learning was different. There was no need to proceed according to the old rules, even if a battle method was created by an invincible powerhouse, the so-called Battle King.

In Jiang Shixun's words, those methods were easily overturned. Rules and the mundane world were made to be broken.

This was what Li Hao sensed here. To break the restraints! There was no need to think that a cultivation method was very strong. There was no strongest method, just the most appropriate method. Even if a technique was created by a grandmaster, that didn't matter either. One believed that they would create an even stronger method!

I need to shatter the god in my heart because I am the god!

Such a thought rose in Li Hao's heart as he suddenly felt that he'd gained quite a lot on this trip. It wasn't the usual material gains that one might think of, but a deeper elaboration of martial dao understanding.

.....

Li Hao left with Panther after he bid farewell to the three troop leaders. He was going to depart the ancient city. When he reached the tree tunnel, he looked at the altar and walked over after some thought.

“Director General Wang says that the senior needs too much energy, that the little bit I offer now isn’t very useful. But I am grateful for the senior’s support last time with the drop of Water of Life...”

He brought out numerous mysterious power stones and shoved them all in. Vast quantities of stones were devoured by the tree. Ten thousand, twenty thousand... the altar showed no reaction even after five hundred thousand. Li Hao didn’t know whether to laugh or cry!

“So that Water of Life after the little I put in last time really was just fishing for more...” If he’d been greedy on his last trip and continued to offer more mysterious power stones, he likely wouldn’t have drawn any reaction even if he exhausted everything on him. The tree really had been scamming him!

Laughing helplessly, he put a bit more in until he only had six million stones left.

“I don’t have the ability to support the senior’s full revitalization, so just have a taste for now! Your awakening will not be a problem after I take down the royal family and the mines of Skystar Town. I also look forward to the day in which Battle Heaven is fully active again...”

He turned and left. Some branches rustled in the dark, quite at ease.

.....

Inside the city lord’s manor.

Director General Wang watched from a high vantage point and smiled at a point outside the city. “It looks like he did indeed stumble across some wealth. General Pagoda just enjoyed a full meal. Although it won’t do much, it’s still a gesture of the young man’s good intentions.”

He didn't have Li Hao leave everything behind because there was no need. Li Hao was still weak, so perhaps revitalizing the little tree now would be more helpful to him. General Pagoda was a bottomless hole. There would never be enough for the tree.

"Master Guardian, can we trust the plant spirits at the discarded imperial palace?"

"No matter if we can or not, they will not do anything to Li Hao at the moment," the old turtle answered ponderously. "Li Hao gives them enough benefits, so why not continue to rely on the young man for awakening and strengthening? Killing the young man won't result in any benefits. Compared to animal spirits, plant spirits are still a bit more reliable."

"Master, you forget that you yourself..."

"I am a weapon!"

Very well then! The director general laughed and looked in the direction of the barracks. There was a Gold Armor hovering over that locale.

"It looks like the Ninth Division leader also holds more expectations for the lad as well."

No one was disappointed by Li Hao becoming supernatural. On the contrary, they held more expectations. This was a noticeable sign of growth that they found nothing wrong with. Li Hao also seemed to have more of his own thoughts on this trip. Only someone like this was worthy of inheriting the legacies of the New Martial era.

People died, but ideas did not. The strongest of powerhouses would only be a weapon of war and not a heavyweight if they did not have their own thoughts.

The old turtle didn't respond; it turned the massive pagoda in another direction instead to take a look. "You need to work harder," it said after a while. "If the unexpected didn't happen to that one

back in the day, he would've long risen to reserve commander. Although his body has decayed, his mind grows ever stronger! As expected from someone who graduated from Demonic Martial!"

"So what about Demonic Martial?" sniffed Director General Wang. "It was my Capital Martial that was ranked number one among all the universities back in the day!"

"....." The old turtle couldn't be bothered to respond. How was this still a point of contention?

"Does the guardian not agree?" asked the director general when he didn't receive a response.

