

Star Gate 821

Chapter 821: All in Readiness (III)

“That is fine too!” Li Hao smiled.

That was fine... too? Chen Zhongtian blinked.

“I need you to keep someone preoccupied for me,” the young man chuckled. “Obstructing them for three minutes will change your price to ten thousand stones a drop. Four minutes will update it to eight thousand stones. Five minutes to five thousand. The battle should be over at five minutes, and I’ll put you down for ten thousand stones a drop if you hold past one minute, but not to three...”

Chen Zhongtian blinked, then couldn’t help but laugh. You know that I’m a six element Arcanus. Who in our modern society can exceed my strength by so much? I’m just distracting the target, do you think so little of me?

To put it plainly, those stronger than him in this age could be counted with one hand. And any who were greater were limited in how much stronger they were. They could at most somewhat suppress him a little; he would still have the ability to fight back. Li Hao’s words were certainly interesting.

“Then if the enemy is killed within a minute...” Chen Zhongtian laughed.

“Then we’ll proceed according to the best price!” Li Hao grinned. “Five thousand stones a drop for five hundred drops!”

“Who... are you going against?” Chen Zhongtian stopped midway between throwing his head back with laughter. Li Hao wasn’t weak and knew that he wasn’t weak either, yet he still made this kind of request. Truth be told, it was... unsettling.

“I’m not at liberty to say.” Li Hao grinned.

Chen Zhongtian frowned and looked at the young man. “The Wind and Cloud Pavilion?”

“I’m not at liberty to say!”

“.....” Your ass you aren’t! Chen Zhongtian’s frown deepened. I’m just here to feed my family, not to die. You aren’t going to throw me against premier powerhouses, are you? Like the existences in the ruins?

But... the young man should know how great the difference between their strengths would be. It would be an impossible undertaking and just the entertainment of a death wish.

“Will you be fighting with me?”

“Of course!”

“You’re not... going to run off, are you? Or lead me to my death?”

“.....” Li Hao sighed. “I, Li Hao, would never do that to a fellow comrade. Who would ever trust me if I did so? Of this, you can rest assured!” The young man gave it some more thought before saying, “Let’s forget it. I’m afraid of exposing too much...”

“Don’t!” Chen Zhongtian laughed. “I can... agree to this, but I want an advance of one hundred drops.”

Li Hao stared at him.

“Although I don’t know who you’re up against, for you to approach it so earnestly means that they aren’t an ordinary opponent. Can it be Ying Hongyue? That would make sense. He’s your enemy and very strong, so he’s worthy of such attention!”

Indeed, he was thinking of Ying Hongyue. That was a terrifying fellow and truly dangerous. However, Chen Zhongtian felt that he could handle Ying Hongyue for a few minutes. The guy couldn't erupt with seven elements. All he would need for five hundred drops at five thousand stones a drop was 2.5 million. If he went to a plant spirit for the same sum, he would need twenty-five million!

The difference was enormous and would save him approximately two million stones compared to the previous prices. Was that not money??

"An advance?" Li Hao furrowed his brows, then agreed, "That's not out of the question! But I'll give them to you only just before we set off!"

The more powerhouses he had against the big tree, the better. The only drawback was that he might expose a lot of his secrets, but... so what? It was better than more people die during this attempt.

He wouldn't care about Chen Zhongtian if the man was only a five element Arcanus, but he was listed as peak six element on the Divine Masters Ranking. That was terrifying; Li Hao wasn't sure if he'd come out on top in a fight. Having such a powerhouse on his side would decrease a lot of his losses and maybe even save some lives.

As for the risk of the guy deserting the battlefield... Once they were there and ready to kill their target, would the plant spirit show him mercy? There was no way back after he entered!

Chen Zhongtian suddenly felt uneasy that Li Hao had agreed so swiftly. It wasn't a good proposal from his son that he should come here to work. In fact, he wants to refuse! This was growing decidedly unsettling.

At the same time, the massive temptation truly called out to him. He wanted to turn down Li Hao as he was accustomed to playing it safe. However, he was torn by the seduction of the very cheap prices. The Inspectorate was truly too poor these days and his son didn't even have enough resources to ascend to four element Arcanus.

After repeatedly turning the matter over in his mind and weighing up the pros and cons, he ultimately nodded. “I agree! When do we move out?”

Li Hao was also debating whether to move against the Wind and Cloud Pavilion first—but they might not appear immediately—or if he should go against the coconut tree first. If Chen Zhongtian was joining the team... that made for ample hands. So he would take down the plant spirit first! The little tree wanted to devour its replica as well. The stronger the little tree was, the better, and the faster they achieved that, the better.

Li Hao quickly took stock of everyone else’s whereabouts when his thoughts traveled here. Kong Jie and the rest had almost arrived; one day was sufficient for everyone to form their supernatural characters. The Wind and Cloud Pavilion’s timeline wouldn’t arrive until the day after tomorrow.

“Tomorrow night!”

“Huh?” Chen Zhongtian blinked again. “Are we going against Red Moon or the Wind and Cloud Pavilion? That’s really fast!”

They were going to take action tomorrow night?

“Yep, tomorrow night.” Li Hao grinned. “I won’t speak of our target, just in case word gets out! Don’t worry, Inspector Chen, it won’t be just you and I on this operation. The people I’ve summoned will all be with us. Everything is foolproof, so there is no need to worry!”

“Additionally, it’s best if you can bring your ultimate trump card with you... that divine weapon that’s suppressing the old Skystar King. Just in case!”

“.....” Chen Zhongtian’s scalp crawled with numbness! “Don’t... do anything crazy. I don’t want to die just because I’m trying to earn some money, and who... is your target?”

He was starting to shake from the possibilities! The kid didn't want to enter the ruins to take down an ancient powerhouse, did he? The knees of a hundred-year-old man were starting to knock in terror. "Are we heading into the ruins?"

"Maybe..." Li Hao laughed.

Horror skittered up Chen Zhongtian's spine and even his voice shook! "We are unable to go against the ancient powerhouses. They're at least the Apex level once they awaken! It's better in our age because of various restrictions, but in the past, one hundred six element Arcanus might not be able to defeat one Apex..."

"That was then, like you say," Li Hao chuckled. "Now they are simply obsolete characters. Are modern humans to be ruled by ancient humans if we do not shatter the fear occupying our hearts? You will find that once you kill an ancient heavyweight, a transformation will come upon your mind, will, heart, and soul! Otherwise, we are doomed to eternally live beneath the shadows of the ancient civilization!"

"You're crazy!" Chen Zhongtian shrilled. "You really are going to..."

The icy clench of fear closed around his heart. For modern powerhouses, the stronger one was, the more one understood how mighty and powerful the ancient civilization and its heavyweights were. Weaklings did not sense it as much. A premier expert such as him felt it most keenly. He hadn't thought that Li Hao would set his sights on such a goal.

"Then forget it, we do not need Minister Chen's help!" Li Hao looked at him. "You were not part of my plans to begin with."

"You... have gathered the Silver Moon martial masters together not for the Wind and Cloud Pavilion, have you?" Color drained from Chen Zhongtian's face. "You made up your mind early on that you wanted to eliminate ancient powerhouses. You're pushing Silver Moon into a fire pit!"

He finally understood now. Li Hao didn't just have his eyes locked on the Wind and Cloud Pavilion—all of that was just a cover. He'd summoned so many people to fight ancient powerhouses; the Wind and Cloud Pavilion was simply the best pretext. Otherwise, everyone would speculate about his intentions if he gathered so many people in an ordinary time. But now, people would say that Li Hao was a lunatic and that the Wind and Cloud Pavilion was so very unlucky. The young man was plainly going to pursue them to the ends of the world!

No one would give thought to the possibility or even dare let their thoughts wander in the direction of Li Hao turning to aim at an awakened existence in the ruins.

“Does this not suit your preferences?” Li Hao stated calmly. “If we trip over ourselves and die, the rest of you will be at peace! But if we succeed in killing ancient powerhouses, we'll be infallible and our strength and hearts will improve in a tangible manner. Once I emerge then, I'll make sure that everyone who's against me won't live to see the second awakening!

“You can think it over, Minister Chen, but you may not tell anyone else!” The young man stared steadily at him. “You're the only one I'm talking to about this. If I dare go after an ancient powerhouse, that means I'm fifty percent confident in my chances. Does Minister Chen think the Inspectorate is stronger, or the ancient civilization?”

“Don't worry, I won't breathe a word!” Chen Zhongtian promised solemnly, suddenly wanting to run away. What a bunch of complete lunatics!

“The opportunity is right in front of you and may not come around again if you pass it by. Have a good day, minister. I won't be seeing you out!”

A variety of changes flickered across Chen Zhongtian's face before he swiftly departed. He was going to go back to... beat his son to death! Damn you to hell! You wanted me to pick up a job, but does this look like a simple job to you?! It was more cruel than extracting his own blood to sell it!

Li Hao chuckled to see the old minister run away. It didn't matter if the man didn't show up tomorrow, whereas it would be quite interesting if he did. The young man continued studying the ranking and sneered after a long moment, “Ying Hongyue!”

Li Hao was ranked number one, whereas Ying Hongyue was number two! There must be a certain degree of inflation in his ranking, but there should be none for Ying Hongyue's. What a terrifying fellow!

"He's the real number one... so Ying Hongyue is the strongest in all of Silver Moon Territory!" Li Hao could barely believe his eyes. The guy who didn't dare come close to him was number one! He knew that Ying Hongyue was strong, but never thought that he would be this strong.

Ying Hongyue was peak six element, not yet seven. There was an additional line next to his name—incredibly strong life force that can break through at any time.

What did that mean? That Ying Hongyue could set foot into seven element Arcanus whenever possible?

Chapter 822: All in Readiness (IV)

The look in Li Hao's eyes grew colder the longer he stared at the name. His previous thoughts were that Ying Hongyue was probably weaker than those such as Qi Pingjiang and the old Skystar King, because he was younger than them. As such, Li Hao might not be afraid of him even if Ying Hongyue was a peak six element Arcanus.

But now? The old Skystar King was ranked number three! Number four was Minister Zhao of the Ministry of Administration and Qi Pingjiang was neither fifth nor sixth...

Number five was Lin Hongyu—a name unfamiliar to the young man. He was soon enlightened as there was an addendum after the name that identified her as the city lord of the City of Supernaturals.

Number six surprised him enormously—Zhao Shuguang, director general of Silver Moon! Number seven was also an unexpected mention of the current Skystar King! Qi Pingjiang only came in as number eight and Chen Zhongtian as number nine. Was this ranking targeted at him or the royal family? The two kings were placed in the top ten!

The young man soon came to know which party the ranking targeted. Number ten was Zhou Chuan, deputy director general of Silver Moon. Number eleven was Yama. Number twelve the Flying Sword Immortal. Number thirteen was the lord of Yonder Mountain. Number fourteen was Hong Yitang, number fifteen Yao Si, number sixteen Hou Xiaochen. Number seventeen was Sky Sword, and number eighteen Liu Hao. That was another unfamiliar name, and Li Hao looked at the addendum to see that he was the minister of Finance. How unexpected! His battle strength was listed as late six element Arcanus.

Therefore, there was a lot of falsehood in this ranking. All Silver Moon entrants were promoted upward and listed around peak six elements. That was bullshit and entirely too fake!

And yet... upon knowing that the rest of the ranking was true, then people would still pay additional attention to the beginning of the ranking, despite knowing that it bore certain parts of falsehood.

There were three Silver Moon heavyweights among the top ten and nine in the top twenty! Number nineteen was the lord of Phoenix Mountain and number twenty was... Yuan Shuo!

Indeed, Yuan Shuo. Would anyone believe that? Li Hao absolutely didn't, especially as his master was listed as peak five elements! Peak bullshit, more like!

