

Star Gate 801

Chapter 801: Beat The Shit Outta It! (I)

“Whatever you wish,” the Black Armor responded indifferently after a while. “But remember, non-students are not allowed to enter the campus. They can only stand by the gates! Also, don’t forget that fines will be levied for destruction of school property. You better hand over the previous fines as well. Interest will be collected on it if you don’t!”

Li Hao blinked. Interest? There was even interest on that?

“Is the interest rate... high?”

“Not that high. Thirty-six percent a year..”

Li Hao started. Holy hell, how is that not high? You’re a loan shark! They’d been fined fifty-five million last time. A year’s worth of interest was... Li Hao’s scalp crawled. Almost twenty million stones! He’s so black-hearted!

But a year... dragging things out for a year might also be nice. Perhaps twenty million wouldn’t be much to him after a year. That’s also good!

“Thank you, senior!” Li Hao smiled. He vanished as he left the ruins, then returned with a group of people. They stayed outside the gates instead of entering the campus proper. The Black Armor floated in the air and silently watched the group, soon sensing various auras erupting on the scene. He only needed to observe for a while to know what they wished to do.

Puppets leaned on the windows of the various classroom buildings, all of them curious. Li Hao was oblivious to their presence. Gradually, some puppets wandered around the school gates like they were on patrol, and the ones shaped like toys at the gates also opened their eyes.

The young man could sense it now—it felt like a lot of people were looking at him. He turned around for a look, but didn't see anything out of the ordinary. He couldn't help but mutter to himself that the Black Armor's gaze was quite intense! It felt like hundreds of people were staring at him!

Indeed, a group of puppets, toys, and the Black Armor were quietly watching the visitors' actions. The Black Armor could sense more than the rest and detected some changes in the environment—not inside the ruins, but the world outside. It seemed to have loosened some of the restrictions on them. The void outside seemed more stable.

Does it have to do with these characters? They are very similar to Tranquil Star's ultimate art, but they incorporate mental strength and life force. It rather suits these modern humans. Does this count as having created a new dao, which is why this world is revitalizing on its own?

The Black Armor was stunned by his trial of thought. If this was the case, then this world might soon return to the conditions that he was familiar with in his time.

Once more people walk this path, it might become a unique cultivation method that is similar to core origin. Or it might be a new dao of the inner world...

In the ancient civilization, core origin dao had been the mainstream dao of the initial years in New Martial. The later mainstream dao had been the one of the inner world as created by the Human King. It was much more difficult, however, so a lot of the old guard still cultivated core origin.

These visitors at the gates looked to be walking another path. How interesting! However, the Black Armor could also tell that this path was not complete. It needed the aid of external resources, which was not a good sign.

If only it could be combined with the golden body!

The Black Armor was of the opinion that cultivation methods for the body should be individually created. Otherwise, this path was not suited for widespread propagation.

Li Hao and the others didn't pay attention to this hole in the method as they furiously summoned mysterious power and exhausted vast quantities of Water of Life. Their presences flared and word characters hovered in the air!

Everyone's strength was truly leaping forward at the same time in a massive geyser. Even Li Hao was attempting to trace the next character. With metal, water, and fire already mastered, he wished to grasp the remaining earth and wood as soon as possible. If he succeeded, he would manage to count as a seven element Arcanus. It was just that his wind and thunder elements weren't all that strong.

Li Hao kept experimenting, hoping to succeed. If he did with just one character, he stood a chance of facing Qi Pingjiang. He was still a bit lesser than the Military God, and he didn't like being threatened all the time.

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Evenround Martial.

Scores of puppets craned their necks around, staring at the outsiders with blatant curiosity.

The school gates.

The group gradually ceased cultivating, some with a frown, others with stern concentration, and some with great irritation. He Yong fell in the last category.

He frowned with annoyance and dissatisfaction. Li Hao's dao of supernatural characters seemed incomplete. At least, he was facing a big problem. One aura could fortify only one character, which meant that they almost all had singular characters. However, their characters couldn't transmute like Hong Yitang's. Theirs were too focused on a single outcome. He Yong had coalesced a 'fist' character and incorporated the three elements of fire, metal, and earth into it.

The character was powerful and He Yong felt that it wasn't any weaker than the supernatural abilities of those elements, but he wasn't able to accomplish what Hong Yitang had. His punches were a messy combination of all three elements. In contrast, Hong Yitang could separate his elements into distinct abilities.

In this way, He Yong was... very similar to a martial master. It was just that his internal force had become combined with supernatural abilities. That was good enough as well, but seeing that Li Hao could form his characters individually and Hong Yitang could put his through a variety of changes... He Yong was naturally irritated that he could only use his in a mixture.

It was also aggravating that he could only incorporate three elements. He felt that he'd improved greatly in recent days and wasn't necessarily weaker than anyone. He wasn't worse than Hong Yitang or Yao Si!

But reality slapped him in the face as he'd only incorporated three elements into his character.

Off to the side, Light Sword was... doing well enough. She was also three elements, but He Yong couldn't be bothered comparing to her. She was unique in that she'd coalesced the elements of light, dark, and wood. That was only one element out of the five organs, which indicated that she had much more room to improve than He Yong. At the very least, he hadn't located the light or dark locks. So while she was a three element Arcanus for now, she might be a four or five element very soon.

Hou Xiaochen didn't make a sound, but He Yong could tell that there were at least four elements in his character. And... he'd actually drawn a spear, not written a word. He'd created a drawing instead of tracing a character!

What the hell??

Everyone was looking at Hou Xiaochen and the spear in front of him that resembled their characters. The man smiled when he realized that everyone was staring at him. "I simply had a sudden stroke of inspiration. Words are not universal—the ones used in the ancient civilization are different from modern day. Therefore, writing isn't fixed in stone. I was thinking... humanity did

not know how to write in an even more far-off age. They only used simple symbols to replace words. So isn't my drawing of a spear a kind of word too?"

The characters themselves weren't the key—the intent held within was! Wasn't a symbol shaped as a spear also a word after it had the relevant intent infused?

Li Hao bobbed his head up and down, new reflections striking him. These favored geniuses of heaven all had their own thoughts, alright. Hou Xiaochen was correct, the actual characters themselves were just an outward appearance. What was key was whether there was a change in its strength.

Hou Xiaochen sent the spear forward without a word! Despite the lack of the Flaming Phoenix Spear, the group struggled to hold onto their minds. An inexplicable pressure bore down on their weaker members and expressions shifted drastically.

Hou Xiaochen retracted the spear and his character vanished.

"The... Broken Will intent seems stronger than before," Li Hao breathed. "Did the director incorporate the supernatural lock of the head that represents mind intent?"

It was said that the lock of the head indicated the strength of one's mind intent, which was the mental intent in the ancients' eyes.

"That's too dangerous." Hou Xiaochen shook his head with a smile. "I haven't decided to integrate that for now. It's just that my spear intent has solidified with mysterious power and is wholly contained by the character. That doesn't inflict much strain on the body, so it's easier to display the spear intent.

"There's actually a massive benefit to forming these supernatural characters..." he mused. "If you wish to walk the path of multiple auras, interference from your other auras will be of grave concern. If you meld all of your auras into the characters and completely contain them within, it will be easy for you to comprehend other auras once you accomplish that with the auras of your five organs."

Grasping one aura wasn't hard for a genius like Li Hao, it truly wasn't. The young man hadn't encountered martial dao for long before comprehending the earth aura. He'd been an absolute rookie at martial dao then. The disruption caused by multiple auras after grasping them was what made cultivation difficult. But what if that disruption was not a factor?

"The same goes for all of us!" Hou Xiaochen looked at the rest. "If we completely place the aura inside a character, we'll be able to easily comprehend another aura if we wish. We can meld that into another character and continue the process. It's easy for us to grasp more without the interference of our pre-existing aura."

His words raised eyebrows, particularly He Yong's.

"Not everyone is suited for multiple auras!" Sky Sword said faintly. "One aura will do! My aura is the sword and my sword aura is the one and only! Pure and simple or multifarious, they all lead to the same destination in the end!"

"This depends on individual choice." Hong Yitang nodded as well. "Director Hou is right, now is a great time to comprehend other auras. The characters isolate our current auras, making it easier to grasp new ones. Li Hao, for example, will easily understand more if he cultivates some secret arts.

"I don't actually recommend the others to comprehend more... But Light Sword... You can comprehend one more, the dark aura!" Hong Yitang advised. "Your light aura is your primary aura—light and shadow occur successively. Those of us present won't see much benefit from it because we focus on other elements, but I think two auras will find great effect with you."

Light Sword turned over his words thoughtfully, then regarded the man square in the face. "Do you have other motivations in mind because you're beginning to find me pretty lately?"

"....." A hush stole over the group as everyone looked to the sky, not saying a word. Light Sword... was certainly growing confident!

Yao Si smiled at seeing them engaged in earnest conversation. He was familiar with this group of Silver Moon martial masters. They either appeared fiery and explosive on the surface or were coolly aloof, but they were rather brainless in private!

“None of this is key,” he interjected. “Don’t you guys think that the supernatural locks are the most important at our current stage?”

Everyone looked at him.

Chapter 802: Beat The Shit Outta It! (II)

“In our current cultivation system, the number of locks determines the number of elements we can wield. Whether it is martial masters or supernaturals, the four limbs are unattributed to the elements, the five organs have their own elements, the spine is of thunder and lightning, the zifu of wind, light and dark are in an unknown location, and the head is of mental strength. That makes for fourteen locks.

“Of them, the four in the limbs are foundational locks. If they’re counted in terms of strength, whether it is us, pure supernaturals, or pure martial masters, we only have the equivalent of ten element Arcanus to aspire to, is that correct?” Yao Si looked at everyone. “The destination looks far away, but it may not be that far. Therefore, I think the more critical task at hand is to locate more supernatural locks and discuss our findings with each other. The light and dark attribute locks, for example, have flown under my radar.”

He felt that since everyone focused on different aspects of cultivation, perhaps they could exchange information and see if they could discover more locks.

“You’re in such a hurry,” He Yong couldn’t help but point out. “Have you already saturated all of the known locks?”

“That’d be an exaggeration,” Yao Si laughed. “I’ve saturated eleven locks prior to today, of which four are the limbs. I’ve only just completed the circulation of my five organs and don’t plan to tackle wind or thunder at the moment. The transformation of my organ elements into five supernatural abilities is more reliable.”

The group looked at him with surprise. He's already completed the circulation of the five organs? This old guy is... really strong. The five organs were weaker than the physical body or skeleton. Some people prioritized other attributes first because it was difficult for the five organs to endure five eruptions in succession. There was too much force brought to bear.

Although the supernatural characters contained the aura, the aura had to erupt dominantly when used in battle. Could one guarantee that the backlash wouldn't recoil onto the five organs? This one didn't seem afraid.

"Don't look at me like that," Yao Si smiled. "I started fortifying my organs many years before you guys and I'm the oldest out of all of you. I'm at least ten years older than Yuan Shuo, which makes me a previous generation martial master."

He was much older than the rest—Li Hao pegged him at roughly 80 years old. That was indeed old.

"The five elements gathering in the five organs... Has Director Yao sensed any peculiar changes in your body after that?"

"There still are!" Yao Si nodded after some consideration. "But... I still feel short on something. If you have your teacher publicize the Breathing Method of the Five Styles, we might be able to fully meld the elements of the five organs together. If that is accomplished, then I think an even greater change will occur in the body. How about you? Have you not finished their complete integration?"

"I wouldn't have broken the wind and thunder locks first if I'd known." Li Hao shook his head. "They're weaker than the rest of my elements, for one, and they have no corresponding aura. Instead, they increase my burden as I only completed drawing the earth supernatural lock this time..."