"It has nothing to do with me." The old turtle refused to be involved. Demonic Martial had produced the Human King, Capital Martial produced His Imperial Majesty, and Southern Martial clamored that they were the first beneath the world instead. What would a weapon be doing in that squabble?

Not to mention, this was Battle Heaven. Whether it was Demonic Martial or Capital Martial, they did not come first. The army commander graduated from Southern Martial! Thankfully, none of the highest characters were present at the moment, or legs would be broken upon hearing this talk of school superiority.

The mice will play when the cat is away. It was only under these circumstances that the director general dared to voice these words.

.....

Li Hao walked out of Battle Heaven. Although the cliff face shimmered, the Night Watchers on duty did not sense anything. Li Hao was a troop leader and raised very little fuss when he entered. Neither did he want anyone to know that he'd been present, so he swiftly vanished after leaving the ruins.

.....

Less than one hour later, Li Hao appeared in the mountain cave that the little tree was in.

“You’re here!” rustled the little tree. “I turned all of the mysterious power stones and origin weapons that you sent into Water of Life. There were 120 drops total, did you get them?”

It was rather apprehensive as it wondered why Li Hao was here. Was the human visiting because it’d given too little? But... it had to embezzle some, ahem, collect some processing fees to nurture itself, didn’t it?

It was a reasonable fee! The boy wasn’t here because he felt that he’d gotten the short end of the stick, was he?

The little tree swayed with newfound nervousness because it knew now that Li Hao was a very important customer. After the human supplied so much energy last time, the little tree had thought that would be it for a few years.

Who would’ve thought that tenfold that would come a few days later! Should it give more to such an important customer like this one?

“I haven’t yet, but that’s alright.” Li Hao smiled. “I’m here because I want to ask how many mysterious power stones will the senior need to fully recover?”

“Fully recover?”

“Yes, to command the strength of an Apex again, that of a true divine...”

“Eh?” rusted the little tree. “A lot!”

“One million stones?”

“Not enough.”

“Ten million?”

“...perhaps... just about... But there’s no hurry. You can take your time collecting that sum and I’ll repay you once I’m recovered...”

“No worries!” Li Hao grinned. “I’m also here to ask that if there is no more core origin dao in the outside world, will it still be possible for the senior to emerge?”

“No more?” hesitated the little tree.

“Most likely!”

“Then... unless I restrict my strength, I’ll probably collapse if I emerge in my prime!”

As he thought!

Chapter 719: VIP Customer (IV)

“If energy awakens in the world again to a degree sufficient for a powerhouse like the senior to emerge, does that mean you will be able to walk around at will?”

“I can if there is sufficient energy. Even if the core origin path is no more, my strength is my own. If heaven and earth can support my existence and I will not easily break the void... then I will be able to survive!”

That sounds right! Li Hao understood why everyone was waiting for the second awakening of the supernatural. They wanted to bring a few of the awakened powerhouses with them on their campaigns. That was impossible at the moment.

“Senior, I have a small request that I wonder if you’ll be able to fulfill?”

“Speak of it.”

“I would like the senior to grow a batch of rations for me, the kind that staves off hunger for three days with one grain. The plentiful kind that fills the body with vigor...” Li Hao ran some quick calculations. “It has to be enough for one hundred million people for one year. If they eat one grain a day, that’s three hundred sixty-five grains per person. Thirty billion grains will be enough, that’s not much...”

“I can’t do that!” refused the little tree. “That requires a large amount of energy and life force. I cannot sustain this kind of expenditure in my current state.”

“What if I give you one hundred thousand mysterious power stones?”

“Not enough!”

“Two hundred thousand?”

“Far from enough!”

“Five hundred thousand?”

“Um... ah... that will barely be enough,” the little tree said reluctantly. Five hundred thousand stones... would do!



“So that means it’s five million stones for a year’s worth of grain for one billion people?” Li Hao smiled.