The young man didn't know what to say. The ranking's estimation of battle strength deviated severely whenever it mentioned those of Silver Moon; it wasn't possible for these descriptions to be correct. That was nine Silver Moon names among the top twenty! What kind of nonsense was that?!

Everyone else on the ranking was the leader of their faction. Other than the lords of Phoenix and Yonder Mountains, the lords of Buddha and Sky Roc were dead, Sky Sword was counted among the Silver Moon crew. The remaining two mountain lords weren't even part of the top twenty! There didn't seem to be anything amiss with the explanations related to the battle strength of the others, which meant there was much amiss with the descriptions affixed to Silver Moon.

"Hmph!" Li Hao snorted coldly. Why don't you include yourself, huh? The ranking listed only the top twenty before stopping. There was no reason given as to whether this was by design or if this was the most that the Wind and Cloud Pavilion could probe into at any given time. There were probably more that they could look into, but they purposefully didn't list any more.

Just these twenty were enough. This ranking would cause a great uproar as nine Silver Moon personages entering the ranking was the stuff of legends! There were countless heavyweights on the nine ministries' side, yet their strongest—the minister of Administration—was ranked only number four. The one at Armed Forces was only at number eight. Not a single current minister was listed.

Apart from the Arcanus Ranking of these twenty, there was also a separate Divine Masters Ranking. There were ten more spots on that list and the first among them was Dao Sword. Since he was from the Night Watchers, that made him part of Li Hao's camp.

This made the top of both the Arcanus and Divine Masters Ranking hail from Li Hao's side. Although the Divine Masters Ranking was essentially worthless, it represented future potential. As such, this ranking was very important.

"Trash trying to scheme against me! Do they think that everyone's stupid?" Li Hao cursed, then sighed. Indeed, everyone was stupid. They all thought that they'd hidden themselves very well, but their full strength had been completely plumbed by another. No matter if it was true or not, Silver Moon would become the target of great suspicion.

There would be many feints and probing moves to come; could Li Hao simply take them all lying down? If he killed any powerhouses that came calling... that would immediately prove that the ranking was true. That was when true trouble would descend on Silver Moon.

"What a pity that your ranking won't be distributed!" Li Hao decided that the ranking had to be modified from the few that were mentioned. Some people didn't need to be listed, while others must make an appearance.

"Everyone's here!" Sky Sword called from outside the door. A smile crossed the young man's face. Good! Everything was in accordance and it was time to visit the ruins.

He quietly left with a group of people half an hour later. Six elderly martial masters, Northern Fist, Tyrant Blade, Thunderleg, Kong Jie, and Huang Yu made for eleven premier martial masters. Combined with the earlier Sky Sword, Hong Yitang, Hou Xiaochen, Yao Si, Southern Fist, Light

Sword, Yu Luocho, and Li Hao himself, as well as a Panther of unknown strength—this group represented the sum total of battle strength that he was going to bring to bear against the coconut tree.

If Chen Zhongtian joined them, that would make for twenty premier heavyweights. Even their weakest of Yu Luocho was an Arcanus. Li Hao had also given Yang Shan and Qin Lian a generous amount of Water of Life. It would be more than twenty Arcanus if they succeeded in ascending as well.

If the little tree was also thrown into the mix... then his side would be terrifying!

.....

As Li Hao left with his people, Chen Zhongtian returned to the Inspectorate. He grabbed his son without a word and beat him so thoroughly that Chen Yao wanted to strike back at his old man.

“You unfilial son!” Chen Zhongtian intoned after a long while. Chen Yao glowered back at his father. The old man took a deep breath. “If you trade the family fortune for cultivation resources, they should be sufficient to support your entering four element Arcanus. I’m going to leave for a trip tomorrow. If I don’t return... go to the Ministry of Administration that night or just flee secretly. Abandon the Inspectorate and find a place to hide...”

Chen Yao blinked and looked more closely at his father, not knowing if he was putting on a front or truly speaking his heart. Chen Zhongtian didn’t bother explaining further—he had come to a decision to put it all on the line for once!

He had high hopes for Li Hao. Although the young man was crazy, it was as he said. The gamble would pay off enormous dividends if it succeeded—not in terms of wealth, but of mind and spirit.

Chen Zhongtian looked at the rear yard, a keen light glinting out of his eyes. Everyone in the world feared the ancient powerhouses, finding them impossible to overcome. He was among their number,

but if they managed to shatter their internal demons, that would be a massive step forward for martial masters cultivating their heart!

Even Qi Pingjiang and the others don't dare say that they dare to move against a plant spirit, but I... do! There's a ninety-nine percent chance that Li Hao's going to attack the plant spirit left behind by the Hus. Since he dares gamble with his life and the lives of many Silver Moon martial masters, he must have his confidence in doing so. Then I... I shall be involved as well.

Chen Zhongtian had made up his mind. Tomorrow night... was prior to the revealing of the ranking. Li Hao's thoughts were not difficult to guess. He would eliminate the plant spirit before turning his attention to the Wind and Cloud Pavilion. If he succeeded, then the latter wasn't worth worrying about. If he failed... then the ranking didn't matter anymore. It wouldn't be important anymore!

"Old man... you're just joking with me, aren't you?" Chen Yao raised an eyebrow. "I sent you to Li Hao to pick up an easy job, not to send you to your death. What are you putting up such an attitude for?"

Chen Zhongtian couldn't be bothered to respond and brought a little girl close for some kisses. He turned to his eldest son. "Take everyone to the Ministry of Administration if I have not returned by morning of the day after tomorrow. You can do with yourself as you see fit, but your siblings are too young to get away."

Chen Yao frowned and continued staring at his father. Chen Zhongtian ignored him, walking further in and setting course for a secret room. Chen Yao's heart shook to see his father walk inside! That room held the divine weapon enshrined by the Chens. It was their strongest weapon, the one that suppressed the old Skystar King. It was related to the methods they'd employed back in the day. What did his old man want with it?

Taking that weapon with him really was putting his life on the line!

Chen Yao looked around in a daze. What... was going on here? He didn't get it. I just wanted you to earn some money, not go die! What had Li Hao said to his father?

.....

Evenround Martial University.

Martial masters were astounded by the supernatural characters that flowed from Li Hao and the rest. Meanwhile, the Black Armor that remained on the athletic field was completely lost for words.

Do you really treat this place as your secret cultivation haven? You come here for no reason at all and you return day after day, it's truly... aggravating!

At the same time, it was surprised by this set of visitors. These people were interesting. They possessed strong auras—a manifestation that bore some semblance to the core origin dao of old. However, they were plainly not very strong. Ancient cultivators who did not reach peak comprehension found it hard to grasp dao.

These cultivators, on the other hand, seemed to have already touched the threshold of dao. Their physical bodies were mediocre and their mental strength run-of-the-mill. And yet, the perception of fledgling dao was plainly noticeable from them.

The Black Armor chuckled to himself. Each era bore their own cultivation style. What these visitors demonstrated was a good development, but also a drawback. Coming into contact with dao too quickly made it difficult for them to truly strengthen their own body and endure the force of great dao. Was it better to sip and nibble at the fount of great dao instead?

Li Hao finished teaching his newest pupils as the Black Armor pondered over his thoughts. Almost no one had reservations about the method. Being able to retain their auras while commanding supernatural power was their greatest yearning.

Everyone eagerly practiced this new skill. This process naturally required Water of Life. Li Hao calculated their needs at two or three hundred drops, and that was an optimistic estimate. It was a significant consumption of resources. Of course, the young man felt that he could make it back if they eliminated the coconut tree.

He walked into the school campus after he finished his instruction. The puppets at the school gates were still conducting regular patrols for unknown reasons. Li Hao set a course for the athletic field. The Black Armor watched silently, not knowing what the young man wanted.

Chapter 823: Killing the Replica, Coalescing Arcanus (I)

“Senior!” Li Hao walked over with a radiant smile. The Black Armor did not respond. Unbothered, the young man continued, “Senior, this student has a question to ask.”

“Speak,” the Black Armor responded evenly.

“Senior, how should I ensure the elimination of a plant spirit that was of the Immortal level in the ancient civilization?” Li Hao cut straight to the chase. “It’s awakened to a certain degree at this stage, but it shouldn’t have returned to the Immortal level yet. Under these circumstances, how should I guarantee killing them?”

The Black Armor looked at the sky. It was very dark and there was a lunatic standing in front of him! A fellow who’d just reached six elements wanted to kill an Immortal. Did he want to challenge someone stronger than him? That was fine, but one needed to consider how great the difference in strength was. Not to mention, there was a metamorphosis stage in the modern system. The difference between the two wasn’t bridged by just one or two minor cultivation levels.

“Do you know what the Immortal level represents?” slowly asked the Black Armor as he looked at Li Hao. The young man shook his head.

“In the ancient civilization, grades one through nine were still of the mundane level! Entering Apex from grade nine was a metamorphosis that made one too strong to imagine! The ‘Emperor’ rank after it was later modified to Immortal so we wouldn’t accidentally infringe upon the titles of some true heavyweights. The new name also indicated that bearers were undying and indestructible...

Li Hao looked at the Black Armor. Undying and indestructible? They still died all the same, aren’t you dead?

The Black Armor seemed to know what he was thinking—or rather, Li Hao had forgotten his capabilities and was letting his mind run wild in front of the entity.

“That is what is said about the ranks.” The Black Armor didn’t mind the impertinence. “But after one thousand, ten thousand, one hundred thousand years... Or rather, endless time, the indestructible crumbles away all the same! The greatest existence or golden body also declines if there is no energy supporting them. But those plant spirits have survived to present day. Strictly speaking, they are all truly immortal!”

How many years had it been? Time was the greatest enemy in all eras. Even if one’s potential was so tremendous that it defined the age, it would continue to wear away at one for ten thousand, one hundred thousand years.

The Black Armor didn’t continue further and said faintly, “The key to killing an Immortal cultivator lies in two points—first, severing its core origin! This is very important as there is no more core origin dao in this world, but the opponent’s dao still exists. It simply cannot depend on the true dao of the world. It is no longer stable and cannot draw upon an unlimited supply of energy from the core origin dao.”

“Then... how do I sever their core origin dao?” Li Hao raised a brow.

“Your supernatural characters combined mental strength and aura,” responded the Black Armor after a long moment. “It is a unique dao in itself. Only great dao can be brought to bear against great dao! Pure blood qi attacks, internal force blows, or mysterious power moves cannot harm great dao. The aura, however, can!”

“You have Stellaris in hand. So long as your aura is strong enough and your supernatural characters powerful enough, you’ll be able to cut their dao down with one swing!”

Li Hao turned over the meaning behind those words. Only great dao could harm great dao!

“Secondly, once plant spirits awaken, there is certain to be a vast reserve of Water of Life in their bodies. Any plant spirit would ensure so. Therefore, the greatest taboo in battle is to drag the

fighting out. Once the clash drags on, they might utilize all of their Water of Life in a critical moment and return to peak condition!”

“Will they have Water of Life in their bodies right after awakening?” Li Hao’s expression shifted slightly.

“Of course,” the Black Armor responded faintly. “Any plant spirit of any era would do so. Ask the little tree next to you if you don’t believe me. It may be extremely weak, but it will also store a vast quantity of Water of Life, even if its strength is yet to recover to its peak!”

Li Hao immediately released the little tree; it felt very awkward at having heard the conversation! One might as well outright say that the little tree had gifted a lot of mysterious power stones during its transaction with Li Hao.

But since the Black Armor had already spoken, the little tree had to respond, “I did… keep some for myself. I’m not certain of the other guy though.”

“You all do!” the Black Armor affirmed calmly. “If you don’t want to have to go through killing it twice, then you must kill it before it fully erupts! Otherwise, it’s not just a matter of finding them difficult to kill, but that you’ll gain a lot less for your victory.”

Li Hao nodded rapidly. So this was the case! Thank goodness he was shameless enough to approach the Black Armor with his questions. The little tree might not know as much as this one.

