

## Star Gate 721

### Chapter 721: Fool (II)

“What, are you hesitating?” Huang Yu suddenly smiled.

“There are no words to describe the depths of my gratitude for the commander’s previous help in Skystar City.” Li Hao raised an eyebrow. “But if Hu Dingfang’s position really came as the result of trading the Breathing Method of the Five Styles, then that means the commander also knows the breathing method. But if the commander is putting in a showing... I will let the matter go.

“However, this also means that the favor rendered by your earlier assistance is no more. On the other hand, both my master and I will also no longer pursue the issue of the breathing method.”

“Can you represent Yuan Shuo?”

“I think... I can!” Li Hao looked at the man. Huang Yu smiled slightly stiffly in return.

“It’s not because of the breathing method,” he said after a moment. “Hu Dingfang wouldn’t dare teach it to others either. Your master still walks this world, after all! Yuan Shuo did factor into Hu Dingfang’s promotion as your senior sister leveraged his reputation when she came to me. However, Hu Dingfang is also worthy enough of his appointment.

“As for the Bais, they are no major matter for you at the moment. They’re just the eyes and ears that the royal family have installed in various locales. These kinds of people are everywhere, but the Bais have been slowly distancing themselves from the royal family.” Huang Yu looked at Li Hao. “With me present in the military, there will be no major problems. What you worry of will not come to pass!”

Silver Moon was stronger than the young man imagined; Li Hao needed to have more confidence in his home.

“There is no need to view Hu Dingfang with enmity.” Huang Yu didn’t care about all of this. “So many years have passed and the breathing method has been modified many times over. Let the matter go.”

“So long as he doesn’t teach anyone else.” Li Hao nodded after some thought. “I naturally will not do anything so long as my master doesn’t say anything. But the rules of the martial world still exist. I will intervene if he passes on the knowledge!”

“You’re such a stubborn kid!” Huang Yu laughed, but didn’t say anything further. Such was Silver Moon’s martial world. The core of a secret art was not permitted to be freely disseminated. The commander changed the topic. “What do you think of Silver Moon’s army?”

“It’s very strong... but not enough!” declared Li Hao. “You have three thousand strong, but there’s several million supernaturals in the central region. As strong as the Silver Moon army might be, it will take ten people per supernatural. All the central region needs to do is to send thirty thousand supernaturals to overcome Silver Moon. Of course, this is just in terms of cold weapons. Adding in hot weapons might lead to a bit more of an effect.”

“Mmhmm!” Huang Yu nodded and considered the matter. “So we need to strengthen the provincial army as a whole. Do you have any ideas?”

What did he mean by that?

“What do you mean, Commander Yu?” Li Hao asked without a flicker of change in expression.

“It’s good to strengthen via mysterious power, but you also know how violent that energy is. The user easily ends up exploding!”

The young man understood! Sword energy! Li Hao looked at the other with a brewing headache. Huang Yu wanted him to supply the entire provincial army with sword energy?!

Oh... my... how much would that deplete of his resources? These are all martial masters, can you afford to cultivate them all? Martial masters had a much greater appetite than others, to say nothing of anything else.

“Also, I hear that the Demon Hunters are proficient in a small-scale military formation...”

“Commander Yu... is seriously asking for a lot!” Li Hao ground out through grit teeth. He was just here for a look, but the man flung out these kinds of requests. Sword energy wasn’t the only thing he wanted, he even wanted the military formation!

“I’m just saying,” laughed Huang Yu. “It doesn’t have to be that way. But what if we really do do it that way? Think about it. I can give you the position of vice commander! Those of Silver Moon must help those of Silver Moon!”

“I’ll think about it!”

“You have the support of the Battle Heaven Army and one of their positions, but you don’t have enough people. There won’t be enough people for your use even if you recruit all of the Silver Moon Guards!

“As opposed to recruiting people you don’t know, why don’t you choose from my people here? They may not be strong, but they’re soldiers as well. Our discipline is strict and orders are followed. If you can become the commander-in-chief of Battle Heaven’s armies, you’ll have countless powerhouses under your banner! One command will mobilize an army of millions and trample over Novas and Arcanus!

“Three hundred thousand from Silver Moon’s provincial army is a very good seed!” Huang Yu looked at the young man. “What do you think?”

Li Hao looked silently at him. The other seemed to understand a lot.

“You’re not the only one who’s a troop leader,” Huang Yu continued softly. “There are more in Silver Moon! But it’s very hard to become a division leader. Only division leaders can command ten thousand ancient soldiers! It’s even harder to become a reserve commander. But if someone can do so, they’ll be able to mobilize one hundred thousand soldiers!”

“Why do you think that there are only three hundred soldiers in Silver Moon, and not one million or three million?”

Li Hao seemed to understand and raised an eyebrow. “Commander Yu means to say... that these soldiers can don ancient armor at any time?”

“There’s too few of them!” Huang Yu did not deny the conjecture. “We only have three thousand sets of armor at the moment!”

That was three full troops!

“The Battle Heaven Army?” A light flashed through Li Hao’s eyes.

“No!” Huang Yu shook his head. “The city of Battle Heaven has awoken to a higher degree and it’s different from the other cities. It has powerhouses in residence, so it’s very hard to obtain its approval. You were a product of fortune. Hou Xiaochen’s gone inside so many times, but still has nothing to show for his efforts.

“There are other cities apart from the eight major cities. Some of the smaller ones give out positions more readily... But sadly, a portion of the smaller cities has been destroyed. In all our years of exploration, we’ve only managed to have three of us be made troop leaders.”

Li Hao was surprised, then quickly realized, “Commander Yu is one of them?”

“Yes.” Huang Yun nodded. “And now you are as well, so Silver Moon has four thousand armored soldiers that can be mobilized. But that is far from enough. It’s too difficult to become a division leader.”

“What about the royal family?” asked Li Hao. “The royal family has many Black Armaturas...”

“They only have troop leaders as well, just more of them. They proceed to nibble their way to the top bit by bit instead of having one of them directly become a division leader. In the ancient civilization, their assessment of division leaders was exceedingly rigorous. Strength and military merits were both required!”

Li Hao understood. Division leader was a truly premier powerhouse. According to Director General Wang, they could tear through the void and travel five hundred kilometers in the span of one breath. Even if the position requirement was lowered, there was likely no one who could meet it at the moment.

So it looked like the royal family had indeed obtained the Skystar Army’s approval, but just in terms of multiple troop leaders, not division leader.

“If that difficulty level is so hard, you might as well focus on training a batch of powerhouses yourself,” Li Hao remarked. “That might be easier.”

“It’s not the same.” Huang Yu shook his head. “You can’t see anything now because there are too few of us. Once we reach a critical mass and the ancient armor can be interconnected, you’ll see then how strong the ancient armies were!”

“Silver Moon yearns for someone to reach the rank of division leader, even reserve commander. If we can outfit the entire provincial army, we won’t have to fear anyone then!” Huang Yu was just commenting casually, he was well aware of the difficulties. What he had in his sights was Li Hao’s troop leader authorization. Since the lad wasn’t making use of it, he might as well lend it to the Silver Moon army.

“I’ll think about it!” Li Hao laughed without refusing or agreeing. His troop was a reinforcement troop now and thus, different. He could play around with twenty-three hundred sets of armor and another five hundred at the Silver Moon Guards. That made for almost three thousand.

But the provincial army did indeed have good foundations, and they were all soldiers. Their battle sense, coordination, and discipline were much stronger than those wandering martial masters. The Silver Moon Guards might not even measure up to the local army in terms of discipline.

This isn’t a wasted trip. Silver Moon’s army seems not bad!

“If Commander Yu is interested, you can choose a troop of one thousand from Silver Moon,” said the young man. “They need to be elites as they’ll be sent to Skystar City. I want to establish a martial academy there, in name only, of course. But I’ll still need some support from the province, it’s not like I can just have an empty school. That would be meaningless and an embarrassment.”

A thousand people would create some momentum for him.

“A martial academy?” Huang Yu raised his eyebrows. “Are you looking to imitate the martial universities of old?”

“Pretty much.”

Not really. He was just going to sell dog meat under a banner of lamb meat. It would dispel some people’s worries if Silver Moon sent over one thousand people. They would think that the school was a Silver Moon playground.

“One thousand...” Huang Yu asked, “Do you want them as bodyguards or something else?”

“Not bodyguards!” Li Hao shook his head. “If possible, I want to incorporate them into the Battle Heaven system.”

“You...” The commander furrowed his brows. “You only have authorization for one thousand, and it already sounds like you want to bring Silver Moon Guards under your command...”

“That’s right. I’m going to commandeer the Silver Moon Guards and then another one thousand!”

“.....” Huang Yu looked at him, astonished. “What do you mean?”

“My troop is a reinforcement troop! I have a slightly larger quota...”

Huang Yu’s mouth dropped and he stared for a moment before cursing, “So there’s nepotism in the ancient civilization as well?”

The hell? Reinforcement troop?? I’ve never heard of that before!

“Then armor...”

“I have them!” Li Hao smiled at him. “Does Commander Yu have armor from other armies?”

“What?”

“Such as Black Armaturas or the Voidbreakers. I can trade them in at Battle Heaven and recruit more for my troop.”

Huang Yu was completely befuddled. “How... many soldiers can you have?”

“I don’t know.”

“What?”

“I didn’t ask and they didn’t say!” Li Hao chuckled. “The leading officer at Battle Heaven only said that I can recruit some people. He didn’t say how many.”

### Chapter 722: Fool (III)

How was this even possible? Huang Yu was well and truly bamboozled. He was seized by an urge to curse loudly! So the soldiers of the ancient civilization were this black-hearted? This was clear nepotism!

If the rest of them wanted to be a troop leader, they had to undertake all sorts of missions and wish for plenty of luck. It was very hard to become a troop leader.

But Li Hao?

He’d gotten the title as soon as he entered Battle Heaven. And now he commanded a reinforcement troop. What was this nonsense? Huang Yu was very jealous! So what of the eight families?!

As irritated as he was, he didn’t voice it. Instead, his thoughts ran rapidly—so this meant that Silver Moon’s army could be further outfitted!

“Will do.” He nodded. “I’ll send over my best and brightest. One thousand, was it? What specific requirements do you have?”

“They need to know how to read and be healthy. It doesn’t matter if they’re martial masters or not. Also, don’t send me troublemakers, they need to take orders! And they need to be smart, I don’t want dumb people...”

Huang Yu laughed and immediately nodded again. “I can do that!” This was a good development. “Why don’t you take a nominal position in the provincial army...”



“Forget it!” Li Hao shook his head. “It won’t come with a salary. I’m already the acting head of the Silver Moon Guards, a deputy director at the central Night Watchers, a vice minister at the Ministry of the Inspectorate, a deputy director at the Silver Moon Night Watchers, the Skystar Governor General, Skystar Marquis, and Skystar vice commander. But none of that’s paying me a salary!”

The greater the title, the lower the salary. Everyone thought that another department was paying him, so no one paid him. It was also a highly confusing mess! He was involved in so many institutions, but no one seemed ready to send him any pay. It’d gotten to the point where he was famous, but didn’t have anything to show for his fame. The hell were any of these titles good for?!

Huang Yu burst out laughing. The kid was concerned about salary at a time like this? He was... certainly unique!

