

Star Gate 831

Chapter 831: Killing an Immortal (II)

A trickle of golden blood dripped out of the big tree's severed leaves. The coconut tree froze with incomprehension for a split second. It'd been too long! So long that it'd almost forgotten how to fight. It'd been so long that it couldn't believe anyone below Apex would dare raise a hand against it. Even back in New Martial, no cultivator weaker than Apex would dare attack an Immortal.

It snapped back to its senses as the massive face on its trunk contorted with fury. "Li Hao!"

This was a madman! He courted death!

Countless leaves hovered into view and formed a massive hand that sought to swat this gnat to death. Does he think that I'm weakened with the destruction of my replica, that it's an opportunity to kill me?! That was just a replica, not the primary body!

Power enclosed the vicinity and the Hus on the outskirts grew excited. The plant spirit was about to make a move! Li Hao was dead meat!

The skies darkened one more, presenting a sight gloomier than before! A gigantic mouth yawned over the premises, devouring heaven and earth like a black hole.

"ROAR!" Panther was in the form of the big golden dog. Mammoth in shape, it swallowed the enormous hand. On the ground, Li Hao erupted with formidable sword intent.

He struck with the force of peak six elements! The supernatural characters were part of Stellaris—there was only one sword beneath the heavens and it stabbed at its target!

Boom!

The skies shattered and earth fractured. Panther swallowed the branches that Li Hao cut off, but they seemed to be alive and turned into individual trees that darted into its stomach!

“The descendant of the Monster Spirit Envoy?” A cold look entered the tree’s eyes. So that animal has a special background to it, but so what? The broken branches were still deadly to the dog. A mere five or four element Arcanus dog with some bloodline power of the Monster Spirit Envoy could devour the world, yet could it digest what it ate?

Do you think you’re the Monster Spirit Envoy? You’re going to be dead before long!

Countless little trees darted into Panther’s stomach, drumming a loud disturbance in the black dog’s cavernous stomach!

The big tree ignored it—the little bastard Li Hao was on its mind. Its branches trembled as Panther roared and wretched, regurgitating almost two dozen figures.

A beam of golden light shot at the big tree.

BOOM!

Deputy Zhou punched outward, creating a fissure in the ground as his blood qi soared to the skies. He was more ferocious than before!

“You deserve death!” The big tree fully flew into a rage. No wonder Li Hao had dared go on the attack! He’d collected a bunch of Arcanus! You’re trying to kill me with Arcanus??

Countless branches manifested and shot through the void. An avenue of light appeared as well, like an eternal road. Countless minor trees shot out from it.

The group didn't panic as they knew what it was. The coconut tree's replica had deployed it before—an attack of core origin. As they expected, a small tree appeared in each of their minds. They were ready and immediately let loose with their supernatural characters.

Rumble!!

Blood flowed from their orifices as Deputy Zhou and Chen Zhongtian vomited blood. They suffered from a stronger attack than the rest and various origin weapons materialized over Chen Zhongtian to block the offensive. The man was shocked by the ferocity they faced.

The big tree was really strong, so much stronger than its replica! If it wasn't for a plethora of origin weapons protecting his meridians, he wouldn't be able to withstand this blow. Was this the capabilities of an Immortal? If he'd run into it himself as a peak six element and bore the targeted focus of the tree's attacks, it would take only one blow before he died.

Chen Zhongtian could scarcely believe it! Was the gap between them that great?

It was then that a little tree materialized. A shadow flickered into view and hurtled at the core origin dao.

"How dare you!" The big tree was grappling with surprise that the humans had only been injured and not died. Alarm seized it and it shouted with indignation.

BOOM!

An incredible uproar echoed as core origin strength swept through the area. The projection of the imperial palace solidified and the little tree directed it in a ramming charge at the avenue of core origin!

The projection immediately suppressed the surroundings!

The coconut tree abruptly lifted its roots from where it'd been firmly planted and turned into a humanoid tree. Its four limbs were clearly distinct and its face solidified. The path of light in the void vanished!