He was slightly regretful as he wanted to give the other locks of the five organs a try. But the already present wind and thunder placed a great burden on his shoulders. He sensed an immediate surge of formidable pressure the second he tried to break the wood lock. It almost crushed him!

"We... cannot brashly enter seven element Arcanus!" he said after some thought. "According to the hierarchy of the ancient martial dao, seven elements is basically Apex and can tear through the void."

But space is unstable at present and... I don't think that our physical bodies and organs can support that breakthrough!"

"Even you can't do it?" Sky Sword was surprised. Li Hao had an endless supply of sword energy and Water of Life at his fingertips, could he not do it either?

"The key lies with the dao of the body!" Li Hao answered after some thought. "The only way forward is to solve this problem. Nothing else will be an issue then. Everyone should think it over after they go back—two heads are better than one."

He wasn't a god, he'd just read more ancient tomes compared to them and knew more secret arts. But was his brain really better than the rest of them...? Not necessarily. He wanted to try coalescing the seventh element, but could sense that there would be a lot of trouble involved. It was such a helpless situation!

It also wasn't like there was no way to strengthen himself anymore—he could comprehend the wind and thunder auras! While he'd yet to fully contain the wood aura inside himself, it'd become part of its supernatural lock and presented an utterly still facade. Most of the mysterious power in his body was completely contained within their locks, so this was a good opportunity to grasp more auras.

Once he mastered wind and thunder, he would trace two more characters. Ultimately, the 'exterminate' character formed by his sword aura would lead all of the characters into unified assembly. There was hope yet that he would burst forth with domineering strength and be able to kill six or even seven element Arcanus!

When it came to the wind and thunder auras, Li Hao thought of something. "There was the Wind Thunder Sword among the Seven Swords back in the day! My teacher killed Ambiguous Sword and Ghost Shadow Sword, so does Wind Thunder Sword's secret art... still exist in the world?"

The easiest way to comprehend an aura at present was to practice the secret art that would lead to it. Anyone with slightly better potential would be able to easily grasp it. The Wind Thunder Sword was said to be most skilled with the wind and thunder auras! How fortuitous!

He was a swordsman and adept in the wind and thunder elements. However, Yuan Shuo hadn't taught Li Hao the relevant secret art. That probably meant his teacher didn't possess it.

"Wind Thunder Sword... does have an heir. He's at my Sky Sword Manor!" Sky Sword said after a beat. "But... your master killed his master, so he may not be willing to teach you the secret art."

The group fell silent. Old man Yuan Shuo had killed too many people back in the day. Karma was coming for his disciple.

"I'll try persuading him when I return," Sky Sword continued. "You're right, if you can learn it and grasp the wind and thunder auras, then you'll be able to combine six auras as one. Even if you can't break the wood lock in the short term, a regular seven element Arcanus still won't be a match for you!"

"Then I'll have to trouble Senior Sky Sword!" laughed Li Hao. "There's no need to force him to acquiesce. There are a lot of secret arts having to do with wind and thunder. It's just that the Wind Thunder Sword might also be a secret art and it's more convenient because it deals with two elements at once."

It wasn't make or break for him. Even though Li Hao's potential was astounding, he needed at least a month to practice a secret art to the point of comprehending its aura. Two auras in the same art might require two or three months...

He couldn't speak of this to others, it would make them pop with anger.

Practicing the Wind Thunder Sword could save him a month or two; that was the key. With the current state of the world, much could happen in one or two months.

"Since you know the Ghost Shadow Sword, I'll teach you the Light Sword method," Light Sword said. "This is preparation for you breaking the light and dark locks. Just one aura is enough for us..."

“Let’s trade,” Li Hao laughed. “Senior Light Sword knows the Light Sword method and I happen to know the Ghost Shadow Sword method. You need an appropriate dark attribute art anyway!”

Light Sword didn’t say anything, she did indeed need it. A trade was nice as well.

The transaction was easily conducted since both of them were in the same location. Li Hao soon received a book describing the secret art. The breathing method came via transmission. This was the limitation of the old guard—the older martial masters weren’t willing to let their breathing methods become public knowledge.

It was only to be expected! Rules that had stood for hundreds of years wouldn’t be so easily changed.

Now that he possessed the Light Sword method, Li Hao’s problems of the light and dark auras were resolved. Although he wouldn’t break those locks just yet, he would be able to use the method in the future. He could also practice them first to grasp their auras. He didn’t have to wait until after breaking the lock to comprehend the aura.

The group had made massive gains during this cultivation session. Light Sword and He Yong were both three element Arcanus. Sky Sword and Hou Xiaochen should be four elements. Hong Yitang... to be honest, Li Hao couldn’t read the man. Those permutations of his one sword aura were very baffling. It was difficult to determine anything from his supernatural character, but he was at least a four element Arcanus.

Nothing needed to be said about Yao Si. As expected of a veteran martial master with deep foundations—he vaulted straight to five element Arcanus!

Manager Yu had remained quiet all this time; Li Hao scanned her with some regret. Was she a... two element Arcanus? How could that be?

The young man furrowed his brows. Manager Yu wasn't weak—she rivaled He Yong before. Why had He Yong set foot into three elements, but the manager was just at two? That was the most basic level of Arcanus as one element was on par with a Nova.

Manager Yu was quite calm when she registered Li Hao's look and smiled faintly. "I've been a supernatural for many years and only recently converted back to martial master. My aura isn't strong and I've quickly ascended to Arcanus. The rest of my capabilities are fine, but a weak aura has prevented me from entering three elements. My aura is one of slaughter!"

Li Hao blinked with understanding. The manager had killed far fewer people after all these years by Hou Xiaochen's side. Although she occasionally made a move, she spent most of her time helping Hou Xiaochen with trivial matters. It greatly weakened both her aura and killing intent. And now, her weakened aura could not fortify a powerful supernatural character. She could only reach two element Arcanus.

"It's fine." Hou Xiaochen smiled indifferently. "You walk the path of slaughter and just need to kill more. The more you kill, the faster you improve. There will be plenty of chances to come. Will we be short on targets with a certain someone around?"

Manager Yu didn't say a word—this certain someone naturally meant Li Hao. Hou Xiaochen was right, so long as there were large skirmishes and killing to come, she would improve at a rapid clip. It was just as she had done so when she left home to avenge her family. She had improved very quickly when she mowed down her enemies.

He Yong finally found comfort in someone being weaker than him. He smiled with great spirits. "Two element Arcanus is good too. You'll be able to smack around the martial masters who haven't snapped their supernatural locks!"

The entire group had improved; they were a very different sight from when they entered the ruins. In fact, they could not be mentioned in the same breath. However, they'd also consumed a lot of resources.

The little tree had coalesced three hundred drops of Water of Life in the past couple of days—that was all gone. There were too many who needed it. Li Hao had also supplied a lot of sword energy

and generously paid the little tree three million stones for the Water of Life. The sword had consumed another one million, which left sixty million stones in his stores.

Even if this sum didn't outright revive General Pagoda at Battle Heaven, Li Hao felt that the deed wouldn't be far off. But at the moment, he wasn't going to send the resources there. Whether it was him or the others, they all needed it to improve their strength. What would they utilize if he gave it all away?

Using money to earn more money was the proper path!

Chapter 803: Beat The Shit Outta It! (III)

"Everyone's completely containing their characters within their bodies, which is fine for those who were originally martial masters. They don't need to purposefully emanate anything. But Senior Sky Sword, Martial Uncle Hong, and Director Hou should still let some mysterious power seep out for everyone to see that you've ascended to Arcanus," Li Hao advised. It would be bizarrely alarming otherwise if the entire group of people didn't exude any energy.

The group knew what to do without need for further instruction from Li Hao.

"Then let us depart!"

They'd been inside for roughly a day, it was almost night outside. The inauguration ceremony for the Skystar Commander Office was tomorrow. Although all of the obstacles had been cleared, they needed to be on guard against unwelcome developments.

Li Hao rose and looked behind him. There was an unusual phenomenon here—a lot of puppets were patrolling around the school gates. What... are they all doing here? Do they suspect that we've damaged school property and are here to demand fines?

The young man looked surreptitiously around him—there was no damage! Therefore, he put the matter out of his mind and called out clearly, "We'll be leaving now, senior. I will visit you when I have time to later!"

Of course, who knew when this time would come around?

“As you wish!” the Black Armor said faintly. “The world has changed and the void can be stabilized if more people of this age practice these supernatural characters. The second awakening that you speak of will also stabilize the void. With space itself secure, Apex or seven element Arcanus might rise ahead of time!”

Li Hao’s heart shook and Hong Yitang couldn’t contain himself. “Does the senior mean...”

“Plant spirits, monster spirits, and everything else can all detect these changes. Your limits also determine the limits of others. Take Li Hao, for example. After he’s set foot into six element Arcanus, that means that the core origin replica of plant spirits will also be able to exert the strength of six elements in the outside world!”

Li Hao blinked.

“So this has to do with my supernatural characters?”

“Possibly!”

Li Hao frowned with understanding, but quickly set it aside. “That’s alright,” he smiled. So the Black Armor meant that his personal limits also determined the limits of others. If everything is under my control, what am I afraid of?

The Black Armor said nothing further. The world spun around the group as they vanished from Evenround Martial. When they were gone, puppets swiftly ran to the Black Armor.

“Teacher, is that person the pioneer of dao in this age?” one of them asked curiously.

“Not really,” the Black Armor responded faintly. “His dao is but a beginning. Only when he reaches Apex does he stand at the true start of dao! If he can continue to walk this path and perfect it, then it

stands a chance of becoming a true great dao that reaches the heavens. Otherwise... it's just the tricks and amusements of a child."

Perhaps these accomplishments were the establishment of dao to Li Hao and the rest. But to the Black Armor, only when they reached seven elements Arcanus did they truly begin. The ancient civilization truly comprehended great dao only at that stage. There was no talk of pioneering dao if one did not reach even that level.

The puppets didn't mind his response. Their teacher had high standards; they rather thought Li Hao's actions were interesting.

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Night fell.

The emergence of Li Hao's group once more raised the attention of all observing powerhouses. What had these people done in the past day? There didn't seem to be much of a difference to them. Had they gone inside... to amuse themselves?

No one understood what was going on, but they guessed that something must have happened. Why else would they enter the ruins again?

Li Hao ignored the scouts; everyone returned to their homes. Hou Xiaochen took Manager Yu with him. They went back to the Night Watchers with Yao Si. Having obtained what he wanted, he darted into the Skystar Sea to return to Sky Sword Mountain.

As for the inauguration ceremony tomorrow... he wasn't concerned at all. Anyone who dared make trouble for Li Hao now wouldn't even know how they died. But he also left word that the young man could notify him if Li Hao wished to venture into the ruins. In the meantime, he was going back to the mountain to see if he could bring back the Wind Thunder Sword.

In a surprising move, He Yong decided to return to the palace. Is he not afraid of death? wondered the young man. The royal family is highly on guard against me, but you're going back?

"It's fine!" He Yong didn't mind and transmitted, "I'm going back to look up some information. The royal palace has a lot of data banks and complete intelligence reports. I'm going to see if I can get my hands on anything to do with Skystar Town. Don't forget about the missions that we took on in Battle Heaven. We might be able to complete them!"

One of their missions was to investigate why Skystar Town had cut off the supply channels to the rest of the territory. Li Hao still remembered it, but since he'd yet to visit the Skystar Ruins, he had to set it aside. Upon hearing that He Yong wanted to look into it, he nodded after some thought and didn't say anything.

The mission said that one only needed to identify the reason and restore communications for a reward of ten thousand merits. This number of merits wouldn't be traded for that many energy stones—just one hundred thousand. This was the worst possible trade for the merits—Li Hao could see that now.

Wouldn't it be grand for me to trade the merits for a real division leader position? Wouldn't it be nice to trade them for some powerful ancient arts to study? Why should I trade them for energy stones? That's obviously for ordinary soldiers who can't accumulate a high amount of merits. I made a bad trade before.