“That works too... when do you go back to Skystar City?”

“As soon as I’m done here.”

“Then very well, I’ll make the arrangements now and have them be on their way. They should arrive in about a week.” The commander paused. “You can trade for more armor?”

“Yes.”

“I had no idea this was possible,” Huang Yu hesitated. “How about... Black Armaturas?”

“The ancient Skystar army? That works too!”

“When Silver Moon warred with the Skystar Dynasty, we killed many Black Armaturas,” Huang Yu lowered his voice. “That was a very long time ago and we sealed away some of the armor that we collected. We’ve been unable to use it, so it’s not with me. I’ll look around for you.

“The royal family sent in more than one hundred thousand Black Armaturas and the old guard of martial masters killed several thousand. There has to be at least one thousand sets of armor...”

“When was this?” Li Hao sucked in a sharp breath.

“Two hundred years ago!” Huang Yu laughed. “Some Silver Moon martial masters might have the armor in their private collections. If your teacher and the others have an unbroken legacy, then they might have some! The dynasty was built two hundred years ago and Silver Moon was the last one to surrender. We fought the Black Armaturas for many months and suffered countless casualties, but also collected many sets of armor.

“When the dynasty later wanted to recollect the armor, we reported that martial masters had taken it all. Hence, Silver Moon martial masters and the dynasty have been at odds with each other for a very long time. They’ve continuously wished to reclaim their property, but they never succeeded.”

Li Hao grinned. So martial masters had killed many Black Armaturas two hundred years ago!

Huang Yu ended his recounting and started thinking elsewhere. “Will armor from any troop designation do?”

“Yep, any!”

“Then give me a few days!” Huang Yu grew excited. “I need to collect them. Right, did Battle Heaven say anything about you becoming a supernatural?”

“They did.”

“What?”

“Work hard!”

“.....” That was it? Huang Yu was baffled. That was it? Nothing else?

It was extremely odd as Silver Moon focused on martial masters. Martial masters held down in the fort in each of the cities and supernaturals were just supplemental force. Hadn’t any of those martial masters said anything?

One had to know that it wasn’t empty speculation. The ancient cities of Silver Moon all despised the supernatural. Take Battle Heaven, for example. Supernaturals instantly came under attack when they entered!

It wasn’t just one place like this, but almost all places. That was why everyone thought that the ancient civilization hated the supernatural! Was Li Hao an exception because of the eight families?

Though questions swirled in Huang Yu’s heart, he didn’t ask them. Li Hao didn’t say anything else either. He was ready to visit the province’s administration after this. Ole Hou had something to give to the director general.

.....

After bidding farewell to Huang Yu, Li Hao swiftly traveled to the administrative government building. He saw Director General Zhao and Deputy Zhou half an hour later. The director general looked at Li Hao. There were only the three of them in the small office. What an oddity it was that Deputy Zhou shared an office with his superior!

“Director General Zhao, Director Hou wanted me to give this to you!” Li Hao took out a storage ring; he hadn’t looked into its contents.

The director general assessed it briefly and inclined his head, smiling at the young man. “You’re much more mature than before. Hou Xiaochen left some black ink in here that would’ve been spat

at your face if anyone else other than me took a peek. It looks like you really didn't look into the ring."

"....." Li Hao was at quite a loss for words! How much time does Ole Hou have on his hands?? Black ink? Do I look like someone like that? I have money and resources. I wouldn't be interested in a mountain of gold or silver even if you put it in my hands!

The director general laughed and changed the topic. "You did well in Skystar City. It's good to take them down a few notches. We're old and we're lacking some impulse and hot bloodedness. But in this era, or any era really, impulsiveness can be found in any of the youth!

"Youngsters are marked by cockiness!" He rather approved of Li Hao's actions since when should one act with wild abandon, if not when they were young?

"Thank you for your understanding, director general!"

"It's nothing, and this was just a minor affair." Director General Zhao was noncommittal. "So I know about your goals for this trip. Hou Xiaochen mentioned that you wish to find your footing in Skystar City. That is up to you. Silver Moon cannot offer you much support, but one thing we can promise, and it is that an Arcanus will come to support you the next time there is a major battle! It won't just be Huang Yu, but the caveat is that you need to give us enough time beforehand!"

"How many Arcanus do Silver Moon have?" Li Hao couldn't help but ask.

"Not that many," the director general snorted with laughter. "Do you think they're found by the side of the road? Not to mention, Silver Moon doesn't have many supernaturals. The Arcanus I speak of are Arcanus-esque. They may not be actual Arcanus!

"I can also give you a list of friends in Skystar City. You can go to them if you have need. They may not be able to help you that much, but they'll more or less be of some effect. I also hope you don't need up killing them in a random killing spree..."

Secret agents?

Li Hao understood. “I don’t randomly kill people, I only kill bad people!”

“It’s all the same,” chuckled Director General Zhao. “There is no difference between good or bad in this age. It’s just as well if the entire team is full of villains. Also, remember that if there is a second awakening of the supernatural... you must hurry back to Silver Moon as soon as possible. You are dead without a doubt otherwise! Skystar City is safe enough now, but tremendous changes will occur as soon as the supernatural revitalizes again!”

“I understand, thank you director general!” Li Hao nodded.

“You’re welcome!” Director General Zhao concluded his brief mention of a few points.

“I do need a few things,” Li Hao quickly added. “A large amount of seeds and preparations for accepting refugees. I plan on opening the waterway over the sea or breaking through the Near River blockade. It’s almost officially winter and there are too many refugees from the unrest in the north...”

Director General Zhao’s expression shifted and he frowned slightly. Deputy Zhou also jerked his head up at Li Hao. The two old men looked at each other with the beginning of a splitting headache. This was no small matter! It would plunge Silver Moon into disaster!

“There is no need to force the passageway open,” responded the director general. “If you tell Near River that we are willing to accept refugees... They will immediately deliver the people to us, whether you offer to house one million or three million people! There are so many refugees that they will instantly drag us down, do you understand?”

“I can supply food.” Li Hao nodded. “But I need time. I can feed thirty to fifty million, much less three to five. One good thing about more refugees is that they can work in our infrastructure, like building a transportation system that crosses Silver Moon. This has been the case since the ancient times. If they have enough food and clothes, their needs won’t be too much in the short run!”

“You’ll find that there is no food to be purchased now, no matter how much money you have!”  
Director General Zhao exhaled heavily.

“That’s fine, I’m having a plant spirit cultivate it...”

“Where does such an idiotic plant spirit exist?” blinked the director general. “How is that possible? They’re having trouble recovering their strength. Creating food like that will expend too much energy. None of them will offer that service unless they’re an idiot!”

“.....” Li Hao paused, stunned. Was cultivating those seeds... the mark of an idiot? So the little tree was an idiot?

Director General Zhao was heavily surprised, as was Deputy Zhou’s eyes wide open. Did you meet an idiot plant spirit somewhere? Which one of them would do something like that these days?? Why do you think none of the major factions do so? The key thing is, no plant spirit is willing to offer a service like that!

It’s more of a loss than a gain and a waste of energy. With this amount of time and energy, they’d rather improve themselves!

Li Hao’s jaw dropped and he laughed drily after a while. So the little tree was an idiot! It hadn’t had any opinions otherwise!

Meanwhile, the two old men were rapidly wondering about the existence of this foolish plant spirit. Hot damn, we should’ve gone digging around for one like that! Where did the boy find his? The two were suddenly gripped by an impulsive fit. How about we dig around too? Maybe we can find some more silly plant spirits!

## Chapter 723: Stealing Away Talent (I)

The two old men were rather surprised by the kind of plant spirit that Li Hao knew. It was general knowledge that plant spirits were greedy existences. Well, they couldn’t be labeled as greedy as this

was just their nature. No matter how many mysterious power stones one gave them, the plant spirits would suck them all dry.

Many plant spirits were hanging on to life by a thread after so many years. That they survived at all was due to the longevity of their being. They would scramble to absorb even a hint of energy that appeared around them. Spitting out one droplet of Water of Life in return was to the seeker's good luck. Otherwise, if one met a spirit like General Pagoda, what could be done if the spirit absorbed one million stones and didn't offer anything as compensation?

The two old men were hesitant about Li Hao's proposal to accept refugees. This would be a difficult matter. It wasn't just an issue of rations, but that a sudden influx of refugees would pose too many problems. Silver Moon lacked in all areas of infrastructure. Everything about these people's day-to-day would have to be taken into account. It wasn't as simple as Li Hao worded it, that they could simply just put everyone to work.

A matter like this was complicated beyond imagine.

"It's a good deed for you to want to accept a portion of refugees..." Director General Zhao was silent for a long moment. "But you must keep in mind that the human heart is at times greedy. Once they have eaten and drank their fill, they may want more or enjoy better treatment. If you don't satisfy them then..."

"I know, but this is an age of the strong!" Li Hao declared coldly. "I do want to do something, but if they prove too greedy to be satisfied with their station in life, then I will bring my fist to bear! They know full well the situation in the three northern provinces and Near River. If they wish to not know the meaning of contentment, then they can know how it feels to not be content!"

"So you understand as well," sighed Director General Zhao. "In that case, what was a good deed might cause us to be cursed at by others instead!"

He shook his head with a sigh. It was hard being a good guy in this day and age.

“It’s not like Silver Moon has a good reputation to begin with.” Li Hao didn’t care.

“.....” The two old men nearly choked on their spit. What...

“I mean it!” chuckled Li Hao. “We’re northern savages in the eyes of other people. This is an uncivilized land of barbarians! To be honest, people come to Silver Moon only when they have nowhere else to go. I know that sheltering refugees comes with a high cost and I’m just flapping my lips around, that this might cause both of you to lose all of your hair, but sometimes, I feel that doing something is better than doing nothing. I will do my best to fulfill all of your requests...”

The young man knew that it would be a very tall order. It was easy enough for him to say that the food he’d deliver would feed one hundred million people. Was food the only thing they needed?

Of course not!

Director General Zhao sank into deep thought and responded after a long while. “We’ll think about this, we can’t give you an immediate answer.”

Li Hao said nothing further. It was already a great show of face that they said they’d think about it. He’d be overbearing if he insisted further.

“Li Hao, perseverance is required in all matters.” The quiet Deputy Zhou stroked his mustache. “We are more worried that you’re just barging around with temporary enthusiasm, that you’re throwing out whatever ideas you think of. Do you have clear goals? Sometimes, meandering around is the greatest enemy!

“You might think of resisting today, saving others tomorrow, but chose to give up because there is no hope the day after that,” he said slowly. “You must consider the consequences of such actions. Silver Moon can give you some support, but we will not rampage with you if we lack the assurance to do so. Strictly speaking, you do not give us any confidence at all!”

The deputy wasn’t afraid of drawing the young man’s ire, he simply reminded in a soft voice, “Silver Moon lacks a person with drive to take center stage, but we do not want someone who will



give up halfway. What is your goal? What are you willing to sacrifice in pursuit of it? You want us to follow your commands as soon as you open your mouth. Are your good intentions worth anything?