A haggard old man looked coldly at the little tree. "A projection of the imperial palace? So you are a guard of the abandoned palace of Silver Moon Territory?"

"I see!" the big tree suddenly laughed. "I wondered how Li Hao was bold enough to attack me, so it's because of you! You're just an Apex and this isn't even your primary body. Do you think this shadow of the imperial palace can suppress my core origin dao?"

Although it was very weak, its opponent was neither here with its primary body and was very inexperienced. Its core origin power wasn't that dense either. Did this little replica want to kill it with these pathetic abilities?

Silver Moon martial masters stood in all directions, everyone on high alert. The coconut tree was too strong! The little tree had stepped forward and utilized its projection, but wasn't able to overcome their opponent. In fact, the big tree seemed rather enjoying it!

"Interesting, how interesting," laughed the coconut tree. "This is wonderful, you have a plant spirit replica with you! Devouring you will be more nutritious than devouring one hundred million mysterious power stones!"

Indeed, Li Hao's trump cards were a joke to the big tree. This little replica would be its to eat!

A series of ghastly wails sounded nearby. The big tree tilted its head just in time to see Li Hao retract his sword. The young man hadn't joined his people in attacking the coconut tree earlier because he'd been busy killing all of the Hu powerhouses nearby. They were now all dead!

These people had been watching the show, and some tried to get away in the confusion. Well, they weren't going anywhere!

“Li Hao!” snapped the coconut tree. That animal had exterminated all of the Hus! The tree had use for those humans! They could collect treasures for it after it killed Li Hao’s group! But it laughed when a new thought entered its mind. Would it still need the Hus after devouring the little replica and then the people in front of him?

It was no longer furious and summoned a grand avenue in the void between them again. It seemed to lead to the boundless void, but the little tree said coolly via mental ripples, “Core origin dao has long vanished. This is but your lingering core origin strength. Who are you trying to scare with this show?”

BOOM!

The imperial palace projection appeared once more and came down on all sides. They were no longer in the ancient age. In those days, an Immortal spontaneously increased their battle strength multiple times over when they deployed their core origin dao. That was truly frightening. But now, the big tree was only making use of its lingering strength.

BAM!

The imperial palace projection crashed into core origin dao once more. The coconut tree watched coldly as the little tree rapidly backed away and the projection started crumbling. I am not something you can have designs on, no matter how weak I am! I am an Immortal!

“Kill!” Li Hao grunted and charged with an upraised sword. The others brought out their trump cards as well.

Chen Zhongtian shouted angrily and manifested a long blade over his body. It broke through the void, stunning even Deputy Zhou and the others with the blow. It showed signs of smashing the void to pieces!

Light erupted from the long blade, dominating heaven and earth.

“The weapon of a Saint?” The coconut tree regarded it with hostility. It could tell that this had once been the personal weapon of a Saint. Although the wielder’s identity eluded it for the moment, it knew that its modern wielder was too weak. The blow had been made through the weapon’s instincts and might threaten an Apex, but delivered a negligible effect to the coconut tree.

Multiple branches transformed into fists and hovered threateningly at the group. One punch formed in front of everyone!

BOOM!

Deputy Zhou’s domineering golden body shattered from the punch. Water of Life streamed out from a variety of openings to nourish his body, but blood continued to flow freely from his injuries.

Hong Yitang howled with concentration and brought down Earthturner Sword over the entire scene. His ‘sword’ character fractured with a loud bang and his defenses were pierced through! Hong Yitang spat out a mouthful of blood and color drained from his face. The rest of the group’s attacks quickly arrived, but they could not seize back the momentum!

He Yong and everyone else swiftly flew backward with blood spraying from their wounds.

“Broken Will!” roared Hou Xiaochen, as did Sky Sword and a few others with their own methods. The earth and skies fissured, but the massive punch broke through a spear, the Sky Sword technique, and even the five element Yao Si’s attacks.

Bam!

It took only a split second, but every single powerhouse on the scene was firmly defeated. The coconut tree was too strong! Deputy Zhou had been sent flying and Chen Zhongtian’s long blade only inflicted an imperceptible crack on the tree trunk.