Just listen to yourself! Is that little? That’s a lot! How many do you have? The one million you sent over before apparently came from you killing a lot of people outside. Do you think that’s a small number??

“No wonder no one went hungry in New Martial!” Li Hao sighed with gratification. One plant spirit could easily consume just five hundred thousand stones to grow food for one hundred million people. It would feed them for one year! And it was very possible that the little tree had given a low estimate!

To many, trading five hundred thousand mysterious power stones in return for a year’s worth of rations for one hundred million people was not a good deal. It would be an incredible loss instead. They would rather have this hundred million starve to death since the dynasty did not lack for people.

“Senior, I’ll give you five million mysterious power stones. Grow a batch of those rations for me, enough for one hundred million to eat for one year. Turn the rest into Water of Life for me.”

“That much??” The little tree bent with shock. This was incredulous! Who had the human robbed now?

“And here are fifty origin weapons, some earth rank. They’re all very good. Please convert them all into Water of Life for me too.”

The little tree had no words, finally managing to scrape together after a while, “Whose... palace did you loot?”

“None, I got this through killing people.”

“.....” What could the tree say about that? “You want a lot of Water of Life... it will take me some time to produce it all. It’s no trouble to me, but do you need so much?” This bounty could fetch at least five hundred drops.

The little tree twitched with agitation. So much! Even if it kept seventy percent for itself... ahem, charged a fee, it would recover almost sixty percent of its strength! This transaction had to be done!

Not only that, but it had to ensure that this very important customer would remain so indefinitely!

“I don’t recommend you to trade for so much Water of Life,” it quickly sent out ripples. “It may not be that useful for you...”

“No, that’s precisely what I want!” Li Hao said solemnly. “I only want Water of Life!”

He was going to sell some in secret! He could charge fifty thousand stones compared to someone else’s one hundred thousand. He could then trade the stones to the little tree, sell more, trade more...

Maybe eventually I’ll collect the one hundred million that General Pagoda needs...

Of course, the caveat was that these factions were able to scrounge up so many stones. This transaction had to be done! It was what Li Hao was here for, what did the little tree know! He was going to charge ten thousand while others charged ten times his price!

“That works too!” The excited little tree didn’t mind and dropped the subject since Li Hao insisted. “But I need some time to absorb and convert the energy. Three days... will three days do?”

“Of course!” Li Hao smiled and threw out various storage rings to an overcome little tree.

“When you come back in three days, I’ll give you another... no, two more core origins talismans...”

“That’s alright, my enemies are very strong now. Core origin talismans aren’t that useful.” Li Hao briefly revealed his presence, but the little tree already knew of his increase in strength.

“I know, but you also need to know that my strength will be different in three days!”

Do you understand?

Oh, that’s true! The thought occurred to Li Hao. He grinned. “Then my thanks to the senior!”

“That’s alright, no need for thanks!” The little tree quickly responded with an excited shake. What a very important customer!

Please don’t thank me, I should be giving you some presents. Remember to come find me next time too! I’ll be fully recovered with another two visits and will no longer be constantly starving like I am now.

Li Hao was in a good mood as well. Five hundred drops of Water of Life, food for one hundred million people...

“It depends on the quality of the seeds that you give me. I only need one month if they’re of high quality, but will need to modify them if they’re of low quality. That will take at least three months...”

Oh, seeds?

Li Hao had almost forgotten about this detail and thought that the little tree could produce its own seeds. It looked like he'd assumed too much.

"Then I'll come back in three days and bring seeds to the senior."

"Alright!"

Li Hao was ready to leave in a good mood, but doubled back to ask, "Senior, General Pagoda will need one hundred million stones to barely manage to awaken. Is the general much stronger than the senior?"

The little tree knew that Li Hao had visited Battle Heaven, so it didn't hide anything. "Naturally!" came its affirmative ripples. "The guardian plant spirits of the eight great cities were premier existences! Compared to them, I am an incredibly weak weed that cannot measure up to them."