“Silver Moon has been quiet for two hundred years and might be dragged into the abyss if we follow your ideas.” He shook his head at the young man. “That will not do! What road are you seeking to walk? You must be certain of it yourself! If you want to charge forward without looking back, we can support you somewhat. But you cannot adopt the style of killing people today because I feel like it, then leaving to roam the martial world tomorrow because you don’t feel like it...”

Li Hao blinked, lost in a daze.

“Ever since the ancient times, those who accomplish great deeds have possessed great perseverance!” Deputy Zhou looked calmly at him. “If you cannot impart sufficient confidence to even those around you, then are you to let outsiders support you? On what basis? Are they to risk their lives for you?”

“Are you lost in your identity as part of the eight families? Or do you really think that you’re omnipotent? You did well in the battle at Skystar City, but what have you done after it?”

“I am finding my footing and taking it one step at a time...” Li Hao answered solemnly.

“No!” Deputy Zhou shook his head. “You’re just proceeding aimlessly and deciding on tasks without a plan. It’s Silver Moon today and Skystar City tomorrow. This won’t do! You must keep in mind that if you are to do something great, then you are no longer a martial master of the martial world. You will be a true leader. Is this what a leader does?”

He did not approve of some of Li Hao’s methods and thoughts. If the young man proceeded in this vein, he would not amount to anything significant. Commencing his affairs in a haphazard manner might result in wrongdoing coming from good intentions.

Li Hao furrowed his brows.

“You don’t agree?” Deputy Zhou smiled faintly.

“A bit.”

“Then I ask you, have you considered whether or not Silver Moon citizens agree to taking in refugees?” laughed Deputy Zhou. “You have good intentions, but what will we gain in return for paying such a hefty price? As a leader, you need to consider more than just taking action. You also need to give thought to gains. Indeed, gains!

“These are very materialistic concerns, but we are not your subordinates. For us, we would like to know what we can reap from this. Making empty promises is even better than not saying anything at all. Perhaps you think that rewards will naturally come in the future, but why are we to believe you?

“If you think empty promises are useless, the truth of the situation is, people will think that you will not give them anything in return for their labor. You won’t even draw a pretty picture for us!”

“So you mean...?” Li Hao blinked.

“Even if it’s a bunch of empty promises, you should say something like this and that will happen if this succeeds. Whether it’s promotions or reputation, or something in the future... Doing something for us in the future is a marked sight better than what you offer now!

“Martial masters love getting carried away,” sighed Deputy Zhou. “They rely on loyalty and the bond of brotherhood in everything. That’s the mark of a martial world brute! When have you ever seen a martial world brute rule over the world?

“The ancient Human King may have focused on killing others, but he also knew how to properly use people, how to give them hope and expectations. He said that he would lead humanity to prosperity. It didn’t matter if you believed it or not, someone would. That was enough! And you?

“What can you bring us?” Deputy Zhou looked at the young man. “A land torn apart by war and devastation? Or will you die and your dao disperse, leaving nothing behind? Be realistic, Li Hao. No one will pay the price for your dreams unless it is our dreams as well!”

Li Hao sank into deep thought.

“Ole Zhou, he is young...” coughed the director general.

“No no, I’m just reminding him. He needs encouragement,” Deputy Zhou smiled. “He also needs some realistic suggestions, not just unfettered praise. He will easily lose himself with the latter!”

“There must be plenty in Skystar City now who admire him. He’ll get used to compliments and find good advice that’s jarring to the ear hard to accept. However, this is Silver Moon’s future, so we cannot let him bet our home according to his whims.”

“So what does Deputy Zhou think I need to do to instill hope in the people...” Li Hao asked after being silent for a while.

“That’s easy, you can’t only think of shying away from conflict, lying low, or keeping a low profile,” laughed Deputy Zhou. “Staying out of the spotlight is no longer an option for you! The best course of action is setting your next goal so that everyone can work toward it, so that we can fight for it!”

“You beat the nine ministries today, the three great organizations tomorrow, the royal family after that. You also want to take on Near River and the pirates... Li Hao, do you think of yourself as a god?” The deputy sighed with resignation. “You can’t be like this! That will only make people afraid and disappointed.”

“They’ll feel that the entire world is their enemy, that won’t do! Aren’t you doing this for revenge? Then just focus on your revenge! If you say that you want to exterminate Red Moon, people will

choose to stick to the sidelines. But now, you've become an unstable factor and everyone wants to eliminate you!

"You can raise another banner in the name of revenge. For example, Red Moon might be seeking to destroy the world, so you eradicate them for world peace. Even if it's a false declaration, it's still better than what you're doing now!" Deputy Zhou was truly resigned and heaved a sigh. "Just say it if you want to move against the nine ministries. Announce that you will only attack the nine ministries, for what, for why, and for how. What will we receive after you succeed? There will naturally be people willing to risk their lives for you then!"

Li Hao listened in a daze, was that so? I should set a goal, a clear goal, and tell everyone that I'm working toward this goal? Is that it?

...that makes sense!

Otherwise, he thought about attacking different targets on different days, but he might not end up beating anyone in the end. When that was the case, he would be surrounded and mobbed to death!

"The Inspectorate may be an opportunistic institution, but so what? When it comes to conquest or revenge, these are the characters that you want! Why refuse them? Why engage in open hostilities with them? Does it make you feel better to step on them? Why can't you lower your head to go to them for another discussion, a deep conversation? When there are enough opportunistic fellows, they'll become your supporters!

"Will it satisfy you only when you turn fair-weather friends into enemies?"

"Ahem!" coughed Director General Zhao, but that didn't deter his deputy.

## Chapter 724: Stealing Away Talent (II)

"Sir, I don't intend to erase everything he's accomplished or deny who he is," Deputy Zhou explained, "I'm just stricken with the fact that this guy doesn't know to cherish the results from the Skystar battle and the exceedingly good name that he built for himself. He wasted a huge opportunity!

“Hou Xiaochen isn’t cut out for this either, he didn’t consider these issues much or to this degree. After the defeat that the nine ministries and three great organizations suffered, the nine ministries plainly don’t want to fight anymore. At this time, the Ministry of Finance is probably laughing at the rest since they’ve suffered the least. The Inspectorate is being opportunistic because they haven’t lost anything. Li Hao can absolutely rope them in to form a new line of defense!

“As for the Ministry of Armed Forces, your senior brother is there. Drop the lines about him leaving a long time ago, did your master actually remove him from the rolls? If not, then he is still your senior brother. You can go to him and see if you can reach an accord with the Ministry of Armed Forces. Of course you’ll have people there that you want to eliminate or settle grudges with, but that can be saved for later.

“And the Ministry of Administration—they don’t see you as a major enemy for the moment. Their enemy is the royal family. Why can’t you negotiate some of your problems away?

“People also helped you before in the east, like the East Pole Duke or Yu Qiao of the Firebright province. You’ve now killed three generations of the Steadfast Duke’s lineage and the Xus are threatening to topple over. Are you going to just leave it at that? You can absolutely send representatives to the east and meet with those two. Even if you don’t partner with them, you must lay claim to the outcome of battle. You’re the one who killed the Steadfast Duke, why aren’t you doing anything about it?

“And the City of Supernaturals, are you not going to say anything after you killed one of their Heaven’s Eye? Only martial blockheads do that. You guys... even if it’s just a gesture, you should send someone to the city to threaten them or offer compensation. You can’t just decide to do nothing!

“The same goes for all of the supernaturals that were killed that day, particularly the Starlight Pirates and their dozen dukes. If you don’t wish to partner with them, you should at least contact the other pirate factions and have them divvy up the Starlight Pirates. You can just offer them moral support for that action. That will spell the end of the Starlight Pirates and not create an enemy that might come after you in the future!”

The more Deputy Zhou said, the more disappointed he became. “Li Hao, you are a very good candidate for being the leader of the martial world, but you are truly unsuited to be this kind of leader. I’ve been observing you all along and find that you are the same as your master! This was how your master conducted his affairs back in the day. He felt that since the people I defeated could no longer rise again or have a change in fortune, what did he care about them?”

“And then what happened? Ying Hongyue, the Celestial Sword Immortal, Yama, Buddha Mountain, Yonder Mountain... All of them rose again! Your master is in the most dismal straits these days and you resemble him more by the day!”

“Will you be stronger than your master? No, you will be the same! Do you think that the Starlight Pirates aren’t worth much with the death of the North Sea King? Do you think that the Xus are worthless with both generations of Steadfast Dukes being dead? Do you think there is no threat from a heavily injured lord of Buddha Mountain who’s become a supernatural? Do you think nothing of the City of Supernaturals with one million supernaturals? They’ll stop after killing you, one Arcanus!”

“.....” Li Hao was shell shocked. He thought back to his recent actions, his thoughts and conclusions, and nodded after a long moment. He had nothing to say.

Deputy Zhou’s words were not easy to listen to, but they did touch upon some key points. Li Hao hadn’t had the mental bandwidth or capacity to consider certain things before. Some subjects had never even been on his radar.

Leader of the martial world... Just like his teacher? His teacher had left many enemies behind in the world and the young man sometimes snorted at Yuan Shuo for not bothering to see his job through to the end.

He suddenly understood his teacher’s actions today! It wasn’t that Yuan Shuo had left the job undone, but that he simply hadn’t cared enough. Take Li Hao, for instance, he felt that there was no further threat from the Xus and North Sea pirates. Eradicating them was a waste of time and money.

But... what would the situation look like many years later if he didn’t improve at all? He would be the greatest public enemy, just like his teacher! At that time, people would say that the Demon Sword of yesteryear dominated the world, but now he was in such pathetic circumstances. He was less than a dog!

“Deputy Zhou, how about you come to Skystar City with me?” Li Hao lit up.

“.....”

Dead silence.

“Li Hao...” coughed Director General Zhao.

“Sir!” Li Hao interrupted solemnly. “Silver Moon needs only you! It is a waste of talent for Deputy Zhou to be here! Perhaps Skystar City is the best stage for him! I don’t know any of this, but that is alright!”

The young man spoke excitedly, like he hadn’t suffered a blow from the lecture. “Someone told me that it’s fine if you don’t know everything. So long as you know how to use people and dare use others, then it’s fine!

“No one is omnipotent, I’m not! I’m young, I haven’t seen much of the world, I don’t know anything... but none of that matters! I can learn, and while the process may be long and arduous, it’s not an issue if I surround myself with the right people!

“Didn’t the royal family make me the Skystar governor general?” He looked raptly at Deputy Zhou. “If you come, I’ll make you the Skystar deputy governor general. The royal family won’t say anything, I’m entrusted with all the power! You’ll be the deputy, Martial Uncle Hong Yitang will be the headmaster, Director Hou will look after the Night Watchers, and me... I’ll be in charge of killing enemies!”

Li Hao waved his hand and spoke seriously, “As for what I base my confidence in and what you guys can place your hopes in...” He thought it over. “First, Stellaris and the identity of the heir of the eight families! Second, I’ve been promoted and I’m a division leader of the Battle Heaven Army now...”

Gold armor flashed!

The two old men started. Gold armor? Division leader?

Li Hao was putting to practice what he'd just learned. It's just a trick! My reinforcement troop is no different from being a division leader, right?

“Third, I can unite the Silver Moon martial world. At the very least, a lot of people find me trustworthy and that I am worthy of striking up a relationship with. At the same time, they find that the official authorities are not worthy!