If he could restore communications between the eight cities, the one hundred thousand merits involved could likely be traded for a reserve commander position that could lead one hundred thousand men. Maybe he'd be able to lead the entire Reserve Defenders! That snotty Golden Armor of the Ninth Troop would have to salute and call him "sir" next time it saw him!

"Be careful!" Li Hao nodded as he daydreamed happily.

He Yong said nothing else as he ran for the royal palace. His actions raised quite the attention, and royal scouts cursed to themselves. You're from Silver Moon when they need help and recall that you're a royal instructor when the coast is clear. Do you think of the royal palace as a hotel??

There was suddenly only Light Sword and Earthturner Sword left by Li Hao's side. The three returned to the Ministry of the Judiciary.

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Earthturner Sword and Light Sword went about their business when they returned to the Judiciary. Li Hao walked straight into the depths of the rear residence. There was a house there, built in the style of a minor palace hall. Plainly, this was where the entrance to the Hu ruins was located.

Li Hao proceeded according to his exploration until he reached the end of the hall. There was a door there that was clearly built later; it looked to be the passageway to the ruins.

The young man stood outside instead of entering. A long moment later, a faint tendril of mental power reached out from behind the door.

"You are... Li Hao? The heir of the Sword Sovereign?"

"I thought you would ignore me." Li Hao smiled.

Although the plant spirits couldn't emerge in the world, they could still release some mental strength to probe the surroundings. Even the little tree could do so—it'd known ahead of time when Li Hao led a group into Mount Cat Head.

"Hu Xiao and Hu Mingfa are dead?"

"Correct."

“My replica is also broken... Did you kill it?”

“It had nothing to do with me,” Li Hao laughed. “How would I have the ability to do that? The powerhouses inside Evenround Martial did it. You guys were certainly bold to cause trouble inside the university! Did you not know the danger, or not understand it?”

The plant spirit thought deeply for a moment. “That martial university... is very mysterious! But we thought that everyone had departed... It appears that there were powerhouses that stayed behind.”

“Of course, and they’re terrifying!” Li Hao laughed. “When your replicas were churned to pieces, one of them yelled... A Saint!”

A large tree behind the door trembled slightly. A Saint?? There was a Saint in residence at Evenround Martial! Incredible!

“It looks like... something went gravely wrong with Hu Mingfa’s plan... Those energy stones became the opportunity for their revival... They were caught in their own trap!” sighed the tree. Their side had courted death. The plant spirits had anticipated this outcome as they truly thought there was no one around.

There were no resident plant spirits at Evenround Martial. Logically speaking, even if there was someone there, they should’ve declined to the state of lingering obsession or mental strength. There would be nothing to be afraid of as existences like Director General Wang were indicative of the problems plaguing those still alive in the ruins.

Humanity... did not live as long as monster spirits did in the passage of time. However, the remnants of strength from a Saint was sufficient to shatter their replicas. The gap between the two was too great!

Not to mention, their replicas were very weak at only five or six elements. How were they to stand against a revived Saint? Whether in the ages of New Martial, Emphyrean Emperor, or Initial Martial... the Saint cultivation level was a premier existence.

Li Hao was also rapidly assessing the situation. The plant spirit behind the door should not be of the Saint level.

“The Hus are no more. Would you like to work with me, Senior Plant Spirit?” Li Hao chuckled.

“You?”

“Can we not work together? The descendant of the Sword Sovereign should bear some qualifications no matter where I am! Even though that Saint didn’t give me any treasures, it didn’t dare touch me either. You’re just an Immortal at most, but can you even utilize the strength of an Apex since you aren’t fully awakened? In the ancient civilization, you wouldn’t be fit to partner with the Li clan!”

“.....” The plant spirit hadn’t thought that this person would be so arrogant, but he was right. His words were true. It was just a plant spirit standing guard back in the day, it didn’t have the right to talk to the Lis of cooperation. “You said so yourself that this was back in the ancient civilization. That was when the Sword Sovereign still existed. And now?”

“And now, I eliminated the Hus!” Li Hao laughed loudly. “You can partner with even the Hus. What, am I less worthy?”

Chapter 804: Beat The Shit Outta It! (IV)

“It’s not out of the question,” the plant spirit offered after some silence. “So long as you can complete the mission that I set for the Hus, then partnership between us is also feasible.”

“Tell me plainly, what can I gain and what price do I need to pay?”

“I need large sums of mysterious power stones,” the plant spirit said bluntly. “As for what you stand to gain—Water of Life is what you crave the most. Apart from that, I can offer you the same deal as I did the Hus. So long as you pay the appropriate price, I can also sever off some core origin to create a replica and eliminate your enemies!”

“What is your price for Water of Life?”

“I charged the Hus sixty thousand stones per drop. You are the Sword Sovereign’s descendant, an esteemed personage that everyone knows. Fifty thousand stones will do!”

“.....” Li Hao laughed, but inwardly cursed up a storm. You guys really know how to rip someone off! You put it like you’re giving me a deal!

Naturally, his talk of partnership was entirely bullshit. The young man just wanted to test the waters.

“If I may be so bold, are you stronger or General Pagoda of Battle Heaven?”

“.....” The big tree was speechless. One was the defending general of a main city, while one was the guard of a corner of Skystar Town. Which do you think is stronger?

“Don’t blame me for my questions, I also need to determine how strong you are and if you’re worth my effort. After all, I have a lot of options as well as a lot of Silver Moon powerhouses worth my exertion...”

The big tree cursed to itself. Others might not be able to voice these words, but the one in front of him absolutely could. It rummaged through its thoughts before responding, “Perhaps I am less than some of the Silver Moon existences, but they have all stilled in silence. It’s too hard for you to revive them and the price you’ll have to pay will be far more than you can imagine. What you gain in return will be scant and sparse!

“I’m different. Since the nine ministries and royal family have chosen us out of all possible options, that means we are the strongest. We have also awoken by quite a bit, we are not just starting on our journey. Do you know what I mean?”

“I do!” Li Hao nodded. “So it means that you guys can step into battle at any time, but General Pagoda in Battle Heaven will only be stirring to wakefulness even if I supply one hundred million stones. The general will also be very weak and far less than you, is that right?”

“Of course!”

“Then... how strong are you compared to your brethren among the nine ministries and royal family?”

“The one with the royal family was the main protector of Skystar Town back in the day. We are... slightly weaker than it. The others are roughly the same as me.”

“Are you Apex or Immortal?” Li Hao asked. “You’re not at the Saint level, right?”

“Correct.” The big tree didn’t deny it since this might be easily determined after paging through some ancient tomes. “You know a lot, but the more you know, the more you should understand how strong we are...”

“Of course!” Li Hao laughed. “Ah, is the one with the royal family of the Saint level?”

“It’s just a hair away!”

The young man understood—peak Immortal, was it? That was indeed strong! “So you’re an Immortal too?”

“Yes.”

“Then... does that mean you can kill an Apex if I lure him here?” Li Hao grinned.

“Apex? No Apexes exist now, it is impossible for them to appear...”

“That’s hard to say,” laughed Li Hao. “Qi Pingjiang of Armed Forces is at peak six elements. He’s only one step away.”

“That’s still a difference of heaven and earth!” It was the first time that the big tree displayed such confidence. “I’ll kill him easily if he dares come!”

I see! This guy is at least an Apex. Damn that’s scary. Can the little tree’s replica measure up to it with the imperial palace projection?

It’ll... probably be just a little bit weaker. These plant spirits have all awakened to a great degree; the little tree previously only fought their replicas of unknown strength.

“I understand!” Li Hao nodded. “I’ll converse with you in a few days! I have matters to attend to tomorrow and need to exterminate the remnants of my enemies. I hope that you can also understand there are only benefits to be had in partnering with me. There are no drawbacks to worry about.”

“I naturally understand, or I would not have appeared to see you.” It didn’t matter who the big tree cooperated with, so long as the person could supply sufficient mysterious power stones for its recovery. Whether it was the Hus or Li Hao, did it matter?

Not at all!

It wanted Li Hao to understand that reviving it was a much better bargain than focusing on the one in Battle Heaven. What could that one bring even if one offered one hundred million stones?

I’m different!

Li Hao turned on his heel and left. This big tree is at least an Apex and cannot be mentioned in the same as six element Arcanus. It's very, very strong! Can my combined force and the little tree's replica really take care of it?

I'm six elements, Yao Si is five. The little tree... is more than six and less than seven. The gains will be unimaginable if I can kill it...

And, has the little tree improved lately? It can't have gained nothing after devouring all that core origin power. Once we take down this tree... the little tree and Deputy Zhou can have both some core origin power. I'll have another ruin in hand... There's so much to gain here!

Li Hao had finally made up his mind. I'm gonna beat the shit outta it! I might not have if you'd said five thousand stones for one drop, but fifty thousand? What am I keeping you around for if I don't kill you for that?

.....

On the last day of November, the 30th.

A hubbub formed in front of the Skystar Commander Office on the Avenue of the Nine Ministries. It was to officially open for business today!

People bustled to and fro on this avenue early in the morning. There were very few bystanders in regular times, but it positively thronged with people all day. Whether they were here to offer congratulations or collect information, paying a visit was no loss for most people. If one didn't come, however, that might leave an undesirable impression.

Representatives from Skystar City, some provincial overlords, local leaders, seven divine mountains, and even the City of Supernaturals were present. The three great organizations sent their people either in the shadows or out in the open.

All of the various agencies had their doors flung open on this day. Some doors had been closed when Li Hao arrived to claim his new territory, but all of them opened for business over the past two days. Those who insisted on keeping their doors closed would be declaring that they wished to end up like the Judgment Guard! Any who wished for that to be their end could try doing so.

A heavy traffic of people and vehicles filled the streets; the clamor was unceasing. At the end of the avenue, the once magnificent Judiciary had a new signboard over its doors. The characters of 'Skystar Commander Office' glittered with radiance.

Demon Hunters and Night Watchers conducted intersecting patrols at the two ends of the long street. To the Night Watchers, they would no longer be of the Inspectorate after today. They would be the Night Watchers of the Skystar Commander Office. Some were happy, some were worried, and others decried the change.

But... what could they do about it? Absolutely nothing at all.

.....

On the avenue.

Someone looked at the structure towering at the end of the street and remarked emotionally, "To think that he'd defeat one of the nine ministries about a month after arriving at Skystar City and make it so that the other eight ministries don't dare retaliate. He really is a bit like a wandering hero!"

"Wandering hero? His teacher Yuan Shuo wouldn't be as useful as the lad if he was here!"

"That's true!" Some old men chuckled merrily on the avenue, laughing harder when they mentioned Yuan Shuo.

Yuan Shuo had led the pack back in the day. The title of Old Demon Five Styles had shaken the entire martial world and now... the curtains had closed on it. Rather, it was his disciple who was truly renowned throughout all of the known world.

The old men looked around, then at the martial masters of the Demon Hunters. They nodded with approval. "High spirits and strong morale. What a group of fine youngsters! As expected of Silver Moon martial masters!"

"They don't really count as Silver Moon martial masters anymore though!" One of them shook his head. "They've become officials and draw a public stipend. That Demon Sword didn't open a martial dojo either. Instead, he establishes the Skystar Commander Office to administer the laws of the land. These people... would all be regarded as government flunkies back in the day..."

"You're so old fashioned!"

"Old stick-in-the-mud!"

"I'm just saying... what are you guys yelling at me for?" The old men chattered loudly, having quite a good time. One of them snapped to attention when he saw something, drawing the glances of the other elders.

"Chen Zhongtian, that old thing is so long-lived!" someone sneered.

The old inspector general and his son were walking in their direction. The old minister quickly identified the old men and smiled nonchalantly at them.

