

Star Gate 751

Chapter 751: Persuading With Fist and Reason (III)

“So have you grasped a third element or not?” Manager Yu couldn’t help ask.

“It’s hard to say.”

Her expression darkened as well.

“You guys will know in the future!” Li Hao laughed heartily. “There’s no rush. I’m just here today to discuss these two matters with Director Hou. Then I’m going to visit Director Yao next. Ah, how many locks have you saturated, Director Hou?”

“Guess!”

This was payback in the kid’s own manner!

“How many auras have the director comprehended?” Li Hao smiled.

“There is no need for multiple auras—that leads to a mishmash of mediocrity!”

Ah, the young man understood. The director knew only one aura—that of the spear. Li Hao had once sensed the aura of the Broken Will Spear and it was indeed very strong. Just some lingering hints had threatened to rip apart the firmament, and that may not have been Hou Xiaochen’s peak condition.

However, did he know only one aura? In that case, would he be able to incorporate all of his supernatural locks through writing just one character? That wasn’t out of the question either. Just as his teacher has said, those with multiple auras had their methods, those with few auras had their different methods.

Hou Xiaochen just wouldn't be able to utilize each individual character as a different supernatural ability like Li Hao could. That wasn't necessarily a bad thing as the young man would have to combine all of his words as one at the end. All paths lead to the same end. If not, it wasn't a good outcome to have his strength scattered piecemeal instead of gathered in one whole.

He was just letting his mind run as he was far from that stage. As for Hou Xiaochen and the rest, Li Hao wasn't planning on letting them become supernatural and walk his path. He himself didn't know where the path led, so how would he dare let others follow his footsteps?

Only Hong Yitang had set foot into the supernatural domain, the rest walked their own martial path and was yet to reach the stage of unsealing themselves.

"Then I'll be off..." Li Hao left as swiftly as he came. Hou Xiaochen wanted to say something, but stopped himself. Off your ass! The young man suddenly turned to Manager Yu when he thought of something. "Manager! You haven't saturated that many locks, have you?"

"Eh?"

"You can come with me when I strengthen the Silver Moon Guards."

"Ah..." Manager Yu nodded and glanced at Hou Xiaochen. The man's face was full of resignation.

"Go with him!" he said after a while. Why not? There were free benefits to be had there.

Manager Yu smiled, looked at Hou Xiaochen, and nodded. She gave off the air of "I'm only going if you go", which mollified Hou Xiaochen somewhat.

Meanwhile, Li Hao had already left. How childish!

He was speechless that Hou Xiaochen was actually jealous. These Silver Moon martial masters all liked to have fun with the ladies in their old age. What were they doing in their youth?

Hou Xiaochen was younger than the rest, but he was almost fifty, correct? What a pity that there didn't seem to be any renowned female martial masters among the younger generation.

Wait, why does it have to be female martial masters? Li Hao thought. Can't it be female supernaturals? Honestly, these people... and I lack a secretary still! His thoughts turned to Light Sword. Forget it, that auntie seems to be looking for me everywhere lately. She can't find me because I keep running around. This is so scary. Everyone else's secretary is a pretty, cute little thing, but mine is an auntie with a beard. What a... stark difference!

Li Hao grew more depressed the longer he looked at Little Ye's sweet smile. Yao Si was fashionably part of the times with a secretary in her twenties!

"Commander, is your body able to endure the strain of breaking through to three elements?"

Little Ye seemed to be prying for information! Li Hao went on the alert and responded without a flicker of change in expression, "I'm alright, even four elements would be fine!"

"I knew it!" Little Ye was delighted. As she thought, Commander Li was almighty. Even four elements would be fine, the director had guessed incorrectly!

A sneering Yao Si lifted his teacup inside his office. My secretary is a bit silly and Li Hao is a bit foolish. He probably thinks that Little Ye is probing for intelligence, but she's simply admiring him.

Heh! Women, heh! Men, young men, heh heh!

His smile disappeared the moment Li Hao set foot inside the door.

Little Ye was very hospitable and quickly ran off to make tea. “Commander, what kind of tea do you drink?” she whispered.

“Any is fine!”

Little Ye completely understood and hastily took out a can of tea leaves from the bottom drawer. Yao Si sucked in a sharp breath—his secretary was completely out of line! That contained his most precious tea that even he himself rarely partook in!

He couldn’t contain himself when he saw Little Ye take out a large pinch and coughed gently, “You are dismissed, Little Ye. I have matters to discuss with the commander!”

“Oh, alright!” Little Ye didn’t dare say anything else and rushed out the door, casting a lingering look at the dry tea leaves. She was slightly regretful that Commander Li wasn’t going to have a chance to drink her tea.

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Yao Si raised his massive tea cup after his secretary left and took a large mouthful, smacking his lips as if an old man in the countryside. He adopted the pose of waiting to listen to Li Hao’s words.

The young man furrowed his brows, but decided to persuade through reason.

“Director Yao, I am extremely grateful for your aid earlier. I find that the director has not forgotten his original intentions and returned to his initial self! I would like to unite the strength of the people and consolidate those with ambition and drive. The tyrannical rule of the nine ministries and royal family needs to be overthrown as they wish to become the Human King through erasing the people’s mind!

“That cannot be tolerated!” Li Hao waved his arms around and grit his teeth. “Therefore, even though I know I am less than the enemy, I resolve to be the mantis trying to stop the chariot. They must know that this will not work!”

“Pfft! Pah!” Yao Si spat out a tea leaf that he’d accidentally ingested. He nodded at Li Hao when the young man looked at and indicated for him to continue.

“I was then thinking, that whoever takes the lead in this will be visited with misfortune! Otherwise, Director Yao would be the best choice. How about this, I’ll lead the Silver Moon Guards and Demon Hunters in joining the Night Watchers. Director Yao can raise the flag and I’ll wave it for you!

“I have no other goal other than to defeat the nine ministries, royal family, three great organizations, overthrow the feudal traditions, and rebuild order...”

“Pah!” Yao Si spat out another mouthful of tea leaves again. This time, Li Hao glared at him.

I’m here to persuade you with reason, but if you don’t recognize the respect that I’m treating you with, don’t blame me for bringing out the fist instead!

Yao Si laughed to see the fiery look in Li Hao’s eyes and bared his yellow teeth. “You talk a pretty talk. I ask you, what right and basis do you have to say all this? Shall we follow you to our deaths?

“Don’t clap lofty morals on me,” he sneered coldly. “And don’t paint yourself with such an invincible right. You’re not weak, Li Hao. In fact, you’re strong with a stable dual-element system. However, the nine ministries and royal family have deep foundations. Setting aside whether or not they will produce Arcanus of three elements this time... You may not be able to stand against them even if they don’t!

“Who are you to speak of overthrowing them, even without taking into account who stands behind them? Is it a good idea to die with you? And it’s one thing if you die, but you want to drag the Night Watchers into the swamp with you?” The old man looked coldly at Li Hao. “I, Yao Si, may be

fearful of death as you say. But at least I know one thing, and it is that if I do not have the Night Watchers with me, if I stand against them just by myself, then the nine ministries will not kill everyone because they still need people in the field!

“What will they do once you dust yourself off and run back to Silver Moon?” Yao Si looked at him. “You’ve set your goals so high and noble that you speak of yourself like a saint! You are not, and neither am I, but at least I won’t drag other people down with me!

“How many people have you implicated along your journey? Hong Yitang has transformed from a premier martial master to an Arcanus, to say nothing of anything else. That is a nightmare for a martial master...”

“Becoming supernatural is a nightmare?” Li Hao snorted. “Then Director Yao really can’t endure much pressure. If you’re this kind of martial master, then it doesn’t matter if you no longer are one!”

“Hah!” Yao Si sniffed. “Just listen to yourself! Do you think you’re stronger than me because you’ve killed Hu Xiao? It was part accident and part my doing that you were able to kill him. You don’t think you would’ve easily killed him by yourself, do you?”

Li Hao looked at him and said slowly after a while, “So Director Yao continuously refuses me because you think I am too weak, that I am unable to stand against the nine ministries and royal family, and because you think I have exhausted my potential after seeing foot into the supernatural?”

Yao Si did not reply. These were indeed factors influencing him; he could not permit the Night Watchers to follow Li Hao down the abyss. The young man was destined to lose!

Yao Si wasn’t saying all this in a fit of temper or out of a lack of desire to support Li Hao’s grandiose ambitions. None of that mattered. What was key was that Li Hao did not have the skills to bring people hope. Without hope, there was despair.

Yao Si was responsible for the Night Watchers. People like Little Ye blindly worshiped Li Hao. That could not be permitted and would cause problems sooner or later. It wasn't just him, Hou Xiaochen and the rest didn't pay the young man much attention because they knew that these actions would result in self-destruction. That was why Silver Moon neither encouraged nor discouraged the young man. They simply went along with the flow.

Li Hao smiled, he knew. That was why he'd come prepared. It wasn't just the people in the central region. He knew that Silver Moon didn't think highly of him either. What Deputy Zhou had said before was a clear indication.

"If I can beat you, Director Yao, will that represent something?"

"So what if you can?" Yao Si smiled. "Do you think there's no one stronger than me? I'm not weak, I know it. I am likely stronger than unstable Arcanus if I don't unseal myself, and can rival a stable Arcanus if I do. If I further unseal myself... premier Arcanus of two elements may not be a match for me. I would not fear those of three elements if I break my locks!

"But... so what?" he laughed self-deprecatingly. "Do you know the type of existence that will emerge after the second awakening?"

"I do!" Li Hao responded calmly. "Those known as Apex—existences that can rip through the void and instantly travel thousands of kilometers in a split second! There might be those above Apex as well, but are they relevant?"

Chapter 752: Persuading With Fist and Reason (IV)

"So what?" Yao Si laughed. "Is it because of Battle Heaven that you remain so confident despite knowing? Li Hao, you don't think that the ancient city really will support you, do you? It can barely protect itself!"

"No, I never think to rely on anyone else. From the very beginning till now, I've only relied once on my master. I've been saving, protecting, and strengthening myself since then! Even last time," the young man looked at Yao Si. "I would not have been afraid even if all of you had not come. So what if the nine ministries are strong? I could've killed Hu Xiao when I erupted that day and would've run off if not for the rest, then come back and kill again. I'd be a killer striking from the shadows. It would remain to be seen then who would be wary of who!

“At most, everyone’s support that day gave me a chance for direct frontal combat.” Li Hao looked at Yao Si. “It’s not that I would’ve been at their mercy without you!”

“So it was wrong of us to help you?”

“That is not the case!” Li Hao looked at him. “It only explains that Director Yao’s blood has not yet chilled. You made your move not for me, but for the world!”

“This is nonsense!” Yao Si snorted with an unfriendly look in his eyes. “Get out!”

He wasn’t willing to converse more with Li Hao, the kid was too obnoxious. He did not like the Li Hao of this day. The brat was outrageously pretentious and conceited! He’d grown too full of himself after his last victory. He’d even forgotten that it wasn’t a complete victory. If it wasn’t for restrictions imposed by the royal family, many of the Silver Moon contingent would’ve died in that battle.

“I know what Director Yao is thinking, that I am cocky and ignorant...” Li Hao looked at the man.

“So long as you know!” Yao Si frowned. “The young can be confident, but they cannot be arrogant. How much of the world have you seen, that you dare be so unbridled?”

“I think I’ve seen more of the world than the director has!”

“.....” Yao Si truly flushed with anger now. He set down his tea cup and looked at Li Hao, a stern consideration in his eyes. He really was uncomfortable when the young man acted thus.