“Fourth, I have some clues to my next cultivation level. My strength will continue to rise!

“Fifth, I know a very easygoing plant spirit. It will even fight for me!

“Sixth, Battle Heaven may be able to fully awaken soon. I've already become part of their inner workings and have very good relations with them. They're willing to put their full force behind me. Some of their premier powerhouses will awaken very soon...

“Seventh, the strongest heavyweight of our time—Ying Hongyue—is afraid to face me at the moment. He has not successfully assimilated his seven bloodlines together...” Li Hao listed all of his strengths to enhance his standing, ultimately looking at Deputy Zhou. “Therefore, you may think I'm wet behind the ears, sir, and that I don't know much. But I'm not a saint and it's not like I was born knowing all this. I'm just an ordinary person who made it to this position step by step. It hasn't been long since I left Silver City. Is this enough?

“If not, I'll continue to add to my list of strengths. I'm sure I can do it!”



Director General Zhao stared at the young man. Deputy Zhou also looked at him before suddenly grinning. “You’re... an interesting one!”

“Come with me, Deputy Zhou!” Li Hao smiled widely.

“I was just pointing out some problems to you...”

“I’ll give you one hundred drops of Water of Life!”

“.....” Deputy Zhou blinked.

“Li Hao...” coughed the director general.

“Two hundred drops!” Li Hao waved his fists around and set his jaw. “And that’s not it. I’ll give you more benefits when I get richer! Your job will be easy. Go to Skystar City and settle all this for me! Take care of all this! Whether it’s negotiations, recruitment of others, you can say whatever needs to be said to whoever you meet.”

The deputy looked at Director General Zhao; the latter wanted to roll his eyes. “Ole Zhou, we’ve worked together for forty years...”

“He’s offering two hundred drops of Water of Life!” Deputy Zhou continued looking at his superior officer. That was so much!

The director general wanted to vomit blood. The hell was this?? Li Hao was trying to steal his subordinate right in front of him. How was this appropriate?!

“Li Hao, how do you have so much...”

“I do!” the young man answered emphatically. “Of course I do! My plant spirit charges me twenty thousand stones per drop. I collected more than seven million stones before this and traded them in for three hundred drops. I’m giving most of it to Deputy Zhou!”

“.....”

Twenty thousand stones? For one drop?

“Where... is this plant spirit?” the director general asked ponderously.

“Eh?”

“Ah...” the old man coughed. “I’m asking if it will affect Silver Moon. Is it near Mount Cat Head?”

Li Hao instantly went on the alert. What did the old man want? You want to lure my people away from me? “Don’t even think about it, sir. That’s a guardian plant spirit that only I can contact. Anyone else who goes will be killed! It’s already recovered to the level of an Apex and can tear through the void. It’s powerful beyond belief!”

“.....” Director General Zhao sighed. What a pity!

“Sir.” Li Hao turned to Deputy Zhou again. “You can see where the problems are, which means you can take care of them! As the saying goes, the prudent bird chooses a fine tree to nest in. I’m sure that the director general won’t mind and won’t obstruct your future. Nothing will happen in Silver Moon before the second awakening. There’s not much point in staying here to waste the deputy director general’s talents!”

“.....” Deputy Zhou stroked his mustache, then looked at his superior officer again.

“Are you mocking me, Li Hao?” Director General Zhao laughed with anger.

### Chapter 725: Stealing Away Talent (III)

“No!” Li Hao responded seriously. “I think that I need a strategist, someone who will advise me tactically. Martial Uncle Hong is a teacher and a friend. Light Sword is pure martial strength. Director Hou may be skilled at strategy, but he is pulled in many different directions these days. Additionally... the director should be more skilled in martial strength, so I don’t think I want to tax him further.”

“You want me to go to Skystar City?” Deputy Zhou interrupted the director general as the latter opened his mouth to speak. “Then what if I tell you to bow your head to Ying Hongyue? He is an ultimate powerhouse and your enemy. What if I have you apologize for your actions and ask for punishment? Are you willing to listen to me then?”

“I can!” Li Hao was very calm. “There’s no problem with that so long as he accepts! I can even get down on both knees and ask him not to retaliate against me. The caveat is that he is willing to accept so. What’s the problem with that?”

“.....” Deputy Zhou blinked, then looked at Li Hao. “What if he wants Stellaris?”

“That won’t do, that’s my bottom line. I can bow my head, but I cannot cross my bottom line. That would be another sort of trouble.”

“What if he wants you to hand over the Silver Moon martial masters?” laughed Deputy Zhou.

“Then he does not mean to truly accept my olive branch. You yourself are a Silver Moon martial master and he knows what martial masters are like. I will not do so. If I did, then he would not believe my olive branch is real.”

Deputy Zhou fell silent with consideration. “Last question! Do you wish to be the Skystar King?”

“I don’t care. I can and I don’t have to either,” Li Hao replied as calmly as ever. “If no one wishes to be king, then what does it matter if I’m the one who’s king? As incompetent as I am, I think I’ll do a better job than the current Skystar King!”

“.....” Such arrogance!

Deputy Zhou began laughing and stared at the young man. “I can go... I have nothing else better to do. Traveling to Skystar to see old friends isn’t out of the question. Do you mean it when you say two hundred drops of Water of Life?”

“My word is my bond!”

“Then we’re agreed!”

“Cough cough cough...” Director General Zhao seemed ready to cough his lungs out. “Ole Zhou, you shouldn’t subject yourself to the rigors of travel at your age...”

“I’ll be fine, Water of Life will keep me in good shape!”

“There will be lots to do in Silver Moon now, Li Hao wants to take in refugees...”

“Those are all trifling matters!”

“Ole Zhou, you and I have worked together for forty years. Are you leaving after just a few words?” the director general couldn’t hold himself in anymore. “What are you thinking? Skystar City isn’t a kind place...”

“He’s offering a lot of money!” Deputy Zhou pointed at Li Hao. “Two hundred drops! I’ll stay if you give me two hundred drops too!”

Screw you! Where would I get so much Water of Life from?

Director General Zhao was extremely soul weary. He looked at the young man, then at the deputy.

“Go on then, all of you can leave!” he sneered. “Li Hao, don’t think you’re making off with some riches today. Anyone can paint a pretty picture, but execution ability is the most important! I know Ole Zhou much too well, he’s skilled at strategizing, but not at putting words into action! He can talk anyone to death, but nine out of ten attempts fall flat when he tries to do anything.”

“Is this how you view me after all these years, Ole Zhao??”

“Is there a problem with that?!”

“No problem, then there’s nothing else that needs to be said between us!” Deputy Zhou quickly dumped some documents on the director general’s desk. “Here’s my handover. You know all of my duties, so you can take over all of them right now! I’ve gotten bored of working with you after forty years. It’ll be nice to have a change of environment.”

“I don’t mean it that way, Ole Zhou...”

“Ole Zhao, Li Hao is right. There’s not much going on Li Hao these days. I’ll be back after the second awakening of the supernatural.”

“.....” Director General Zhao wanted to erupt in loud curses. They hadn’t discussed this! How had this meeting turned into a two-man comedy? Ole Zhou had never said anything like this before!

Fucking hell! What is this? You run off just because you want to! Have you considered me at all?

The old man looked at Li Hao again, finding the young man's actions utterly reprehensible. Despite that, he still felt compelled to remind, "It's not a good investment to pour too much energy into Skystar City. Silver Moon is your foundation..."

"I know, but has the director general ever heard of the saying that the enemy should be destroyed outside the gates?" Li Hao grinned.

"I..."

"I'll come back in two days for you, Deputy Zhou! I'm off now!" The young man immediately vanished.

Director General Zhao was speechless and looked at his old colleague when Li Hao was gone. "What's gotten into you?"

"Nothing much, I'm just bored." Deputy Zhou stroked his beard. "Don't you think taking a look outside is very interesting?"

"You know what our situation is!" The director general sighed. "How do we have any time to spare? Massive changes might arise after the second awakening!"

"Everything will be fine so long as you are here."

"Okay, tell me honestly, what are you thinking?"

"I'm really not thinking much," laughed Deputy Zhou. "I just wanted him to angrily walk away with some introspection after my lecture. He might give up then, or he might rise again. Never did I think that he would ask me to go with him. It seems like a nice idea after thinking it over, so I agreed. Not to mention, two hundred drops of Water of Life is nice! It can fortify my body some."

Director General Zhao was too weary for speech. Their ties of friendship had been snapped just like that!

“Whatever you want!”

“There’s nothing you can do otherwise.”

“I... Get outta here!” The director general was irate. The old thing really was going to leave. They’d been together for forty years, and this was how he was abandoned? I hate you right now!

“Then I’ll go back and pack my things... Let’s grab a drink later for a send-off!”

“Send off your ass, get out of here!”

A merry Deputy Zhou walked right out. The director general sighed when he was gone and shook his head with resignation. “He’s old, he’s truly gotten old... He just has to catch up with the times, huh! Is the bloodline of the eight families so much better?”

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Li Hao walked out of the administrative government building. He was first happy, then a bit pained by his unexpected expenditure. Were two hundred drops worth it? Could Deputy Zhou really bring so much benefit to him?

Based on what the director general said, the deputy was only skilled at strategizing and raising questions. However, what the young man needed was resolving of these problems! If the deputy couldn’t settle them, then raising the issues was a futile endeavor.

I was a bit impulsive just now!

Forget it, he was spending money to purchase peace of mind. Deputy Zhou should be a powerful martial master. Even if he didn't prove much use when it came to strategy, it was nice to have a strong bodyguard. The young man couldn't see through him even now, so he should be pretty strong.

Two hundred drops... two million stones... That's nothing!

Li Hao comforted himself. This was good. It was hard to buy happiness, but he was very happy at the moment! Even if the deputy only talked a good talk, being able to identify issues was better than not. Forty years worth of being an official was different, alright! Look at that, no one else around him mentioned these problems.

Li Hao felt much more peace of mind after thinking this through. That was settled, then!

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Li Hao did not return to the Night Watchers. He went straight out of White Moon City as he wanted to go back to Silver City first to take the blood pearls. He wanted to see if he could witness that stroke again. It was fine that his own sword intent had fallen silent. As he grew stronger, there was a possibility that even metamorphosis blood pearls would be ineffective for him. Where was he supposed to get even stronger ones?

.....

Silver City.

Li Hao didn't greet anyone. He dashed straight to the mines and hid in the underground ruins. The young man tossed back all three blood pearls at once as he worried taking too few of them would lead to no effect. Perhaps he'd only see the diagram of the eight trigrams again when all three were in his stomach.



His blood churned and frothed as energy from the blood pearls entered his bloodstream. Some changes appeared in his eyes. Li Hao lifted his head and saw a massive eight trigram in front of his eyes. Compared to last time, he saw much more on this occasion.

The cosmos!

Indeed, he seemed to see a cosmos. Last time, he saw someone standing in the middle of the diagram. Instead of seeing that this time, he saw only the unbounded cosmos. There was a door standing in the depths and something seemed to be near it.

Li Hao looked around in a daze, but still recalled that he had a goal. He raised his eyes upward to follow the thread of red emanating from his head. Light flashed before his eyes as an illusory figure appeared.