"Martial masters?" Chen Yao followed his father's gaze. There were a bunch of martial masters in that direction, and they all seemed pretty strong.

"They're martial masters—the old guard from Silver Moon," his father answered casually. "They've lived quite long as they're only a few years younger than me. To think that they'd still be

alive! These guys wanted to charge into Skystar City twenty years ago when the supernatural rose. The joint forces of the nine ministries and royal family defeated and killed a bunch of them.”

Chen Yao nodded, he remembered this. He hadn't been involved as he'd been too weak then. Some of the older heavyweights had participated in a battle over the Skystar Sea. These old martial masters of Silver Moon had wanted to seize something; he hadn't bothered himself with the matter.

Here they were again after so many years!

“What are they doing here?” Chen Yao asked with confusion. “There's not much for them to do at present. Do they hope to get something from Li Hao?”

“.....” The old minister laughed. Just listen to his son! “Can't they just be here to congratulate him? Not to mention, if it wasn't for Li Hao already defeating his enemies, you might be seeing them fight the nine ministries on this day!”

If it wasn't for the fact that the battle had been won before these old martial masters arrived, they would certainly be fighting at the moment. They were all very strong.

Chen Yao said nothing further. Everything looked to be fine and peaceful today. The nine ministries wouldn't cause trouble and neither would the royal family. Who would dare kick up a fuss at this time in Skystar City?

Only idiots would do so.

Chapter 805: Mishaps at Inauguration (I)

The doors to the Skystar Commander Office were wide open. A large open area behind the doors had been arranged as the site of the festivities. An extraordinary flurry of activity filled it; Demon Hunters standing around the perimeter added to the celebration.

There wasn't much food to be seen, mostly chairs individually set around the area. Some of them were assigned to a row of tables at the front. There was tea and finger food laid out on the tables. That was seating provided only for the biggest factions.

Place cards were set out on the tables for the eight ministries, royal family, seven divine mountains, City of Supernaturals, and three great organizations. There were twenty seats total!

Quite a few people sucked in sharp breaths when they registered the sight. It was the height of brazen arrogance to assign spots for even the three great organizations. Was this blatant face slapping or were they truly invited?

After the twenty most prominent guests came seats for certain provinces and more well known local supernatural organizations. Although simply putting their name cards on chairs made for a shabby sight, just the sight of those placements alone caused one's hearts to skip a beat.

What was Li Hao trying to accomplish with this presentation? Was he going to make a note of everyone who didn't show up? Also, the lords of Buddha and Sky Roc Mountains were dead. Would their representatives attend? They still had powerhouses in residence, but closed door cultivation should be their first priority at the moment. Would they have the time to spare for offering congratulations?

The first row was occupied by a row of benches. They faced what should be the speaker's podium. There were name cards on the benches as well.

Chen Yao and his father were the first out of the eight ministries to arrive. They were followed closely by those of Finance and Internal Affairs. All of the ministers had come, and not the old ministers. Ministers Liu Yunqing and Mu Hai were present in person.

Their presence surprised the other guests who were here early. Three current ministers had already arrived. What an extravagant exhibit! The nine ministries were truly showing Li Hao face. How many nine ministry powerhouses had the young man killed? It would be enough for them to send a representative, but their ministers were here in person. There wouldn't be another pitched battle today, would there?

Some people began looking around with alarm. Yao Si arrived at this time. He walked straight to the podium and located his seat in a chair that faced the audience. He smiled when he met the ministers' eyes and looked at the Inspectorate's bench. The man hadn't thought that Chen Zhongtian would be here in person as well!

Now this was getting interesting!

Those from Administration and Armed Forces arrived together moments later. It was another two current ministers—Qi Pingjiang's son Qi Dinghai. The characters of 'pingjiang' stood for pacifying the rivers, whereas the ones of 'dinghai' meant calming the seas. Their shared bloodline was evident through their names.

The current minister of Armed Forces was also a solemn, awe-inspiring individual like Qi Pingjiang. He looked a bit younger than Qi Pingjiang, but that was all the difference. A few people followed behind him, one of which Yao Si recognized. He raised his eyebrow at seeing Yuan Xingwu. This former senior disciple of Yuan Shuo's was a late Nova now. What did Armed Forces intend with assigning him to Qi Dinghai?

The minister of Administration was a cultured and refined man. A scholarly air wrapped around him; he looked to be in his mid forties. Zhao Huaimin smiled at Yao Si when the two looked at each other. His father had chosen these two characters for his name because he wished for his son to be as they entailed, to hold the people of the world in his heart. The old minister of Administration had done so all those years ago, but now... he might have forgotten those intentions in times long past.

Yao Si looked at the two newest arrivals. These two had strong fathers and were strong enough themselves. They didn't look all that impressive, but they should be at least three element Arcanus.

Premier heavyweights like them usually ascended from the path of martial dao. The nine ministries used to count many martial masters among their ranks. Recently, whether it was due to pressure from recent events or finding that supernaturals could convert back to martial dao, all of those martial masters had seemed to cross over to the Arcanus level.

These kinds of powerhouses were much stronger than regular Arcanus. With the arrival of the final two ministers, nearly all of the eight ministries were represented. Five current ministers and one old minister had come for a total of six.

The Ministries of Examination, Foreign Affairs and Commerce didn't send their ministers, just their vice ministers. The ones of Examination and Foreign Affairs were dead. None of their heavyweights of the same level would dare come now. After Qian Wanhao from Commerce was dead, his son plainly wouldn't choose to show his face at this time. Sending his vice minister was a decision made after prolonged consideration and a direct request from Armed Forces and Administration.

The royal family had also sent a delegation. Out of its nine princes, two were dead. The Prince of Southern Conciliation was present, along with a few royal children. The seventh princess and ninth prince were among them.

Even the nine ministries were surprised by this prince's presence. He was the only one among the royal family who still actively led troops. He was a general in the true sense of the word and commanded six hundred thousand men. He held down the fort on the shores of the South Sea and faced off against the Valiant Duke in the south.

The dynasty had three founding dukes of external surnames among its officials—the Tranquil Duke in the west, the Steadfast Duke in the east, and the Valiant Duke in the south. [1] Of them, the Valiant Duke possessed the greatest battle accomplishments. Combined with the abundance of the south, that meant he was an existence that the royal family was highly on guard against.

Compared to the Steadfast Duke, the Valiant Duke was more domineering and had wanted to cross the sea a few times to expand his territory northward. But with the Prince of Southern Conciliation present on the other side, the two were locked in a standoff for many years. The nine ministries paid no attention to the matter and didn't strip the prince of his military command either.

But today, the prince had returned to the capital. Different thoughts grappled with this development. Had the duke reached an accord with the prince, or was something else at play?

Otherwise, wasn't the prince concerned that the Valiant Duke would set off as soon as he left?

All of their questions were answered a moment later. A group of people sauntered vigorously toward the complex's front doors. Led by a well-muscled man, they set foot through the doors. The man swept a glance around the premises and said faintly. "Are the three founding dukes not worthy of seats?"

"The Valiant Duke!" Some could not believe their eyes! It'd been a very long time since the three founding dukes had come to the capital. They dominated their respective locales. So the Valiant Duke was here in person today! No wonder the Prince of Southern Conciliation had come back. Since his old opponent was here, it didn't matter if he stayed at his post.

Another group of people walked in at this time. Their leader was slightly chubby, but looked to be quite refined and wore opulent robes. "Big brother Valiant is here too?"

"We're not that familiar with each other, Tranquil Duke!" The Valiant Duke didn't even bother turning around.

"....." The slightly chubby man didn't mind. He smiled and looked at Yang Shan close by; the latter seemed a bit frightened, then quickly pulled himself upright. He cast a fierce look at the duke.

The Tranquil Duke smiled and inclined his head, not minding the exchange. Yang Shan... used to be an expert-in-residence at his home, but turned traitor and fled one day. The man had changed his name and gone into hiding with Qin Lian, so there were no traces of their whereabouts.

Yang Shan then abruptly reappeared a few days ago and participated in the battle against the Four Seas Company. His wife had been part of the Skystar Sea battle. Did the married couple think they were untouchable after latching onto Li Hao's thigh?

Despite the Tranquil Duke's thoughts, he remained smiling.

Another ripple of shock percolated through the crowd. Other than the Steadfast Duke's household that was in a sorry plight, the other two founding duke families had sent representatives—and it was the dukes themselves!

Another person showed himself at this time—Deputy Zhou.

“Surely you jest, Valiant Duke.” He smiled warmly. “We simply thought that the two dukes wouldn't make the trip as the distance is long. This is why we've been short on hospitality. Men! Hurry and set up seats for the two dukes!”

Someone quickly walked up with two chairs and placed them behind the royal family, not the first row.

“The three major dukes are the founding dukes of the nation,” remarked the Valiant Duke as he stared at Deputy Zhou. “Do we count even less than the three evil organizations these days?”

Deputy Zhou didn't mind, he chuckled, “Ah, you are indeed joking, Your Grace. The three evil organizations are filled with the lawless and reckless type. They do not accept education or enlightenment, so they should sit in the front row! According to custom and propriety, the two dukes cannot be placed on the same footing as the royal family. But if the Valiant Duke wishes to sit in the front row, we can arrange for that as well. Men, move their seats to the front row!”

“Forget it,” the duke laughed after a meaningful look. “You're familiar with proper code and conduct!”

As for the eight ministries, three great organizations, and City of Supernaturals... His words essentially meant that these people all rebel against the royal family and they were leaders of their respective factions. You, too, can be a rebel leader if you announce those intentions now.

The Valiant Duke looked at the deputy a few more times, knowing that the latter used to be the deputy director general of Silver Moon. He smiled and led his people to their seats without further word.

The Tranquil Duke beamed brightly and nodded slightly, then walked to his seat to sit next to the Valiant Duke.

The Prince of Southern Conciliation sat unmoving in front of them, whereas the seventh princess turned around for a look and felt uncomfortable. These three dukes showed signs of mutiny a few years ago and the Valiant Duke had faced this prince for many years. Today, however, the dukes were sitting behind them. The possibility of them striking at the royal delegation was so uncomfortable that it almost couldn't be borne.

With the royal prince being wholly unmoving, however, the two royal children didn't say a word, despite how uncomfortable they were. It was the inauguration day of the Skystar Commander Office and while the dukes' intentions were unknown, they wouldn't choose this particular timing to create trouble. Not unless they wished to wage war against Li Hao.

The crowd at the back also found their seats. Of the ninety-nine provinces, those that were closer had sent their major personages. Those further away sent their office representatives in Skystar City. Almost everyone was present, with some attending of their own accord even if they weren't ordered to do so. While adding to the festivities may not be on their mind, there was no need to offend Li Hao either.

The provincial tyrants were no fools—Li Hao was in the middle of fighting someone else, what was one going to be involved for? To deliver their own heads on a platter to him? Even Near River province, one that Li Hao was decidedly on the outs with, had sent someone. Although their representative was just a Solar, it was quite a show of respect and face.

Chapter 806: Mishaps at Inauguration (II)

More attendees arrived while a low hum of conversation buzzed through the vicinity. The newcomers broke through the air in the blink of an eye and revealed themselves to be very young when they landed. Representatives from the City of Supernaturals!

They didn't speak after their arrival and simply walked straight to the front, locating their seats after quickly scanning the area. Satisfied that they were seated in the same row as the most distinguished, they took their places.

There were still people standing outside the doors—those were just here for the show. Those who dared linger for the proceedings were personages of uncommon note themselves. There were some old men present who were veteran martial masters of Silver Moon’s martial world. Some other martial seniors also dawdled—wandering rogues as opposed to government officials. They craned their necks from outside the door. Perhaps there would be some fighting later on! Although it would be dangerous to be nearby, there was never a shortage of people unafraid of death.