“I have seen my ancestor pierce through the firmament with one word!” Li Hao was unusually calm. “I have seen the Human King kill a celestial emperor! I have seen emperors march on the heavens! I have seen much, and all that I have seen should be much more and greater than what the director has!

“I have seen the cosmos shatter, universes shatter, and too much apart from that! The enemies were too strong and the Human King was caught in the fervor of battle. He killed everyone who did not bow their heads! Director Yao, you tell me if I’ve seen enough of the world!”

Yao Si’s expression changed slightly and he looked at the young man. A long while later, he slowly said, “I hadn’t thought that you’d seen all that... but how are you still so arrogant after having seen all that? What are you thinking of, Li Hao?”

“I think that all things have a beginning and since no one is willing to be that beginning, I will be! If you are unwilling, Yao Si, then I will step forward. Why can I not?”

“Do you think you can ignore all threats, danger, and all else just because you have seen much of the world?” Yao Si said coldly.

“No, I have seen much and my strength measures up to my knowledge. Apart from those who cannot emerge, who in this world can rival me?”

“Such arrogance!” Yao Si shouted. “Do you know how strong the old minister of Administration is? Do you know how strong the Skystar King is? Do you know how strong Ying Hongyue is?! You know nothing, yet you purport yourself to be invincible!”

Who in the world dared say they were invincible?? Not even Ying Hongyue! You’ve had too much to drink, Li Hao, to claim yourself as invincible!

Li Hao laughed and waved a mirror fragment into existence. It shrouded the surroundings and enveloped the director.

Yao Si’s heart skipped a beat in alarm, but he didn’t make a move. He simply stared down Li Hao. “What do you want? Are you going to use might to force me to abdicate? You think too much! Li Hao, I’ll show you what it means to be a true, premier martial master even if I have to break my supernatural locks!”

“Since the director is unwilling to accept what I’m saying, then I will use my fist to persuade you. Nothing is more convincing than the fist. Your group of martial masters always thinks so little of the heroes in the world!” Li Hao sneered. Wind and thunder gathered in his left hand, while the water and fire characters manifested in his right. Under Yao Si’s astonished eyes, four supernatural abilities instantly became one.

Sword intent manifested! The Lifeless Sword! Stellaris swung forth and slashed through the air. All four attributes exploded at the same time, BAM!

Yao Si waved a fist in response, shock on his face!

BOOM!

A massive collision rang out, sending Yao Si flying backwards and vomiting blood. He felt his throat—there was a blood mark there that seeped blood. Fire, water, wind, and thunder exploded in his body, badly damaging his organs.

“Pfft!” He coughed out another mouthful of blood and stared at Li Hao. He’d crashed through the wall of his office, violently wobbling the mirror fragment that could withstand the impact from a metamorphosis.

Yao Si didn’t mind; he simply stared incredulously at Li Hao. After a while, in which he wouldn’t stop vomiting blood, he said with difficulty, “Four... elements! Why... didn’t... I sense... any ripples... from water and fire...”

He coughed again and spat out blood mixed with pieces of his organs.

“Why must there be any ripples?” Li Hao casually directed some sword energy into Yao Si’s body.

“And... you... can still use sword intent...” Yao Si stared at the young man, a mad look filling his eyes. “Why??”

“Why?” Li Hao laughed. “Mysterious power is born from the supernatural locks and the locks themselves are of our personal strength. Why can I not use my own strength and deploy sword intent? Who says that supernaturals must be weaker? Who says that mysterious power must be an outside force? Who says that I, Li Hao, cannot take in mysterious power and convert it to my own use? The New Martial era could create a new path of martial dao. Why cannot I do the same?”

“.....” Yao Si fell silent and struggled up with difficulty. He coughed a few times and looked at Li Hao. He didn’t know what to say in this moment. He hadn’t unsealed himself just now, but he possessed the strength of an Arcanus. And yet, he’d almost died to a single stroke from the young man. No, he would be dead if Li Hao hadn’t shown mercy!

Thus, Yao Si knew that even if he fully unsealed himself or broke the supernatural locks, he still might not withstand Li Hao. The young man was an Arcanus of four elements!

Yao Si laughed ruefully. When Li Hao asked who could rival him in this world, he’d said that many people could. That even he could when he unsealed himself. Li Hao had hit him upside the head and shown that martial strength wasn’t the one and only. What stunned Yao Si even more so was that Li Hao had set foot on another path. He’d inducted mysterious power into his body!

He might be the only person to do so in this world who could do so. Yao Si couldn’t believe it and didn’t believe it.

“Did... your teacher guide you to this?”

“No, teacher doesn’t know about it. Of course, teacher provided a lot of principles for me to consider, as did Battle Heaven, and a lot of other people. I just followed my thoughts in experimenting and the results prove that my tries were very successful!” Li Hao looked at the old man. “Director Yao, have I been crippled? It’s only been three years since I started training in martial dao. If I’m strictly counting the time that I’ve been a martial master, it’s only been four months! Do I, Li Hao, have the right to stand with the likes of Ying Hongyue?”

Yao Si remained silent. Did he? Of course he did! Being able to bring mysterious power into his body and retract his elements without giving off a single ripple made Li Hao an incredible figure, to say nothing of anything else. What a terrifying fellow, an invincible genius!

None of the old antiques were willing to venture into the world, so who in the lands these days commanded four elements? The one of the Ministry of Administration? Or of Armed Forces? Or the Skystar King? How about Ying Hongyue?

No matter who, while Li Hao could not be definitively hailed as invincible beneath the heavens, there weren't many modern superhumans who could rival him. He had the right to be this arrogant! Someone with strength and potential was called confident, not arrogant.

Yao Si took a deep breath and said slowly after a long moment, "You're the only one who can do so. Or rather, I should ask, is this a viable path?"

"It looks to be, but I've only just seen the signs and don't recommend that you immediately imitate me. Even I don't know what the future looks like, but at the very least, I've taken a step!"

Indeed, you've taken a step. Yao Si smiled wryly. As a premier martial master, he could see too many things and suffered quite a few mental blows as a result. Pure martial strength alone wouldn't have convinced him, but a Li Hao who'd created a new path? Was this a new path?

He didn't know—only a path accessible to all was a new dao. Otherwise, it was just an exception. His heart was in disarray from what he'd just seen.

"Director Yao, it will come true so long as you have the courage to!" Li Hao repeated. "I wish to lead the Night Watchers and ask for Director Yao's support!"

"Promise me..." Yao Si sighed after a long moment. "That you will not lead them to their deaths if you do not possess full confidence."

“I cannot! Full confidence is the stuff of legends. It all comes down to the fight and struggle to increase the odds of success. They do not exist at the moment of planning. Wanting to ensure a one hundred percent chance of success... is just to be an armchair theorist!”

Yao Si blinked.

“Director Yao should not speak of such unrealistic ideas,” Li Hao continued. “Not to mention, everyone knows that it’ll be a dangerous affair with me. I’m not forcing anyone to join me, they can do as they wish! They will be fighting for themselves, for their descendants, for their family, for their friends... is it just for me? If that is the case, then there’s nothing noteworthy about the Night Watchers!

“Or does Director Yao think that the title of Skystar King is worth something? It’s nothing in my eyes! It’s just that if no one wants to or can be it, then I am willing to put myself forward! Who else should do it, if not me?”

Who else should do it, if not me?

Yao Si shook, just listen to him! But his thoughts were vastly different now from what they were before. After some silence, he said slowly, “What... would you have me do?”

“The Night Watchers will join the Skystar Commander Office!” Li Hao intoned. “I’m going to establish another ministry, one known simply as the Skystar Commander Office. It’s going to be the tenth ministry! Director Yao will still be the director of the Night Watchers, it’s just that the Night Watchers will be a subordinate agency under the Skystar Commander Office!”

Yao Si looked wryly at the young man. “Are you not... afraid that I’ll leak your plans to others?”

Chapter 753: Disturbance (I)

“No!” Li Hao said proudly. “Is the Li Hao you see today going to be the Li Hao you see tomorrow? Is the Li Hao of a few days ago the Li Hao of today? How about the Li Hao of four months ago and

the Li Hao now? People like to view me through an old lens. They're already dead when they take a clear look at me!

"Is my goal these people? No! I'm going to clear out everything that doesn't listen to me! Whether it's ancient plant spirits, monster spirits, or powerhouses, it's all the same! Someone once told me that the ancient powerhouses still left in this world are either deserters or those with important missions at hand.

"They should not oppose me, if they still remember their original intentions. If they do, then I'll sweep them all into the trash!" He raised his head to the sky. "We modern people are not necessarily lesser compared to the ancients. If they can do it, so can we! What do we stand to gain in placing our hopes in the revitalization of the ancient civilization?

"Why don't we think of surpassing them, even though it will be hard? Do we shy away just because it is hard? If everything is a brand new start, why do the nine ministries and royal family only wish to walk the path of the ancients and become the Human King in name only?"

Yao Si remained silent, giving a long exhale after a while. "You have a great heart and ambition, but..."

"There is no but!" Li Hao shook his head. "When you say 'but, if only, maybe...' that represents hesitation and apprehension! Martial masters should not be thus! Martial masters train the heart! Where our heart lies is where our dao lies!"

Yao Si smiled even more ruefully. This little bastard was teaching him another lesson! I'm the premier martial master here!

"Very well!" He nodded after a long exhale. "I can agree to your proposal then. But the Inspectorate..."

"I'll talk to them. I'll ignore them if we can't reach an agreement. I'll kill their people if they dare make trouble, that will make the nine ministries think twice!"

“.....” Yao Si had truly nothing to say now and laughed ruefully, “Give me some more sword energy. My internal injuries haven’t healed yet, you hit me too hard.”

“If I can’t convince people through reason, then I will convince through the fist! Courtesy first and war later is better than just empty negotiation.” Li Hao directed some more sword energy into the old man and tossed out a few drops of Water of Life. Yao Si took them all.

He didn’t want to contribute to the conversation anymore. Having bided his time for so many years, but letting a youngster slap his face twice in a row... He wasn’t going to say anything next time, lest he get hit again.

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Yao Si had chosen to bow his head. There was no helping it, Li Hao was too strong. Of course, that wasn’t the key. The key was that Li Hao had gravely wounded him with one stroke. The man’s inner tranquility was ruffled.

There were many in the world who were stronger than him. If this was the issue, he would’ve been a hotbed of agitation long ago. He’d never bowed his head to them because it required more than simple might to make him acquiesce. What was also of grave importance was that Li Hao’s goals were his goals.

Yao Si thought quite a great deal in this moment, a great deal. Li Hao had set off on a different path and completed the amalgamation of four elements. The elements of fire and water were particularly different, yet they were fully withdrawn into his body for his own use. It was mind-boggling that the external forces of wind and thunder could coexist peacefully with the internal forces of water and fire.

A completely different situation had developed with Li Hao. He could use the sword intent of a martial master as well. Did this mean that he’d melded a martial master with a supernatural?? That was incredible! Was it that simple?? A problem that’d plagued the world for twenty years had been solved by a young man with a few months exposure to marital dao?

Yao Si was still at a loss.

Of course, it was due to Li Hao's large breadth of experience and inspiration from Tranquil Star's ultimate art that he'd succeeded. The man with the greatest potential in the world—Yuan Shuo—was his teacher, and taught the young man everything he knew. Li Hao had come in contact with many things that people would never dream of encountering in their entire lives.

His view of the world was grand! But sometimes, it also depended on boldness and fortune. Not everyone was daring enough to pursue this road or make this kind of try.