“Thirdly, as a partially awoken Immortal and a plant spirit, its defenses will be difficult to break. So long as a plant spirit lives, its body remains very durable!”

Li Hao frowned.

“Therefore, you need to concentrate your strength if you wish to kill it,” continued the Black Armor. “Break through the heart of its life force—the core of a plant spirit, the equivalent of its heart.

Wherever the densest concentration of its energy is during battle is where the heart of its life force is.”

The Black Armor reached out, sending the little tree into a panic as it landed in the former’s hands! The Black Armor pointed at a certain spot on the little tree’s trunk. “This is where the heart of a plant spirit’s life force is. Only in breaking it will your attacks have marvelous effect. Otherwise, it will only be a scratch even if you hack them into two!”

Li Hao quickly bobbed his head up and down with the new knowledge. He looked at the little tree—thank goodness it didn’t have a face, or it’d be stricken with panic, fear, and terror at the moment. This Saint level existence was too horrifying!

“Are you relying on this little tree in your bid to kill the plant spirit?” The Black Armor looked at Li Hao.

“Yes and no!” the young man laughed dryly.

“It’s not that you don’t stand a chance.” The Black Armor pondered. “But that the core origin dao of the world has disappeared and what is left can no longer increase. Everything is possible after a long duration of sleep! But be careful and don’t give the other a chance to self-detonate. All of you will die then!”

Self-detonate?

Li Hao raised an eyebrow at the new thought. It didn’t need to be further said that an Immortal level existence would be terrified of death now, having painstakingly hung on to present day. If it was taken down by a group of ants... it might very well self-detonate in a grand way at the last possible second. If it did, how Li Hao and the rest would survive would be the question.

“Thank you for your pointers, senior!”

The Black Armor ignored Li Hao and remained standing in place. Truth be told, the young man was curious, why did this fellow just keep standing there?

Once again, he forgot that his thoughts were an open book to the entity.

“I am the dean of education at Evenround Martial,” the Black Armor said faintly. “I am in charge of assembly at the field and emergency combat readiness. When I stand here, that represents that we are to be combat ready!”

Is that so? Li Hao thought sheepishly. Alright then! But... you're just one person, what's the point of being combat ready by yourself?

He didn't ask further as this dean was a bit aloof. He wasn't as friendly as Director General Wang. Li Hao was starting to discover that most ancient existences were incredibly removed beings. Those willing to chat like the little tree and Director General Wang were very few.

Perhaps they didn't think much of present day humans, or perhaps they'd lost all hope a long time ago.

Li Hao turned back to the school gates and rubbed his eyes for another look at the toy puppets. One of them seemed to have opened their eyes just now! He knew that the toys were puppets, but did puppets have a need to open their eyes?

The young man cast a strange look at them, then at the puppets patrolling the premises. These puppets seemed... off somehow.

There was only an empty clearing in front of the school gates. Was there a need for several hundred puppets to be patrolling this area? Could it be that they were... alive?

Well, no, not even the Black Armor counted as alive. Various thoughts rose in his mind, but he didn't dare voice them aloud. Whether it was the Black Armor or Director General Wang, none of

them had asked Li Hao to do anything for them. They didn't want the young man's help in reawakening, nor did they want mysterious power stones from him.

Who knew if they felt there was no need to trouble Li Hao because he was too weak, or if revitalization was already out of reach for them. They were all humans, not plant spirits.

.....

Li Hao looked down at a storage ring and hesitated, should he eliminate the big tree's replica here? It would be a perfect chance to probe the other's strength...

Upon further thought, he decided to wait a bit longer. He could wait for everyone to finish their transformation and summon everyone joining the operation. They would jointly move against the big tree!

.....

The conversion process took a very long time. Night had already fallen by the time Li Hao's group emerged. He quickly returned to Skystar City with his people.

Skystar City, Skystar Commander Office's.

A group of well-known names had gathered. All of them were powerhouses and rather excited.

"Then I would ask Deputy Zhou to stay behind and stand guard..." Li Hao looked at Deputy Zhou, following his initial plan.

The deputy looked at him and smiled, "I should go in too. There's not much use for me alone if something happens to all of you."

Li Hao raised an eyebrow and took a closer look at Deputy Zhou. He wasn't certain of this one's precise strength as the deputy was an ancient martial cultivator, but the Arcanus Ranking placed him high.

"Then... let us go in together!" Li Hao nodded. This was just as good. "We should split up first. Wait for me at the western ruins, I'll be there shortly!"

The group shifted with confusion, weren't they all going in together?

"I have some other arrangements in mind," Li Hao smiled. "I'm going to determine our opponent's strength and methods first!"

Although his team didn't quite understand, it was fine by them and they left one by one.

.....

The rear yard.

Li Hao visited once more, this time with hints of solemnity. "I have discovered the hiding spot of the Wind and Cloud Pavilion," he said lowly. "And I'm leading people against them right now! Thirty million stones is a small matter if I come back alive, the Wind and Cloud Pavilion definitely have their own reserves!"

The big tree hadn't thought that the human would take action so quickly. After all, it'd only been two days since the Wind and Cloud Pavilion showed itself. Seeing that it lacked a source of news and didn't know the true state of things, however, its mental ripples undulated back, "Then I wish you good fortune. Don't worry, there will be no issues, not with my replica present."

Li Hao hesitated, then asked, “But if we meet with strong foes... I hope that senior’s replica... will fend off our opponents for a moment or two...”

The coconut tree wanted to curse loudly. What do you mean by this? Are you going to run first if it turns out you can’t overcome them and let my replica die? You’re absolutely awful!

Chapter 824: Killing the Replica, Coalescing Arcanus (II)

“Of course my replica will help you when you encounter difficult opponents,” the coconut tree said after some thought. “But if you fail and my replica shatters, then I will absorb these origin weapons first to stabilize my core origin.”

In other words, Li Hao still needed to pay the thirty million stones. The origin weapons were just interest.

“Very well!” Li Hao nodded after a period of silence. He turned to leave and paused when he reached the door. His voice was muted. “Senior Plant Spirit, if I... fail... and can return... I would... like to borrow some Water of Life to heal my injuries!”

“.....” The coconut tree wanted to curse out the young man! The human had gotten used to reaping great rewards without barely any investment, hadn’t he? He was addicted to that, wasn’t he? What a joke!

“My injuries are too severe after severing my core origin, so I’m afraid that I won’t be able to further offer Water of Life to you...” The big tree kept up an inward litany of insults. Get out of here! I haven’t seen a single mysterious power stone yet, but I’ve already cut off a replica. Now you want Water of Life? This Li Hao is too damned greedy, the little bastard!

“If it really comes to that, then I’ll put down the Windchaser Boots and Stellaris as collateral!”

“.....” The coconut tree froze with shock. Stellaris! The Windchaser Boots! It didn’t immediately have a response.

“This is just a contingency plan!” Li Hao laughed. “None of this will happen if I win. You need to trust the strength of your own replica, senior!”

The big tree continued turning things over in its mind and didn’t say a word.

“Please consider it, senior. We can discuss further if I really do find myself in need.”

“It’s said that Stellaris can purify energy,” the big tree couldn’t help but ask when it saw that the young man was leaving. “Is that true?”

“Yes,” Li Hao laughed. “How else would I have my accomplishments today? It’s only been a few months since I set foot into martial dao!”

The big tree spoke no further. It was true! So the legends were true! They said that the Sword Sovereign’s body was very weak and that he had to bring his full strength to bear with each blow. Stellaris was apparently forged by an unparalleled heavyweight—possibly a joint effort between the legendary Human King and Divine Forge Emperor. It was made so that the Sword Sovereign could quickly recover after deploying a move.

As for whether or not that was the truth, a guardian plant spirit of Tranquil Star didn’t know much. But since the sword really could purify energy... then that was incredible!

.....

Li Hao didn’t dare linger any longer and swiftly departed. He saw someone with a constipated expression standing at the main doors of the Skystar Commander Office as soon as he reached the front. The young man was rather surprised.

He’s really here?

Chen Zhongtian looked at Li Hao with a pained expression; the young man looked back at him and sized up the man. “Minister Chen... is really joining us?” he smiled.

“Mmhhh,” Chen Zhongtian mumbled back in a muffled voice. “I’ve lived too long, after all, and can set aside certain things!”

One hundred years was a long life.

Li Hao laughed and thought of the ancient heavyweights. Their ages were easily measured in terms of thousands of years. Could one hundred years be considered too long? “Then let us go together!”

“Eh?” Chen Zhongtian was surprised and looked toward the rear yard. Was this not the location?

“Let’s go!” Li Hao instantly vanished. The man raised his eyebrow—so fast! He immediately disappeared as well.

Chen Zhongtian had not been exaggerating when he said he was skilled in speed and defense. He was indeed very quick—Li Hao was even utilizing the Windchaser Boots, but the man caught up in a split second.

They reached the western outskirts in a few moments. Li Hao had come here so often these days that none of the other factions dared come or even post scouts. Chen Zhongtian’s expression shifted slightly when he met the rest of the group. There were so many people here! Were they all here for the powerhouses in Evenround Martial? Had he guessed incorrectly?

He was a bit confused, but perhaps... the existences inside were stronger than he thought?

Just as he saw the others, so did they see him. Some of the old men pursed their lips—what was this fellow doing here?

“Li Hao, why did you bring this old thug with you?” asked He Yong.

“.....” Chen Zhongtian didn’t know what to say. It was one thing if others called him that, but Southern Fist? Did the guy have the right to look down on him like this? Why didn’t he take a look in the mirror?

It was hardest for people to read themselves at times—if I’m a hooligan, what does that make you?

“So Old Minister Chen has come as well...” Yao Si smiled when he looked over. “This is unexpected!”

The two had had previous dealings with each other since the Night Watchers used to be under the Inspectorate. However, Yao Si didn’t much care for the old minister, so the two didn’t have much to do with each other.

“Go in!” Li Hao chuckled. “Senior Old Chen came to us with enthusiasm and has agreed to be our defense. Welcome to the team!”

The group abruptly understood and nodded, some of their smiles turning crafty. Chen Zhongtian began to regret his decision! Did these people... really want to send him out against ancient heavyweights? He’d said his defenses were strong, but that was just relatively speaking. That didn’t mean he could actually hold off against ancient powerhouses.

Li Hao didn’t care about this. He entered the ruins without second thought. Upon seeing that the young man held a medallion, Chen Zhongtian understood why no one else could enter. The medallion meant that the ruins had started awakening.

...

“Here again?” The Black Armor was truly speechless! He was in the middle of some thoughts when here the young man was, disturbing his peace and quiet again! Is there no end to this?!

It was Chen Zhongtian's first time visiting Evenround Martial—he was stunned at what was presented to him. The countless puppets terrified him. Were these their targets? These walking hunks of metal looked really strong, and there were a lot of them!

The rest of the group also looked at Li Hao; the young man cut straight to the chase. “We’re going to start first with the replica of the plant spirit! Everyone can use this opportunity to sense its strength—it’s a given that it will be very strong! The replica possesses only one-third the strength of the primary body, but strictly speaking, it can be classified at the Apex level of the ancient civilization.

“Senior Little Tree will be part of the main offense! Your only goal will be one—entangle them!”

The little tree manifested and waved its branches. Chen Zhongtian was further astonished by the sight—another plant spirit? Entangling an Apex... so this meant that this tree also possessed that level of strength? So this was one of Li Hao's trump cards!

“Additionally, Martial Uncle Hong, Minister Chen, and the senior of Iron Shirt discipline will be the outermost layer of defense!”

All three were known for their stalwart defenses. Old Minister Chen was an unknown, but since Senior Iron Shirt's master also practiced the same method, his strength and defenses must be great. Nothing needed to be said about Hong Yitang. His Earthturner Sword was the strongest sword defensive technique there was out there.