Some in the crowd outside looked like scouts, possibly from the three great organizations or seven divine mountains. No one minded their presence and permitted them to observe as they would.

A different group walked out of the rear yard of the Skystar Commander complex at this time.

.....

Li Hao was clad in armor; he’d changed its color today as the golden color was very conspicuous. He opted for red, finding it to be more festive. To outsiders, however, it looked to be the color of blood!

Hong Yitang and the others followed by his side. They headed to the front with Li Hao and dropped into their seats.

“Thank you everyone for the honor of your presence today.” Li Hao smiled at the crowd beneath him. “It has exceeded my expectations that so many people have come!” He frowned slightly. “Why is there no food or drink when our esteemed guests have already arrived?”

Seated on the wing of the stage, Deputy Zhou glanced at Li Hao. “Bring out the food and drink!”

The declaration caused a ripple of surprise that grew more pronounced when the food was brought out. A dozen soldiers lifted a platform with a massive roc bird on it.

“This is an Arcanus level major monster spirit,” Li Hao chuckled. “Its flesh and blood are highly nutritious! Men, cut off pieces for our guests! It tastes the best and is chewier when raw. Enjoy this uncommon delicacy, everyone!”

Certain eyes widened among the crowd. This was the lord of Sky Roc Mountain! Li Hao had outright delivered the mountain lord's carcass on a platter! This fellow was... truly vicious! At the same time, some in the crowd were completely unmoved.

Soldiers cut up pieces of monster spirit flesh and served bloody portions to the tables. The audience behind them could only put their plates on their legs. No one dared say anything. They stared at the cold smoke rising from the bloody flesh. Some closed their eyes while others snorted with laughter and dug in with fork and knife.

"Does it not suit some of your appetites?" Li Hao smiled. "I hear that phoenix meat is even more tasty. Why don't I serve a different selection for everyone next time?"

"Is Commander Li going to kill the lord of Phoenix Mountain?" The Valiant Duke smiled before anyone else could answer. "I'm actually rather looking forward to that. Save me a piece when you take out that monster spirit!"

"Those are heroic words!" laughed Li Hao. "That is most certainly part of my plans and I will save you some! I showed them face today, but they rejected me. There is a spot arranged for them, but they are not here. I'll raze that mountain to the ground when I have time!"

Cold pricked at the spines of some in the crowd! This guy truly spoke like a crazed martial blockhead. Representatives from Phoenix Mountain might have ended up with the same grisly fate had they attended today. Maybe... maybe Li Hao was just blowing hot air!

The young man laughed for a bit; a portion of meat appeared in front of him—it was cooked!

His guests inwardly cursed him out when they saw the sight. You serve us raw meat while you eat a cooked portion yourself!

“It’s my first time doing something like this, so I’m not sure what the proper procedure is,” Li Hao laughed. “Establishing the Skystar Commander Office... is frankly just going through the formalities. But since everyone is here, I’ll say a few words for the inauguration!”

“First, from today henceforth, the Night Watchers are officially joining the Skystar Commander Office. Director Yao Si will continue to be the director, as well as a vice commander in the Skystar Commander Office!

“Second, the commanders of the four directions fall under the jurisdiction of this Office. Hou Xiaochen will be assigned the commander of the north, Southern Fist He Yong will be assigned the commander of the south! Light Sword Hu Jiao is assigned to the east and Yang Shan is assigned to the west!”

A ringing silence answered his words.

“Third, the Skystar Martial Academy will be built with Earthturner Sword Hong Yitang as the headmaster!

“Fourth, there will be an administrative wing of the Skystar Commander Office with Zhou Chuan as the administrative director general!

“Fifth, the Demon Hunter Army is to be reorganized with Liu Long as its commander!” Li Hao concluded faintly. “This will be the operating system of the Skystar Commander Office to come. The commanders of the four cardinal directions will administer the affairs of supernaturals in their territory. The administrative wing is in charge of establishing the laws of the land. It will handle all civil duties!

“The Night Watchers are to be divided into five divisions—headquarters and the four cardinal directions to be directed by their respective commanders.

“The Skystar Martial Academy will propagate martial dao and accept civilians as students. Ordinary students will have a chance to practice martial dao as well!” Li Hao smiled. “What does everyone

think of my arrangements? I am quite young and do not understand this, so I have casually delineated responsibilities. Does anyone have any advice to offer?"

The audience was still digesting the announcements. The Tranquil Duke smiled at this time. "We naturally have no opinion about the commander's internal arrangements. However... I do have a small question to ask..."

"Ask away!"

"This Yang Shan... used to be an expert in residence in my household. He stole a precious treasure from my complex and has been on the run since. He even killed some people when he ran. The commander says that you will strictly administer the law as your guiding principle.

"This Yang Shan has committed murder in pursuit of another's property, but now he swaggers forward with the righteousness of the southern commander under the Skystar Commander Office. I don't know how Commander Li has been hoodwinked—how can a criminal qualify to enforce the law on the commander's behalf?"

Li Hao looked at Yang Shan.

"In response to the commander." Yang Shan bowed. "I fled because I was unwilling to comply with the collusion between the duke and pirates. I killed the pirate leader and the collaborators from the duke's side. I was then pursued by his powerhouses and had to go into hiding..."

"Collusion with pirates?" laughed the Tranquil Duke. "Is this the story you come up with since you have no evidence at all? Do you know what awaits you for falsely accusing a duke? I do not mind, but this will be a stain on the Skystar Commander Office's reputation.

"Commander Li reveres the law, but you hold it in contempt and easily slander others. You'll bring about the downfall of the Skystar Commander Office if this continues! You have indeed murdered people and stolen treasure. You admit to it yourself!" The duke looked at Li Hao. "Commander Li,

you should not appoint him as the western commander even if you don't thoroughly investigate him. Otherwise, your inauguration ceremony will become an occasion of criticism!"

Li Hao looked steadily at him. The Tranquil Duke was the first and only person to raise a fuss today. He made complete sense and presented a well reasoned argument. Li Hao could not force him to be quiet. If he did, the strict adherence to the law that he preached would become a joke. It was the foundation of his legitimacy! If that was shaken, he would lose the trust of the outside world.

Even if the Tranquil Duke really had colluded with pirates, was there any evidence to prove his actions?

"Do you have proof, Yang Shan?" Li Hao turned to the man with a smile. "If not, falsely accusing the duke is no small matter! If you do have proof, I'll arrest the duke on the spot and behead him as an example to others. This will be my announcement to the world that collusion with pirates will result in no mercy!"

The duke's eyes widened, but he quickly regained his calm. Li Hao was so out of control! But where is your evidence going to come from? What a joke! He naturally had his own plans in mind with sticking his neck out at a time like this. It wasn't worth telling others about it. Although Li Hao was a difficult person to deal with, there was nothing the duke was afraid of.

"I do! I have recorded images of the duke's people conversing with the leader of the pirates..." Yang Shan replied.

"That proves nothing." The duke frowned. A recording? That technology was banned many years ago. To think that the bastard would have that in his pocket!

"My wife once worked in the duke's household and was in charge of matters in the rear residence." Yang Shan ignored the duke's interjection. "She once saw the leader of the pirates enter the duke's complex for a secret meeting and recorded the entire process..."

The Tranquil Duke's frown deepened. How was that possible?? Qin Lian's betrayal was a spontaneous decision, how could she have recorded that such a long time ago? Is Yang Shan... bluffing?

Many were growing nervous at this point and didn't understand what the duke wanted to accomplish. This was just an inauguration ceremony, just be quiet and listen! Why did he have to rush over from the west and involve himself? Did he really think that Li Hao wouldn't dare kill him?

"Is that so? Then let us broadcast the recording," Li Hao laughed. "If your words prove true, then no matter how the duke argues, I can arrest him since he is a superhuman. Although we do not have direct evidence, we'll be able to seal off his complex first and investigate him later!"

The young man looked at the duke with increasing bafflement. The eight ministries and royal family aren't making a peep, but you've come all the way from the west to pick a bone with me. What are you cooking? Or do you have shit for brains? Or are you sticking your neck out for someone else to get a big payday?

I don't get it, but I don't mind that someone's offering their head up for me to use. Who knows if Yang Shan really has a recording? I'm just gonna bluff first!

Indeed, Li Hao wasn't aware of the truth of the situation either. No one had anticipated that the Tranquil Duke would fire the first shot. The young man hadn't expected anyone to come from the three dukes, and even if a representative was present, it wouldn't be the dukes themselves.

Hence, Li Hao wasn't sure what the Tranquil and Valiant Dukes wished to accomplish here. Therefore, he wasn't certain either if Yang Shan spoke the truth or just wanted to intimidate his old employer. Recordings were a technology that the government had banned long ago. What a coincidence that he happened to have it on him. Even Li Hao felt that this was a bluff!

Chapter 807: Mishaps at Inauguration (III)

Yang Shan said nothing further and murmured a few instructions. Servants quickly brought over and set up a large screen. The man took out an item from his storage ring—some people recognized it as a videotape.

The Tranquil Duke was frowning ferociously by now. He'd thought the rebuttal was fake, but now he realized the truth of Yang Shan's claims. No one should've known that he would cause trouble on this occasion, so Yang Shan was equally in the dark about his plans. That this was ready ahead of time could only mean one thing—it was real and truly existed!

The duke's expression flickered and he said faintly, "These things can be faked as well! What we see with our own eyes may not be real, to say nothing of ancient technology that can be easily modified."

"So the duke means that this is not evidence either?" demanded Yang Shan. "That everything hinges on one word from you? That I am guilty simply because you say I am? You must be mistaken about something, this is not your territory!"

He lifted his head and frostily regarded the duke. "In that case, then the duke needs to produce evidence that I have stolen from you and killed people. I killed pirates, seized their loot, and have already turned it into the Skystar Commander Office. Does the duke have a new story to spin about that?"

He maintained his hold on the videotape and didn't put it down to be played. You're picking at me, huh? Thank goodness I bought the tape with me! But... he didn't actually have the courage to play it. On the tape were recordings of his intimate affairs with his wife. It... ah... demonstrated some of his... particular kinks. He'd be the first one scared to death if he really played it!

Yang Shan was betting that the duke wouldn't let him play the tape!

Hidden in the shadows, a petrified Qin Lian was dripping with sweat. I'm going to hack you into pieces after we're done today! she cursed her husband. Her heart had leapt into her throat when he brought out the tape. How could you actually bring it out!

"Forget it, we can discuss this later since you aren't willing to admit to it." The Tranquil Duke smiled faintly. "Today is the inauguration day of the Skystar Commander Office. This duke will not put a damper on things!"

It was best if he could humiliate Li Hao, but if he couldn't, then the matter would be dropped. There was no need to force open hostilities between him and the young man.

Li Hao looked at the duke, then at Yang Shan. He really wanted to say, play the tape already damn it! I'll kill this guy as soon as you play it! He's got some nerve to spoil the day! He feels like he's lived too long and wants to die, doesn't he? I'm going to wring his neck today even if he's brought a true Apex plant spirit with him...

But Yang Shan wasn't playing the tape. Seeing as beads of sweat were dotting the man's forehead, Li Hao realized that something else was afoot.

"Very well then, let's leave it, Yang Shan," he commented casually. "The Tranquil Duke just wanted to vent his ill will. We can investigate later whether evidence truly exists. The wrong will not be acquitted and the innocent will not be convicted!"

"This subordinate understands!" Yang Shan lowered his head and waved for soldiers to dismantle the screen.

Some among the audience found the turn of events strange, but since the Tranquil Duke was no longer protesting, they were even less inclined to offend Li Hao.

Yang Shan put away the tape with an inward sigh of relief. That scared the shit out of me! Thank goodness for my kinks. Betchu they didn't think that I'd carry some tapes around with me. Mm, this is a good kink. I've got to keep it.