Whether it was the martial masters of the modern world or supernaturals, all of them lacked a certain courage. Those who had it were the strict minority.

Yao Si recovered from his wounds with the aid of sword energy, savoring the sensation when he suddenly said, "Your abilities don't seem to just be attacks of mysterious power. They contain some other aspects within them."

Li Hao nodded. Of course! There was the aura, mind intent, and blood qi incorporated into them, not to mention his own life force. That strength could be more accurately described as the combination of all aspects of strength. It definitely wasn't a simplistic mysterious power attack.

"Is it a burden on your body?" asked Yao Si.

Li Hao thought for a moment, then shook his head. "The burden isn't great so long as I don't utilize it. The energy can almost be entirely retracted within. If I want to use it, my limits are similar to that of sealed martial masters. However, I can use it at any time!"

That meant to say that he could endure even seven elements if he wished, but he could only utilize four elements at a time. He could deploy more if he wanted to, so long as he wasn't afraid of death and that his body could endure the explosive power.

“Then... aren’t you the same as a sealed martial master?” Yao Si frowned.

“Not at all!” Li Hao laughed. The difference was enormous! “A sealed martial master’s strength must come from breaking their supernatural locks. Once they do, they experience a brief loss of control over their power and receive a large amount of external power. But my abilities are my abilities. They’re still mine even if I don’t use them!

“Which means to say that one, my strength is completely under my control.

“Two, I can utilize at will at any time, to whatever degree I wish. Once a martial master breaks their supernatural locks, they are in a passive position that they cannot control.

“Three, my eruption is gentle apart from the actual moment of eruption. My abilities even nurture my body as opposed to the spontaneous destruction of a martial master unsealing themselves.

“Four, my ceiling is higher. Martial masters can only unseal themselves to the number of their saturated supernatural locks. My supernatural abilities are limited by the number of supernatural locks that I’ve found.”

Yao Si mused over his words. That truly was quite the feat from what the young man was saying. He didn’t further inquire about details such as why Li Hao’s wind and thunder hadn’t become that kind of strength. Was there some issue, or another reason entirely? What about the supernatural locks of the four limbs that were without attributes?

The supernatural locks of the limbs were an unattributed energy. Thus far, Li Hao’s unattributed energy existed in a scattered state. His water and fire attributes seemed to contain the aura. So was the aura the key?

Yao Si quickly gleaned a few clues from the display and mostly guessed at the truth. He then thought of Li Hao’s five auras and how most martial masters only possessed one. Therefore, it was very hard to say whether Li Hao’s path was suitable for all.

No matter what, he was already quite satisfied.

“You can unseal the premises now,” he took a deep breath. “Your mirror fragment...”

“Is from the Steadfast Duke.”

“I know.” Yao Si nodded. “But this mirror should be a complete whole. I think I’ve seen these fragments before—the palace and nine ministries probably all have them! Not only them, but the three great organizations and seven divine mountains as well, and some other organizations.”

Li Hao blinked. He’d guessed that the palace would have a shard, but everyone had a shard? Was this matter so common?

“This mirror must have been a premier treasure that later broke. Everyone should have a few pieces,” Yao Si pointed out. “Undo the seal. You’ll draw attention as time goes on.”

Li Hao smiled and undid the mirror seal. Yao Si could actually break it himself as the treasure could hold off Novas, but not Arcanus. Being curious, the young man asked, “How many locks have the director saturated?”

“Let’s put it this way,” Yao Si smiled. “You can fight Arcanus when you have nine saturated locks. You’re somewhat stronger than regular two element Arcanus when you have ten saturated locks. it will make you the equivalent of Hu Xiao. At eleven, you’re the equivalent of me.”

Eleven locks? Li Hao raised an eyebrow. “So this means to say that you have the battle strength of a three element Arcanus under normal conditions?”

“Not entirely as Hu Xiao wasn’t a premier two element Arcanus. Under normal conditions, I should be at the peak of two elements...”

Eleven saturated locks! Li Hao was still rather stunned by the number. The locks of the four limbs and five organs were the basic set. So Yao Si had saturated two more elsewhere?

What about Hou Xiaochen? He'd easily defeated Arcanus of two elements last time, which placed him at more than ten locks. The same likely went for Hong Yitang as well. Of course, Hong Yitang might have only had nine or ten at first, but he would've grown stronger after his five organs completed a revolution. In terms of strength, he might not measure up to Yao Si or Hou Xiaochen.

Li Hao made some swift judgments and discovered that there was a great gap between premier martial masters as well. One could be as numerous as Yao Si and be at eleven locks, or one could be as few as He Yong at only five locks. Well, he was probably between seven and eight now.

The young man made some more calculations. Those who started saturating their locks usually possessed the strength of a Nova. The increase from saturating the locks of the limbs wasn't that great. Martial masters could unseal themselves when they saturated their fifth lock. At that point, they could even battle peak metamorphosis. But under normal conditions, they could only fight Novas. Only at nine locks could they pit themselves against an Arcanus.

However, the more locks that one saturated, the more difficult the task became. There was a limit to the number of supernatural locks that could be discovered.

An anxious Little Ye pushed the door as the two conversed. She sighed with relief when she saw that the two were sitting down and said awkwardly, "Um... I couldn't enter earlier. My apologies, director, please continue!"

She'd thought that something had happened inside when there was a sudden complete lack of sound. She wanted to enter for a look, but proved unable to open the door. When she left, however, she saw that the director's table had broken.

So they'd been in a fight? She hadn't heard anything. How strange! Of course, she didn't dare ask questions and swiftly closed the door.

Chapter 754: Disturbance (II)

“Stop assessing her so cautiously.” Yao Si smiled, a grin that widened when he saw that Li Hao was on high alert. “She just simply admires you. You beheading those nobles that day won you the adoration and worship of many.”

Li Hao blinked, worship?

“That’s a nice feeling!” He smiled after a beat. No wonder Little Ye was always so abnormally enthusiastic. He’d even suspected that she might be a spy. Abrupt enlightenment descended with Yao Si’s explanation and he burst out laughing.

Yao Si couldn’t be bothered explaining too much. He glanced at Li Hao. “Are you really going to start a tenth ministry?”

“Does the director think I’m joking?”

“It’s not that... just that I think we should make some more preparations.” He turned to the young man. “Although you have the strength of four elements, establishing another ministry... Even if the royal family does not care, the one in the Ministry of Administration will not sit idly by. He and the one in the Armed Forces are premier heavyweights. They might possess three or even four elements.

“Of the nine ministries, there are three real powerhouses. The Ministry of Administration, Ministry of Armed Forces, and Ministry of the Inspectorate.”

The other six were on a slightly lesser footing, so it was these three that fought for supremacy to begin with.

“The fourth may be the old minister of the Ministry of Finance,” Yao Si continued. “The old guy is very strong, he’s just much more diplomatic and possesses a lot of wealth, so he’s more like a trader.”

Having lived in Skystar City for many years and been familiar with those ministers early on, Yao Si knew them decently well.

“The old minister of Administration is very strong, his son isn’t weak either. A strong father raises strong children!”

Li Hao sank into deep thought. He’d yet to cross paths with the Ministry of Administration. “I don’t care, I’m still going to establish my ministry, even if it takes another fight!”

“Then you need to be careful of them,” Yao Si changed tactics to simply reminding Li Hao upon seeing how resolved the young man was. “As for me, I can at most fight the other ministers even if I unseal myself now.

“You also have to be careful of the three great organizations, as well as the City of Supernaturals. They might seek revenge after that woman died.”

“What’s the deal with the City of Supernaturals?” asked a mystified Li Hao. “Apparently the nine ministries, royal family, seven divine mountains, and three great organizations all have bases there. They’re based in the central region and had more than a million supernaturals at their peak. Are the nine ministries truly letting such a formidable force just develop as it will in the central region?”

He truly was curious about this City of Supernaturals. At first, he thought it was established by the nine ministries. But upon further perusal of information, he didn’t find that to be the case. That the city could even name the Arcanus realm meant that they were a faction to be reckoned with. It represented that they weren’t afraid of drawing ire from the nine ministries.

“The City of Supernaturals...” Yao Si took a moment to marshal his thoughts. “It’s a bit complicated. It was all fun and games first, but they gradually developed as powerhouses moved in. The people who founded the city didn’t matter, the key was those who later took up residence. They’re the one who altered its layout and elevated its status.

“Do you know the ancient aristocracies?”

Li Hao blinked, thinking of something. The big snake had said that he possessed the heritage of an ancient aristocracy. It was more likely than not that the Lis were an ancient aristocracy. But with Yao Si's question, he seemed to understand something. "Do you mean..."

"Yes!" Yao Si nodded. "It's just like the eight families of Silver City, but the ones of Silver City weren't well known at first. It was only after certain things were uncovered in the ancient ruins that people knew of the eight families' existences.

"These ancient aristocracies might have inheritances from the ancient civilization, or their forebears might have cultivated ancient secret arts when they excavated ruins several hundred or thousands of years ago. Their knowledge has been passed on since, generation through generation until some families of illustrious history were formed.

"They were the ones who built the City of Supernaturals. The nine ministries and royal family later sent their representatives to the city, as did the three great organizations and seven divine mountains. That was how the city gradually grew stronger!

"Strictly speaking, this is the situation of Silver Moon as well." He looked at Li Hao. "The martial masters of Silver Moon are also the kind with generational legacy. It's just Silver Moon martial masters love to fight, so any families with this kind of inheritance were fought out of existence before long.

"Silver Moon actually has quite a few ancient aristocracies." Here, Yao Si didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "But Silver Moon martial masters are too foolhardy and each new generation rises on the corpses of the older generation. Tell me, what kind of family can endure such conflict?"

Silver Moon was the location equipped with the foundation for ancient family development, but the province had no such aristocratic level! Was that not strange? But for someone who knew Silver Moon, it was a very natural outcome.

Those of Silver Moon love to fight too much! Yuan Shuo was just one such representative, and all Silver Moon inhabitants were thus. From weak to strong, from ancient to modern times, they fought nonstop!

After sweeping through the world, they returned home to continue fighting. They did not stop until they were crowned first throughout the lands.

Under such circumstances, how could the province produce a strong family through the ages? It wasn't possible for every generation to be strong, but as soon as one generation weakened, challengers would be at the door. There was no way for people to deny such challengers unless they moved.

Liu Long's family once was a renowned martial family, but his father accumulated too many injuries from too many challenges and eventually succumbed to them. The Nine Forged Force had many heirs, but at Liu Long's generation, he could do nothing other than cower in Silver City.

Li Hao blinked at the explanation, then couldn't help but laugh.

"Don't laugh!" Yao Si protested wordlessly. "There's a reason why your eight families declined. From the information that we uncovered, your families had martial masters among them five generations ago. It was more than likely that someone later beat them to death, which caused the decline of your families."

Li Hao blinked.

"Don't doubt me, it's the truth!" Yao Si laughed ruefully. "The weakening of the eight families had much to do with the culture of Silver Moon's martial world! Or do you think the eight families really were so down on their luck? But there was one good aspect about the martial world in that they did not fully eradicate families. Whether it was out of womanly mercy or the rules, once a family's martial masters died in battle, people normally did not take the matter further. Otherwise, it would be an enormous question of whether or not the eight families would exist at all a few generations ago!"

Li Hao understood! So this was the case! There had been powerhouses among the eight families before, but they were unable to persevere after years of challenge. Hence, they faded into obscurity in the end.