The three met each other's eyes and nodded.

“Tyrant Blade, Sky Sword, and Director Hou will stand at the rear. They will be the main offense utilizing mind intent. Northern Fist, Southern Fist, Director Kong, Seniors Crazy Demon Blade and Thunderbolt Fist will be the secondary offense...” Li Hao reeled off their assignments. “Manager Yu, Light Sword, Thunderleg, and the rest of the seniors will be the outer ring of attackers to land blows when the opportunity presents itself.”

The group exchanged glances, some with annoyance in their eyes. Light Sword, for example, had been sent to the outermost ring. This could only represent one point—she was too weak. Even He Yong was secondary offense!

As for Hou Xiaochen and his group, their mental strength was ferocious and mind intent domineering. It was reasonable that they were assigned to the rear. But Light Sword and Yu Luocha were arranged thus because of their weak cultivation. This was done to protect them.

Therefore, He Yong puffed up his chest. He wasn't afraid of the upcoming battle. For martial masters about to take concerted action against an enemy, it was the most tragic if they weren't even assigned to a main offensive position.

It indicated that Li Hao didn't think much of your strength, which made He Yong very happy! He was now worthy of the main offensive line and placed on the same level as that villain Northern Fist and his martial uncle Thunderbolt Fist.

Once Li Hao finished his arrangements for the group, he looked at Deputy Zhou with a furrow to his brows.

"If you're willing to, I can be part of the main offense with you," smiled the deputy. "I'll assist you!"

Li Hao nodded. While he wasn't certain of the deputy's strength, so it shall be since the deputy had spoken. This was just an initial attempt at taking down the enemy, not to mention that their safety was assured in a place like this.

"Make sure you've thought things through," the Black Armor said coldly off in the distance. "Fines must be paid if you inflict any damage!"

Chen Zhongtian jumped with surprise; none of the others reacted. That suit of armor was alive?

“I understand,” Li Hao chuckled. “A deadline of one year at most and interest to be paid on top of principal!”

The Black Armor couldn't be bothered to say anything else after the young man's response.

Li Hao took out a storage ring and took a deep breath. It was his first time facing a true Immortal opponent with Apex level battle strength. The previous replicas that he'd faced were but the equivalent of five or six element Arcanus.

“Senior... be careful!” He looked at the little tree.

It promptly transformed into a big tree and waved its branches. “Don't worry!” Would they go after the primary body if they couldn't even handle a replica? That would be courting death!

“Everyone, this is just a replica, but it's an incredibly powerful replica!” Li Hao cautioned. “If we find it difficult to eliminate even a replica, then we must cancel the rest of our plans! Then... we begin!”

Bam!

The storage ring exploded. A towering tree immediately materialized in the air—the coconut tree looked around blearily, then looked at the puppets and Black Armor in the distance. Startled fright crept in, weren't they going against the Wind and Cloud Pavilion? Why were they here?? Wasn't this Evenround Martial University?

It immediately sensed the inappropriate circumstances. Li Hao's group was crazy! If someone had awoken in Evenround Martial, it wasn't an entity that any of them could run afoul of. The tree had thought they were going against the Wind and Cloud Pavilion!

“We are no match for these opponents... idiot! Take me and run!” cursed the big tree.

Chapter 825: Killing the Replica, Coalescing Arcanus (III)

The coconut tree then saw the little tree; the latter erupted with violent mental ripples the second they encountered each other and rushed its opponent.

“Kill!” Li Hao growled as well.

BOOM!

Everyone acted in the same instant, bringing blade, spear, sword, and halberd to bear!

The coconut tree froze with incomprehension for a split second, finding the scene incredulous. It snapped back to its senses—they... want to kill me!

“Bastard!” It flew into a towering rage. What did this represent if Li Hao wanted to kill it? That meant that the human had been lying about everything before!

The coconut tree ignored the Black Armor and immediately transformed into a towering tree. It even showed hints of becoming humanoid with its branches forming the limbs. It was much stronger than the group of replicas that Li Hao had faced last time.

“You court death!”

Bam!

A massive explosion sounded with an eruption of mental strength. The ensuing ripples churned through the area. Although the little tree shook, it didn’t summon the imperial palace. This was just a test of their skills against the coconut tree. If they needed to utilize the imperial palace projection for even this, how were they to face the primary body?

The powerhouses present jerked backward with dismay as they felt their heads spin and awareness turn groggy. All of them immediately summoned their supernatural characters to withstand the mental invasion.

Chen Zhongtian looked curiously at them out of the corner of his eyes, baffled by the sight. What was that?

There was no time to ponder further as he shouted ferociously and manifested a set of armor glittering with golden light. Countless tree branches churned toward them.

BOOM!

The void seemed to shatter as another ‘sword’ character manifested, transforming into a sword mountain and reflecting the Earthturner Sword out of it! But even so, the potent technique and defensive mountain formed out of the supernatural character was instantly pierced through by numerous branches!

Hong Yitang grunted, blood leaking out of the corner of his lips. He was taken aback by the sight. Was this what was meant by the Apex level?

A desperate wail sounded as Master Iron Shirt transformed into something akin to a golden Buddha and solidly planted himself in front of the group. A massive character hovered in front of him—defend!

KABOOM!

Countless branches whipped through the air and shredded it to pieces.

Chen Zhongtian’s reaction had been a second too slow—not because he was weak, but because he was thrown off balance by the group’s methods. What were those things?

But soon enough, he was shaken out of his reverie. Having reserved a bit of his strength, he punched with a shout. A weapon erupted from his fist and pierced through two layers of branches, snapping some of them.

Hou Xiaochen and the rest attacked at the same time! Yao Si punched forward with the might of five element Arcanus. The circulation of his five organs was in full force and the five elements were completely melded as one. The world shook from his punch and he punctured all of the branches in front of him, obliterating them by himself!

The spear, blade, and sword materialized in the void. Sky Sword, Tyrant Blade, and Hou Xiaochen engaged in their attacks of mind intent and ripped through the air with domineering force!

“What is this??” The coconut tree was aghast with dismay. What were these humans using? It’d never witnessed it before!! Dismay was rapidly setting in. Although it was strong enough to pierce through the defenses of three powerhouses in a split second, its defenses were also erased in a split second. These guys were all very strong!

There were multiple at six element Arcanus and even the weakest of Manager Yu was between two and three elements. Meanwhile, Li Hao and Deputy Zhou were yet to make their moves. They were silently observing all this while. The collision between the little tree’s branches and the coconut tree’s branches ripped through the void!

This indicated that their clash exceeded the Apex level and was sufficient to tear through the void. That made this kind of conflict very dangerous for both plant spirits.

Despite the overwhelming show of force, Li Hao frowned. He had so many powerhouses on his side, yet their target instantly broke through the first layer of defense. One had to keep in mind that the little tree was acting as the main offensive force and keeping the coconut tree preoccupied! And yet, their target still had the capability to attack the rest.

As expected, the gap between the two sides was substantial.

Deputy Zhou looked at Li Hao. The young man rumbled, “Try taking the field. I want to gauge your level of strength so as to make better preparations to come!”

Deputy Zhou laughed and broke through the air. He didn’t attack the big tree from a distance like the others, but shot straight at it. His actions enraged the coconut tree—where did this ant with a death wish come from?!

An incredibly thick branch shot through the void, aimed at Deputy Zhou’s heart. The quiet old man suddenly howled with ferocity, sending his blood qi soaring to the heavens!

The Black Armor had been enjoying the show when its head snapped to Deputy Zhou with surprise. The martial dao of New Martial!

BOOM!

Blood qi flooded out and became a long dragon of blood qi. Deputy Zhou’s body shimmered with golden light as countless branches whipped across him. He stumbled back, but was wholly unscathed. Incredible!

“A golden body?” The big tree paused. “You are a cultivator of New Martial...”

But that was impossible!

Momentary surprise found all of the participants. Deputy Zhou usually presented himself with a genteel demeanor, but was now a frenetic martial cultivator as if a demon god. He howled with resolution and punched forward, snapping a branch with his moment!

A powerful presence emanated from the glittering old man as he howled again, bringing another punch down with a loud rumble! He stood on the frontlines and encircled the big tree, pummeling their target alongside the little tree.

Aureate light glimmered in Li Hao's eyes—what an incredibly strong body! Was this the martial dao of New Martial, their golden body? It did not exist in the modern age, no one could cultivate such a forceful physical body.

Nine revolutions of the golden body!

Even the Black Armor was surprised at this point. There were levels of differences to golden bodies and this guy who walked the dao of New Martial possessed one of the highest level!

“Who's heritage do you have?” asked the surprised Black Armor. This wasn't one available to any regular person; nine revolutions of the golden body wasn't common back in his day either. He saw a personage of the new age in front of him, but this one possessed such a strong golden body!

“Is it... the heritage of the exalted emperor from Capital Martial?” The Black Armor could barely fathom that possibility. When did Silver Moon Territory ever come about that one's heritage? He stared at Deputy Zhou, then at Li Hao. Had the Sword Sovereign left it behind?

That wasn't out of the question as Martial Uncle Eternal was very close to these exalted emperors. It was very possible.

Rumble!

A ray of golden light flashed through the air—Deputy Zhou charging the enemy! Li Hao watched raptly, the old man had such strong defensive capabilities and his offensive power was quite up to speed as well! He absolutely possessed the strength of six elements, maybe even peak six elements! There was nothing wrong with the ranking that the Wind and Cloud Pavilion had given this one. He had the right to be part of the top ten and looked to be even stronger than number nine, Chen Zhongtian!

Chen Zhongtian was likewise surprised and stunned at this moment. How was this guy so strong?

“Show me your strength, Minister Chen!” Li Hao shouted. “This is just a replica. If this is all the strength that you have to your name, then you’re not worth such a high price!”

Chen Zhongtian cursed to himself and also streaked into a ray of golden light. He vanished on the spot and reappeared next to Deputy Zhou. As he thrust a palm strike forward, the coconut tree whipped several branches through the air and swept the premises with enormous mental strength.

Chen Zhongtian shouted and grabbed one of the branches with his bare hands, erupting with formidable internal force. The branch split apart!

This was the second person to independently break one of the branches after Deputy Zhou demonstrated his abilities. The rest needed to work together to break any of the branches. Li Hao’s eyes widened, the old minister was very strong!

Mental ripples surged from the coconut tree and its furious voice echoed in everyone’s minds, “How dare a bunch of ants attack this seat! You desire death!”

BOOM!

The sky darkened as a towering tree manifested from another locale. It split into countless replicas in the blink of an eye and appeared in everyone’s mind!

The little tree also erupted with energy and its mental ripples undulated violently, “This is a core origin method. Be careful, everyone! Protect your mind and use the aura to defend against it!”

Everyone’s mind intent flared and they retracted their supernatural character into their bodies. The auras of martial masters burst forth! The towering tree in their minds exploded. It should’ve

obliterated their minds, but it failed catastrophically in this moment. The impact caused many to vomit blood and their characters to fracture, but they'd held on!

Li Hao was also attacked by the tree's mental strength. He instantly summoned his 'sword' character and slashed through the shadow!

"Impossible!" The big tree shook, dimming from its failure. "How can this be... What are these characters of yours..."

They contained mental strength and aura! It'd wanted to obliterate their minds—without their minds, these people would be the walking dead. They were all so much lower level than it that they couldn't possibly have withstood the attack.

And yet, the humans still stood! All of them, not just one or two! What kind of freaks were they?

The Black Armor was likewise surprised; he was truly intrigued by the supernatural characters now. They could hide the marks of life and contain everything within them. The cultivators were undying so long as the characters were not destroyed.

They were a clear counter to core origin dao. Or rather, their negation of those who practiced mental strength dao were very clear to see. Attacks of mental strength were terrifying in New Martial, but in this age... the mental strength of an Apex was held back by a group of weaklings!