Li Hao's heart shook from the implications. Was the difference that great? The more he compared his new Arcanus strength to others, the less he thought of himself! He had to work harder!

There was no time to waste. He left everything behind and quickly exited the cave. The moment he did so, the little tree shook with anticipation and furiously absorbed the mysterious power stones. It was so excited that it had no words to describe its emotions.

"This is so incredible that a random human I met would collect so many mysterious power stones in such a short period of time. He's terrifying!" As excited as it was, it also felt a very strong sense of danger!

Battle Heaven seemed to want to steal its very important customer! What should it do? Give the human some more benefits? But... the little tree only had itself, it had no other treasures to offer! The sapling was momentarily lost in thought, fretting over how to ensure that its relationship with the young man remained top priority.

Do I... have to sell my body?

.....

Li Hao grinned happily upon leaving the imperial palace. The little tree seemed a bit naive. Though it'd inherited the old tree's memories, it was a pure, blank slate compared to the blackened hearts of antiques from the past. He could tell from its tone that it'd kept a lot of the stones for itself, but that didn't matter.

The royal family might inflating prices somewhat to price one drop of Water of life at one hundred thousand stones, but if others were able to directly transact with plant spirits for the resource, the price was bound to be at least thirty thousand stones.

Maybe the plant spirit that the royal family dealt with was more powerful and wanted to fully awaken. If Li Hao wanted to trade with General Pagoda, perhaps that plant spirit might feel that it was operating at a loss even if each drop was priced at one million stones. It'd yet to reawaken, so each drop it released was from its stores.

That was how all powerful plant spirits were, but the little tree wasn't an ancient plant spirit in the true definition of the category. Thus, it needed less energy to revive and therefore posed a lower price to Li Hao.

The little tree felt that it earned a lot at seventy percent, whereas other plant spirits would find that too little as it wasn't enough to support its full restoration.

Li Hao quickly calculated his gains from the trip. Was it worthwhile to trade mysterious power stones for Water of Life?

It was!

He didn't have much use for stones and kept one million for Stellaris to convert to sword energy. That was sufficient for the sword to consume for a long time. It would require higher level treasure for it to unseal next—more high level mysterious power stones with denser energy, more powerful

weapons, and others. Turning the motley array of items in his possession into treasure he could use was the wisest decision.

.....

Li Hao landed outside White Moon City after roughly an hour. It seemed only yesterday when he first came to the city. It was his first time away from home then and he'd been slightly timid. But now, he found it so close to home and it was now also his home. Silver City was his only home in name, but in the central region, all of Silver Moon was home.

The gold armor turned into a trench coat when he landed. The bitter winter gale howled through the land. Liu Long had also worn a trench coat when Li Hao first met him, but that had been in the peak of summer.

Half a year had passed in the blink of an eye—or less than half a year, rather. The places and items were the same, but the people were completely different. One trip to the east and central region had brought too many reflections to Li Hao.

#### Chapter 720: Fool (I)

White Moon City was as bustling as ever. Although it was cold and bitter, living didn't seem so hard in Silver Moon. True, there were complaints and grumbles to be heard on the streets. When the Li Hao of old heard those voices, his first thought was that the officials of Silver Moon were full of shit! How could they operate the province to such dismal straits!

But now that he took another look, while the people weren't dressed in pretty clothes, everyone had thick garments to wear. Their faces were flushed with decent health, which indicated that food was acceptable and they could at least eat their fill.

In comparison, the central region may shine with a glamorous veneer, but there was much that one could learn about their true situation. Their appeal was built on the back of shadows. It was abnormal that no beggars could be seen in their cities. While some could be seen in Silver Moon, that was the normal occurrence.

Silver Moon denizens didn't particularly react to the Inspectorate conducting patrols on the streets. Wasn't it normal for inspectors to be carrying out their duties? Whether it was Silver City or Silver Moon, the Inspectorate conducted their normal routine. Li Hao had once participated in run-of-the-mill cases such as apprehending thieves. He'd never thought much of them before, but now he felt that Kong Jie performed well enough in his position.