By now, Li Hao didn't know what to say about Silver Moon's martial world. Perhaps... this was what a true martial world was like!

"Therefore, the ancient aristocracies of the City of Supernaturals are just some martial master families with ancient heritages?"

"Mostly!" Yao Si nodded. "With the rise of the supernatural, these families had more people and therefore, martial masters to ascend as supernaturals at first light. They quickly won a place for themselves, but they aren't without their drawbacks. They focus on their own family members, so there are very few of them, but many powerhouses.

"After the supernaturals grew stronger, their heavyweights decided to form a city of their own. They gathered many members of the ancient aristocracies to build the City of Supernaturals together, wanting to carve out a place of their own in the Skystar Dynasty."

"I see!" Li Hao fully understood now. "Then... which family did the Heaven's Eye we killed belong to?"

"I'm not sure," Yao Si smiled. "I stopped paying attention to things five years ago, so I don't really know much about the City of Supernaturals now. Their powerhouses don't come out often, so I'm not sure if it's a heavyweight of their families. Perhaps they're a younger addition... but it doesn't matter."

Li Hao nodded. Yao Si was quite willing to talk to him today. If this was in times before, he probably couldn't be bothered with the young man.

"I see!" Li Hao didn't press for more.

"When are you going to commence your plans?" Yao Si further asked.

“In the near future...” Li Hao thought it over. “But I’d like to do certain things before that. There might be troublemakers in attendance at our opening ceremony, so I’d like to poke around first.”

“What do you intend to do?”

“I’m going to release word that I’m going to officially establish my office, whereas Director Yao can also release word that the Night Watchers will be joining me. The exact date... is to be determined!” Li Hao grinned. “Whether it is the nine ministries or three great organizations, all of them want to kill me! Right, didn’t the Ministry of Finance relinquish a grade two ruin? These guys probably think that killing me outside allows for too many unknown variables. Perhaps they want to lure me inside and kill me there.”

That was very possible.

“I’d rather like to make use of the opportunity to eliminate some of them!” Li Hao stroked his chin. “I can get rid of some before my full strength is exposed...”

Here he was, waiting to lure the nine ministries into the ruins to kill them before they had a chance to do the same to them!

“The ruins aren’t an appropriate place,” Yao Si cautioned with alarm. “You’ll easily give rise to grave trouble as the nine ministries have partnerships with some ancient monster spirits...”

“I know!” Li Hao laughed. “But it’s not yet time for the awakening, so at most they’re using some core origin strength in the event of a partnership. They might form a replica and possibly reach the strength of a three, four, or even five element Arcanus, right?”

“It’s possible!”

Li Hao smiled and sent his mind into the storage ring. “Senior Tree, is your replica able to fight against the replicas of some other plant spirits in the ruins? They might be the equivalent of four or five element Arcanus...”

The little tree was surprised by the question, but responded, “Whether it is four or five elements, it’s all part of your Arcanus realm. In the ancient civilization, that was weaker than Apex. I may have severed half of my core origin and thus made myself weaker than a regular Apex, but I’m definitely stronger than anything below Apex.”

Li Hao understood. In that case, what was he afraid of?

Chapter 755: Disturbance (III)

As for whether or not the ancient plant spirits were willing to separate a large portion of their core origin, Li Hao didn’t find it likely.

In fact, it was highly unlikely!

The plant spirits were all in a recovery stage and weren’t putting all of their eggs in one basket like the naive little tree was. Perhaps... Li Hao might really get lucky and eliminate some enemies at the same time!

Of course, he had some ideas in mind as well. Any disturbance created in the outside world was too great when he drew his characters. Perhaps he could form his third and fourth characters inside the ruins. It was also inside the ruins that the little tree could deploy its strength without concern. There was great danger to it in the outside world.

After a while of deliberation, Li Hao proposed, “Let’s do this. We should spread word that we’re partnering and that the Night Watchers will join the Skystar Commander Office in ten days. The Skystar Martial Academy will also begin operations on that day. They will be joining the Skystar Commander Office as well. That gives the nine ministries more time to kill me!”

Yao Si's head ached. This guy... was fearless! He actually felt it better to keep a low profile during all of these changes. There was no need for official action, wasn't it good to keep everything under the radar?

However, Li Hao felt that that would impart a veneer of illegitimacy to everything! He wasn't fighting for the sake of conquest. He wanted more people to know that he was resisting the unjust actions of the nine ministries and royal family, the chaotic times that they were in.

His thoughts were different from Yao Si and the rest. They felt that the proper course of action was to keep a low profile, to slowly proclaim himself king and gradually accumulate resources. That did not fit Li Hao's preference.

"...whatever you wish..." Yao Si took a deep breath. "But I must reiterate, you must let people go if they do not wish to join the Skystar Commander Office."

"Of course!" Li Hao smiled. "I also must emphasize that they can leave, but once they cause trouble, there is no other fate for them than death! Also, I will investigate those who have crimes on their record. I will not look the other way or let bygones be bygones!"

You're seriously ruthless!

Yao Si still nodded, however, ensuring that the two reached an accord. "Then... what if the nine ministries really do want to lure you to the ruins to kill you? Do you want me to go in with you?"

"That's fine!" Li Hao shook his head. "Director Yao can just hold down the fort on the outside! Not to mention, the nine ministries may not do so. It's just my speculation."

On the other hand, he himself was ready to do so.

Li Hao didn't know that such were the plans of the nine ministries as well. They were currently fretting over how to lure Li Hao into the ruins and with what method they should use to kill him. What kind of treasure could they use to draw the young man's attention?

If Li Hao knew, he would happily tell them what was the best bait for him. Let's forget all the scheming and just start hitting each other!

But he didn't know, and neither did they.

"Then... when do we announce this?"

"In a moment!" Li Hao said calmly. "Let's consolidate what is already set in stone and advertise that the Skystar Commander Office has only one duty—to eliminate all superhuman troublemakers and lawbreakers! Every superhuman falls within the Skystar Commander Office purview, even the nine ministries and royal family!"

"We'll show them if I, Li Hao, dare take these people on!" He laughed and looked at Yao Si. "A lot of people will probably curse at you for losing your mind once this is publicized!"

Run mad with me!

Yao Si was quite speechless. Indeed, most normal people would think that he'd gone crazy. But... I can't help it after the little bastard beat me up.

He didn't say anything and simply nodded after a while.

.....

As all sides cursed at Li Hao for lying and fooling them, as the residents of Skystar City learned that Li Hao had gone to the Avenue of the Nine Ministries, as Hou Xiaochen pondered when Yao Si would send Li Hao flying...

A sonorous voice rang magnificently through the city. It belonged to Yao Si and reverberated augustly in the ear.

“I am Yao Si, director of the Night Watchers! The Night Watchers were formed to cleanse the world of superhuman unrest. I find that my strength falters in my advancing age and I have suffered from the power struggle conducted by Yellow Dragon. We are beset by chaos and the Night Watchers no longer have the ability to return peace to the land!

“I am deeply unsettled by this and am grateful that today, Commander Li Hao of the Skystar Commander Office is willing to accept the heavy mantle of cleansing our world of superhuman unrest...

“In light of this, when the Skystar Commander Office officially opens in ten days time, I will lead the Night Watcher to join the new institution! We are willing to answer to Commander Li’s command and aid the Skystar Commander Office in completing the Night Watchers’ cherished goals!

“In ten days time, I will accept the position of vice commander in the Skystar Commander Office and continue to lead the Night Watchers. I hope to offer the last vestiges of strength I can to secure peace throughout the lands!”

.....

The announcement shook Skystar City.

Hou Xiaochen’s office.

Hou Xiaochen crushed his cup with shock and astonishment. How was this possible?! Yao Si was a very difficult person to reason with. He was a premier martial master and had his own thoughts and determination, as well as his own plans.

Hou Xiaochen had thought that even if the two didn't come to blows, Li Hao wouldn't be able to easily persuade the other. And yet...

"Has Yao Si drank too much?" Hou Xiaochen rose to his feet, his eyes wide with surprise.

"Maybe he's been convinced by Li Hao..." An astonished Manager Yu quickly replied. "Li Hao's doing this for the public good, after all..."

The situation could not be that simple! How could a powerhouse like Yao Si bend the knee so easily for the public good and even bow his head to Li Hao!

Hou Xiaochen was too incredulous for words. Just what had happened?

.....

The Inspectorate.

The inspector general appeared in the building's lobby as soon as Yao Si started speaking. He slammed his palm down at the last word and shattered the table. A baleful look appeared on his face.

He'd supported Li Hao once before, but the Night Watchers were a subordinate agency to the Inspectorate and one of their prized jewels at the moment. And yet, neither Yao Si nor Li Hao asked for their approval before making this decision!

Li Hao was establishing the Skystar Commander Office and Yao Si was leading the Night Watchers straight to his banner. Yao Si would be a vice commander, which meant that the Skystar Commander Office was putting itself on the same footing as the Inspectorate! There'd been no forewarning or advance notice. They hadn't even sent a messenger to the Inspectorate!

“Bastards!” The inspector general grit his teeth with a snarl. This went beyond the pale! This was over the line!

You should’ve told me beforehand if you were going to do this, and not just outright announce it like this! What, are you going to force something into reality?

The Inspectorate headquarters briefly stilled before heavyweights ran out of the lobby. Something big had developed, and this was much more severe than when Li Hao killed all those Arcanus! The dynasty’s only official supernatural agency had seceded from the Inspectorate and nine ministries, joining the institution that blatantly set itself against the nine ministries!

.....

The royal palace.

General shock also reigned, along with disbelief. Yao Si had... bent the knee? How was that possible?!

“Go investigate why Yao Si has suddenly made this decision! Li Hao has just gone to talk to him, so why has this happened?”

“Understood!” Someone swiftly ran out. It wasn’t just the palace, but nobles and civilians on all sides that were agog with shock. Li Hao’s voice rang through the city at this time.

“The Skystar Commander Office will be officially established in ten days’ time. I am honored by the addition of the Night Watchers! It is my delight to partner with Director Yao for this grand undertaking of safeguarding the dynasty, protecting the nation, and defending our lands!

“In addition, the Skystar Commander Office will be establishing the Skystar Martial Academy. It is open only to ordinary people and will enroll a temporary cap of three thousand students. Earthturner Sword Hong Yitang will be the headmaster!

“I welcome all powerhouses and Silver Moon martial masters to join the Skystar Martial Academy as teachers. We will assemble an army of martial dao to pacify the unrest throughout the lands.

“From this day forth, all superhumans in the twenty-two central region provinces and Skystar City come under the jurisdiction of the Skystar Commander Office! Anyone who creates a disturbance or breaks the law will be executed without mercy!

“I thank the esteemed peerage in advance for their joint efforts!” The young voice rolling through the lands caused jaws to drop. Was this... an official declaration of war? Or was this only to seize power?

They didn’t know what the truth was, but they could sense the sudden eruption of mysterious power. Was the Skystar Commander Office... really going to wage war against the nine ministries, royal family, and even three great organizations?

.....

Innumerable transmission pendants in Skystar lit up with activity. Various families of great factions shifted to action.

In a magnificent city of the central region, where countless supernaturals were gathered.

The shocking bolt of news out of the blue made some squeak with incomprehension. “Demon Sword is going to establish the Skystar Commander Office in Skystar City!”

No one paid attention to him. That was old news. But everyone reacted in the next second as well.

“The Night Watchers... Director Yao Si will be leading the Night Watchers to join the Skystar Commander Office. Li Hao says that all superhumans in the central region come under his command from today forth. Any who break the law will be... be... executed!”