They should've died in large swathes in the past!

The Black Armor was taken aback, to say nothing of how dumbfounded the coconut tree was. How could this be? It'd expended a great deal of effort to kill these people, but none of them had died!

Chapter 826: Killing the Replica, Coalescing Arcanus (IV)

"Is this the greatest killing move of core origin dao?" Li Hao laughed, finding it to be... not that bad!

He'd been observing the big tree all along to form a complete picture of the ancient cultivation system's capabilities. But now, it was time for him to join the fight. He appeared in front of the big tree and infused his sword with various supernatural characters.

He soundlessly slashed out with an explosion of the wind, thunder, fire, water, metal, and earth elements!

Kaboom!

The blow pierced through the big tree's image as if it was tangible! However, it immediately recovered. Dimmer than before, the coconut tree abruptly shrank into the size of a person. It came straight at Li Hao in a maddened charge. Damn it, this is all because of you, you little bastard! I'm going to kill you even if that means the end of my replica!

Li Hao vanished out of sight, but the tree was equally fast. One of its branches flailed like an arm and shot straight at the young man's head when he reappeared. Li Hao was about to back away when two more figures flashed into view. They flanked the young man—Chen Zhongtian and Deputy Zhou.

The big tree wanted to pierce through their defenses, but a 'sword' character hovered in front of them and enveloped itself with the aura of ten thousand swords! The little tree likewise sent thousands of branches over. Seeing his side's reinforcement, Li Hao stood his ground and accumulated his strength, bounding forward with a howl and a mighty pierce!

It threatened to rip the very void apart; supernatural characters manifested in front of the others at the same time. They brought their full strength to bear and unleashed their strongest blow!

Boom!

A massive collision sounded! Every leaf on the big tree trembled as it shattered the sword aura, beat back the little tree's branches, and even ran through Deputy Zhou's golden body...

However, that left an opening for a sword to stab straight at its core!

Bam!

Stellaris pierced through the tree trunk. Its core essence vibrated and five auras burst forth at the same time. A surge of intent from the Lifeless Sword technique exploded with a rumble—explosions constantly sounded in the void. A big tattered tree swiftly retreated one hundred meters. A massive face appeared over its trunk and it looked vengefully at the crowd.

“Do you seek to kill this seat to seize my core origin? Those are the delusions of wishful thinking!”

A surge of core origin surged violently—Li Hao knew that the coconut tree was about to self detonate!

The little tree’s core origin rippled violently as well and a projection of the imperial palace appeared. It crashed down with a rumble!

Bam!

The agitating core origin was immediately suppressed, drawing another incredulous look from the coconut tree. “The imperial palace...”

Boom!

All of its branches exploded and were devoured by the imperial palace projection! However, it seemed too much for the little tree to digest by itself. The projection shook and sent a strong surge of core origin to Deputy Zhou. The deputy absorbed it without second thought. Since he walked the path of ancient martial dao, it was quite appropriate for him to absorb such energy.

Li Hao and the others landed on the ground. While the rest were overjoyed, the young man frowned. It didn't matter that everyone was more or less uninjured; more importantly was that it'd been so difficult to take down a replica. He wouldn't have been able to prevent the coconut tree from self-detonating if it hadn't been for the little tree utilizing the imperial palace.

This couldn't be allowed to stand! They would be seeking death if they sought out the coconut tree's primary body in their current condition. The biggest problem was that no one could take down the target with one blow!

Li Hao frowned, then smoothed out his brows after a moment. He took a deep breath and suddenly said, "I want to coalesce my last supernatural character of wood. Please wait for a moment and rest and recover on your own!"

Everyone's expressions shifted. Seven... elements?

Li Hao didn't explain himself further. He could sense that it would be difficult to kill the other without coalescing his seventh element. Seven elements could rip through the void in the outside world, but his elements weren't that pure—at the very least, his wind and thunder were a bit weak.

As for whether or not his physical body could endure the strain... All he needed to do was to grit his teeth through the coalescence process. The element would be fully contained after that. It would simply consume additional life force and sword energy when it was utilized later on.

Li Hao found himself too weak without reaching great perfection in his elements of the five organs. He wouldn't be able to take on the replica by himself, to say nothing of the primary coconut tree.

A wood aura flared through the surroundings and the group looked at him. Their previous joy had disappeared—they were too weak! All of them in conjunction delivered limited damage to the coconut tree replica.

The group quietly sat down cross-legged and mysterious power rippled over their body as they traced more characters. Their bodies started fracturing as well. Meanwhile, the little tree drizzled Water of Life on them without needing Li Hao to say anything.

Chen Zhongtian's eyelids twitched at the sight. Hot... diggity... damn... what was with these people? They were terrifying! He felt that if they really killed the plant spirit's primary body, that would produce many powerhouses that were much stronger than him.

This operation against the coconut tree's replica fully demonstrated to Li Hao that the gap between the two sides was still very significant. Although his group wasn't severely injured—in fact, no one was that injured at all as Deputy Zhou and Chen Zhongtian had blocked all of the attacks, it'd just been a replica they faced!

The coconut tree had said that it severed one-third of its core origin. Was Li Hao supposed to believe that just because the plant spirit had said so? Perhaps it was only one-fourth that it cut off.

Therefore, Li Hao understood that he could take the gamble, but he couldn't do so without lacking any confidence whatsoever. He would lead the others to their deaths if he made wild gambles!

His wood element erupted and nearly split his body apart. His blood shot in all directions and his organs trembled. His body couldn't endure the strain of seven elements. Although he was keeping the other supernatural characters in check, the strain of seven elements was still too much for him to bear!

Water of Life rushed into his body in a steady stream, as did sword energy. However, they had a difficult time grappling with his injuries.

Chen Zhongtian's scalp crawled with numbness as he watched the sight! The lad was crazy, he was throwing his life away! Even if Li Hao set foot into seven element Arcanus, he would be ripped apart by the void when he left the ruins. Their space was exceedingly unstable at the moment. Emanating a tiny bit of energy would lead to the void ripping the cultivator apart!

What was the point of that?

Chen Zhongtian wondered at Li Hao's actions, then sighed to himself. The point was... that this guy wasn't an ordinary person!

The little tree didn't have time to spare for absorbing core origin. It rained down Water of Life; Li Hao wasn't the only one who couldn't endure his breakthrough. The rest of the group also suffered from splitting skin and shaking organs.

The Black Armor had drawn close to them at some point in time—but Chen Zhongtian had been completely unaware! That was terrifying.

The Black Armor looked at Li Hao, observing the young man. The latter was still unable to stabilize his power after a while. The 'wood' character could not fully take shape. It quickly broke apart whenever it teetered on the edge of success.

"You are not qualified to endure seven element Arcanus at the moment," the Black Armor said slowly. "Your physical body is too weak!"

Li Hao ignored the Black Armor and continued his efforts, leading to some dissatisfaction from the dean. He'd issued a warning out of the goodness of his heart! Troubles would develop with Li Hao if this continued. It was one thing to exult in the glories of youth, but to ignore the words of a New Martial Saint... Li Hao was too arrogant!

The young man roared at this time.

BOOM!

His wind and thunder elements abruptly flared with life. Stellaris soared into the air; the 'exterminate' character took in the wind and thunder elements, then darted into the sword!

“Oh?” blinked the Black Armor. The young man roared again, finding it not enough!

Under the Black Armor’s astonished eyes, Li Hao howled angrily and slammed his hand on his chest. His golden armor receded, revealing bare skin. The young man tore through his heart without hesitation.

As blood sprayed everywhere, an expressionless Li Hao looked down at his organs!

Chen Zhongtian was well and truly horrified by the scene. What was this? Committing suicide?

Li Hao ignored the rest and observed his beating heart. His organs were trembling violently and crumbling away. It wasn’t enough for him to have suppressed his wind and thunder elements.

“The five elements...” Li Hao murmured. His ‘fire’ character manifested in front of him and a ferocious tiger howled over it.

The young man took a deep breath, grabbed the tiger, and shoved it into his heart. His heart shook with rumbles and began fracturing. As the rest looked at him wide-eyed, he explained calmly, “Our characters are the combination of mental strength and aura. They are of the same origin as our organs and body! The supernatural locks are strong and hide within our organs, yet do not crush our organs. This holds true even for mundanes!”

A mundane also possessed supernatural locks, so why didn’t their organs crumble completely? Why didn’t their four limbs fall apart?

“Whether it is the five organs or four limbs, there must be a special space inside them,” he declared firmly. “There is a treasure inside the human body that is nurtured within. Our strength returns to our self and our body does not break!”

Most of the group felt that he was speaking another language, only a few brightened with understanding. A keen light shone out of the Black Armor's eyes!

Li Hao slowly forced the 'fire' character into his heart. A million thoughts ran through his mind as he continued, "There must be another space within the human heart. It can contain the supernatural locks and is the source of our treasure. It nurtures our blood qi, and while I do not know where it is, it might have something to do with the supernatural locks. Our blood qi is most cleverly hidden somewhere!"

The more he spoke of this theory, the more certain he grew. He continued compressing the 'fire' character. "I'm going to shove the characters into this special space like they're supernatural locks. They won't harm the body that way and will be utilized only when they're needed!"

"Even if we suffer damage in the process, it will only be that of a split second. Our mind intent and blood qi are both stored in this marvelous place..." Li Hao spoke with absolute conviction. "There must be such a place in the human body. The supernatural locks would not be harmless toward us otherwise..."

The Black Armor looked at Li Hao with astonishment! He watched as the young man slowly placed the 'fire' character deep in his heart. Li Hao quietly perceived his organ and even picked up his beating heart with one hand! It was quite a stunning act.

The young man suddenly frowned as the character disappeared into his heart and spat out a mouthful of blood. The heart drummed thunderously, threatening to explode!

Chapter 827: Faux Seven Elements (I)

"Li Hao!" The Black Armor shifted forward, wanting to help the young man. Or the young madman, rather!

Li Hao raised his hand and shook his head at everyone, murmuring, "You are formed of my aura and contained within a cage. You wish to break out of the cage and do not desire to be a confined tiger. I do not wish so, either!"

“Of the auras of the five organs and the auras of the five elements... you are formed of my most blazing emotion! This world is a dark one and not fair. Everyone is as if a prisoner and I, Li Hao, refuse to be such a prisoner!

“But the fist must retract before it can erupt with greater power! You possess the ability of the supernatural lock since you’ve devoured it. Enter the heart for me and help me locate that peculiar space within. Hide within it to emerge with even more stunning force!”

“ROAR!” howled the ferocious tiger. A stunning sight developed before everyone next—a snarling tiger appeared over the heart, one wreathed in flames! It was immensely begrudging and furious, wanting to smash through the cage.

Perhaps this was Li Hao. The tiger snarled, seeming to understand the young man. In reality, the tiger was Li Hao and the young man was the tiger! The fire aura seemed to be alive in this instant.

Under the Black Armor’s stunned gaze, the ferocious tiger howled before slowly withdrawing into the heart. It prowled inside the organ as it became more indistinct. Gradually, even the fire mysterious power disappeared. Something seemed to open with a rumble before the tiger disappeared!

“.....” Jaws dropped throughout the group, particularly Chen Zhongtian’s. The man was completely dumbfounded.

Oh my granddaddy, can someone tell me what’s going on?

Li Hao’s heart now resembled that of a mundane’s. There was no supernatural lock, no flames, and no mysterious power. It was an ordinary heart in everyone’s eyes. Perhaps it was a very strong heart, but it was an ordinary heart nonetheless.

“Have you... really discovered the treasure within the human body?” rasped the Black Armor.

“No!” Li Hao shook his head. “The aura has!” He tilted his head back at the other. “I haven’t discovered it, but the aura has. The aura is alive since it has melded with the supernatural lock. The

aura is alive! This is my dao, and my dao has discovered that place. Perhaps I can do so myself in the future! This must be a very special characteristic of the human body and might be linked to why modern humans are so physically weak!