There were again minute differences from last time. It seemed to be an old man as he could see more clearly this time. His hair was disheveled and he wielded a longsword. A ray of sword light illuminated heaven and earth!

“The Lifeless Sword!” Sword intent bearing the meaning of annihilation and the wherewithal to destroy everything struck. A sword thrust forward to render everything into nothing!

It was a stroke stronger than the one he’d experienced last time. The one of severing the self destroyed strong foes when deployed, but it also ended the wielder. This one wasn’t the mutual downfall of enemy and wielder, but reducing the entire world into the void. Nothing existed after it.

“Everything has fallen silent...” Li Hao murmured as the thought popped into his head. What a terrifying stroke!

Everything was gone after the old man’s move. There was only chaos and darkness. Was this what was meant by a premier swordsman?

## Chapter 726: Making Out Like Bandits (I)

Li Hao swiftly backed away as a tendril of sword intent came his way. His arm exploded, but the young man held Stellaris aloft. As he expected, a tendril of sword intent darted into the weapon. Stellaris trembled while Li Hao swiftly swallowed a few drops of Water of Life. His arm grew out, shattered, then grew again...

He continuously imbibed Water of Life. He'd known before that this sword intent was formidable, but only today did he know that it was more terrifying than he thought! He was an Arcanus, but his level of strength was having absolutely no effect. And this was just observing the stroke from a moment removed from its time! It was just a brand left behind from countless years ago!

He had to swallow eight drops of Water of Life before Stellaris fully absorbed all of the sword qi. Li Hao's arm finally stopped being obliterated. When he next opened his eyes, a destructive presence agitated from them. The five auras also stirred within his organs and some changes seemed to take place in the sword overview. The bridges between the five organs began to twist as they took on a sword shape.

Li Hao raised his head to the sky again, seeing nothing there anymore.

"The cosmos, door, eight trigrams, seal..." murmured the young man. What was Silver City? This was what he'd seen this time. Who knew when he would be able to catch a glimpse next time? Thankfully, he'd accomplished almost all of the goals he'd come back with.

Li Hao crawled out from a pile of pebbles and looked at the stone door not too far away. It was as quiet as before. He dropped his gaze. This place was a land of inheritance. As he only had the Windchaser Boots and Stellaris at the moment, he was unworthy. This was very possibly the legacy site of the mallet of the Hong.

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At the same time, Red Moon headquarters.

Ying Hongyue looked toward the north, his blood qi shaking. He furrowed his brows when he seemed to see something.

“Li Hao...” he murmured. Had the kid returned to Silver City? As he thought, the legacy of the Sword Sovereign was different. The kid did not fall in any battle and a joint deployment of Arcanus was insufficient to kill him. What a pity, what a pity that he himself...

Ying Hongyue closed his eyes. He had to meld the seven bloodlines together for anything to be feasible. Li Hao was growing too quickly, so quickly that it outstripped the imagination. That the eight families had the Lis at their head did not seem to be empty rumor.

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“The sword bloodline...” Li Hao walked out of the ruins with a few more thoughts in mind. He’d been debating lately on what path he should take next. Battle Heaven and Silver Moon martial masters had given him a lot of inspiration, and now there was the matter of the sword bloodline...

Indeed, the supernatural locks were showing signs of turning into a sword bloodline. Now that was interesting.

“There’s also the sever and break incarnation, and using mental strength to nurture the sword...”

So it turned out that many things were interconnected in the end! This further piqued Li Hao’s interest in martial dao. Although he was no longer a pure martial master, a supernatural martial master was still a martial master.

“Supernatural locks, nurturing the sword, the Incantation of the Blade of Blood, core origin dao...” Li Hao muttered a litany of keywords. There were so many thoughts rattling around his brain lately that they were proving difficult to digest. Director General Wang was right, seeing too much made it easy to wander off onto the wrong path. Many things had to be tried one by one and a full understanding gained before dwelling on them.

There’s too much and it’s too varied. That’s not good!

The more systems he learned of, the more thoughts he had. They had to be consolidated. Otherwise, he might plateau at an impasse if this continued.

There's also my auras that have quieted down...

He needed to have a clear grasp on the topic of the auras as well. The auras, supernatural locks, core origin dao...

More and more subjects flooded his mind, filling Li Hao's brain to the brim. He shook them all away; he would try them out one by one in the days to come. However, another thought appeared in his mind—consolidation. What if he could unite them all and have one concept be their common vehicle? He could somehow incorporate dao, aura, supernatural locks, and mysterious power with each other.

Mysterious power was outside force and could not be integrated into his body. What if he wrapped it in something that could be assimilated into his body? Would that work?

What if I could open the supernatural locks at will, release their power whenever I needed, and close them again? Doesn't the Five Styles incorporate the aura into them? And if I create an opening in the supernatural locks... the kind that can be accessed at will...

Although he'd just decided to put all those thoughts out of his mind, he was suddenly gripped by new inspiration. Create a small opening in the supernatural locks? What a good idea! I'm a genius! But... how? And how should I close it after opening?

His teacher's Five Styles temporarily ended after Refiner of Spirit. Yuan Shuo didn't say what should happen next. Indeed, should they be opening their locks after Refiner?

Or should I use my previous method? Creating an opening isn't hard, just force a hole into it like I'm planting a tree. Closing it at will is the hard part. I have to use something as a door... And it has

to be something from my own body or it won't be a match for myself. Blood qi? Mental strength? Or something else?

Or could they all be combined to be the doorstopper? Combining them together... wasn't that the act of writing with his mental strength?

Li Hao laughed. How interesting. All of martial dao came together in the end!

Of course, these were just his preliminary thoughts. He needed more time to experiment. The Seventh Troop leader had it right. One should research so long as one was alive. What was there to be afraid of? He should just give it a try!

.....

Silver City.

Li Hao returned to his old house. It'd been cordoned off as it'd become a condemned building—no one lived in it anymore. It'd been scheduled for demolition a long time ago, so moving away didn't affect anyone.

Panther came back with him. The old den at the bottom of the stairs was still there. It was a bit messy and humid. Panther swept a disdainful look over it. Whoever wanted this old thing could have it!

"You don't know the meaning of nostalgia at all!" Li Hao flicked a glance at Panther. "This was your home before!"

"Arf arf arf!" Panther refuted. This wasn't! It was just a temporary den. Would you live in it if I gave it to you?

“Time passes without return!” Li Hao sighed with emotion. The strongest of powerhouses could not return to the past. Time was the greatest enemy. He’d been a pathetic little bug here a few months ago, but now he fully dominated wherever he was. Would he still have taken this path if he was returned to the past?

If a few months ago, he would have. But what if he could go back to when his parents were alive, when Little Yuan was alive?

Li Hao laughed and put the thought out of his mind. What was past was in the past. Time would not return, so why create troubles for himself.

.....

The young man did not spend long in Silver City. As many secrets as the city held, they were not ones that he could trigger at the moment. He arrived back in White Moon City the next day, choosing to visit the Silver Moon Guards base this time. It’d been a month since he last set foot there.

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The Silver Moon Guards base was very quiet. There weren’t many people to begin with and they were out and about on missions lately. The Demon Hunters had fought a few battles with the pirates and some with supernaturals. They were growing their reputation, but they paled far in comparison with Li Hao. When the young man appeared, the regrouping Demon Hunters agitated with excitement.

“Leader!” Everyone was highly overcome when Li Hao set off the alarms. Liu Long was shoved to the back as the entire group flooded forward. The first to arrive was none other than Hong Qing. She was so full of questions that she seemed fit to burst. She looked around in all directions when she saw Li Hao.

“Leader, where’s my dad?” she asked impatiently.

“Hmm?”

“Earthturner Sword!” She gave her father’s title in a fit of impatience. “Don’t they say that he was present at the battle of Skystar City? I also hear that he killed the Steppe Prince, is that true? Is my dad an Arcanus? No way! He shrinks in on himself so much—ahem, I mean he’s such a practical person. How could he have hidden his strength?”

“I’m the daughter of an Arcanus? Then why am I doing so poorly for myself? The sons and daughters of Novas are either Solars or Novas themselves. My dad is an Arcanus, but look at me!” Hong Qing hadn’t been in such a hurry before, but she’d received some news lately as it made its way to Silver Moon.

The people were agog with praise for Silver Moon martial masters and their feats over the Skystar Sea. Demon Sword shone in all directions, Sky Sword appeared out of the void to dominate all directions. Earthturner Sword executed a titled prince in a fit of anger... Silver Moon martial masters were so arrogant that they reigned sovereign over the four seas and eight lands...

Rhymes and jingles were being made out of their accomplishments!

In Hong Qing’s eyes, the key person was Earthturner Sword Hong Yitang! He was listed on the Record of Thirty-Six Heroes, but he shone particularly brightly as he’d cut down a titled prince! This prince was an important key member of the royal family and not a person with a nominal title. How could the girl not be exhilarated?

What a pity that her father hadn’t come back these days. She didn’t have anyone to ask! Otherwise, she’d shake her father for an interrogation. If you’re so strong, why is your daughter so weak? I’m the worst off child of an Arcanus! I had to wash my own clothes and make my own food growing up! Damn if she wasn’t pitiful! Would she have to do all of this if she’d known her father was so strong??

Li Hao was placed in awkward straits by Hong Qing's questioning. "Um... you should ask your dad this..." he said after a while. "I don't know why he's so wrong either. As for you being weak... perhaps your father thinks you need more tempering..."

Hong Qing looked woefully at him. That was it? That was all he had to say to her?

"What a pity I didn't see my dad kill the Steppe Prince with one stroke... It must've been glorious!" she said with regret.

#### Chapter 727: Making Out Like Bandits (II)

"It was indeed pretty glorious," Li Hao agreed with a laugh. "Earthturner Sword killed his enemy with one move. The Steppe Prince didn't believe it even as he died."

"Leader is strong too!" Hong Qing suppressed her impatience to compliment the leader. Li Hao was still stronger when her old man wasn't around. "You killed even Hu Xiao, one of the founders of the nine ministries. Apparently you almost killed the Skystar King too..."

"....."

Wut. I went after powerhouses of the nine ministries, how did this turn into almost killing the king? Li Hao broke out in laughter.

Someone else finally pushed himself out of the crowd as Hong Qing exchanged words with Li Hao. Wang Ming's face was distorted from the force he was using to shove himself past people.

"Senior brother's illustrious name is known throughout the world! Now that you are the Skystar Marquis and Skystar Governor General, we hear that you plan to hail yourself king in the royal capital! Do you need people? Is that why you've come back, senior brother? I can go! I'm not busy, I can be your footman!" Wang Ming babbled animatedly.



Li Hao didn't know whether to laugh or cry. He looked at Wang Ming—the fellow was now a Solar. Although he was an initial Solar, the strength was passable for his age. However, it wasn't much in the grand scheme of things.

Most of the Demon Hunters had improved. Many were Dominators now. After cultivating at the little tree's cave, Weeping Willow Sword heir Li Heng had been the first to break through. Hong Qing and some others had followed suit shortly thereafter, making for several Dominators in the small group that was the Demon Hunters.

Liu Long seemed to have set foot onto the path of Summoner of Spirit. But after Li Hao opened his eyes in Skystar City, he found everyone to be too weak. Granted, their level of accomplishment was worthy of praise. They'd smashed the first obstacle after reaching Dominator. Their rate of progress afterward wouldn't be too slow.