Boom!

The city boiled over with activity.

“Who’s he trying to scare?” someone snorted.

“His hand won’t stretch here, will it?” another person fretted. “This is the City of Supernaturals with countless supernaturals here. It’s not under his rule!”

“He should figure out the three great organizations first!”

“We should keep a lower profile... That Li Hao killed so many Arcanus before that even the old minister Hu Xiao died in his hands...”

Chapter 756: Disturbance (IV)

The entire City of Supernaturals was a hubbub of reaction. This was the supernatural main camp and they were here from all parts of the world. But now, Li Hao, a powerhouse who’d never visited before, was the center of attention. Everyone was discussing him. No matter what happened next, no matter if he did anything or not, his words would cause a certain commotion.

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The news fully spread on this day.

Silver Moon, White Moon City.

Director General Zhao had been aware of Li Hao's plans, but he was still surprised in this moment. This fast? He... knew Yao Si... That the old man had so quickly decided to join was so unexpected!

Was this to Ole Zhou's credit?

But... Ole Zhou hadn't said anything or sent anything back. It shouldn't be.

.....

Red Moon headquarters.

Ying Hongyue furrowed his brows and muttered after a long moment, "How is this possible??"

Yao Si wasn't the type to easily give up power, how had this occurred?!

Ying Hongyue knew what kind of person Li Hao was. The young man wasn't doing this on a lark or just mouthing some slogans. He might really cleanse the land of supernatural unrest in the days to come and whip the central region superhumans into shape!

Did Li Hao not know of the difficulties within? Or the dangers?

He did! And yet he insisted on this course of action!

Ying Hongyue frowned ferociously, truly unable to understand the development. Was Li Hao letting everything go to his head, or was he actually confident in himself? Where did that confidence come from?

“Withdraw all of our superhuman strength and adopt a defensive position for now. Don’t take any brash action!” Ying Hongyue commanded with some confusion and solemnity. Everything had gone completely out of control ever since Li Hao left Silver Moon. The changes were happening too quickly.

.....

The four corners of the land shook with the news. Some regarded it contemptuously, finding Li Hao to just be a daydreamer. He wanted to put the superhuman house in order? What a joke! He wanted to clean house? Did he have the strength to? Which of the three great organizations, seven divine mountains, City of Supernaturals, and nine ministries was an easy target?

Maybe he thought himself invincible after killing some Arcanus last time. Maybe he really wasn’t afraid of death.

Can you actually successfully establish your office in ten days?

Meanwhile, the wandering Silver Moon martial masters were also troubled by the news. Did... they go to Skystar City again? It felt like another battle brewed on the horizon!

.....

Near River.

Deficient Leg nearly choked on his own spit as he played with one of his children.

“The hell... Is this how arrogant this generation’s martial world leader is? He’s crazy!”

The last time Deficient Leg joined a fight, he'd gone to be a punching bag. Here another one came a few days later? I can't do it, not this time!

Yuan Shuo was practically a benevolent old man compared to the kid! The most he'd done was spar with martial masters. He wasn't like Li Hao, wanting to wage all-out war at the drop of a hat!

"Daddy... are you going to fight again?" an adorable little girl asked curiously.

Deficient Leg was caught in an awkward situation. Fight my ass! Your daddy's not going this time. If I go, you might turn into an orphan that no one wants. It's too dangerous! Are we supposed to lose our minds along with Li Hao now that he's gone completely crazy?

They'd all seen the disparity in strength in the last battle. Silver Moon martial masters might be strong and could stand against metamorphosis, but they could not against Arcanus!

Deficient Leg hesitated; he didn't respond.

.....

He wasn't the only one. Whether it was Tyrant Blade, Northern Fist, or even Sky Sword... all of them hesitated. What are you trying to do, Li Hao? You'll be the death of us all if this continues!

.....

The Sky Sword Mountain Manor.

A dozen martial masters were gathered together and someone protested loudly, "Mountain lord, you really can't go to Skystar City again. The various factions will certainly be ready to take down Demon Sword. You might not return if you go this time!"

“Demon Sword is crazy! He always thinks too much of himself!”

“.....” The crowd grumbled angrily. This was making Silver Moon martial masters court death!

One after another, battle to battle, from the east to the central region. Sky Sword had gone to Li Hao’s aid multiple times and had felt his ability falling short of his wishes on the last occasion. Was he to continue to foot the bill for Li Hao’s insanity?

Sky Sword remained quiet. No one knew what he was thinking, only that Sky Sword seemed to be hesitating on this day as well.

.....

In the palace.

He Yong shuddered with goosebumps as he sat in a daze. Li Hao... you’re nuts! Can’t you give us some time to rest? Can we swap places for a bit?

He could sense killing intent all throughout Skystar City. Li Hao had gone utterly insane. Hong Yitang, can’t you guys keep him in check?

.....

“How interesting!” Hong Yitang laughed and looked at Deputy Zhou not too far away. “Isn’t this exciting?”

“.....” The deputy didn’t say a word. It was a good development, he just hadn’t thought that it would come so quickly. What’d happened to Li Hao yesterday? Yao Si shouldn’t have been recruited so easily, not unless some incredible changes had occurred in Li Hao.

It was indeed exciting, but ten days was a very long time. Wasn’t the lad concerned about too many dreams occurring in a long night?

Or had he done this on purpose?

Many thoughts flooded Deputy Zhou’s mind as he breathed out. Perhaps... this was why he’d left Silver Moon.

.....

If the heavens are to end someone, that person will grow too big for their boots first!

Perhaps this saying was perfectly applicable to Li Hao at the moment. With Yao Si adding fuel to the flames and leading the Night Watchers to join him, everyone knew that the young man had completely lost his mind. This wasn’t appropriate even if he was an Arcanus of three or four elements!

This would cause the Inspectorate to turn on him. The best case scenario for this fairweather ally was neutrality, the worst case would be the Inspectorate’s first instance of outright hostility.

.....

The Silver Moon Guards took action on this day, commencing a series of searches and arrests throughout Skystar City.

The front doors of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Liu Long led the team and announced, “The Skystar Commander Office is about to be formally established! On orders of the commander, we are here to arrest the fugitive Mu Xiaorong! Her crimes are not severe, but she fled from custody. If you hand over Mu Xiaorong today, we will take circumstances into consideration when passing judgment. After the Skystar Commander Office formally opens, all fugitives will be treated as traitorous supernaturals and shown no quarter!”

A group of Internal Affairs powerhouses walked out, some with aloof looks on their faces, others with livid expressions. “Do you have a death wish?!”

“You are the ones who court death!” Liu Long was completely unperturbed. “How dare the Ministry of Internal Affairs obstruct the investigation of a case! We will sentence you according to the crime of sheltering criminals! The commander has given orders that if we cannot arrest Mu Xiaorong today, we will trample your ministry to the ground!”

“You bastard!” someone raged. They were crazy, weren’t they?! The nine ministries were yet to go for Li Hao’s head, but his people came knocking on their door first instead!

Hundreds of Silver Moon Guards stood outside the door, erupting with blood qi and blazing with killing intent in their black armor.

“Can you represent the minister?” Liu Long looked calmly at the speaker. “Or the royal family? Mu Xiaorong’s crimes do not deserve death. She stands a chance of getting off easy if you have her turn herself in. The headmaster of the Skystar Martial Academy is here. Does the Ministry of Internal Affairs think that the Skystar Commander Office is unable to take you on?”

Someone walked out of the Ministry of Internal Affairs as the two sides faced each other in a stand-off. It was Mu Xiaorong. She appeared slightly run-down and sighed. “I’ll go with you. It’s just... Commander Li’s actions...”

Ai!

She sighed. He'd gone completely crazy. If she didn't leave today, the ministry might immediately clash with Li Hao for her sake. Yao Si, Li Hao, Hong Yitang, Hou Xiaochen, and Light Sword were certainly nearby. Countless people were observing from the shadows.

The Skystar Commander Office was yet to fully open for business, taking her in was plainly in preparation for the opening ceremony.

The nine ministries also hadn't fully decided on their course of action. The Ministry of Internal Affairs actually represented the royal family, but also possessed their independence. That the royal family didn't send word might be because they wanted to use the Internal Affairs's hand to incite the war between Li Hao and the nine ministries.

However, Mu Xiaorong knew that Internal Affairs might not be able to withstand the Skystar Commander Office. Therefore, she stepped forward.

A fatty stood behind her, silent without a word. He didn't step up and simply watched from afar. His daughter was being arrested again. Li Hao was going to make an example out of her!

The royal family was not stepping forward and neither were the nine ministries because the Ministry of Internal Affairs was the royal representative among them. And yet, Internal Affairs also was part of the nine ministries. It was a complicated web of relationships.

"Take her!" Liu Long barked. Silver Moon Guards darted out to clap Mu Xiaorong in chains. The action elicited a shuffle in presences among the crowd. The fat minister clenched his fist without a word!

His daughter was being arrested right in front of him and clapped in chains. Her departure during the ruckus last time had also been an Internal Affairs decision. There was open hostility between the two sides, after all, but who would've thought that Li Hao would be permitted to find his footing in Skystar City in the end?

Those who hadn't run off were fine, but those who did were prosecuted. He'd thought that the matter had been swept under the rug and Li Hao would no longer pursue it, that the young man wouldn't possibly raise a fuss over it. Reality proved him wrong!

Chapter 757: Knowing Full Well (I)

"Father!" A young man clenched his teeth next to the fatty—it was one of Mu Xiaorong's brothers. She was the youngest daughter of the minister of Internal Affairs and much beloved. However, she was being arrested in front of everyone, in front of the ministry, in broad daylight!

"Let's just go at them!" Someone spat out.

The minister didn't say anything, he didn't make a single sound. Perhaps that outcome was what some wanted to see. Or even what Li Hao wished to see. The minister could vaguely sense strong presences sweeping through the area. What did Li Hao want to do?

Are you trying to force us into a duel to the death with you?

The minister continued to be silent. Perhaps the royal family was waiting for his resistance. It would be the perfect pretext for war between the nine ministries and Li Hao. But... he'd worked for the royal family for so many years and the Ministry of Internal Affairs was the royal representative among the nine... The royal family was growing ever more mysterious in their actions.

That was not a good sign!

Skystar royalty should be taking a stand now, whether in support of Li Hao or the nine ministries. Whatever it was, this should not be their reaction. It was good to watch a fight from the sidelines, but they should not be forgetting that Internal Affairs was their external representative and the only one among the nine who supported them!

Are you not going to say a word even when my daughter is being taken?

The chubby minister watched silently. Then take her! His daughter hadn't committed any serious crimes, she'd simply fled from earlier custody. Could Li Hao sentence her to death for that? Didn't he present himself as a champion of justice, that he strictly administered the law?

Then his daughter would be held in custody at most. Those who wanted to watch a show or see him stick his neck out... could keep waiting!

You guys are cherishing a snake in your embrace, just you wait!

"Take her!" Liu Long waited a while outside the front doors and didn't see anything else developing. He swiftly gave the order for the group to retreat and vanished with Mu Xiaorong, leaving astonished onlookers in his wake. The Ministry of Internal Affairs had stayed out of this business!

.....

People on all sides were mobilizing, whether Night Watchers, Silver Moon Guards, or others. Various nobles were being arrested again!

In front of a prince's manor.

The Stable Mountain Prince was dressed in royal robes and wearing a cold expression on his face. There was a large crowd gathered in front of his manor.