The man was highly satisfied by his quick wits. Otherwise, the Tranquil Duke really would have turned him into a criminal in front of the crowd and doused Li Hao's might.

The young man set the matter aside, as if he didn't care at all. "Such are the matters that I mentioned! In addition, I want to say that the Skystar Commander Office will be consolidating the superhuman domain in days to come. We will be setting down some superhuman rules to be

followed throughout the lands. I hope that you leaders of the dynasty will set an example in applying the rules!”

“What will these superhuman rules entail?” Chen Yao asked from the Inspectorate’s side.

“They’re simple and won’t levy any major restrictions. Being superhuman myself, I know how our minds work,” Li Hao laughed. “They center around the points of not harassing ordinary citizens, forbidding the wanton destruction of citizen property, banning flying through cities, and a requirement for all superhumans to register themselves.

“They can do so at their local Night Watcher branch. All superhumans will be entered in the records and those who are not listed will be regarded as evil supernaturals!”

Eyes widened at the explanation.

“According to what I know, some superhumans cultivate inside the ancient ruins. Are they to emerge to register themselves?” someone asked coolly. “Then what about the existences from the ancient civilization? Are they to register as well? Since we are all equal, will the Skystar Commander Office kill everyone who does not register?”

“And is there anything wrong with that?” Li Hao smiled. “It’s just registration, there will be no restrictions levied on people. They can register at first light when they leave the ruins. Is that hard to do? If they do not register after leaving the ruins and break the law, then execution is naturally in store! You don’t need to worry about that!”

Some were sneering inwardly at how importantly Li Hao thought of himself. Those from the City of Supernaturals also laughed. Superhuman registration could be a serious or trivial matter. When it came down to it, which faction would be willing to follow this rule?

If Li Hao insisted on this course of action, it was only a matter of time before he faced enormous backlash! Did he want to register the secluded powerhouses and those who’d withdrawn from the

world? Just look at those ambitions! Silver Moon might be the first to refuse, to say nothing of anyone else.

You might be deserted by all of your followers after this!

“And what of the monster spirit factions?” someone else laughed. “There are major monster spirits in our various territories. Is your hand going to stretch to them as well?”

“Why not?” Li Hao answered faintly. “Skystar Dynasty is human territory and the monster spirits have long bowed their heads to us. A registration log means they will be granted protection from humanity, enjoy harmonious relations, and delight in brotherly affection. That is the proper way forward! Those who stubbornly cling to the old ways will be killed!

“What, does the noble human race need to bow down to the monster spirits and wait on them hand and foot? Some humans go weak at the knees when they see monster spirits these days and do everything those monsters want. In return, they are scathingly harsh toward us while we live without dignity and principles!”

Ninety-nine percent of expressions shifted at his words. Plant spirits were also monster spirits. Some looked at Li Hao with an inscrutable look.

“Has Commander Li... not come in contact with any plant spirits?” Quiet all this time, the Prince of Southern Conciliation suddenly spoke up.

“I have, but I do not bow my head or bend the knee to them. My Water of Life from them requires only three thousand stones a drop. That is an equitable trade that leads to mutual benefit and profit...”

BOOM!

The audience shifted restlessly. Seriously?? Three thousand pieces?

“I did not say that we cannot work with monster spirits or show them respect,” Li Hao said faintly. “Both sides can coexist in peace. Everything is possible when the laws are adhered to! It is fine for monster spirits to enter our world as well. Everything is possible so long as they do not violate our laws!”

The people did not care about his last set of words. Chen Yao couldn’t contain himself. “How many mysterious power stones did you say you needed for one drop of Water of Life?”

“Three thousand!” Li Hao frowned.

“You don’t mean cultivation energy stones, do you?”

“Of course not!” the young man dismissed out of hand. “I expended nearly one thousand drops of Water of Life recently. If it was thirty thousand energy stones, wouldn’t that mean tens of millions mysterious power stones? I don’t have that kind of money to spare as I didn’t get a single stone from the pile that you guys dumped at Evenround Martial!”

The group looked at each other, whereas Li Hao looked at Liu Yunqing. “Minister Liu knows of the particulars, don’t you? A bunch of idiots randomly threw stones onto the ground and ended up reviving an ancient powerhouse... They deserved their deaths!”

Eyes widened as people looked to Liu Yunqing for confirmation. The man was expressionless and didn’t say a word. Judging from that reaction, the group knew that he possibly did know what had truly happened in the ruins. Damn it!

Liu Yunqing was caught between a rock and a hard place. Staying silent was the best course of action. Anything he said would be a mistake.

But now, everyone knew why the entire expedition and the plant spirit replicas were gone. Perhaps no one had been awake at the ruins before, but with all those mysterious power stones thrown onto the ground... and absorbed wholesale... how would nothing revive then?

It'd been one hundred million stones! Even a Saint could be brought back with that amount!

The more they thought about it, the more dejected they grew. So this was how their previous failure had come about?? Damned if they didn't want to vomit blood from it!!

And three thousand pieces per drop... was a heart-spasming figure. The least any of them paid was fifty thousand, with some of them paying sixty thousand. Wasn't that ten to twenty times what Li Hao's price was?

They knew that the plant spirits were certainly keeping some for themselves, but they hadn't expected that the plant spirits would be so greedy!

It also rang certain alarm bells as this meant these plant spirits might be much stronger than the group thought. They were accumulating strength in secret. More care needed to be taken!

Chen Yao was wholly fixated on this and nothing else. "Then... Commander Li, are you interested in trading for some Water of Life?"

"Sure." Li Hao nodded with a smile. "The caveat is that you join the Skystar Commander Office and earn some merits! By then, each drop will cost only three thousand pieces or less. The exact price will differ according to rank, which is only fair, isn't it?"

Chen Yao fell silent. Forget it, pretend I didn't say anything.

The rest of the group was rapidly considering that they couldn't continue trading with the plant spirits like this. Li Hao could trade for ten drops to their one, or not even. No wonder he improved so quickly and didn't lack resources.

Fucking hell! This wasn't fair! They had to renegotiate with the plant spirits no matter what. The plant spirits were fish caught in a pond. Having their arrangement break down would be good for no one.

"Then, is Commander Li willing to sell your Water of Life?"

"Of course! I'll charge only thirty thousand a drop. That's cheaper than what you can trade for."

No one jumped on his offer. Although that was cheap, Li Hao would benefit massively from the transaction and he was their enemy... That wasn't acceptable. They could not give such a good deal to Li Hao, even if the plant spirits charged them more. However, the possibility lingered in the back of some minds.

Thirty thousand stones a drop wasn't bad! The royal family sold theirs for one hundred thousand stones a drop and they still had buyers! It didn't matter to them if Li Hao earned the profits or someone else did.

Around the crowd, others watched certain expressions with dawning trepidation. This couldn't be allowed to stand! If someone really did trade with Li Hao and the young man kept ninety percent of the profits, would he continue to go stronger? But... were they supposed to sell below cost if they didn't want this situation to develop?

Headaches flourished throughout the group. The little bastard had certainly done this on purpose! He was forcing everyone to sell below cost at thirty thousand stones a drop! Not only would he still earn money from the endeavor, but he would earn the gratitude and strength of a batch of heavyweights! This guy was too black-hearted!

Chapter 808: Deliberate Misrepresentation (I)

The nine ministries and royal family had been preventing powerhouses rising from the ordinary populace by limiting their access to Water of Life. Without that critical resource, metamorphosis could not make it to Arcanus. But Li Hao represented an opening in that blockade. Large sums of metamorphosis and premier martial masters might flock to his banner.

It was the inevitable outcome after the guy essentially said that he would infinitely supply Water of Life!

The group sank into deep thought, contemplating how to respond strategically. They hadn't paid much attention to everything the young man said before, finding it to be delusions of grandeur. Only this represented real trouble!

Ultimately, Mu Hai of Internal Affairs spoke up, "I don't care about any of this. I just want to know when there will be movement for those that the commander has arrested—including my daughter."

"I was going to behead them today," Li Hao laughed. "But now... forget it. That would be placing too much importance on them. We can execute those who are guilty in a few more days. As for Minister Mu's daughter, there's not much issue with her. She's only guilty of some small transgressions, so spending two or three years locked away is enough!"

Mu Hai stared at the young man for a while before lowering his head without a word. Li Hao really was going to incarcerate his daughter! That bastard! And yet, he also had to be relieved that his daughter wasn't going to be beheaded.

Li Hao smiled radiantly at the audience. Not bad, other than the Tranquil Duke with a death wish, no one else made trouble for him. The proceedings were going well! He'd take care of that duke later.

"The Skystar Commander Office is officially established today and will enact rules for superhumans. This is a cause worthy of celebration!" A long peal of laughter suddenly rang through the air. "Powerhouses have existed since the ancient times, yet are unknown to all. Their names linger only in the wind and cloud! The Wind and Cloud Pavilion will publish the Arcanus Ranking and update the Divine Masters Ranking in three days. It will immortalize the names of the greatest in Silver Moon for all to see! Such is our gift to the Skystar Commander Office for its inauguration, hahaha!"

Laughter echoed loudly through the void as figures flashed through it. A light glinted in Li Hao's eyes as he looked around.

“That’s quite a show of little tricks!” he snorted. “What Wind and Cloud Pavilion? How dare it be of similar name to the Ranking of Wind and Cloud in the New Martial era?”

Li Hao wasn’t completely brainless! The originators of the Divine Masters Ranking appearing at this time meant that they wanted to stir up trouble! In the ancient civilization, the Ranking of Wind and Cloud exposed countless secluded heavyweights with its list and large-scale slaughter soon occurred after publication!

There was no sign of the speaker even now—they were gone!

Li Hao looked on with an unpleasant expression. The Wind and Cloud Pavilion had chosen this day, a day in which he gathered titans from all corners and was laying down the law, to steal his thunder. They obviously had malicious intent!

The Divine Masters Ranking was just a gimmick that not many powerhouses paid attention to. But now, they were going to release the Arcanus Ranking to immortalize Silver Moon heavyweights! That was gravely ambitious!

Various powerhouses glowered at the development. The Wind and Cloud Pavilion! They’d never heard of the organization before, while they knew of the Divine Masters Ranking. Some people had looked into the origins of the ranking, but found nothing for their efforts. They’d known early on that there was a backer behind the ranking. Who would’ve thought that this backer would be quite strong!

Could this ranking really list all of the heavyweights in the world? No one believed that! There was no one in the world who grasped knowledge of all the powerhouses there were.

Li Hao’s inauguration ceremony and establishment of rules for superhumans had abruptly become of secondary importance. All manner of flotsam and jetsam were becoming active prior to the second awakening. It looked like someone didn’t want the world to proceed peacefully. There were certain to be stunning changes and names present on this ranking.

“Damn them!” Quite a few people cursed, some with more apprehension than others. A series of troublesome issues might develop if the heavyweights of all factions were exposed. No one was certain if this mysterious organization had the capabilities it boasted of. The ancient records spoke of such a ranking that really did list all of the heroes beneath the heavens. It was a terrifying construct!

.....

Unhappy expressions filtered through those of the Skystar Commander Office. This was a nod to the Ranking of Wind and Cloud! A powerhouse had established that ranking; it was later called a walking obituary for those listed on it. It was heavily prominent in the ancient age and its creator incomparably domineering. Even the ancient Human King couldn’t do anything to them.

The skies and earth shifted when the ranking was updated. All excluded experts and local geniuses were entered on it. Their strength was described in full, which made it easier for enemies to get a grasp on their target. An entrant on the ranking might have commanded fear and respect before, yet who would be cautious after all was known?

Of course, the caveat was that the ranking was trusted and accepted by the public. If not, it was just hot air. But if the Arcanus Ranking released in three days could truly incorporate all of the powerhouses in Silver Moon... that would be horrifying! It meant someone else knew all of their secrets and personal affairs.