“I’ve long wondered where the supernatural locks reside and why we can’t dig them out when someone dies. Why can supernatural locks also exist in ordinary people’s bodies? It must mean that there’s another dimension within us!

“I thought of this when someone told me that Apexes can tear through the void. Since there is another space beyond our space, why can there not be another cavity within the cavity of the human body?

“Therefore, the supernatural locks must reside in that secondary space in regular times. Where there is the supernatural lock is the secondary dimension. Therefore, we can manipulate the supernatural lock through the aura and follow its trajectory to return to the secondary space!”

“.....” The Black Armor didn’t know whether to label Li Hao as a lunatic or a genius!

Indeed, since the supernatural locks were so strong, why didn’t they detonate the five organs on a regular basis? Did they really exist within the organs and limbs, or in another dimension associated with them?

The Black Armor looked dazedly at Li Hao. He did not understand modern humans either. Countless years had passed; changes might have occurred in the human body after all this time. Their structure was different from that of ancient humans, but everyone knew that there was great treasure to be found within the human body.

The Black Armor thought of the internal world within his own body and said slowly, “You make a great deal of sense. I do not know whether a secondary dimension exists within the human body, but I do know that one can be created!”

Li Hao looked sharply at the Black Armor, regarding the response with curiosity and expectation. The Black Armor wouldn't speak of this under normal situations; it would not teach such knowledge to the humans of this era.

But now, it continued seriously, "It is unknown whether a secondary dimension naturally exists within the human body, and humanity of different ages differs from each other. The times are different, the world is different. It is impractical to utilize sweeping generalizations when speaking of us!

"In the New Martial era, there were people who ultimately turned core origin dao into a core origin universe—calling it the inner world! It was an inner universe! They could even create an entire world within themselves. It was unimaginable how they could fashion a new world! Perhaps his body was a world, a major world, heaven and earth, a universe, an era, a civilization..."

Li Hao's mind spun with what he heard. "How is that possible?" he murmured.

"And why not?" intoned the Black Armor. "Do you think it is a joke when we say that New Martial was strong? Granted, it was a powerhouse whose might penetrated heaven and earth that did so. He might be the only person since the ancient times who's ever accomplished that feat!"

"Who?" Li Hao asked subconsciously, but he seemed to already understand something. As he expected, the Black Armor laughed. He spoke in very complicated tones—some pride, some worship, and some dejection colored his voice.

"Who? Who has been truly invincible and unfailing since the ancient times? Only one—the Human King!"

There truly was someone who'd never fallen! He was invincible in his time and exercised complete dominion through the land. He was so strong that one could not fathom his strength. Everyone could only eternally look up to him.

In this moment, the group felt a certain kind of emotion. Invincible in his time and exercising complete dominion through the land, never falling in battle—the Human King!

The puppets heard the declaration as well and a peculiar emotion rose all over Evenround Martial University. It differed from the atmosphere previously felt at Battle Heaven.

“The Human King is invincible!”

“We are the vanguard of the Human King, we fight!! Fight!! FIGHT!!”

“.....” The university seemed to come alive as the puppets heard or sensed something. They didn’t speak, but conveyed their thoughts through raging mental strength! They seemed ready to rip through the firmament and draw swords to fight. They would go to battle for the Human King!

The little tree shook from the mental strength flooding the scene. It was now certain that this university had been established by that one. It’d only speculated as such before, but its guess hardened into reality when it saw the imperial majesty’s image emblazoned on the Black Armor.

These puppets were hard pressed to contain themselves after the Black Armor mentioned the Human King. The little tree could tell from that reaction that this place... truly was extraordinary. It possessed a direct connection to the Human King! It must!

Powerhouses had followers who were close to or further removed from them. The students here must have been completely loyal to the Human King back in the day. They might be descendants of his line or loyal guards.

Li Hao and the rest only felt that the world was going to explode around them, or that perhaps they would be ripped apart first before that happened. Supernatural characters twinkled around them, threatening to fall apart as well.

Eventually, the Black Armor shouted, “Silence!”

A quiet hush immediately descended. The puppets that'd gotten caught up in the moment were quiet.

“Learn to control your emotions!” hectored the Black Armor. The puppets remained quiet! Meanwhile, Li Hao and the rest were as white as sheets. They were stunned and baffled by what had taken place. Every single puppet in this place... felt extraordinarily strong! What in the world?

Chen Zhongtian wanted to pee his pants if he could. He raised a shaking hand, the color having drained from his face. Fucking... I've... never been in such a terrifying ruin in my life. This is such a tiny place with hundreds of puppets, but each puppet gives me the same feeling as the plant spirits.

How is that possible? My heavens! There's hundreds of puppets here!

On the other hand, Li Hao's thoughts were preoccupied with how incredible the ancient Human King was. It was countless years later and these people were long dead, but their lingering mental strength still worshipped the Human King with such fervor. It only took a mention of the Human King to send these people into a near riot.

Indeed, people.

Li Hao knew in this moment that these puppets were all humans. There was only mental strength left of them, but that still made them better off than the Battle Heaven Army. The latter was essentially just possessed armor.

Evenround Martial seemed to be more prosperous as puppets were employed here—each puppet was an ultimate treasure, so these people had retained more of their mental strength. As such, they were stronger.

Can these puppets be the students of yesteryear? Li Hao suddenly wondered with great shock. They were likely all of the Apex level. Hundreds of students were all Apex? There was even the Immortal level! How did this level still make one a student?

An Apex would be a division leader at the Battle Heaven Army, an Immortal would be a reserve commander, so a Saint would be... an army commander??

The young man looked at the Black Armor with disbelief. He hadn't given much thought to this before, but it turns out that this one... was on the same level as the commander of the Battle Heaven Army?!

Was this still just a martial university with it being so strong??

He was utterly shocked by his line of thought and the Black Armor's words. Reading the young man's wild mental ripples, the Black Armor suddenly smiled. "You're very interesting. Good... luck!"

He vanished, as did the puppets. Li Hao blinked, what did the Black Armor mean by that? That one couldn't be bothered with him before, but now seemed a bit... warmer? Was it because he'd voiced his speculations about the secondary dimension?

They weren't baseless thoughts, that other space really did exist. He just wasn't able to locate it and had to rely on the aura to do it for him.

An internal world? The dao of the Human King?

Li Hao's heart rose and fell with a variety of thoughts. Whether it was Chen Zhongtian or the others, they also grappled with their emotions. The Black Armor was very strong—they knew that and could sense it.

This heavyweight hadn't intervened or said anything before. He just sat back and watched until Li Hao brought the supernatural characters into his body. That was when he mentioned the internal world of the Human King's dao...

What did this mean? Was he comparing Li Hao to the ancient Human King?

The group couldn't quite believe what'd just taken place. As arrogant as one might be, when anyone reached their level, they knew that they were nothing compared to the ancient civilization. Modern cultivators would die in droves if ancient powerhouses so much as farted on them. And this was the ancient, invincible king that was being spoken of!

Did this mean that the Black Armor thought very highly of Li Hao?

Chapter 828: Faux Seven Elements (II)

At this moment, in the basement of the classroom building.

In front of the library.

Puppets crowded in front of the doors, hanging their heads like they were children who'd committed wrongdoing. They didn't dare look at the Black Armor.

"Do not brashly agitate your lingering wills." The Black Armor solemnly turned to them. "You are all already dead, you are just the living dead! Do you really want to fly apart into dust?"

"Teacher!" A puppet stepped forward with heightened emotions. "We... wish to return to the main world and join the Human King's Demon Guards! We want to follow the Demon King and march through the worlds. We wish to illuminate the firmament with the glories of humanity!"

They'd enrolled at Evenround Martial back in the day for this goal, to join the Human King's personal guard. Ninety-nine percent of those who graduated from the university could join that guard because this place was different. This was an institution of learning created by one closest to the Human King. The descendants of countless powerhouses vied for a spot in its classrooms.

Those who successfully matriculated were selected from tens of thousands. Who'd ever fathomed that they wouldn't even have a chance to graduate and would sink into oblivion instead?

Frustration, excitement, and fervor rose in their hearts when the Black Armor mentioned the Human King. We can probably never go back, but our blood still runs hot! The Human King cannot possibly have fallen, he was a truly invincible powerhouse. Therefore, maybe he's only lost!

That's right, that has to be the case. It must be that he's marched so far on his campaign that he's forgotten the way home and this place. No one else gets lost, but he does. That's definitely what has happened.

"The Human King has gotten lost again, hasn't he?" someone murmured. "He got lost after he killed the Heavenly Emperor and made everyone wait for a lot of years. This must've happened again!"

"....." The Black Armor was silent, then smiled after a long moment. "That's right, he must be lost! He was my senior at school and has always been thus. We'll... wait for him to return and take us with him when he next sets foot into Silver Moon Territory..."

"We leave and return home!"

"Return home!" Their shouts shook the building! We want to go home!

The Black Armor looked on and laughed silently, but was inwardly filled with resignation and self-recrimination. Sorry, I really am sorry. I've just lied to you guys again. It's been too long! He wouldn't be lost for so long. You bunch of sillies, we're very close to the main world. They can get here in a split second or travel through the waters of the Forbidden Sea. They can even project from the main world if they wanted to. They would long be arrived if they could come here.

Something might've happened to the main world!

The Black Armor looked outside, seeming to have Li Hao in his line of sight. He laughed silently at the interesting fellow. Perhaps the young man would be the standout of this era. Maybe he could even open the Star Gate. But... so what?

The second he opened it might be the second of his destruction. The Star Gate might've become the final barrier.

"Teacher! We of New Martial do not despair!" a puppet suddenly hollered. "You've gotten old and are frequently distracted these days! You're not fit to be a teacher anymore! We're still enthusiastic about things, so we should be the teacher!"

"....." The Black Armor didn't know what to say. Have I gotten old?

Perhaps. He was indeed more sentimental lately. As for the student's declaration of wanting to be the teacher, that was a commonly heard claim. That was how the Human King had conducted himself back in the day, and he was their idol. All of these brats wanted to surpass their teacher and be the teacher themselves. They wanted to lord it over their teachers and turn the latter into students!

What a bunch of unruly brats! The Black Armor smacked the offending puppet down to the ground and heavily patted its head. He didn't stop until the puppet was completely dazed.

"You can be my teacher when you can defeat me. Otherwise... go back to sweeping! Those guys broke some more things, so go fix them. Also, tell Li Hao that he's being fined 4.5 million energy stones for the damages. Adding on to his previous damages makes for ten million!"

"Alright then!" Resigned puppets disappeared from the scene; they'd been thrashed again.

.....

Li Hao finally wore a smile on his face. His ferocious tiger aura slowly disappeared with the 'fire' character. There was one less element weighing down on him; the wind and thunder elements were likewise locked into Stellaris. His wood character gradually took shape.

The others watched raptly, particularly Chen Zhongtian! His mouth hung wide open as he felt like he'd spent the entire day in a dream. He'd seen with his own eyes the disappearance of fire mysterious power. Li Hao had completely caused it to disappear! He'd watched as Li Hao summoned various written characters and melded the supernatural lock within them. He'd also observed the young man incorporate the wood aura into one of the characters, then the supernatural lock, and ultimately an eruption of wood mysterious power and the manifestation of supernatural abilities!

Chen Zhongtian was utterly dazed by everything he'd seen today. Everyone present seemed to possess the same capabilities. What was this? A new dao?

By now, Li Hao had fully repaired his body with Water of Life. His organs were back to prime condition, with his heart holding the tiger aura. It was the easiest aura for him to control and influence, whereas the others might not understand him. His auras were slightly weak, but they were sufficient for his purposes.