Although Hu Qingfeng looked visibly timid, he set his jaw and roared, "Stable Mountain Prince, are you going to shelter criminals in your manor? That one is just the son of a steward, are you going to defy the law?!"

The prince remained silent. He didn't want to submit to this course of action as it came down to a matter of dignity, but the royal family had sent word for him to cooperate. He wanted to snarl back at them, that this was a royal humiliation!

However, the one in the palace seemed to wish to see this kind of scene develop. The minister looked in the direction of the palace and sighed. What do you have in mind, royal brother? The Steppe Prince is dead and you don't make a move to shelter Internal Affairs. There's even people kicking in the doors of your brother's manor now.

Li Hao is slapping the faces of the nine ministries and the royal family. Must it come to absolute chaos beneath the heavens?

He didn't wish for this to happen as the dynasty was the result of their family's efforts. It was their nation, but his royal brother seemed to seek to overthrow it all and break fresh ground again. It is not enough to be the liege of a prosperous dynasty, he wanted to be the founding sovereign of a new nation!

All of this could not be explained otherwise. This royal brother of his was not only weakening the nine ministries, he was also whittling away at royal forces. Those who wished to strengthen the royal family were being diminished because his royal brother appeared to want to start all over again!

What... grandiose ambitions!

The Stable Mountain Prince himself didn't know if he was jeering at or disappointed in his brother. He looked at his incredibly nervous steward and slowly said, "Bring him out!"

"Your Highness!" The loyal, elderly steward was aghast and began to despair.

The prince looked at him and transmitted after a long moment, "This is an order from the royal family!"

Color drained from the steward's face. Had they been abandoned?

It made sense! The Steppe Prince had died on a whim! Not to mention, the one being given up was just his son, the son of a servant.

A young man was hauled out of the manor moments later. He looked at his father, but the steward lowered his head and grit his teeth, not saying anything. Such was their fault when they depended on another. When he ran, it was the prince's orders who told him to run. He hadn't wanted to and didn't have the courage to.

However, the prince's men had said it was fine! That Li Hao wouldn't dare offend the royal family! Who was speaking now that he was being taken right in front of the prince?

The young man quietly walked with the Night Watchers and was clapped in irons. He looked back at his elderly father and smiled ghastly. He... probably wasn't coming back after this. He was different from others—he had indeed committed crimes. Li Hao wouldn't necessarily let him off the hook.

Could they take care of Li Hao in ten days? Was he to wait again? He'd waited again and again in these matters. They'd said that everything would be fine last time, but three hundred heads were still hanging from the northern city gates!

The young man smiled with despair, but didn't say anything. He actually wanted to yell at Li Hao that there were barely any innocent nobles in the royal city, but... he didn't dare do so. Even though knowing that he was going to die, he still didn't dare give voice to his feelings.

Li Hao... He murmured to himself. You're a vicious one, Li Hao! No one will be forgetting you even if you die in ten days. It looked like he was the only interesting person in the Skystar City these days.

.....

Large numbers of Silver Moon Guards and Night Watchers mobilized in all directions. Noble after noble was arrested! The operation extended through all streets and alleys, startling all of Skystar

City. The Skystar Commander Office hadn't even officially opened for operations yet! Everyone had thought that last time's uproar had concluded, but... it looked like that wasn't the case.

"They've hit up the Ministry of Internal Affairs, a prince's manor, duke manors, and marquis manors... The people who ran off last time have been arrested again. Are they going to be executed this time?"

"I don't know."

"This guy's really something though. It's only been a few days since he killed so many people. I thought it was all over, but... he's really going for it. He's going hard to the very end!"

"Will there... will there be another big battle this time?"

"I don't know."

"....." The crowd conversed in low voices, a few hints more expectant than last time, but even more apprehensive. Was this really a good course of action?

They actually wanted Li Hao to proceed slowly, even if it did lead to some disappointment. Some had escaped last time, but quite a few nobles had died as well. In fact, the nobles on a whole were a lot more subdued lately. The people had seen some changes and felt that... it was good enough.

Indeed, that was how easily satisfied people were. They felt that it was good enough that Li Hao was present as a deterrent. But now, the young man was starting anew. He felt that he hadn't succeeded last time, so he wanted to fully find his footing and finish what he hadn't been able to last time.

"The Skystar Martial Academy... Did you guys hear about that?"

“Yes.”

“Are you going to let your kids attend?”

“That’s... that’s too dangerous, isn’t it?”

“.....” The crowd also quietly conversed if they wanted to attend the Skystar Martial Academy. The possibility was too frightening! A reckoning would be swiftly forthcoming once Li Hao died, so they didn’t dare.

Indeed, the people didn’t dare. As excited as they might be, they didn’t dare take the risk.

.....

But at this moment, someone did dare.

“I want to sign up for the Skystar Martial Academy!” someone shouted in a large yard.

“Sign your ass! Sign up for death? The Skystar Commander Office may be in the spotlight now, but do you think it’ll be able to suppress the nobles that have stood for two hundred years? I’ll break your legs if you dare go!”

“Dad, am I supposed to not take risks and be like you for the rest of my life? I’ll just be a minor merchant and give offerings to powerful personages here and there. I kneel when I see nobles and bow when I see the powerful...”

“You bastard, I do it all for you! At least we have food to eat and clothes to wear, you...”

“This isn’t what I want! I just want to be able to lift my head. Even if I die, I want to die with dignity!”

“Can you eat dignity? It’s fine if you go, but once the Skystar Martial Academy is no more... our home may be no more as well!”

The young man fell silent. He would insist on his course of action if he had only himself to worry about, but his father was right. Once Li Hao was cut down, then his family might be soon to follow.

Hesitation like this was occurring in all parts of the city.

.....

Li Hao didn’t care about any of this. He waited in the large courtyard of the northern city manor. Deputy Zhou looked at him.

“What kind of outcome do you want to see?” the deputy asked after a long moment.

“I want them to come kill me!” Li Hao smiled.

Deputy Zhou nodded. He could see that. The young man wanted nothing more than for everyone to kill him, to force everyone to kill him. Why else would he undertake all of these actions otherwise?

“They waited until the last day last time,” Li Hao laughed. “They might do that again if I didn’t do anything. There’s no need for that! Passively waiting is not my style.”

There was no fear of the nine ministries actually killing him. He had the Windchaser Boots at the ready. The existences in the ruins couldn’t emerge in the world, so what could people do if they wanted to kill him?

The ruins!

They had to lure Li Hao into the ruins if they wanted to kill him through paying the smallest price possible. Utilizing a set of ancient ruins was the only possibility that seemed feasible to the young man, and there happened to be a set that was about to be available!

He was almost worried for the nine ministries, how could they lure him in? How were they to make him lower his guard? He'd thought of everything for them. The only question remaining stymied him as well—how were they to naturally lure him inside?

Chapter 758: Knowing Full Well (II)

“I just wanted you to broaden your horizons, not go crazy.” Hong Yitang blew at his tea. “You’re really not afraid of death, are you?”

“Why would I be?” Li Hao burst out laughing.

“How are you still not?” Hong Yitang sighed. “Even I want to run off in the middle of the night! And what did you bring my daughter here for? That’s an additional burden on my shoulders... My poor heart can’t take it!”

He sighed again, quite resigned to his circumstances. Little Li, I only told you to imitate the ancients, not surpass them! Not even the ancient Human King was as ferocious as you. He did all that he did when he had the strength to back himself up, when he had backers to support his deeds. And you? Who’s backing you right now? Who can cover you?

No one can!

“There’s no rush, the nine ministries won’t immediately make a move against me. It’s still the same old, I know what they’re thinking! They don’t even want to do anything to me out in the open right now. Therefore, they’re tacitly permitting me to run wild. I’m going crazy, but they’ve probably already thought of how to kill me.”

“And you?” Hong Yitang looked at him. “Are you ready?”

“Of course!”

Alright then. Hong Yitang said nothing further.

“I’m going to stay in seclusion over the next few days!” Li Hao continued. “I’m going to bring my full force to bear to help everyone advance—the Silver Moon Guard and Demon Hunters alike! I’m going to strengthen them with a legitimate excuse!”

Was there a purpose to that?

Not much, to be honest. In the eyes of others, what did it matter if he raised ten thousand people to Sunderer of Hundreds? Even Dominator of Thousands wouldn’t move the needle. The most important detail was found in the greatest powerhouse that each side could field!

The nine ministries would love for Li Hao to expend a great deal of resources to fortify those weaklings. That would leave less for Li Hao and the other experts under his banner. There was a limited amount of resources out there, could the kid materialize more out of thin air?

Hong Yitang frowned, but didn’t say anything. This wasn’t a good idea. In the current state of the world, all factions focused on enhancing their powerhouses. But Li Hao chose to train his weaker members instead? That was to proceed in a diametrically opposite direction; only the young man knew what exactly he had in mind.

“What about the people you’ve arrested?”

“We’ll look into their records and investigate, keeping them under observation if nothing comes up. If they have prior records... they’ll be executed at the commencement ceremony!”

His response drew another round of silence from Hong Yitang. Would you really dare to??

“I’ve given them ten days’ time,” Li Hao laughed. “They’ve got at least five days to prepare. I hope more come, and that they even bring those of the three great organizations with them...”

Deputy Zhou didn’t say anything. Li Hao was setting a lure for big fish! As for how confident the young man was in reeling them in... it was hard to say.

.....

At the same time.

The Inspectorate.

"He’s forcing everyone to go kill him." The inspector general walked to the rear yard and looked at his father reading a book. “Tell me, where does he get his confidence from? Even if Battle Heaven supports him, they cannot emerge in this state of the world. Or does he feel fearless with the Windchaser Boots in hand? Does he think that no one can stop him?”

“I don’t know either.” The old man shook his head after some thought. “He brought Zhou back with him, so I thought he was going to proceed methodologically. However... these developments take me quite by surprise.”

Indeed, he couldn’t make heads nor tails of it.

“Does he think that he’s invincible after grasping three, even four elements?” asked the inspector general.

“That’s possible!” The old man fell into silent pondering. It was very possible from Li Hao’s current actions. He’d tried to obtain three elements yesterday, but didn’t seem to succeed. At the same time, he wasn’t injured from his attempt.

“He failed his breakthrough yesterday—but perhaps he healed his locks instead of failing his attempt,” the old man continued. “He should be able to grasp three elements. Maybe he thinks that he only needs two elements since that was how many he needed to kill Ole Hu. If he can stabilize himself after grasping three... Who else can stand against him then?”

“I can see why he’d think that, but does Hong Yitang and Yao Si think the same way?” The inspector general continued frowning. “Yao Si should be very aware that the nine ministries are more than this!”

It would be one thing if only Li Hao thought this way, but why was Yao Si losing his mind along with the kid?

The old man didn’t have an answer for that. These circumstances were indeed highly counter to their expectations. If Li Hao hadn’t arrested the nobles, if he hadn’t openly put the Night Watchers under his banner, then everyone would’ve turned a blind eye to his actions. They’d pretend not to see anything and permit him to be as arrogant as he wished.

But reality was not the case! The kid was being so cocky that it was like he was telling everyone beneath the heavens to come kill me! I have reasons to not be afraid! I have a trump card up my sleeves!

Indeed, all he needed to do was wear a sign around his neck saying Just try touching me, I’ve got more aces. The more he was thus, the more it made people pause.

“Is he maybe just setting up smoke and mirrors?” the inspector general suddenly mused. “Maybe he’s using this unyielding attitude to tell everyone that I have more plans in mind, so don’t try to touch me, but in reality, he’s very worried about the nine ministries making a move on him?”