The group was flabbergasted. This was so much stronger than the replica, could they really kill it?

The little tree had been erupting with the imperial palace projection to suppress their target's core origin. Therefore, the coconut tree wasn't utilizing its core origin dao at all. It was simply relying on its physical body to crush everyone.

The coconut tree turned to Li Hao again. The young man was strong enough to shatter the image of its fist with one stroke. But... what did that count for?

"Is this the source of your confidence?" laughed the coconut tree. "You will never know how strong the Immortal level is!"

So what if you've constrained my core origin? The little tree didn't have strength left for anything after that. None of these people could measure up to it even if it didn't utilize core origin.

Scanning the Arcanus powerhouses prone on the ground, the coconut tree walked toward Li Hao. "So naive!" It shook its head.

Li Hao watched with a frosty expression. The big tree really was too strong! He admitted to that. It was stronger than its replica even without utilizing core origin dao. That was greatly beyond their expectations.

But... are you sure that victory is in the bag?

Chapter 832: Killing an Immortal (III)

Just as Li Hao was about to erupt with power, the quiet Panther abruptly howled. The dog hadn't done anything so far, apart from the initial devouring of the coconut tree's leaves.

"I am the king of all monster spirits!" Mental ripples surged through the area. They didn't seem to originate from Panther since the dog didn't know how to talk, but it seemed to be the source at the same time.

Everyone saw it—the evaporation of Panther’s golden blood! Another dog seemed to manifest in the air over its head. It was something like a dog, yet not a dog. Golden in color, there were horns on top of its head. It rather looked to be a, well, panther.

The big tree jerked with surprise and fear flashed through its eyes. The projection of the Monster Spirit Envoy! So this dog’s bloodline had already been purified to this level! The strength contained within its bloodline had pulled the projection of the Monster Spirit Envoy out of the bloodline memories!

The golden shadow erupted with an unquestionable supremacy that dominated the four corners. Fear rose from deep within the coconut tree’s heart. This was the king of monster spirits! The king anointed by the Human King himself!

Its subconscious told it that it could not attack, that it needed to bow its head and submit. But soon enough, the tree’s mental ripples agitate furiously again.

“You are dead, but I am alive! You are... no longer the king!”

BOOM!

Its presence flared and clashed with the golden shadow. The latter remained supreme and crashed down on the big tree! Panther was incredibly weakened by the collision, but ignored the constant evaporation of its blood. The projection of the Monster Spirit Envoy grew ever more domineering and its supremacy reigned supreme.

The king of monster spirits naturally held sway over all of its kind! The coconut tree was one such being—monster spirits came under the golden shadow’s jurisdiction. It was the official and legitimate king as decreed by the Human King.

The coconut tree roared with indignation, but weakened as it was continuously suppressed. The little tree continued directing the projection of the imperial palace to clamp down on the tree’s core origin dao.

The rest of the group shot into the air again with battle cries, sending blade, spear, sword, and halberd forward. Supernatural characters exploded to bring overwhelming might down on the big tree!

Panther howled again when the coconut tree wanted to retaliate—its blood had almost completely run dry. The golden shadow in the air sharpened into focus, seeming to walk straight out of the black dog's memories. Thunder and lightning erupted, as if a heavenly tribulation from its golden horns.

Fear dawned in the big tree's eyes!

BOOM!

Thunder and lightning raged, forcing the big tree back while countless branches exploded. Various supernatural character attacks arrived, but the golden thunder and lightning soon dispersed.

Not only that, but the golden shadow faded away as well. Panther fell heavily to the ground, completely drained of strength. It was a black dog again and unconscious. Almost all of the blood in its body had been extracted, but the projection of the Monster Spirit Envoy had been limited in its capabilities. It hadn't been able to kill the Immortal level plant spirit.

As the shockwaves faded away, the air cleared to reveal charred marks on the coconut tree's golden trunk. The fear in its eyes quickly changed to mirth.

Was that it?

The king of monster spirits was very strong, but that had just been a mark left in the bloodline. The king was long dead, but the plant spirit was still alive.