Just like before, he was a six element Arcanus again. So long as the tiger aura remained hidden, the strain exerted on his body was nominal as in the past. Only Li Hao himself knew that he would be a seven element Arcanus as soon as the tiger aura appeared!

However, his wind and thunder elements were too weak. Li Hao sighed to himself, he wasn't a true seven element Arcanus in his own eyes. The key lay with his wind and thunder elements lacking their own aura. As such, their strength was mediocre. Ordinary people might think of themselves as a seven element Arcanus, but to Li Hao, he was just a poor little worm of five elements.

Water of Life disappeared rapidly like water emptying through a drain. The little tree expended much of its personal reserves. Li Hao had given it a total of ten million stones in their dealings with each other; it had supplied approximately one thousand drops to the young man. The little tree had expended only three million stones for Water of Life and used almost five million on its own recovery.

It'd spent the remaining two million on its own Water of Life reserves, making roughly five hundred drops. Such was the instinct of plant spirits, much like how squirrels hoarded food for the winter. They banked Water of Life for future use even if they were yet to fully recover. However, the little tree's stores were completely empty at the moment. The group of humans in front of it absorbed every drop with gusto as they would split apart the second they ran out.

The little tree winced at the consumption! Its pain was somewhat assuaged when it thought of all of the core origin power it'd absorbed. One would not trap a wolf if they weren't willing to risk the child. Other than itself, only Deputy Zhou could absorb core origin power.

How am I supposed to reap benefits if I do not make an investment? These people are working for me when they fight and kill targets!

That's right, such was the little tree's line of thinking. These were worker bees who put in a lot of effort to help it recover, so it had to fortify their bodies well. Its reserves slowly dwindled away until there was almost no Water of Life left in it anymore. The little tree wanted to cry, but comforted itself that it could just make more.

The only person sitting on pins and needles in the group was Chen Zhongtian. Seeing that Li Hao was about to conclude his cultivation, he couldn't contain himself anymore.

"Commander Li..." He approached cautiously. "What is... what is your condition?"

He'd thought that he'd be the strongest of them all, but he found that he was not by far. Setting aside the little tree, Deputy Zhou was also exceedingly strong as a pure ancient cultivator. Li Hao was so strong that it made him shake. The rest seemed to be peak five elements at most, but there were so many of them!

Yao Si and Hong Yitang seemed to have reached that level, Hong Yitang looked to be close. There were some weaklings that pulled down the average level of strength, such as Manager Yu at almost three element Arcanus or the rather weak three element Light Sword...

Ah, Kong Jie could count as only three elements as well, but his fist was quite hard. This gathering of strength would stun the world, but this group of lunatics were cultivating again. Who knew if they'd erupt one after another and advance to higher levels?

It was terrifying!

"There's nothing much to my condition," Li Hao smiled. "We're just cultivating. Don't leak this to other people, Minister Chen!"

"Of course I won't..." Chen Zhongtian smiled awkwardly. "It's just that... those characters are similar to Tranquil Star's ultimate art. I know them too. Is there... something special about them, commander?"

"Guess! Or do you want to give them a try?"

Chen Zhongtian didn't know what to say. I have to be bold enough to try them first. Cultivation sometimes looked simple, but setting one foot wrong might lead to one's doom. This was no joking matter. He'd been observing the group closely and made some conclusions, but he wouldn't dare try them of his own accord without pointers from someone. It really would be his death!

If he broke all of his supernatural locks and failed to finish the characters, wouldn't that lead to him exploding on the spot?

"Then... Commander Li, what is the secondary dimension in the human body?"

"How would I know?" Li Hao laughed. "I'm not the one who discovered it."

Chen Zhongtian was completely at a loss. Fine then! Don't speak of it if you don't want to!

Li Hao truly didn't know, so he was unable to talk of anything. He knew that it existed, but he couldn't locate it. He might be able to when his auras were even stronger, but he couldn't for now. Only the tiger aura could barely manage to understand him and trace the supernatural lock's trajectory to the depths of the heart. The rest... were still a little ways off from that.

Li Hao looked at the rest—everyone was cultivating, the little tree and Deputy Zhou were devouring core origin strength, as well as one other being... The young man frowned at Panther. The dog was barely doing anything lately and just put in a showing when things developed, but it ate quite a lot. And now, it was absorbing core origin power!

This kind of energy is very precious! What are you eating it for?

“Panth!”

Panther immediately opened its eyes. A sheepish look entered them when it saw that Li Hao was glaring in its direction. I can eat it too! I'm the descendant of an ancient monster spirit and I'm really good at eating things. Eating stuff is good for me. As for why I'm not doing anything... am I needed to? It was just a replica and we could obviously win, so I couldn't be bothered to stick my nose where it's not needed.

The dog was confused when Li Hao remained glaring at it, then suddenly opened its mouth and swallowed the nearby He Yong. It looked fawningly at Li Hao. See, I'm useful! What can I do? Eat people!

I can put people in my stomach and make them undetectable! You'll need to bring in a bunch of people to kill the big tree—they're not an idiot, why would they let you in like that? You just need to bring me in! I can eat people and everything under the sun!

Chapter 829: Faux Seven Elements (III)

Bam!

Panther's stomach shook continuously as someone pummeled it from the inside.

“You son of a... dog of a... Panther, let me out!” He Yong’s furious howls could be faintly heard from outside. The hell, man! He was doing just fine and dandy with his cultivation and enjoying being bathed by Water of Life when something abruptly swallowed him! He knew that Panther was behind the deed when everything went dark in front of him.

Li Hao, on the other hand, looked at the dog with interest. He Yong was a three element Arcanus, but he couldn’t escape Panther’s stomach?

The dog shook its extended belly in obvious discomfort. It dry-retched before spitting out He Yong. The man rolled on the ground and sprang up angrily when he saw that everyone was staring dumbly at him. He glared viciously at the dog, “You trying to start a fight??”

He was proceeding just fine with his cultivation when this damned dog swallowed him. This was the height of bullying, it was!

There’s so many people around, why are you only swallowing me? Am I easier to bully? I’m stronger than Yu Luochoa! Swallow her!

Panther seemed to understand the look in He Yong’s eyes, but it couldn’t be bothered to explain. Yu Luochoa has Hou Xiaochen supporting her and he’s practically a five element Arcanus now, he’s really scary! No one likes you, so there’s no problem swallowing you.

“That’s enough!” Li Hao coughed. He looked a bit pale as he’d expended a lot of stamina. The young man looked sternly at Panther. “Don’t go around randomly eating people. Senior Southern Fist hasn’t done anything to you. I know what you’re trying to say.”

He laughed after thinking it over. Not bad, the dog was still useful for something. While he couldn’t come to any conclusions regarding battle strength, Panther could devour energy and hide people. Li Hao had been debating how to enter the Hu ruins with his entire group. It was impossible to not draw suspicion as there were almost two dozen of them. Even though the supernatural characters concealed their true strength, the big tree wouldn’t brashly let all of them in like this.

Panther’s actions reminded him of another option. He’d taken up residence in the dog’s stomach when they visited the Steadfast Duke on the eastern continent. The black dog’s stomach was

spacious and slightly resembled the internal world that the Black Armor had just mentioned. Holding two dozen people shouldn't pose much of a problem. Living people could not enter a storage ring—that was the unique capability of the plant spirits.

“Then you can eat a little more, but not too much. Senior Tree is the key in our fight against the enemy. Satisfy the senior first!”

“Arf arf arf!” Panther rapidly bobbed its head and happily ran back to its feasting place.

Li Hao had just finished his next arrangements when a puppet materialized in front of him. “Teacher says that you damaged more things this time and are fined 4.5 million energy stones. If added to your previous fine, that makes for ten million. Don't forget to pay off your fine!” The puppet dropped the act and outright spoke to Li Hao.

“I understand!” The young man nodded.

The puppet remained looking curiously at him. “You're very strong...”

“You praise me too highly. I am not worth mention compared to you guys.”

“No, it's not the same.” The puppet shook its head. “Here, we have the strongest methods, the strongest leaders, the best environment, the best conditions, the most excellent order, and the strongest sovereigns. Although we are indeed exemplary, we would not reach the same heights as you if given your environment. You are incredible!”

Li Hao smiled and was about to respond when the puppet continued, “Since you're so strong, you can open the Star Gate, right?”

“.....” The young man didn't know how to respond.

“Can you tell us once you open it?” asked the puppet. “We... would like to leave too. We want to go back. We want to be buried at home if that’s the only way we can return. Please do so for us!”

“Um...”

“We’re already dead,” the puppet said earnestly. “Although we wish to follow the Human King’s august majesty once more and march on the heavens with him, we know that we may not have the chance to. But we really miss home, and we won’t have you do all this for free. All of us know supreme arts, truly supreme arts from our family.

“We are the so-called second and third generation disciples that people speak of. Our parents and ancestors are good friends with the Human King. There are true exalted emperors among our ancestors. If you wish it, we can teach you the arts of exalted emperors!”

Li Hao blinked. The true descendants of exalted emperors? That was different from him since he was an untold generation removed from his truly great ancestors. If fifty years denoted a generation, how many generations had his heritage been diluted? It must have been at least fifty thousand years since the ancient civilization according to his count!

But these puppets were second and third generations—they were the true descendants of the noble and mighty! No wonder they were so terrifying and strong even in death.

“I’ll... do my best!” He didn’t give a firm answer as he’d yet to lay eyes on this Star Gate that they spoke of.

Wait...

Was the door in space that seemed to exist in the center of Silver City’s eight trigrams the Star Gate that they mentioned? Li Hao frowned, this would be a difficult task then! That was a very dangerous locale as he seemed to have seen it before. The door might be sealing something away.

“Mm... trying your best is enough. Thank you!” The puppet quickly left. They would come make the request themselves since the Black Armor refused to say anything. Their teacher had considerations of face, they did not. They wanted to go home, even if the only way they could do so was in a coffin.

Li Hao spoke no further and immersed himself in cultivation. The rest came out of their trances in another few hours, each having progressed a bit more. However, they all knew that this was just the beginning. That had only been a replica they faced, the tree’s primary body was the truly thorny opponent.

“Everyone was active on the battlefield just now and experienced for yourselves how powerful a replica is,” Li Hao sighed. “The primary body... will be harder to manage. Someone might die and I’m not fully confident either...”

He Yong snorted before he finished. “That’s enough, us Silver Moon martial masters have seen all manner of occasions. Ask the old thug if he’s afraid of death. If he’s not, then that’s it. You don’t need to ask anyone else!”

“.....” Chen Zhongtian flicked a glance at him; he wouldn’t dignify that comment with a response. “Commander Li, it’s a certainty that the plant spirit’s primary body is powerful. There’s another problem at the moment that urgently needs to be taken care of. As for killing the plant spirit, I naturally have no opinion otherwise.”

“What problem?”

“Ah... the plant spirit is so strong that we might die anytime,” Chen Zhongtian coughed dryly. “But we’ll just manage to preserve our lives if there’s Water of Life present. I think that each of us should be allotted one hundred drops as a life-preserving measure. We lack a healer, so we can only supplement through this regard. However, our need is great. We’ll need at least two thousand drops if everyone is given this in advance.

“So my thoughts are that the first line of offense and defense should be allotted this resource, such as Deputy Zhou Chuan, the last generation Iron Shirt, Earthturner Sword, and...” He didn’t finish

his sentence—and me! We’re the primary defense and will easily die if we don’t have Water of Life at the ready.

Li Hao smacked himself on the forehead, not knowing whether to laugh or cry. “You guys probably thought about it, why didn’t you say anything? It somehow slipped my mind. I was only focused on killing the enemy!”

No one had reminded him of such an important detail—it took an outsider to shed some light. Meanwhile, the rest of the group hadn’t said anything not because it didn’t occur to them either, but because they knew that Water of Life had been used up. Nothing would result from their reminder.