That was a possibility as well. The old man inclined his head, but wasn't too sure. He looked at his son, but the inspector general was looking at him.

"Don't look at me," the inspector general said with a headache. "Those guys at the Ministry of the Judiciary keep messaging me and want me to join a discussion. He asks if the nine ministries can still stand together. If not, they will be excluding the Inspectorate. I'm very conflicted right now!"

He and his father had taken action last time to kill a Celestial powerhouse. That put them on Li Hao's side. His thinking then had been that the young man was under the Inspectorate's banner, so it was no loss to them. But now, Li Hao was about to declare his independence! The intent behind his actions was too obvious.

Not only did he wish to be independent, but he was going to ride roughshod right over them.

"How do you think I should choose this time, old man? If we still stay out of it again and just remain neutral, we'll land ourselves in difficult straits. You said to embrace a thick thigh for help in our moment of need—whose thigh is it?"

"Are they ready?" the old man asked slowly after some thought. "If Li Hao is an Arcanus of three elements and he has the Windchaser Boots in hand, no one's stopping him unless they field a four element Arcanus!"

"And what if he can call upon four elements when push comes to shove? It'll take a premier Arcanus to kill him, a truly elite one!"

"So you mean that... you don't think well of their chances if they don't send out a five element heavyweight?" the inspector general raised a brow.

"Correct!" The old man nodded. "It won't be that easy to kill him unless they send a personage of that caliber into the field. All attempts otherwise will only serve to strengthen Li Hao further. If people haven't lost their minds yet, if there's no five element Arcanus willing to take action, then we should not be involved!"

““And even if there are five element Arcanus willing to fight, we need to be on guard against him running away! My thoughts are that luring Li Hao into the ruins is crucial!”

The ruins! This was the opinion of the joint collective. The ruins were the key; unexpected developments would appear too easily otherwise and reinforcements show up to the battlefield. They would also have to worry about Li Hao running off since the Windchaser Boots weren't for show. Only in the ruins was such an exit strategy not a worry.

However, would the brat go inside? Would he not have thought of the same concerns? What a joke! Even if he didn't, the powerhouses by his side would caution against such a course of action.

The inspector general's transmission pendant vibrated as they conversed. His expression shifted slightly when he took a look at it. He glanced at his father, the old man sighed in response. “Out with it, what is it now?”

“They intend to make use of a mine!” The inspector general took a deep breath.

“What do you mean?” The old man didn't quite understand.

“They mean to create an artificial vein of a tremendous supply of mysterious power stones in the grade two ruins! The sum will truly be astounding. Li Hao relies on Battle Heaven and naturally knows that the ancient city's powerhouses will require energy if they wish to revitalize themselves. They'll need an astronomical amount of energy!”

Regular sums wouldn't do, an astronomical amount was required.

“What are they planning to do?” asked the old man after a long silence.

“Each of the nine ministries will supply five million stones. The three great organizations, Buddha Mountain, Yonder Mountain, and City of Supernaturals will be participating as well. We’ll collect enough for one hundred hundred million!”

Nearly twenty organizations were gathering one hundred million mysterious power stones! The heavyweights of the nine ministries knew full well what this figure entailed. It represented that Li Hao would be able to revive the tree in Battle Heaven if he obtained it—assuming that the tree was alive.

Li Hao wouldn’t need it if it was dead. He would absolutely need it if it was alive. Only such a figure would entice him to take such a risk. Once he succeeded, he would have a tremendous backer in the form of a premier plant spirit.

“They’re crazy!” frowned the old man. “If Li Hao really makes off with that and revitalizes the plant spirit of Battle Heaven... They do know what they’ll face after the second awakening, don’t they?”

“They do, so they won’t let Li Hao succeed!” breathed the inspector general. “Li Hao won’t be lured within if the bait isn’t enticing enough. Only with this will it force him to throw caution to the wind and take the risk. He knows just as well what the one hundred million represents, so he’ll do it even if he also knows that this might be a trap...”

People were starting to understand Li Hao’s character.

“How will you guys make him believe?” asked the old man.

“They’ll open the ruins first and let his people, or someone he knows, see it for themselves. He’ll believe it then!”

The old man still felt that it was too risky! One, it might not goad Li Hao to action. Two, if he successfully claimed it, he’d run back to Silver Moon and revive that powerful plant spirit. That would create another peerless heavyweight after the second awakening.

“Who will be in charge of killing him?”

“The various faction’s... plant spirits!”

Chapter 759: Knowing Full Well (III)

“We’re being kept under surveillance, they’re all on guard against us. The Ministry of Administration has also sent a warning. Either we wait quietly, or we stay out of things, or we act with them. How are we deciding?” The inspector general looked at his father.

“One hundred million... is such a large expenditure!” sneered the old man. “And they’re not afraid of falling head over ass because of it!”

It wasn’t much to one faction—just five million mysterious power stones. That was a matter of elevating a two element Arcanus to three elements. But was Li Hao worth the trade-off of one less three element Arcanus and such a collectively high price?

He was worth it!

These people would feel so ill at ease if Li Hao didn’t die. But their method was also a clear sign to the young man that there was danger here. There would be extreme danger as a massive vein of mysterious power stones had appeared in a grade two ruin. Would he believe the report, especially at a time like this?

If Li Hao really did undertake an excavation, that would mean he possessed sufficient confidence to do so. It was a headache-inducing decision facing the Inspectorate.

“We can contribute our share of mysterious power stones!” the old man determined after some thought. “We’d be in trouble if we didn’t. If we refrain from putting up money and people, that’d be forcing the rest to act against us! We can give our portion of the money, but... not necessarily our part of the people.”

The old man frowned slightly. "It's too risky, it's better to go slow and steady."

"But..." The inspector general was doubtful. "No matter who wins, it will mean trouble for us."

"I know!" The old man nodded. "But trouble is better than being dead. If it comes down to it, we can just add splendor to something that is already beautiful and bow our heads to whoever wins!"

"But..." The inspector general looked at his father with bafflement. "The Inspectorate is not weak, why must we persist in this manner?"

Continuously biding their time would only lead them to deviate from their original path.

"Because you are not the sort to be a feudal lord, and neither am I," his father said softly. "I would not conduct our matters this way if you were a bit more up to snuff! Look at what you have to show for yourself after all these years!

"The Night Watchers have always been under the Inspectorate, but look at your relationship with Yao Si! If you can't do it, what can I do about it? Why do you always think that it's me not helping you? It's because you haven't demonstrated any of the requisite qualities! I think that by the time we Chens reach your children's generation, you'll be lost if I die!"

He'd thought of contending for supremacy before. He wouldn't be staying out of everything and just looking to stick to the middle of the road if his son could take anything on his shoulders. His son somewhat liked to help people, but was also a bit irresolute and hesitant. He couldn't play the part of a ruthless villain, but neither was he saintly enough to be a deliverer. In that case, the family might as well sit back and watch life pass them by, since they could be neither.

"I think I've done better in the Inspectorate over the last thirty years than you did when you were in charge!" The inspector general flushed with anger.

"...heh!" the old man jeered. "And what you have to show after thirty years is the Night Watcher secession! You never think of how to resolve problems when they occur—you wait for the results to be apparent before making your decisions!

“When Li Hao fought in the east, you insisted on waiting for the outcome to take shape before calling it! Being slow with one step means being slow in all! It would’ve been fine if you’d decided to support either the Xus or Silver Moon. Waffling either way the entire time... And you ask me why I conduct our affairs in this manner! I’m just following your lead!

“Since you can’t make a decision in a critical moment, then we shall continue in this vein! We will not seek riches or glory. If it comes down to it, we will fully serve whoever is the victor. We won’t truly die out that way!” The old man grew tired as he spoke and waved a hand. “This is how we’ll settle it! We’ll offer money, but not people!

“As for Li Hao’s side, if he can win... if he can make it out of the ruins, then you’ll immediately join his Skystar Commander Office with the Inspectorate! Joining at first light means that he won’t really do anything to you even if he isn’t fully satisfied. Since we can’t be an overlord, we’ll strive for wealth!”

The inspector general was completely silent. He knew that his father didn’t think he could build an empire by himself. But...

“If I can’t, what about you?” He looked at his father. “The supernatural has risen and immortality is no longer a joke. You’re stronger than me and see things more clearly. Have you never thought of it for yourself?”

“Me?” The old man burst out laughing. “I know my limits well. I am less than the one in Administration when it comes to the civil subjects. I am less than the one in Armed Forces when it comes to the martial subjects. I fall short in terms of viciousness compared to Ying Hongyue, and fall short in strategy compared to that old fart in Silver Moon. Of those in my generation, there are plenty stronger than me. I do not stand out, and neither does my son. Am I supposed to bet my life against people?”

“Why do you lack so much confidence?” The inspector general frowned.

“It’s not that I lack confidence!” smiled the old man. “But that I know how hard it is! I am afraid of precisely that difficulty and hardship. If not, I would’ve personally led the charge many years ago. I’d thought that I could go to the depths of humiliating myself in order to wrangle a chance for you, if you showed promise. But... you’re a lost cause, so what can I do?”

“Of the second generation ministers, only the ones of Administration and Armed Forces are decent. The rest are all lost causes! Each generation is worse than the previous. What am I supposed to do about it?”

The inspector general was silent, burning with some fury and indignation. I’m a lost cause? Am I that bad? He thought that he’d done well enough for himself. The Inspectorate had expanded appropriately under his administration. As for Yao Si... the man was impregnable to threats and bribery alike. What was he supposed to do about it?

However, the inspector general grew despondent when he thought of how Yao Si had bowed his head to Li Hao. I’m not a young’un, but I keep getting mocked for being incompetent!

“What if Li Hao dies?”

“Then we just continue on as before! Choose one between Armed Forces and Administration!” the old man replied noncommittally. “Don’t think of siding with the royal family. That one has quite the ambition and isn’t satisfied with just restoring the dynasty to its former glory. He wants to overthrow everything and start afresh according to his own designs. That’s a very dangerous path!

“That will be all, you decide the rest for yourself!” he concluded in an impatient harrumph.

What is left for me to decide?? cursed the inspector general before walking away. He looked at the seat of his ministry’s operations when he walked out of the yard. It was in a slight uproar and Li Hao’s name was voiced with regular frequency. Plainly, the Inspectorate was also in a panic.

The Chens didn’t bring them any sense of security or stability. I can’t either! Why?? The Inspectorate had directed the inspectors of the world for eighty years. The Chens had never

committed any major mistakes and the years passed in peaceful stability. Was that not enough? Was stability wrong?

.....

The various organizations, divine mountains, and City of Supernaturals had all received certain intelligence reports. Ying Hongyue looked at a group of people in front of him and said slowly, “The nine ministries are taking an enormous risk. It’s fine if they succeed, but if they fail... Once Li Hao takes those stones and revitalizes the plant spirits in Battle Heaven... the trouble will be yet to come.”

Of course, if he really did succeed, it wasn’t just trouble that was yet to come. It indicated that Li Hao was beyond the imagination. The possibility had not gone unconsidered by the nine ministries. What could they do if Li Hao really did end up snatching victory out of the situation?

“Is the leader going to take the field yourself?” Orange Moon asked next to him.

“Me?” Ying Hongyue closed his eyes and sighed moments later. “It would just be more trouble if I went to kill Li Hao! If I fail, he would gain all eight bloodlines. I would be delivering everything to him on a silver platter. What a pity that I’ve yet to fully meld the seven bloodlines!”

“Then... does leader think that Li Hao will win? Or that he won’t even go into the ruins?”