"Wang Ming, I've offended a slew of powerhouses over there. You might get smacked to death if you go with me!"

"That's no big deal! We won't die that easily, not with senior brother there!" Wang Ming grinned merrily. "Even if we die, our names will go down in history!"

Everyone laughed, some with expectation, others with desire. They all wanted to go! Let's go to the central region to make our name renowned throughout the world, strengthen ourselves, and fight all comers!

Sadly, they knew that they were too weak. They'd planned on going to Li Hao after they grew stronger, but eventually decided to remain in Silver Moon.

"Is Swordmaster Hong not with you?" Liu Long walked over with confusion. Li Hao had sent him on a trip to the Sword Sect before the young man left, but Hong Yitang was completely absent from his sect! First he ran off to the east, then immediately traveled to Skystar City upon his return. Now he was gone entirely, rendering Li Hao's arrangements futile. There was no Hong Yitang at the Sword Sect, so what should they do there?

Run errands?

It was better to go out and kill some pirates!

“No, he won’t be coming back!” Li Hao laughed. “Martial Uncle Hong’s decided to stay at Skystar City to apply his knowledge.”

Liu Long’s eyes widened and he looked at the young man. He’d been quite willing when Li Hao wanted him to stay in Silver Moon before, but now...

“They say that there won’t be any upheavals in Silver Moon in the short term, is that so?” Liu Long asked after some thought.

“Pretty much.”

“Will you encounter further danger in Skystar City?”

“Does chief mean to say...”

“Why not... take all of us with you to the central region!” It was Liu Long’s first request to leave Silver Moon. Li Hao looked at him with surprise, but the man continued solemnly, “I was thinking that I will have a place in Silver Moon after entering Summoner of Spirit because I’ll be able to kill Solars! I can safeguard the small city that is Skystar City then! Now I know that Arcanus aren’t that impressive, that a batch has already died, I feel that growing stronger is the only way I can accomplish my goals!”

He wanted to leave Silver Moon!

“Leader, take us with you!” Everyone chorused, unable to keep their eagerness and urges in check. Having weathered challenges in life and witnessed the greater world, they were no longer the ignorant martial masters of old. They’d seen much and wanted to see even more.

“I had similar thoughts with my return, but I was thinking that Skystar City is too dangerous and you guys...” Li Hao breathed out.

“Martial masters are not afraid of danger!” Liu Yan cut off the young man and dimpled at him. “Why are we martial masters if we’re afraid of death? We want to see the greater world that is in the central region!”

“So Sis Liu can’t sit still either?” Li Hao laughed. “You have much more confidence after becoming a Dominator.”

“I can’t just sit by and watch the others of the Silver Moon Guards grow famous.” Liu Yan smiled winsomely. “We want a taste of that for ourselves. The Silver Moon Guards are apparently well known through the central region now too. The people know of them, but they do not know the Demon Hunters!”

“It’s not out of the question,” Li Hao said after some thought. “It won’t be just you guys, the Silver Moon Guards will also be arranging for one thousand soldiers to head to Skystar City. Deputy Zhou from the provincial government will be coming too...”

There would be no issue with adding the Demon Hunters, just that...

“You will have opportunities in Silver Moon as well. You guys know about the little tree, it will continue to grow stronger in recent days. It will possess sufficient life force to help you train and provide an ideal sacred land of cultivation...”

“Martial masters in cultivation are not real martial masters!” someone roared. What was the point of always being in seclusion? No powerhouses ever walked out of a training room in isolation!

“As you guys wish!” Li Hao grinned and didn’t protest further. “But keep in mind that there will be real danger.”

“We know, leader, we’re not afraid!”

“Alright then. Prepare yourselves and pack your things. I may be returning to Skystar City the day after tomorrow.” Li Hao had wanted to take down Near River and open the passageway so that Silver Moon wasn’t blockaded anymore. After Deputy Zhou’s lecture, he gave up the idea. That would be an unnecessary tangent at this stage.

Just like Director General Zhao said, all he needed to do was announce that they would accept refugees for Near River to deposit five million, ten million on their doorstep. So long as Silver Moon was unafraid of death, Near River would send them everyone! They’d closed off the borders only because they didn’t want the refugees to stay in Near River.

Li Hao had accomplished everything he’d come back to do. All that was left was to wait for the little tree to coalesce enough Water of Life and deliver the seeds to it. Huang Yu might also return with a batch of armor. The young man could make another trip to Battle Heaven to conduct a second trade.

.....

Li Hao had just set foot in the Silver Moon Guards base when Hao Lianchuan received word from the Night Watchers. He immediately charged over, saying a lot of words that all meant the same thing—take me with you! I want to go to Skystar City too!

There was nothing for the Silver Moon Night Watchers to do lately. The troublemakers had left, the three great organizations weren’t interested in the province. They’d either run off or died. The North Sea pirates were engaging in heavy in-fighting to determine their next spokesperson, and the East Sea pirates were going against each other to determine their boss...

There were no issues left for Silver Moon.

.....

At the same time, Skystar City.

The royal city quieted down after Li Hao's departure and return to Silver Moon. The fuss that'd been raised previously was slowly calming down.

The nine ministries were the nine ministries and Li Hao no longer killed people. Reports to the Skystar Commander Office dwindled because no one saw further action from the young man. The people chose to wait and observe, not daring to file a complaint.

The Night Watchers and Silver Moon Guards continued to go about their separate business. There was no integration or unification between the two.

A strong ray of sword intent rose from the Night Watcher headquarters on the third day of Li Hao's departure. Yao Si immediately appeared in front of a small residence, as did some other youngsters—Big Eyes and the others. They were highly excited as Dao Sword was finally emerging from closed door cultivation!

Li Hao had occupied all of the headlines lately. Dao Sword, the one who'd killed Yama's grandson and caused open war between the three great organizations and Night Watcher, had been in seclusion all this time. His placement on the Divine Masters Ranking was almost declining beneath the top ten.

"He's finally out!"

"Yeah!"

"It's been almost three months, hasn't it?"

"Pretty much!"

“He’s missed out on a lot during these three months!” Conversation flurried; Yao Si listened quietly.

A person walked out of a small building moments later, his bearing genteel and urbane. He smiled faintly at Yao Si and inclined his body. “Director!”

“Mm.” Yao Si nodded back. “Metamorphosis? But you seem rather stable. So you stand a chance of making it to Arcanus?”

“Arcanus?”

“The name of the new cultivation level.”

“I see,” chuckled Dao Sword. He turned to Big Eyes and the others. “You guys look well too, you’ve improved and are not far off from metamorphosis.”

“What good is that?” Long Blade said glumly. “This is no longer an era of Novas. Arcanus can be found everywhere and a bunch of them died while you were in closed door cultivation. So many of them were killed a few days ago, don’t you know?”

“I could sense a thing or two.” Dao Sword wasn’t surprised. He was only in seclusion, not dead. He hadn’t been able to emerge because he’d been opening his supernatural locks. “It’s fine, we can continue to go forward! We can walk far only when there are many powerhouses. As opposed to one flower outshining the others, it’s better for a hundred to bloom together. We’ll have motivation with the Arcanus level in front of us, wouldn’t you say so?”

“You sure have an open mind!” mumbled Big Eyes. “The whole world’s changed while you’ve been away! Director Yao is no longer the first officer at our Night Watchers anymore!”

“Ahem!” Yao Si coughed gently. Nonsense! How was he not?

## Chapter 728: Making Out Like Bandits (III)

Yao Si had a good impression of these four, particularly Dao Sword. Although the lad was a supernatural, he had exceedingly good potential. He was bold, yet conscientious. If it wasn't for Li Hao's appearance, Dao Sword would absolutely be one of the premier existences among the younger generation. The current crop of Arcanus were all veteran powerhouses.

Of the younger generation, there didn't seem to be anyone other than Li Hao stronger than Dao Sword at the moment. The latter's metamorphosis state was stable and he might be able to smoothly set foot into Arcanus if his organs were a little stronger. He would be the first... alright, the second among the younger generation to be an Arcanus.

Li Hao was younger than Dao Sword, but he was already an Arcanus.

Dao Sword didn't care about this and smiled. "Don't think so much. C'mon, let's go to the Nine Dragons Pavilion for a meal and chat about the circumstances over the past couple of days. I feel like the atmosphere in the Night Watchers has changed, and that there are a lot of stories to be shared."

"So many stories!" giggled Big Eyes. "Let's go eat. We've almost lost our appetites with how long you stayed in there!"

The four merrily went on their ways after taking their leave of Yao Si. The man laughed as well when they were out of sight. The Night Watchers would be a more interesting place with Dao Sword out of closed door cultivation. The young man appeared cultured and refined, but he was also someone who feared nothing beneath the heavens. He didn't even fear the heavens themselves. How else would he have dared kill Yama's grandson and taken the Heavens Dictate?

When his thoughts touched upon the Heavens Dictate, Yao Si looked in the direction that Dao Sword had disappeared in. The treasure had stayed with the young man this entire time because he'd been in closed door cultivation. Had Dao Sword gleaned any new comprehension from it? It was an uncommon treasure.

While it wasn't one of the legendary weapons of the eight families, it was still an immensely powerful treasure from the ancient civilization. The three great organizations had been constantly fighting the Night Watchers for it.

"Things will be interesting when Li Hao comes back!" Yao Si laughed. Dao Sword was likely no match for Li Hao at the moment, but it would be hard to say once he crossed into the Arcanus realm. Dao Sword was another beloved child of the heavens. He was a supernatural, but had a deep study of martial dao. He'd once visited Sky Sword Mountain and received personal pointers from Sky Sword for a period of time. One had to know, Sky Sword didn't think much of most people.

And considering the three other young geniuses in the mix, their powers of fanning the flames were unrivaled. They also liked to watch a good show.

This was when Yao Si's thoughts turned to how Li Hao had called him disgusting. A wave of disgruntlement rose in the old man's heart. So I love watching a good show, what about it?! I'm going to watch your show, you little bastard! How dare you want to make me your subordinate!

.....

News of Dao Sword emerging from closed door cultivation quickly spread throughout the world. All parties paid attention to this stunning genius in the Night Watchers. Since the quartet had gone to the Nine Dragons Pavilion, there would be visitors knocking at their door shortly.

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Off in Silver Moon, Li Hao also received word. He'd taken a transmission pendant with him on this trip, one that was tied to the Silver Moon communication system. However, he didn't normally look at it and didn't really care about the news that he did receive from it.

He hadn't said anything when Big Eyes and the rest joined the battle in Skystar City, and didn't care that Dao Sword didn't appear because he was in closed door cultivation. So what of geniuses? All they needed to do was stay out of his way. If they disrupted his plans, he'd turn a genius of this world into a genius of the underworld.



.....

On the third day of his return to Silver Moon, Li Hao visited Mount Cat Head again.

Outside the imperial palace.

The little tree's presence undulated through the surroundings and its core origin wafted gently. It seemed rather tired, but was much stronger than before. Compared to its previous appearance, it was noticeably larger now.

"I am pleased to report that I have fulfilled my mission!" Drops of Water of Life converged out of the air. Li Hao brought out the large jug that he created last time. Every drop of this resource had been precious before, but now he had five hundred drops!