The various factions were hiding their true strength these days. As soon as someone listed verified that their information was correct, then that meant everyone else’s was also more or less correct.

“Do you know about the Ranking of Wind and Cloud?” Li Hao sent his mental strength into the storage ring.

“Hmm?” The little tree answered quickly despite its confusion. “I do, it was created by someone known as Daoist Wind and Cloud.”

This was not the true title of the premier heavyweight, so it didn't matter if they mentioned it.

"This powerhouse was a heaven-defying existence in my father's memories," the little tree continued. "He created the Sky Gander and the Mirror of Wind and Cloud. That treasure connected directly to the final destination of core origin dao and could capture the true nature of all things. Any core origin practitioner would enter the ranking without exception!"

Li Hao took a sharp breath! He knew about the ranking, but had absolutely no inspiration as to connect a treasure to the final stage of a cultivation dao. That was... formidable and incredible!

"Additionally, it's not just one person as the Daoist of Wind and Cloud, it was an entire family!" the little tree continued. "They were a legendary family that produced an incredible number of four emperors!

"You might not know what it means to be an emperor—those were truly invincible existences! Even the later Human King was hard pressed to stand against the Daoist of Wind and Cloud. The daoist and his three sons schemed against the various emperors and disrupted the world. They realized the error of their ways later on and, as redemption, rendered grave services in helping the Human King kill the Celestial Emperor!

"Everyone knew of the Ranking of Wind and Cloud when it was published," the little tree was still quite emotional when thinking of the creator behind it. "The skies and earth shook, even the Forbidden Sea was suppressed!"

Li Hao laughed at the little tree's recounting. Now this was a real Ranking of Wind and Cloud! Four emperors from just one family? That was incredible? What the hell was that in return just now? The young man chortled gleefully. Who were they trying to scare? The speaker hadn't been present at all and simply conveyed his words through transmission. There was a ninety-nine percent chance that he'd been more than ten thousand meters away and didn't dare draw close.

Look at how Daoist Wind and Cloud carried himself—he dominated the world as soon as his ranking was published! It looked like the Wind and Cloud Pavilion might have some knowledge of this ranking, or had possibly obtained an imitation of its treasure?

It was impossible for them to have the genuine article; they wouldn't be able to use it even if they did. Modern martial masters did not possess core origin and neither did supernaturals. How the hell was one supposed to create a Ranking of Wind and Cloud?

Li Hao laughed and transmitted to the little tree, "Someone wants to set up the Ranking of Wind and Cloud in this age. Do you think they can do it? Will they be able to detect the powerhouses hidden in the ruins or those who are concealing their strength like me?"

"They... do have a hope of doing so if they have fragments of Sky Gander," the little tree said after some thought. "And I mean real fragments! Or an imitation of that treasure. A powerful imitation can scan all of Silver Moon Territory and search for life signs. It can then deduce the strength of the bearer from the strength of the life sign."

"Sky Gander was omnipotent back in the day. The Imperial Majesty wielded it and could even peer into the core origin of invincible heavyweights! It was terrifying. Although people repaired it after it was broken, it was hard to revert back to its original form. If someone obtains a true fragment of the treasure, they might have a chance of looking into Silver Moon Territory. This land is too small and its powerhouses too few!"

"Silver Moon Territory?" asked Li Hao. What did the little tree mean by that? "Was the ancient civilization more than just Silver Moon?"

He'd had certain thoughts in this direction when he learned about the Star Gate, but it was still difficult to digest the notion that his entire world was too small. So the little tree meant that they didn't possess the complete set of ancient civilization ruins?

"This territory is just the great majesty's abandoned palace. You knew that early on!"

This entire world was just part of an abandoned palace? Then where was the real palace? How about the Human King's? His Imperial Majesty's? There were only the eight main cities to be found in Silver Moon province these days, did that mean those cities were the center of the world in those times?

The little tree felt that Li Hao should've come to these conclusions long ago and not be asking now whether the ruins he knew of constituted all of the ruins from the ancient civilization. Of course not!

“Therefore, you mean that Silver Moon is just one tiny aspect of the ancient civilization?”

“Correct.”

Li Hao took a deep breath, closed his eyes, and didn't say a word. His guests thought that he was enraged by the earlier visitor, but in reality, the young man didn't care at all.

“So this means to say that if they obtain a fragment of Sky Gander... they have a chance of finding all the powerhouses in the world?”

“It's possible, or if they have an imitation. It can't be trash, it has to be a strong imitation. The mirror fragments in your hand might be ones from a powerful imitation...”

“They're not fragments of Sky Gander?”

The little tree fell silent with speechlessness. “How is that possible?? If they were fragments of Sky Gander, you'd be invincible throughout the lands since you already have five. Just one fragment alone was enough to cause Saints to fight over it back in the day...”

Would you have five so easily? What's running through that mind of yours?

“Then if they...”

“Seize it!” The little tree had learned how to interrupt. “If it’s not Sky Gander they have, then it’s a very good imitation! You have the right to hold the pieces of Sky Gander, whereas I’m not sure if they do.”

Chapter 809: Deliberate Misrepresentation (II)

“I have the right?” Li Hao blinked. “From my ancestor?”

“Of course not, from the great majesty, didn’t I say so already?” The little tree felt quite helpless. “The Imperial Majesty’s palace has been abandoned. I am the only remaining direct spokesperson. The majesty’s belongings still belong to the majesty even if they are unwanted. I cannot take it back at present, but you can. I entrust you to bring them back!”

“.....” Li Hao nearly choked on his spit. Just listen to these words! Darned if they weren’t high-handed. This great majesty was an overbearing person, wasn’t he? My things are still mine when I don’t want them. I’ll kill whoever dares take them!

The little tree had mentioned before that this Imperial Majesty immensely disliked being mentioned and would reach through the void to kill whoever mentioned his name. What kind of person was this majesty and what was his relationship to the ancient Human King?

The ancient web of relationships was so complicated!

“Can these guys have gotten the Mirror of Wind and Cloud?”

“Impossible!” denied the little tree again. “That’s impossible because the mirror last resided with the Human King. Who is able to take anything from the Human King?”

That would be the greatest joke of all! Even the fragments of Sky Gander could not be the Mirror of Wind and Cloud. Fragments were fragments and simply lost if they went missing. How would the Human King leave the complete Mirror of Wind and Cloud randomly lying around? That was an ultimate treasure that the Daoist of Wind and Cloud had painstakingly crafted!

Although the mirror wasn't as capable as Sky Gander, it was a treasure of a similar level. It was only lesser because it ultimately imitated Sky Gander.

"If what they wield is a fragment of Sky Gander... do you mean to say that... they will be very strong?" Li Hao understood.

"Don't worry, the most that this world can support at present is peak six elements."

The young man immediately understood the little tree's response. No matter how strong a treasure was, using too much strength would result in the void churning one to pieces. Therefore, there would be no appearance of strength greater than peak six element Arcanus.

Li Hao sneered when his thoughts traveled here. He looked to the group instead of asking the little tree further.

"What bullshit Wind and Cloud Pavilion!" he snorted. "Everyone present here has seen and knows much of the world. It's just a bunch of rats that can't step into the light at the bullshit pavilion, some vermin that's more disgusting than the nine ministries and three great organizations..."

"....." Hushed silence stole over the scene as powerhouses of the eight ministries looked at him. Some were quietly furious, others flushed with rage. That... was over the line! You are too cocky!

"Don't be mad," Li Hao said faintly. "What I mean to say is that it's one thing if they can't produce some crappy ranking of their own. If they can... heh, that means they possess an ultimate treasure. The strongest beneath our heavens is peak six elements. No matter how many treasures they have, that is all they amount to!"

"But if they have an ultimate treasure... Well, then I need to ask for everyone's cooperation. None of us want our secrets to be revealed. If a ranking is truly posted, then pursue this matter to the end for me. Unless they hole up in a ruin somewhere and refuse to come out, I, Li Hao, will take action on everyone's behalf and destroy them for no additional charge!"

His words prompted startled looks. It looked like the Wind and Cloud Pavilion had thoroughly infuriated the young man. He was the sort who wouldn't rise early in the morning if there was nothing in it for him, but volunteering to destroy a target today...

An ultimate treasure?

If this ranking really could peer into everything, then none of them had any semblance of privacy left. Who should they kill if not these upstarts wanting to play around with a ranking? Powerhouses cared most about their privacy. One should not undertake a task that one was not capable of completing. In an era that was limited to peak six elements, did this Wind and Cloud Pavilion think themselves as gods just because they likely had a few? So did the nine ministries and royal family have a couple!

"I'm just curious who's backing them," said Chen Yao. "What's their goal? Kicking up this fuss at this time... We've already fought the battles that should be fought and killed those we want to kill. The fights that are meant to be will break out sooner or later—the second awakening is the turning point. Picking right now of all potential timing... what do they want?"

Their provocation wouldn't be needed by the time the second awakening rolled around. This ranking was completely superfluous! Why were they doing this now?

"If my guess is right..." Zhao Huaimin of Administration laughed softly. "Commander Li is probably going to be on the ranking. He's going to be in the top three, if not number one."

The group started; Li Hao raised a silent eyebrow.

"Other than Commander Li, Ying Hongyue will likely be on the ranking as well," Zhao Huaimin continued softly. "Some royal members will probably be listed too..."

The group turned over the connotations of his word, soon grasping what he meant. It went without saying that Li Hao had many aces up his sleeves, but so were the royal family and Red Moon hiding

themselves well. Even now, the world at large wasn't certain what the depths of their strength truly were.

Li Hao occupied the limelight these days and improved at a rapid clip. If some more unexpected developments occurred... all sides might decide to just kill him before the second awakening!

The young man looked quietly at Zhao Huaimin; the man didn't mind the attention. "It looks like Commander Li might be exerting some pressure on those of the Wind and Cloud Pavilion! Otherwise, with their previous style, they would slowly release the ranking bit by bit and do something else before the second awakening.

"But now that they've moved up their timeline..." Zhao Huaimin regarded Li Hao in a meaningful fashion. "Can it be... that Commander Li already possesses the strength to threaten all of the factions in the world?"

This was a probing question and also speculation. The pavilion's appearance today was most likely targeting Li Hao. Otherwise, who would offend him at this time? And yet, that was precisely what they'd done!

This indicated that Li Hao would be first on the ranking if nothing unexpected further developed, or he'd be top three at worst. Not only that, but his people would likely be listed as well, and toward the top.

Zhao Huaimin was slightly baffled and hesitant himself. Had Li Hao really grown so strong to threaten this shadowy organization? Why else would they undertake such actions if that wasn't the case?

"Minister Zhao thinks so highly of me!" laughed Li Hao. "Since you've already spoken thus, then this random ranking that they're coming up with is completely inconsequential."

Zhao Huaimin didn't respond. If the Wind and Cloud Pavilion really could rank all powerhouses in the world... Then putting Li Hao in the top three... might have some truth to it. It may be that he

really was exerting a lot of pressure on the organization, so they were forced to do so and pray that the various factions of the world killed the young man before the second awakening.

Is this Ying Hongyue's doing? That was a possibility! But... would it be Ying Hongyue?

At the same time, Li Hao was contemplating if Zhao Huaimin's words made sense. Perhaps a little. Perhaps... this organization had discovered his supernatural characters or sensed something that gave them pressure. Maybe they thought that he was improving too quickly and was forced to take this kind of action, to stir up trouble when so many heavyweights were gathered.

Of course, none of this mattered. So what if they put him as number one?

"Does it matter if they really trump up a ranking and put me as number two, then Martial Uncle Hong and the rest as number two or three?" laughed Li Hao. "Will all of you believe it? Granted, it doesn't matter if you do. Just try me!"