“It’s hard to say,” Ying Hongyue laughed. “It’s difficult to anticipate his moves. He’s a carp leaping over the dragon’s gate ever since leaving Silver Moon. The skies are high, the birds can soar as they wish. It’s a very perplexing issue to determine his mindset. If the nine ministries fail... then the world will be thrown into chaos! Our troubles will have fully arrived as well.”

“Then let’s have the elder council and Ancient Guard fully mobilize!” Orange Moon set her jaw. “Everyone knows of the threat that Li Hao poses. We must bring our full strength to bear. We’ll take origin talismans and energy bombs with us, we’ll be ready for death. Let’s even bring a pile of city annihilation missiles! Li Hao will surely die if we pay the requisite price!”

Ying Hongyue was silent. Who knew? Li Hao had escaped from death time and time again, growing stronger as he did so. Were the eight families not meant to be exterminated? His own smooth sailing had been shattered after Li Hao appeared. Was this because the young man was the bane of his existence? Perhaps... it was time he thought of a plan. This situation should not be allowed to persist.

.....

Li Hao did not care about the happenings of the outside world, he simply waited patiently. On the second day, he summoned all of his people to gather in the complex in the northern city quadrant.

There were more than fifty Demon Hunters, almost one thousand Silver Moon Guards, more than one thousand from the Silver Moon provincial army. It made for approximately two thousand personnel. There were almost all martial masters; few were the supernaturals.

Hou Xiaochen was present, as was Manager Yu and a few others. Deputy Zhou, Hong Yitang, Light Sword were in attendance, and even Yao Si alighted from a car moments later.

Two thousand people were assembled together. All of the troops were dressed in black armor; a nervous atmosphere wafted through the air. The strongest of them had reached Summoner of Spirit or Solar, and their weakest was only Slayer. They were hardly worth mentioning in Skystar City.

Two thousand people wouldn't give rise to much in the city, but they were the ones who'd arrested all the nobles yesterday. Of course, they were borrowing Li Hao's name. It wasn't that they themselves were so strong that the nine ministries would be wary of them.

Li Hao didn't say a word; he continued to wait. Yang Shan and Qin Lian arrived shortly thereafter, whispering a few words to the young man. Dressed in bronze armor, He Yong appeared a few minutes later.

He sucked in a sharp breath at the sight of all the people standing at attention in the yard. Was Li Hao going for something major? But... he wanted to say that this was an unwise course of action, that he shouldn't waste his resources this way even if he had plenty to spare.

Chapter 760: Mass Cultivation (I)

To be honest, overwhelming the strong with a domineering amount of weaker opponents was no longer a viable strategy in this day. It could work against various Solars, difficult when it came to Novas, and almost impossible to succeed against Arcanus!

Two thousand Sunderers against one Arcanus... The latter could just slam down a palm strike and erupt with supernatural abilities to decimate hundreds of people. Two thousand would be dead in the blink of an eye!

The key was that two thousand people might consume many more resources than one Arcanus. What did Li Hao have in mind here? No one understood.

It was very hard for martial masters to take another step forward after reaching late Sunderer. Setting foot into the supernatural as a Sunflare then would take a lot of resources, not to mention that it was possible that not all of them could cross over.

It wasn't just Hong Yitang and the rest who were confused, not many present understood the young man's course of action. This wasn't how one should waste wealth. It was easier for supernaturals to ascend—which of the other factions ripped through their fortune like this to produce large sums of martial troops?

These resources could be invested into creating one or two Arcanus. It was such a more worthwhile proposition than spending it on these people! Even fostering another Nova was much more worth it than one thousand lousy Sunderers.

Thus, not many understood Li Hao's choice.

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Meanwhile, Li Hao himself didn't think much of the people's criticism. In his eyes, the stronger one was, the less one needed this sort of aid. It was precisely the weak who needed it more with their condition. When the Demon Hunters Army was fully formed, it didn't matter if they were supernaturals or martial masters. They were his next candidates for turning the locks into characters.

This required the aura; he wasn't sure if it was possible without the aura. No matter what, these people would be useful in the future. And who said that a horde of ants couldn't bite an elephant to death? Of course they could!

If not, were the ancients so bored that they raised so many armies just because they could? Did the million strong Battle Heaven Army exhaust countless resources just for fun? With that level of resources, they would easily nurture a few powerhouses. What need was there for an army?

The truth was precisely the opposite, that the strength generated by the connected blood qi of assembled martial masters was beyond the imagination. Anyone would be overcome by this, apart from the truly premier characters standing at the peak of the world.

In this era, those who said armies were useless were those with no vision. The era had just begun and the supernatural just started to awaken. Finding strength in numbers to be already useless... did these people fancy themselves as the ancient Human King?

Using the resources for an Arcanus to train two thousand people... It would be an incredible payout if one of them demonstrated astounding potential. Even if no one did, Li Hao would ultimately prove that two thousand Sunderers wasn't necessarily worse than an Arcanus.

They would also be more malleable. And if he was lucky enough to find a few gems, then what was an Arcanus worth? Only from filtering through a large sum of candidates could they hope to grow stronger. Talent was also an accumulation of population.

Such were the thoughts in Li Hao's mind, but he didn't voice any of them. He looked at the expectant and apprehensive people below. He knew that they knew what he was about to do, and also knew that they were very nervous about wasting resources. His voice was calm, but it rang in everyone's hearts.

“My master once said that one person being strong makes for a hermit expert! One group being strong makes for the martial world! Everyone being strong is the evolution of life!

“This era is neither fair nor orderly! The strong are always strong and the weak are always weak. That isn’t necessarily wrong either, but when life leaps ahead too much and the strong take their position for granted, they will disconnect from the time period. There, they will drift around like rootless weeds and gradually lose their direction and dao!

“If there is no one catching up to them and no one they can set their sights to ahead of them, so what of immortality if they walk alone in the dark? Perhaps we are yet to reach that time, but that will develop if our current situation continues. Once the gap between cultivation levels is too great, those ahead will eventually lose themselves. There is only darkness when no one follows you and no one guides you!”

The assembly listened quietly. Li Hao was speaking from the heart, some of it his words, others from various books.

“From today henceforth, there is no longer a division between the Silver Moon Guards, Silver Moon provincial army, and the Demon Hunters! There is only one name for all of you—the Demon Hunter Army!” Li Hao’s voice reverberated throughout the courtyard. “An army should have conviction and faith! Without conviction, faith, or goals, such an army would just be a gathering of puppets!

“Perhaps you still feel lost and find our age and world an unknown... I hope you will no longer be lost starting from today. Why do you strengthen yourself? It is not in pursuit of rising above this world, but so that you can be better, that your loved ones can live better lives, that your home and world will be better!

“Perhaps you will think that these are beliefs that I’ve forced upon you, that they are not yours! But I tell you, before you identify your own life goals, these are your beliefs!

“Whether you believe them or not, remember all of this once you are part of the Demon Hunter Army!

“Someone once said that the Demon Hunters safeguard justice and hunt demons in the name of justice. I treated it as a joke at first, that it was just words to comfort themselves. But I no longer think that way. Someone has to nurture a heart for good in this time and scrupulously abide by the faith of a soldier. Is it laughable to uphold what is right?”

“Is it laughable??” Li Hao cried out in charged tones. “Perhaps you guys think that I am just a wandering hero through the martial world, that I do not know what justice is. Then I tell you, it’s true, I don’t. I just know that humans should possess a conscience, that we should intervene in anything that is not fair, unjust, or against the law! Those who kill for fun or for another’s riches should answer to the law! Those who make light or tread on life should die!”

“That is the justice of my heart! While it may not be yours, it is for now!”

Everyone listened quietly. Perhaps they were unable to accept Li Hao’s ideals, or perhaps they didn’t care. It didn’t matter to the young man. The moment one joined the Demon Hunter Army, such would be one’s beliefs and value system.

“What is an army? In my view, it is more than just a war machine! It should adhere to the people’s heart and sparkle with light in the darkness. It should bring hope and step forward in danger. Such are soldiers!”

“I have never been a member of the armies of this age, so I do not know what you have learned or values you have been instilled with. I am simply speaking from the heart. I have seen armies that died tens of thousands years ago, yet they still stand guard over their cities by themselves and protect the people’s belongings. They remain faithful to their duties and remember their family who stand behind them.

“Indeed, the armor that you wear belongs to the Battle Heaven Army! I hope that you do not tarnish their spirit!”

The crowd was gravely solemn. The Battle Heaven Army!

“When you put on this armor, you assume the mantle of duty and responsibility! I will be expending a lot of resources to raise your cultivation level and strengthen you. It was not easy to come by them!

“Wearing the armor, absorbing energy, collecting benefits... You must keep one thing in mind—am I the one giving you all of this? No, it is this era that bestows them to you! I hope you can rise to the occasion and become true soldiers to protect the land!” Li Hao looked at them and concluded his speech with, “We hunt demons... for justice!”

“Demon Hunters!” The answering shouts rang through the complex as two thousand people bellowed in unison, venting the emotion that’d accumulated in their hearts.

Justice?

Perhaps!

They might be like Li Hao the first time he encountered the slogan and find it a complete joke. What talk of justice was there in an age like this? But perhaps... hunting demons was a certain kind of faith!

I am of justice, all else are demons!

Some yells were charged with fervor and the veteran Demon Hunters screamed their lungs out. It was very simple to them—anyone who opposed Li Hao was a demon! As for his moniker of Demon Sword Li Hao... they felt that it was those demons who feared him. He should be Divine Sword Li Hao! Those people were the demons!

“Demon Hunters!” The roars reverberated through the vicinity, heralding the first official formation of the Demon Hunter Army. A barrier of light materialized as a mirror fragment enshrouded the surroundings. Those keeping an eye on the complex promptly lost their feed of information.

Powerhouses drew near before long, investigating with a slight frown. The Demon Hunter Army? Li Hao had recruited roughly two thousand martial masters to form that army of his and wanted to hunt demons with it? Who was the real demon here, and who did he think he could hunt with two thousand weaklings?

He had too much time on his hands!

With those resources and that time, he should be thinking of how to fortify himself, not wasting them to enhance these weaklings. None of them had any potential in them!

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Inside the barrier of light.

Nearly one million mysterious power stones manifested and crumbled away. Currents of extremely dense mysterious power morphed into sword energy and a bountiful harvest of elemental power, dark and light power appeared. The area had turned into a sacred land of cultivation.

Drops of Water of Life appeared in front of everyone and disintegrated into fog and mist, raining down on the assembly!

He Yong and the others watched with shaking hearts. What an incredible investment, this was beyond anything they could imagine! Expending a million mysterious power stones, fortifying it with sword energy, and even a dozen drops of Water of Life... what was this if not madness??

“In the outside world, one drop of Water of Life costs one hundred thousand stones,” Li Hao said calmly. “I tell you this not for you to remember how much in resources have been spent on you, but that every single coin you spend will be extracted back from you in the future.

“Only through pain is there gain. I am just giving you an advance on what you will one day earn, so there is no need to be thankful. What you need to do in the time remaining is to pay back your debt—not to me, but to the justice in your heart!”

No one said a word as a vast quantity of energy flowed into their bodies. Sword and life energy protected their bodies as each soldier quickly grew stronger. The ones from the Silver Moon provincial army, in particular, improved at a furious pace. They were weak to begin with—this was a heavenly pill for them.

While martial masters at late Sunderer also grew stronger, their rate of improvement was limited. it was difficult for them to take another step forward unless they comprehended the aura!