He wasn't in a hurry to head to the Night Watchers or the Silver Moon Guard barracks. After some thought, he headed to the military base. Huang Yu had come to help him last time—he'd never had much to do with the commander before that.

That was one reason for his agenda. The other was that his senior sister and her husband were in the army. Li Hao contemplated the relationship between Hu Dingfang and the Bais. That family had an unclear connection with the royal family. Was this senior brother-in-law of his a secret royal agent?

Chen Yuhua knew the Breathing Method of the Five Styles—many wanted it. There were many who wanted to seize even the first version of the method. Did Hu Dingfang's promotion have anything to do with the breathing method?

His teacher had never mentioned it and Li Hao wouldn't have cared before. Now that he'd witnessed the greed from the three great organizations, seven divine mountains, and even the City of Supernaturals, he was of the mind to look around, ask, and investigate.

.....

The army headquarters in the western quadrant of the city.

The western outskirts were where the army was encamped. Silver Moon only had three hundred thousand in its army. It wasn't much compared to the province's one hundred million in population. This level of troops was very low.

These numbers had been maintained for many years. Ever since Great Li vanished from the north, Silver Moon spent many years whittling down its army and not adding to it. This amount of troops didn't pose too much of a burden on Silver Moon finances.

There were one hundred thousand people each in the Silver Moon, White Dragon, and Tiger Wings divisions. Huang Yu was the central commander and in charge of the Silver Moon division. Hu Dingfang commanded the Tiger Wings and Ren Tianchuan was in charge of the White Dragons. Wang Ming's grandfather was the vice commander of that division.

Li Hao wasn't familiar with the White Dragon commander, but he'd been in contact with the man when excavating Battle Heaven. This was a man of few words. The young man was curious what the armies of this age looked like. He'd seen some—they were all trash, corrupted, and didn't have any morale to speak of.

He approached the western outskirts, catching shouts that drifted toward him upon the air. The troops were still training in the bleak of winter.

In this age of the supernatural rise, ordinary people didn't have much guarantee of safety. Not even soldiers could do anything, so most armies had slackened their training requirements. The three divisions of Silver Moon, however, stuck to their schedules.

Li Hao was like an invisible person as he passed through layers of defenses and entered the practice grounds. The three divisions were in the middle of training!

There were supernaturals among them, but very few. A martial master led the soldiers through the training routine. Hot air wafted from the tops of their heads as they panted for breath. One man held sway in the center of the practice grounds. Although he was elderly, he moved with the vigor of a tiger in its prime.

Huang Yu!

Li Hao was surprised. Huang Yu was running through a boxing routine!

“Kill!”



“Kill!”

His shout was echoed by the practicing soldiers, as were his movements. He flourished a spear and struck! This was once more aped by the soldiers around him. In a period of time that abounded with hot weapons in military hands, Huang Yu was leading his people through basic hand and fist coordination!

Off in the distance, the man seemed to sense something and tilted his head in Li Hao’s direction. He ignored his senses and continued practicing. “Hup!”

“Kill!” A dense killing intent rose. It was like this troop had the experience of war. It was an awe-inspiring display of might as there were one thousand people to a team. A martial master led each team and ran through practice routines.

Shortly thereafter, Huang Yu tossed his spear to an officer. “The practices continue!” He vanished on the spot, leaving his men to it. Some officers looked in his direction. Commander Yu was steadfast and unwavering, he trained with the troops almost everyday unless other duties called. Why had he left halfway today?

Some suddenly realized that a person had appeared in the distance, one that didn’t exist before. Shocked, they couldn’t determine who it was that’d snuck into their camp. However, they were much more at ease upon seeing the commander head over.

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“What are you doing here?” Huang Yu frowned. “It’s not a good thing to infiltrate the military barracks. According to the law, execution is listed as the punishment for prying into military secrets! Of course, it won’t be that easy to execute you since you’re so strong, so I will make an exception this time. This is not to be repeated!”