It wasn't enough to fill his container, but at the very least, it was visible in the jug now.

"Congratulations!" Li Hao laughed. "The senior looks to have noticeably improved."

"Not improvement, just recovery. I was very much in a state of lack before," answered the little tree's ripples. "Are you leaving?"

"Yes!" Li Hao nodded. "Not much will be happening in Silver Moon in a short period of time, so I'm going out for a bit."

"To the central region that you mentioned?"

"Yep."

“It’s said that the Skystar mines are there.”

“The senior knows of them too?”

“I see mentions of them in my memory.” The little tree swayed, as if assessing Li Hao. “I mentioned coalescing core origin talismans for you before, but with how much you’ve improved, you may not need them...”

Li Hao wanted to answer that he did! But the little tree continued before he had a chance to speak up, “I have thought about it this extensively. You have helped me recover my strength and we of the imperial palace guards cannot be ungrateful. Therefore, I have a thought...” It struggled before continuing. “I can halve my core origin and create a replica. It won’t be too strong, just a little stronger than you, but it will contain some sentience. You can take me with you!

“However, do not leave me in the outside world if there is no need. Whether you wish to trade mysterious power stones or origin weapons, you can do so through my replica. My replica can also produce Water of Life.

“I will use my father’s corpse as my carrier and you can place my replica inside your body or a storage ring. But if I’m in a storage ring, I will not be able to sense the outside world and may not be able to appear at first light. If I am in your body, I will be able to instantly sense everything!”

Li Hao’s jaw dropped with surprise. The little tree wanted to leave the palace? Alright, not all of it wanted to leave, just half of it. But... hadn’t it said before that it wouldn’t venture out as long as the imperial palace stood? Of course, its main body was still here, it was just dividing its core origin in half.

“If the senior’s replica goes out with me, will you be in danger if you take action in the outside world?” The young man swiftly weighed up the pros and cons.

“I’m not sure... but I shouldn’t if my strength does not exceed the limit of this world. The danger lies in the weakness of the world and the ease with which the void breaks. Without sufficient energy consolidating space... Once I bring my full strength to bear and break the void, void turbulence will cut through everything. I might be cut down before the enemy dies!

“This is why you rarely see powerful existences in the world. The void now is much stronger than it was a few decades ago. When I first awoke, it was very, very weak.”

That was before the first awakening of the supernatural!

Li Hao understood and swiftly considered the proposition of taking the little tree with him. There would certainly be many benefits. He would gain a personal bodyguard, a plant spirit that could create Water of Life at any time, and an existence that could craft a sacred land of cultivation. But there would also be drawbacks!

Would other motives arise in the little tree since it was stronger than the human? Would it think of seizing Li Hao’s wealth when it saw how rich the young man was? Putting it in the storage ring might be a better option.

“This is a good idea!” Li Hao said slowly after a few moments of furious thinking. “It will be convenient too. But senior... I’m going to visit Battle Heaven after this. Will it affect your replica to go with me?”

“Battle Heaven...”

“That’s right!” Li Hao nodded. “I’m going to pick up a few things on a very quick visit!”

The little tree dearly wanted to say that you can go first and come back for me after.

“Once I go, I’ll head directly to Skystar City from there,” Li Hao quickly continued. “If the senior would like to leave the palace, you’ll have to divide yourself now.”

“.....” The little tree understood. It was only inexperienced in the world, not a fool. The human likely wanted to use Battle Heaven to intimidate it. It hesitated, but still answered, “That’s fine, but... but... as a fellow plant spirit... Will General Pagoda of Battle Heaven... want to... eat me?”

“Of course not!” Li Hao answered with a guilty conscience. “Absolutely not! That’s my territory, would I let the general eat the senior?”

A great internal struggle beset the little tree! But for the future, for continual recovery... it had to go with Li Hao. Therefore, it came to a decision. It would go with the young man!

The little tree shook violently. The fallen, crystalline tree on the ground began shrinking down until it turned into a tiny crystal tree. The little tree’s presence was much weaker than before. Dividing its core origin was an action that led to devastating loss. There wouldn’t be much of a problem if its replica returned, but if it died, then half of its core origin would be gone. It would lose its life if the consequences were that severe, or at the very least see its cultivation level decline if the ramifications were light.

This was an action that required a great deal of resolve!

The mini tree floated in front of Li Hao; the little tree’s presence was much weaker—even its voice was weaker. “Do not abandon me... unless you have no other choice... I might die if you do!”

Li Hao was surprised by the aftereffects. The little tree really had made a hefty investment!

“Does the senior wish to consider this a bit further?”

Oh shut up! The little tree wanted to erupt in a rage. I’ve already cut myself into two. Do you think that doesn’t hurt? You try cutting yourself into two!

But in the pursuit of a beautiful future, it restrained its temper. “No need. Will you let me into your body or...”

“Ah... I think a storage ring is better. My apologies to the senior!” Li Hao responded with resignation. “I would like to place you in my body as well, but Stellaris has just managed to take up residence inside me lately. It has quite a temper and is always shooting off sword qi. I’m afraid of it accidentally hurting the senior!”

Very well, that was a perfect excuse!

The little tree didn’t mind. Whatever. So long as you give me the first cut of all mysterious power stones and origin weapons, everything else is a side thought.

#### Chapter 729: Making Out Like Bandits (IV)

Li Hao put the mini tree away in a storage ring and took out a pile of seeds. “Senior, how long will it take to cultivate the rations I need with these kinds of seeds?”

“Their quality... is poor! They require a lot of modification as they are very poor strains. I would say... three months.”

Li Hao sighed upon receiving the assessment. So what they had was indeed low quality, and this was the best that Director General Zhao could gather! It looked like even the crops of this age were a marked degree worse than those of the ancient civilization.

Since the little tree’s main body was still present, it would have no trouble working on these seeds. Li Hao had no reason to linger in the imperial palace. He’d gained quite a lot on this trip back to Silver Moon! There was the little tree’s replica, five hundred drops of Water of Life, and two thousand sets of armor that Huang Yu had collected for him.

He also had all sorts of random armor, with the Black Armaturas the most at one thousand sets. There was also armor from various troops that Li Hao didn’t recognize. Who knew where Silver Moon had gotten those from and if they belonged to proper, official armies?

Li Hao rushed to Rift Canyon without pause. This time, Panther was his steed. He'd gotten tired from all the flying.

.....

Director General Wang was surprised to see Li Hao return to Battle Heaven. The entire city trembled as it looked down loftily. An enormous tree that nearly enveloped that entire city seemed to rustle for a moment.

Li Hao had purposefully let the little tree out to intimidate it. It trembled and shook, not making a sound like it was dead. Shock gripped its heart! As expected, General Pagoda will still live! Not only the general, but the other plant spirits of Battle Heaven didn't seem to be fully dead either. They were wrapped in the general's enclosure and retained some vitality. Perhaps they could also come back to life as well.

The little tree shook with trepidation. Director General Wang decided to fly straight through the city until he reached the front gates. He saw the young man off in the distance and also the mini tree. Contemplating something, the director general vanished once more.

Li Hao brought the little tree forward and quickly approached the city gates. The little tree suddenly landed on the ground and transformed into a tree the height of a person. It bent slightly at the two characters like it was bowing.

The young man was surprised, but quickly understood. The little tree likely knew the origin of these words. Perhaps those of the imperial palace had mentioned it. The little tree reverted back to its miniature form after the bow and hovered unmovingly over Li Hao's shoulder.

"Troop Leader Li!" The three other troop leaders landed at the same time, looking at Li Hao, then at the little tree with surprise. "A plant spirit? they asked with confusion. "Where does this plant spirit come from?"

"The imperial palace."

“Imperial palace?” The Seventh Troop leader seemed to think of something and said after a moment, “Oh... the... abandoned palace? I remember... I vaguely remember... that there was a tree at the gates... But... it wasn’t this one...”

“That was my father!” The little tree’s energy ripples undulated.

“You can communicate with them?” Li Hao looked at the little tree with surprise. The three troop leaders communicated with him through the armor, not through pure mental ripples.

“We are of the same core origin dao. Their core origin has not dissipated, so we can communicate with each other.”

Li Hao understood, so this was the case!

“I see!” exclaimed the Seventh Troop leader. “What a pity, but it’s to be expected. So many of the Battle Heaven Army have fallen after all these years and we have decayed as well. Time urges us on the path of old age. Just surviving is good luck enough!

“What a pity that General Pagoda has not awakened. He would be able to talk with you then.” The troop leader turned to Li Hao. “Is Troop Leader Li going to the barracks?”

“Yes, I’m going to trade in some armor.”

“You’ve gotten more armor?”

“That’s right.”

“It looks like your reinforcement troop is about to expand again!”

Li Hao laughed again and didn't chat further. He walked toward the barracks with the little tree. One inside the city, the little tree fell even more silent.

"Is your father dead?" The words suddenly formed in the tree's heart. "What a pity. He was a loyal soldier. I remember that he was the only one who refused to leave when the imperial palace was abandoned. The one from the Cat Palace gave him a Cat Fruit. Was even that insufficient to save him?"

The little tree's heart trembled! Who was this?!

"It's me." A turtle floated out of the bottom of the tree's heart.

"Senior!" answered the tree with some shock. "The senior is still... still... present..."

"I am a divine weapon and will not decay. Why would I not be present?"

"But Stellaris... the Windchaser Boots..."

"They're different from me. I am an ancient soul weapon—Stellaris and the Windchaser Boots were later modified. The Sword Sovereign does not like a weapon with its own consciousness, so he asked the Divine Forge Emperor to craft them anew. Not to mention, any soul weapon wouldn't last to the next fight in the Sword Sovereign's hands..."

That was true! The Sword Sovereign's sword intent resulted in the death of either his enemy or himself whenever he fought. It would be the height of misfortune to be Stellaris' soul weapon. There would have to be a new one every three days as all would be gone once the Sword Sovereign struck.

"Senior, I..."



“We are just having a casual chat. There is no need to be afraid. You are the descendant of an imperial palace guard and have inherited your father’s profession. Although it’s just a palace and has been abandoned... You received the recognition of the noble Cat Tree, which makes you the same side as us. Not to mention... who dares offend someone from the Cat Palace? No one will do anything to you!”

The little tree remained shyly quiet. Of course the Cat Palace came with an exceedingly high status! But that was in times past. Who knew what the situation was in Battle Heaven now? Not to mention, the Cat Palace was an abandoned palace, not one truly in use.

The old turtle’s figure began to dissipate. “There’s no need to mention this meeting to Li Hao and you do not need to speak too much of the past with him. The past is in the past, do not let New Martial interfere with the existence of this age! Let all proceed as it should!”

“This junior understands!”

“Mm.” The old turtle dispersed, the little tree quieted down, and Li Hao remained unknowing of everything.

.....

Military Supplies.

Zhang Liang was struck speechless by the thousands of sets of armor that Li Hao took out. “It’s one thing if the armor is from the Skystar Army, at least they’re an official army! What is all this junk?? This is... armor from the security guards of a martial university! You want to trade it in like regular army issue??”

“This is from the protective detail of merchant convoys! You’re turning this in?!”