“Don’t think of conserving resources for me,” Li Hao laughed. “This has to do with our survival.” He turned to the little tree. “How long will it take to create one thousand drops if you manufacture them now with no thought for the cost?”

“No thought for the cost?” came the little tree’s mental ripples. “The consumption rate will be at least three times greater than usual. It will be fast, but... isn’t that... too wasteful...”

“It’s fine!” Li Hao laughed. “Then let’s spend some time on this. The sky is yet to brighten and there’s no fear of wasting resources. I have a ton of mysterious power stones—more than fifty million left!”

There was no need to drag the process out to save resources. The big tree would sense it as soon as they emerged that its replica was no more. In fact, the group had to make good use of time so that the tree wouldn’t have a chance to recover.

“Alright, then I’ll... coalesce them right now!” The little tree was much stronger than before, so the conversion process was much faster. Since Li Hao had said to ignore the cost, there was no need for it to sparingly dole out mysterious power stones. It would have everything once they defeated the coconut tree’s primary body. It’d awakened for many years and received endless benefits from the Ministry of the Judiciary.

The little tree produced a vast quantity of Water of Life in less than two hours, consuming ten million stones to do so. Li Hao handed out the resource accordingly. Chen Zhongtian was beside himself as it was damned nice to be among the first to receive a share of the spoils.

After a while, Li Hao looked at everyone. “And now... I’m afraid I’ll have to ask everyone to enter Panther’s stomach!”

The dog was already waiting with an extended jaw. You know how useful I am now, right? As resigned as the group was by the proposed course of action, they knew that it was necessary. Each of them were swiftly swallowed and the little tree reentered the storage ring, leaving only Panther and Li Hao present in the field.

The young man laughed and slammed his palm at his head! Blood flowed out of his orifices and his presence wavered...

Panther jerked back and whined in surprise. Damn, the human was so vicious even to himself!

The torn injury on his chest remained; a smiling Li Hao turned to the black dog. “Does it make sense for you to be fine when I’m this injured?”

“Arf arf arf!” Panther barked in protest, but couldn’t escape Li Hao grabbing its tail and slamming down a palm strike.

“Only with effort made are there gains received. Otherwise, you won’t be getting even a mouthful of spit once we kill the coconut tree!”

“Arf arf!” Tears welled up in Panther’s eyes, but had to accept its fate. Its skin split and blood flowed freely. The dog strongly suspected that Li Hao was doing this on purpose as revenge. The human thought that it ate too much!

Chapter 830: Killing an Immortal (I)

Li Hao's body rose in the gloom of Evenround Martial and promptly vanished. He reappeared in the Skystar Commander Office and vomited a mouthful of blood. A violent surge of mental strength agitated from the rear yard. Within the Hu ruins, a coconut tree stirred with maddened fury. It could sense that its replica was no more!

Damn it, that asshole! Didn't the little bastard say that he was highly confident? Where's my replica?!

It sensed Li Hao's presence before long. The young man was covered in blood; sadness and anguish swam in his eyes. A dog of blood arduously trailed behind him. He coughed out an apology before the big tree could rage when he approached the sumptuous hall in the rear yard.

"My... apologies... I hadn't thought... this would be the case... You should sense it too..." Li Hao stretched his lips in a ghastly smile. "All of my people are dead!"

The tree shook. All of them... dead?

"Thankfully... I used the Windchaser Boots... to escape... at the last second..." Li Hao took out the boots and Stellaris and hefted them in his hands. "My injuries are too severe... I require... Water of Life... There is hope... so long as I'm alive... I will enter the ruins... to recover first... You can take these two weapons first. I need to borrow one hundred drops of Water of Life... it will... be a worthwhile trade!"

The big tree stilled. It'd wanted to rage against the young man's impotence, but found its fury slightly dissipating when it looked at Stellaris and the Windchaser Boots. The young man just... wanted to come in?

"Give me these items and I will give you Water of Life..."

"Cough cough!" Li Hao shook his head. "I need to enter the ruins. Water of Life has such a dense presence when actively used. That will alert everyone in the city to the gravity of my injuries and I

will die without further question. The nine ministries and royal family will not relinquish the chance to kill me... cough cough..."

"Protect me for a while inside the ruins," Li Hao panted for breath as blood flowed freely. "It'll be a day at most for me to recover from my wounds. The Skystar Commander Office still stands so long as I am alive!"

"You..." The big tree wanted to inquire more about what had happened and who killed its replica, but Li Hao's injuries seemed to be worsening and his presence fading away. After some thought, the big tree sent the mental ripples of, "Then come in!"

It wasn't particularly wary simply because it was very confident. The ruins were home turf for the plant spirits, it should be Li Hao who was worried about setting foot inside. It knew that the young man was flailing around randomly for any sort of help in his current state. Li Hao was dead without a doubt if the coconut tree harbored any sort of ill intent.

But speaking of, why couldn't it have any personal motives?

The big tree was highly tempted. Li Hao had a lot of origin weapons on him and possibly mysterious power stones as well, despite what the young human had said. All of it would belong to the tree if it killed Li Hao. It would continue to send the Hus out and have them retake the Ministry of the Judiciary. That would mean its core origin resulted in three of eight heritage weapons and possibly other treasures as well

Wasn't this reaping such a fat profit?

It thought rapidly, worried that the same thought would occur to Li Hao as well. "Hurry and come inside," conveyed its mental ripples. "Be careful of people detecting your condition..."

A door of light manifested in the air. Li Hao quickly darted through it, grabbing Panther with him. He spat out a mouthful of blood with a cough, completely oblivious to the implications behind his actions.

The door of light immediately vanished and the big tree swayed excitedly in the ruins. This Li Hao was such a fool! He gave his trust so completely that the tree was wondering if it should save the young man instead. Maybe killing the human for his treasures wasn't the best course of action?

But upon thinking of how uncontrollable and domineering he was, that made him less useful than the Hus. The tree didn't lack for talented subordinates, it just needed biddable ones. In that case, weren't the Hus most suitable?

Well then, the big tree could only offer an apology to the young man. It was his fault for carrying so many treasures on him! None of the plant spirits in Silver Moon could give a thought to reviving once Li Hao was dead. The coconut tree had its decision once its thoughts traveled here—Li Hao would die! It could take revenge for the death of its replica later, after the second awakening.

Li Hao tumbled to the ground with Panther. The first thing he saw was a towering tree that seemed to have coconuts ringing its top. There was a small town in the distance, one with tiny figures in it that were rapidly converging in this direction.

The Hus?

Li Hao didn't have time to think before looking back at the big tree. A keen light glinted in his eyes! This was a true Immortal level existence!

.....

The tree in the ruins was bigger than one could imagine. Its trunk and leaves shimmered with a golden color. The coconut fruit around its top appeared somewhat shriveled. As Li Hao assessed the plant spirit, the people in the distance made their way over.

There were men and women. They were young, but strong. Li Hao was surprised to identify multiple Arcanus amongst them when he swept a glance over them. The Hus? So they had multiple Arcanus left!

They could naturally see Li Hao if he could see them. The young man in the lead scowled when he saw Li Hao's face clearly. "It's you!" he declared bitterly.

Li Hao looked at him, not recognizing the speaker. However, he looked a bit similar to Hu Mingfa, so he might be Hu Mingfa's son. Li Hao couldn't care less and ignored the young man. He looked at the big tree instead and coughed "Senior, lend me one hundred drops of Water of Life. Once I am recovered, I would request that you give me the Hus to dispose of!"

He went into another coughing fit that ended with blood streaming out of his mouth. Not too far off in the distance, the Hus had been very wary of their visitor. But now, they assessed his condition with raised eyebrows. Li Hao was... injured?

The coconut tree was also debating whether or not to exterminate Li Hao. The young man would bring it a lot of advantages from his position in the outside world. But... he was hard to keep under control and didn't take orders as readily as the Hus.

After hearing the young man's latest words, the tree felt that it definitely could not keep Li Hao around. There wasn't a speck of respect in the human's bones. He was here as a supplicant, but he was still giving orders. The tree was an ancient powerhouse! Li Hao was entirely too bold and completely without reverence. Keeping him around might be creating trouble for oneself.

The coconut tree came to a decision in this moment.

A faint red light emanated from Li Hao's eyes. He wanted to see through the big tree and locate its heart of life. However, the big tree seemed to sense something. A slightly wizened face appeared on its tree trunk. Its lips opened and closed as mental ripples traveled forth. "Very well, but you need to give me the Windchaser Boots and Stellaris first."

These powerful weapons might be utilized to greater effect in Li Hao's hands, but it was better to avoid some trouble. Although the coconut tree wasn't afraid of Li Hao, it was best if the young man was completely disarmed. Li Hao would be at the tree's mercy then; it would be able to take care of a six or seven element Arcanus, to say nothing of a mere five elements.

“Milord!” The Hus understood the situation at hand, but accepted it with reluctance and some fury. Li Hao was gravely injured! But the plant spirit wanted to help him recover!

The Hus fell silent as soon as the face on the tree trunk looked at them. They knew only dread and pain. Not only was the plant spirit unwilling to kill Li Hao for the Hus, but they had to watch quietly as it helped their enemy.

The coconut tree was very pleased with the reaction. These were the kinds of servants it wanted. They could only listen to his commands. See, these ones here didn’t dare twitch a muscle without its command, even though the nemesis who’d killed their father and grandfather was right in front of them.

Such were ideal servants. Li Hao was absolutely too arrogant and cocky. Otherwise, his bloodline was noble and his identity so precious that the coconut tree didn’t really want to kill the young man if it could help it.

Li Hao frowned slightly before nodding. “Alright!” He sighed and walked toward the big tree while holding Stellaris.

“You can just toss it over!” The tree declared with displeasure. What was this fellow doing in coming closer? The tree didn’t want more to do with Li Hao.

“This is the heritage of my forefathers,” the young man responded calmly. “It represents my ancestors and the Li clan has always revered our ancestors. The senior is joking, how can I just toss it over?”

“Li Hao is a disgrace to the family and has no choice but to temporarily use Stellaris as collateral. As the Sword Sovereign’s personal weapon, I hope that the senior can also show Stellaris and the Li clan the respect that we deserve!”

Li Hao looked rather unhappy as he reluctantly offered up the sword with both hands. “Senior, please... accept this sword and keep it well. I will soon return with the mysterious power stones!”

The coconut tree grew even more displeased, but... forget it. It didn't want to give rise to anything unexpected. It was enough that the young man handed it over. All this talk of respect and dignity was an utter joke. The Sword Sovereign might've died countless eons ago. Therefore, the tree viewed Stellaris with a complete absence of respect.

But it didn't refute Li Hao's words. Two massive leaves extended from the tree like arms and reached toward the young man. He continued coughing and raised his hands high. Just as the tree's leaves reached over, a ray of sword light soundlessly sparkled from the blade.

It was like heaven and earth had been cut apart. Although the endlessly keen Stellaris encountered unparalleled resistance, a crack sounded amidst the piercing sound of scraping metal.

Crunch.

Two arms broke. The two arm-like leaves fluttered to the ground as two lifeless, golden leaves. The spontaneous development didn't register to the coconut tree at first. It was thinking—where did Li Hao get this courage from? Also, Stellaris was really very sharp to enable Li Hao to reach beyond several cultivation levels and sever two of its leaves with one move. Were the leaves of an Immortal level existence so easily severed?

The Hus nearby were first stunned, then overjoyed. He's gone mad! That was the first thought in their minds, that Li Hao had gone completely crazy. The coconut tree had reiterated that it would avenge the Hus, but the family members had despaired after seeing the two transact. Li Hao chose this moment to go on the offensive, what was this if not courting death?

Ancient existences were invincible and not to be provoked in the eyes of modern superhumans, particularly the plant spirits! They were undying and had survived since the ancient times. They weren't armored warriors with lingering mental strength or will, but truly indomitable heavyweights!

And yet, Li Hao chose to attack such a being!