“I just wanted to take a look at the provincial army.” Li Hao nodded. “Now that I have, I see that they are well deserving of their reputation. Discipline remains strict and has not fallen to the wayside.”

“Of course.” Huang Yu proceeded to the rear of the camp with a composed expression. “Let’s not talk here.”

“Understood!” Li Hao responded subconsciously and followed the man forward. Huang Yu looked at him without saying a word.

As the two walked to the rear, the commander explained softly, “Silver Moon’s army has always been filled with ferocious troops! There aren’t many of us, but the entire world knows of the northern barbarians. It’s just that the uses of an army have greatly declined after the rise of the supernatural, but that is of no matter.

“Powerhouses can be left to powerhouses. A well-disciplined, strong army is useful any time. Whether it is calming people’s hearts or pacifying minor turmoil, there is no problem with any of that.”

Li Hao nodded. Heavyweights were very useful at times, but that didn’t mean that armies were useless. Not to mention, this army seemed different from the rest.

“Commander Yu, are the soldiers all martial masters?”

“No.” Huang Yu shook his head. “While the supernatural has risen in prominence and the number of martial masters increased, it’s not possible for every soldier to be one. They’ve just learned some elementary secret arts and enhanced their blood qi. They’ve also absorbed small amounts of mysterious power and mysterious power stones, making them much stronger than mundanes but far less than supernaturals or Slayers of Tens...

“Of course, a dozen or so of them can still fight a Starlight or Slayer. A Slayer is only capable of killing ten ordinary soldiers. Those of Silver Moon are fearless, so a Slayer likely won’t be able to kill ten of us.” He spoke with some pride.

“Then why doesn’t Commander Yu train more martial masters? Why focus on ensuring equitable strength across the soldiers? Concentrating your resources might produce more powerhouses...” His cultivation resources were too spread out!

“No no no, you’re wrong. An army is one whole, there is not much use in concentrating resources to produce a few powerhouses. In fact, it will disrupt troop deployment instead and throw coordination into chaos.

“There are powerhouses in the army, but they are individually managed. For example, if you are a Slayer of Tens, then you would be in a team of Slayers. They cannot be intermixed. That would be too chaotic, which will also affect coordination.”

Li Hao nodded, that made sense. The two entered a small building as they talked. The soldiers inside swiftly saluted when they saw Huang Yu. “Commander Yu!”

“Mmhm.” Huang Yu inclined his head. These people were surprised to see Li Hao. Some didn’t recognize him, whereas some of the higher ranking officers did. They were further confused and astonished.

Li Hao!

The young man was known throughout the world; the higher levels knew of him and had seen his picture before. What was he doing back from Skystar City?

The two entered Huang Yu’s office, the commander indicated for Li Hao to take a seat. It was a spacious room without much in it. It was empty apart from a small bookcase and desk.

“When did you get back?”

“Last night.”

“I see.” Huang Yu didn’t say or ask anything else. The atmosphere turned awkward as the silence dragged on. Li Hao had to start the conversation himself.

“Commander Yu, this is the camp of the Silver Moon division. Are the White Dragons and Tiger Wings not here?”

“They’re nearby.”

“I have a question that I wanted to ask the commander. Were you the one who approved of Hu Dingfang becoming the commander of the Tiger Wings?”

“Yes.”

“Then he and the Bais and royal family...”

“Are you asking if he traded the Breathing Method of the Five Styles for his position?” Huang Yu looked at the young man.

“Yes!” Li Hao was forthright. “Teacher didn’t say anything when my senior sister taught him the breathing method. He never mentions it. But now that the three great organizations are all looking for it, I’d like to understand the situation.”

“If this is indeed so, are you going to clean house?” Huang Yu asked faintly. “He is the commander of the Tiger Wings. Attacking him means attacking me, to say nothing of anything else. Will you persist in your course of action?”

Li Hao frowned and looked at the commander.