“And... and this... oh my heavens, this is children’s armor! This is for children! It’s a toy! You want to trade this in?” The deputy commissioner was highly disdainful of the array set in front of him. “You’ve brought back all manner of bric-a-brac! I simply don’t know what to say!”

Li Hao glanced at his offerings sheepishly. Was that so? Weren’t they all armor?

As scornful as Zhang Liang was, he took careful inventory. “There’s twenty-two hundred sets here,” he concluded wordlessly. “Only sixteen hundred of them come from an official army. The rest is trash!”

“Commissioner Zhang...”

“Deputy commissioner!”

“I know, I know. Here’s the situation—didn’t I trade in twenty-three hundred sets before? I had one hundred to begin with, the Silver Moon Guards have five hundred, which makes for twenty-nine hundred total sets. How about I trade this lot for twenty-one hundred sets? That makes for an even five thousand!

“I can’t have an uneven number, can I? That would look so weird and lose face for the Battle Heaven Army. People will look at me and count a little over four thousand. They’ll wonder what happened to the rest, did I lose several hundred in previous battles?”

Did his words make sense?

A little! But Zhang Liang wasn’t convinced. “That... while you make sense, I’m the one who has to suffer through military punishment if I give you several hundred extra sets!”

“Give it to him!” A voice manifested in Zhang Jiang’s mind.

“Commander...” Zhang Liang jerked with surprise, then glared at Li Hao. Asshole who got in through connections! Pah! You’re so shameless! But what could he say now that the commander had spoken? “Fine, you make sense. You can have twenty-one hundred sets!”

“Thank you, Commissioner Zhang!”

“Deputy commissioner!”

Li Hao didn’t care about the proper title. He exulted in his success. The commissioner really had agreed to his request! Damn if that didn’t feel nice!

Meanwhile, the little tree was astonished. How was the matter settled like this? Didn’t they say that the Battle Heaven Army practiced strict military discipline?

But very quickly, it realized that this was because of Li Hao. The young man had an easy time no matter where he went. He could insist on his way here—proof that he really did have support from Battle Heaven.

The little tree was once more stunned by the human’s capabilities! The heir of the eight families was a fish in water no matter where he went! The Lis were indeed at their head! It looked like even Battle Heaven was wary of the Sword Sovereign’s renown.

Zhang Liang quickly brought out the armor and tossed them at Li Hao. He ignored the young man after that, not wanting to talk to someone who made it to his position through connections!

Li Hao didn’t mind. He gleefully walked out of the door. The commander’s office wasn’t his next stop. He simply lingered outside the building for a bit and saluted before running off. This was just to ensure that the commander wouldn’t be able to say that Li Hao hadn’t properly greeted his commanding officer after his return.

Inside the office.

The commander looked on wordlessly. That was truly such a perfunctory way of going through the motions!

## Chapter 730: Return to Skystar (I)

Silver Moon, White Moon City.

A long convoy of cars snaked through the streets early in the morning. A black flag with a ferocious tiger and a Li character emblazoned on it hung high over the cars, rippling in the wind like a snarling tiger loftily looking down from a mountain.

People were gathered in the surroundings, looking at the convoy with bafflement. Was it the provincial army? But they'd never seen this flag before. How curious.

There were roughly twenty large cars and multiple smaller cars in the convoy. Such an array had occurred before in early October, when Director Hou Xiaochen of the Night Watchers had traveled to the central region. Which heavyweight was it this time?

"Is a major general heading out on a campaign?" A person in the crowd couldn't hold in their curiosity anymore.

Someone's ears twitched in one of the big cars and they called out, "Skystar Governor General, Skystar Vice Commander, and Silver Moon Night Watcher Director Li Hao leads the army to Skystar City today. He will suppress the unrest in the dynastic capital and the Demon Hunters follow in his wake!"

The announcement drew some attention. Wasn't Commander Li in Skystar City? When had he come back?

Granted, this wasn't the important part as the crowd exploded with the ramifications of what they'd heard.

“Are they going to war? Director Hou just took thousands of martial masters not long ago and now Director Li is taking so many with him... Are they bringing all of the Silver Moon martial masters to Skystar to turn over the world there?”

“Silver Moon men are the toughest! Didn’t you hear? They’re leading the army to suppress disturbances in Skystar! Heh, we’ll let those southern fellows see how strong us northern men are!”

“.....” A flurry of discussion sprang up in all directions.

Contrary to the low profile of his last journey, Li Hao had no choice but to raise this degree of fuss because he was traveling with too many people. He’d wanted to quietly sneak back to Skystar City, but Silver Moon recommended that he travel openly like Hou Xiaochen had. He could adopt the same car convoy that the director had employed to return to Skystar.

The Silver Moon provincial army was sending one thousand people and there were several dozen Demon Hunters as well. That made for more people than when the Silver Moon Guard left the province. However, there weren’t as many powerhouses as that delegation.

The strongest among the Demon Hunters was Liu Long—he’d just set foot in Summoner of Spirit. The other was the Solar level Wang Ming and peak Solar Hao Lianchuan—the latter wouldn’t leave no matter what Li Hao said.

According to Hao Lianchuan’s words, there was no use for a peak Solar within Silver Moon these days. No major matters were forthcoming on the horizon, so Solars were wasted in provincial territory.

Discourse buzzed in the surroundings as soldiers stood with their heads held high and chests thrust out. It was quite a thrilling feeling to be standing on one of the trucks. The Demon Hunters were in two cars, followed by the one thousand soldiers from the provincial army. A young officer stood in one of the cars leading the soldiers. He wore a military uniform and looked around in all directions. His deputy murmured in a low voice, “Sir, there is no sign of Demon Sword to be found.”

The young man nodded without a word. Commander Yu had told him to lead his men and follow Li Hao to Skystar City. He didn’t know what he felt about that. Battles were hard to come by in Silver

Moon these days, but Skystar City was a lion's nest. Arcanus were a common sight and one battle rendered a dozen of them dead. Novas were completely worthless.

The thousand troops that he led counted as strong troops in Silver Moon—they were almost all martial masters and one step away from Slayer of Tens. Meanwhile, the young man himself was a true martial master, a half step Sunderer. But... what good did that count for?

In an era of the supernatural, it didn't matter if a martial master broke through to Dominator. This troop wouldn't be able to defeat a Solar even if they were equipped with weapons. Perhaps they'd be able to force the Solar into retreat, but any Nova that came along could annihilate them all.

The young man didn't understand, why did Commander Yu want to send such an army to Skystar City? He also didn't understand why someone like Demon Sword needed them. To do errands? Or to enhance his reputation?

Wang Ming's declaration of suppressing Skystar unrest was a complete joke in his eyes. That was just making themselves to be more important than they actually were! They were so much less than the Silver Moon Guards that'd left with Director Hou. One had to know, of the nearly one thousand Silver Moon Guards, almost all of them were Sunderers. They also possessed multiple Dominators and a group of powerhouses like Golden Spear.

What were these soldiers worth?

The young man turned back to look at the cars holding provincial army soldiers. Some people were excited, others apprehensive. Some felt self-conscious, and others felt uneasy. Plainly, they also felt that they themselves were too weak.

While endless thoughts rose in his mind, the young man still grunted, "Be on guard and conduct reconnaissance in the surroundings! The vanguard will take point when we leave the city..."

"We won't have to do any of this, sir," sighed his deputy. "Didn't you see the Demon Hunters alight earlier to scout ahead?"

“That’s them, we are we.” The young man frowned. “Just because they’re doing it doesn’t mean that we won’t do it!”

What his deputy wanted to say was that it was a futile effort. If someone wanted to attack Li Hao, then small fry such as them wouldn’t be able to do anything no matter how they scouted. But it didn’t seem like a good time to say anything.

The convoy of cars quickly drove into the city outskirts.

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At the same time, scouts quickly spread word.

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Skystar City, the Inspectorate.

The inspector general looked at his transmission pendant and smirked. He shook his head, not bothering with words. The boy just wanted to give himself some more confidence and build up his reputation!

One thousand provincial soldiers and approximately fifty of his old troops—a group that Li Hao called the Demon Hunters. Their strongest was a Dominator and Solar... And of the one thousand soldiers, most of them were mundanes! There weren’t that many martial masters...

What use was an army like this if they were one hundred thousand, much less one thousand? Hell, even one million was completely useless!

“Returning in style to his hometown... Does he actually think that he’s in Skystar City to spend the rest of his days in honor and glory?” The inspector general didn’t know what to make of the young man. Since when had he developed a taste for ostentation and extravagance? That was not promising.

As inspector general, he’d seen too many geniuses and knew too much. Those who settled into a life of enjoyment after they accomplished something major usually did not last long. Li Hao had plainly let his previous victory go to his head and was treating Skystar City as his home. He was coming back with one thousand people to pave his road of wealth and riches in the central region.

He’d lost sight of who he was! Thank goodness the Inspectorate hadn’t invested too much in him. He was too young and couldn’t withstand temptation.

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The inspector general wasn’t the only one to think so. At least the Silver Moon Guards had had some strength to them. What good was one thousand mundanes for, if not putting on a show? Even the Silver Moon soldiers themselves thought so.

We’re just here to run some errands and make him look good. Why else does Demon Sword want us? To kill enemies for him? Solars? Novas? Or Arcanus?

Outside the city.

Dressed in silver armor, Li Hao waited at the city gate for the convoy to arrive. He’d turned his gold armor into silver, keeping his usual low profile. He’d wanted to leave first, but then worried that something might happen to these people because they were too weak. Thus, he chose to travel together in case they were all killed by third parties. He wouldn’t even know who their murderers were!

The convoy gradually slowed down.



“Halt!”

The cars stopped and people jumped out.

“There are fifty-four in the Demon Hunters, fifty-five have reported to duty. All are accounted for!” Liu Long roared.

There was one extra because of Hao Lianchuan. With Liu Long in the mix, there were fifty martial masters. Yun Yao, Li Meng, Hu Hao, and Wang Ming made for four supernatural members.

Li Hao looked at Hao Lianchuan with a slight furrow of his forehead. “Are you sure you want to go with me, Vice Director Hao?” he muttered. “The Silver Moon Night Watchers lack a director already, and if their acting director leaves...”

Hao Lianchuan wasn’t his typical irreverent self. He looked at Li Hao for a while before saying, “I don’t want to stay. If I stay, I’ll continue to get weaker!” He didn’t want to stay!

Li Hao didn’t say anything. The young man jogged over from the rear to salute. The military ceremonies of the Silver Moon provincial army differed from the Battle Heaven Army. Lacking a certain gravitas, it was just a simple raising of the hand.

“Commander Li, the White Moon Guards of Silver Moon number 1,020. 1,020 have reported for duty. All are accounted for and we await the commander’s orders!”

Li Hao nodded. “What is your name?”

“This subordinate is Huang Taiming!”

“What is Commander Yu’s relationship with you?”

“Commander Yu is the Silver Moon commander-in-chief!”

“I mean personal relationship.”

Huang Taiming frowned, but answered, “Commander Yu is my grandfather twice removed. My great-grandfather and Commander Yu’s father were cousins...”

This was a close familial tie, but could also be a far tie. This meant to say that Huang Yu’s great-grandfather and the young man’s great great-grandfather were one and the same, but that was an uncountable number of generations ago.

So his post wasn’t a result of nepotism.