"Alright, I'm not in the mood for this anymore. This concludes the inauguration ceremony. How inauspicious!" The smile vanished from Li Hao's face. "The Wind and Cloud Pavilion humiliated me to my face with complete lack of reservation. A nonofficial organization is playing around at enacting a ranking to stir up trouble beneath the heavens. They will join the three great organizations as evil supernatural organizations! I hope none of you have anything to do with it, particularly the Tranquil Duke!"

The young man looked at the duke, his eyes narrowing with a cold glare. "It was you who threw the first stone today, and this happened shortly thereafter. You better pray that I don't find anything on you or that you're not connected to this pavilion, or I'll raze your complex to the ground!"

"Commander Li's words are a bit over the line." The duke frowned. "I'm just discussing something according to its own merits. How does that turn into casting the first stone? Not to mention, Commander Li said that you would bring the law to bear against superhumans, that everything must be according to the law..."

The young man closed his eyes, surprising the duke. Was this the end of it? That easy?

Six old men abruptly appeared, each of them in masks and charging the Tranquil Duke with a variety of weapons!

The Valiant Duke's heart skipped a beat when he wanted to shout angrily. Yao Si had locked onto him. The various powerhouses in the crowd also spasmed with alarm. They were all being targeted individually!

"Who are these brazen scum to incite trouble on the day of my inauguration ceremony?!" Li Hao bit off coldly. "It must be the remnants of the Wind and Cloud Pavilion. You court death!"

He slammed out with a palm strike of the wind, thunder, water, fire, and metal elements! A massive rumble shook the area. When people's eyes could focus again, they saw the Tranquil Duke vomiting blood and a bloody hole in his chest!

Everyone jerked with shock!

The six masked men who killed him were lifeless on the ground.

"Brazen scum!" Li Hao frowned. "The Wind and Cloud Pavilion are indeed ruthless and brutal! Take them away and feed them to the dogs in the back! As for the Tranquil Duke... what a pity. He was killed by the Wind and Cloud scum. It looks like I misunderstood him just now!"

"What a shame that I was one step too slow. That vermin was so bold as to kill someone right in front of me! Damn them! Men, give the duke a proper burial!"

A deathly silence rang loudly over the gathering. The Tranquil Duke was still vomiting blood on the ground, not yet fully dead. Bitter and incredulous, he stared wide-eyed at Li Hao. He didn't believe that Li Hao would kill him in front of the representatives one hundred factions!

How could this have happened??

He was a three element Arcanus! Not even a six element Arcanus could've killed him in an instant if Li Hao hadn't become involved! He twitched, wanting to take out some Water of Life to save himself. The duke also looked at the Valiant Duke, attempting to plead for help. But someone coughed the moment he moved.

Hou Xiaochen coughed violently as spear intent that threatened to rip through the skies slammed into the duke's mind. The Tranquil Duke's presence immediately dissipated.

Manager Yu hastily passed over a white handkerchief as Hou Xiaochen continued coughing violently. Crimson blood dyed it red and he looked around with some embarrassment. "My... apologies... My body's always been in poor shape."

No one made a sound!

Chapter 810: Deliberate Misrepresentation (III)

The Tranquil Duke had been alive just now, but he was completely dead in the blink of an eye. Everyone had eyes and could see for themselves. Even if they hadn't caught felt or sight of anything, they could more or less guess at what had happened. Hou Xiaochen had acted from the shadows!

Damned if the man wasn't brazen to the extreme!

The hulking Valiant Duke stood to the side. He didn't say a word and simply looked at Li Hao and Hou Xiaochen. These Silver Moon madmen were completely crazy! They killed a three element Arcanus at the drop of a hat—and that had been a duke! Were they not going to stop until they offended everyone in the world?!

The Steadfast Duke and Tranquil Duke each represented a continent, as did he for the southern continent! Did Li Hao care about that?

Not at all!

The Valiant Duke felt a grave threat staring at him in the face. These madmen would set aside all considerations if he ever enraged them!

After a long moment.

Zhao Huaimin looked at Li Hao and asked faintly, “Commander Li... what... happened just now?”

Six masked villains had abruptly taken a stand. They were all close to one or two element Arcanus. However, the Tranquil Duke had demonstrated the strength of at least three element Arcanus, he wouldn’t have fallen to just one strike!

Li Hao had brought the strength of five elements to bear. Those six were supposedly dead—were they really? The audience watched the Demon Hunters swiftly drag the men away, their expressions gradually turning livid.

Do you think we’re blind?! Some of those masked men are cracking open their eyes right now. The fuck! Li Hao, this goes beyond the pale! Aren’t these six the six geezers who were watching the show outside earlier? They’re the freaking old guard from Silver Moon! Do you really think we don’t recognize them?? We’ll chop off our own heads for you if you aren’t behind this with transmitted instructions!

So the Tranquil Duke was dead... just like that? It was too hard to believe!

Hong Yitang and the rest locked onto the powerhouses in the complex. Anyone who dared move would be met with thunderous retribution.

Li Hao had deliberately misrepresented the situation in front of more than one hundred people and put on a show to misdirect everyone! Damn it, this is Li Hao?? The one who speaks endlessly about law and order?! It’s just blatant double standards!

The Tranquil Duke might have had his own reason to be confident and felt that Li Hao wouldn't do anything to him without evidence. Perhaps he'd reached an agreement with the Valiant Duke or perhaps other situations would crop up...

Whatever it was, the duke likely never anticipated that Li Hao would outright kill him in front of everyone with such blatant lies! Six masked men, people from the Wind and Cloud Pavilion... Li Hao even had the perfect scapegoat!

These people had just announced their presence to the entire city, made a mockery of the proceedings, and then left. Once word of this got out, who would believe that it was Li Hao behind the Tranquil Duke's assassination?

Yang Shan was struggling to keep his composure. Dead? The mighty Tranquil Duke was dead so easily??

Li Hao's palm strike had seemed to be aimed at the six 'villains', but the audience was well aware of whether or not it truly had been. An explosion had thrown the area into disarray. That palm strike must have directly hit the duke. A three element Arcanus wouldn't have died so easily under any other circumstances!

Three elements were absolutely a premier heavyweight of the day! How could six martial masters that hadn't crossed over, their strongest the equivalent of two elements, kill a three element so quickly??

Utter bullshit!

"Commander Li..." the Valiant Duke raised with an unpleasant expression. "It's one thing for you to dispose of the criminals' bodies, but the Tranquil Duke was a duke, after all. Let his people take him back for burial!"

Li Hao's people were dragging the Tranquil Duke's corpse away too! What did he mean by that?

“I need to investigate how he died,” Li Hao answered calmly. “Depending on what method, supernatural ability, or internal force... I may be able to find some clues and uproot the Wind and Cloud Pavilion’s headquarters in one go! It’s fine that the Valiant Duke does not understand how an investigation should be conducted. The Skystar Commander Office is most familiar with this job and I was once an inspector at the Inspectorate. I handled many cases and even received banners of commendation. Go ask around Silver City if you don’t believe me!

“I will naturally bury the body properly once the investigation is complete. If the duke’s household finds that inappropriate, we will return his body to their residence in Skystar City after three days. Don’t worry and trust the professionals!

“Alas, I was inept!” the young man sighed. “I did not detect the Wind and Cloud Pavilion hiding so many powerhouses nearby. As the Skystar commander, I failed to adequately protect my guests and a duke was killed under my watch...

“The Wind and Cloud Pavilion is hereby recognized as the fourth evil supernatural organization!” His voice rang throughout the city after a heat sigh. “They deserve death and destruction! They sent six Arcanus to waylay my guests and killed the Tranquil Duke! Although I have exterminated the villains, my incompetence permitted the duke to perish.

“A pillar of the nation has fallen today and we grieve deeply over the late duke! These are my sins, so today, Li Hao requests to be demoted three ranks and have my wages confiscated for ten years. I will be acting commander instead and will utilize all of my strength to hunt down this Wind and Cloud Pavilion. I request the Skystar King’s approval and will not rest before eradicating them!”

“.....” The people blinked at the information conveyed through his resonant tones. They were just wondering what a Wind and Cloud Pavilion was when Li Hao’s voice enlightened them. What a surprising turn of events!

“So Commander Li was... ambushed by this evil organization?”

“Probably? He must have been too careless!”

“Where’s this Wind and Cloud Pavilion from? I know about the Divine Masters Ranking, but who would’ve thought that they would have so many heavyweights? Six Arcanus and lying in wait for guests... They’re really bold and deserve their deaths! It’s just that the Tranquil Duke... Er, who’s the Tranquil Duke?”

“He’s from the western continent, don’t you know? One of the three founding dukes!”

“Oh I see, what a pity. I don’t really know him, but he was killed after coming to the capital to offer congratulations to Li Hao. Do you think... you know what I mean. Do you think those groups wanting to slap the commander’s face made up this Wind and Cloud Pavilion?”

“Ooh, that’s possible. Six Arcanus is no small sum. I’ve never heard of this pavilion thing before, so where would they get so many experts from? I bet those ministries and others are still unwilling to accept the commander’s authority and want to humiliate him!”

“Will he really be demoted and have his wages confiscated?”

“I don’t know. The Tranquil Duke was probably on the commander’s side. What a pity that he’s dead just like this. Apparently there’s a lot of heavyweights present today, but no one tried to help him. That’s not normal. I bet you that he especially traveled here to offer his congratulations and join the commander’s banner. What a damn shame!”

“Seriously. The Tranquil Duke... ai! Commander Li’s also in a tough spot. He’s killed so many of their strongest, but it still doesn’t put them in their places...”

“I know, right?”

“.....” Discussion and gossip flurried as the entire city discussed the events with sadness. In their eyes, the Tranquil Duke must have personally made the trip from the far off west specifically to offer his services to Li Hao. There was no other possible explanation.

So many people survived that attack; he was the only one dead. The nine ministries must be behind this to set an example to everyone present! They wanted to send a message that whoever dared join Li Hao's camp would die!

What Wind and Cloud Pavilion? That must be a front for the nine ministries! The Tranquil Duke must have been one of Li Hao's. What a pity that even a local overlord would be killed for his intentions. These people were too much and too bold in their attempts to suppress Commander Li!

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The Skystar Commander Office.

All was quiet. The audience was familiar with shameless tendencies, but they'd never met someone who insisted on bald-faced lies in front of several hundred and the various leaders of their factions. The young man twisted falsehood into the truth. Was... he even human??

This wasn't just being shameless, this was treating everyone like an idiot! Many people turned toward the Prince of Southern Conciliation, awaiting the royal family's response.

A sigh traveled from the palace after a while. "To think that the Tranquil Duke would fall... this is indeed a grave loss to the nation! However, this has nothing to do with the Skystar Marquis. No one wished for this accident to take place!

"The Tranquil Duke is to be buried according to the appropriate pomp and circumstance of a duke. The Skystar Marquis should be rewarded for exterminating members of an evil supernatural organization, but that shall be waived in light of the nation's tragic loss today. The Skystar Marquis must eliminate all of these evil organizations!"

"Li Hao will most certainly eradicate these animals down to the very last!" Li Hao declared portentously with a solemn expression. "The Wind and Cloud Pavilion will be the first target on the

Skystar Commander Office's list. That they dare slaughter whoever they will on this day and kill an important subject of the dynasty... I, Li Hao, will turn them into dust!"

Everyone could sense his anger in his fading tones. An outpouring of sympathy rose from the people. It looked like this Tranquil Duke truly had come to join Li Hao. Look at how angry the commander was! They could sense it from his voice that he was infuriated!

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Back at the Skystar Commander Office.

Of the quiet crowd, some were inwardly sneering to themselves while others cursed madly. What a grand show!

"Let us end things here," Li Hao said tiredly. "My apologies and thank goodness everyone else is alright. The Wind and Cloud Pavilion will not be getting away with their deeds. I will most assuredly kill them all as a proper accounting to you!"

"....." No one responded to him and figures soon turned to leave.