A ray of sword light slashed down on it as the tree laughed. Li Hao's body was falling apart; flesh and blood flew off of him, even his heart was shattering! But this was precisely the chance he'd been waiting for, an opportunity to catch their opponent off guard.

He knew that facing the coconut tree head-on would be very hard, so he'd maintained the strength of six elements all this time. But now, his fire aura blazed and his body started falling apart as it was too difficult for it to endure seven elements. Li Hao ignored the strain on his body. A ferocious tiger manifested over Stellaris, the look in its eyes startlingly cold!

Li Hao had said that the skies and earth would shake when its tiger emerged. There was no such disturbance as his tiger stepped forward, just a merciless predator quietly manifesting over his weapon. Supernatural characters collided over Stellaris and formed a new combination—a dragon of sword intent seemed ready to condemn the world!

Li Hao had been observing all this time, trying to determine where the coconut tree's heart of life was. And now, he finally saw it.

BAM!

A massive collision rang through the air as Stellaris pierced the big tree's stomach. That was where its heart of life was! Li Hao had seen it with his unique eyes, the eyes that saw through falsehood. This was where the core of the tree's strength lay.

Kaboom!

The formidable body flew apart, Stellaris continued forward until it hit a rock, one that was clear and crystalline.

"Scree!" A piercing shriek grated on the ear—the coconut tree. Its face contorted with anguish as it gaped at Li Hao with shock that quickly turned to fury and hate!

Li Hao's move did not pierce through its heart of life, but it left numerous cracks that horrified the tree. The little bastard had concealed his strength! How was that possible?! How could an existence on par with Apex appear in this age? Although the boy's body was weak and a far cry from a true Apex, his sword intent could be regarded on the same level as an Apex!

First it was the little tree, then the projection of the Monster Spirit Envoy, then the blade of a Saint, and now the force of an Apex from Li Hao. The coconut tree was increasingly terrified by the fight. If it wasn't for its body being that of an Immortal, it might truly perish here.

Boom!

Powerful strength emitted from the heart of life. Li Hao's physical body was so weak that when the force traveled up the little sword, it nearly blew the young man apart. The immense recoil shattered his organs; the golden armor proved to be of no use as the force directly seeped into the body.

The coconut tree watched with a vicious expression! What a pity that your body is too weak. Your aura is strong enough—the aura of the modern age is an interesting thing. It is on par with the core origin dao of my time, but what use is it?

Its cultivators have physical bodies weaker than those who follow the path of mental spirit.

A figure rose in the aura as Li Hao suffered in agony. Deputy Zhou howled; his golden body erupted with aureate splendor. A peculiar strength surged into Li Hao's body!

Indestructible matter!

This was a strength unique to golden body powerhouses—it made the golden body undying. Li Hao's breaking body spontaneously healed when it assimilated into him. It was an effect faster than the healing properties of Water of Life or sword energy.

The young man roared with determination and stabbed forward again, blood streaming from every opening in his face!

Clang!

A rapidly spreading fissure appeared on the heart of life. The coconut tree's expression shifted drastically. Nine turns of the golden body?

Where else would so much indestructible matter come from? How could modern humans fashion such a golden body in their training?

Aureate light emanated from Li Hao's body; his weak body was thus fortified and his wounds immediately closed. Deputy Zhou's golden body dimmed. He fell to the ground, the golden hue fading away to reveal a pale face.

Deputy Zhou smiled wryly, damn if this wasn't a tough opponent! Half of his indestructible matter had been expended. He would have to consume enough sufficient core origin power and Water of Life for recovery if they were able to survive this.

"Hmph!" The big tree brought forth fearsome strength once more, punching at Li Hao's head. It remained a force to be reckoned with even in this condition.

"Skies capsize and earth turns!" someone shouted. The earth truly turned with this move. The big tree's punch was sent off course and punctured the void near Li Hao. The young man stabbed out once more. He vomited successive mouthfuls of blood as he did so!

Rays of splendor exuded from the little sword.

"Seal off the void!" Yao Si yelled. Supernatural characters manifested from each martial master and gathered together in a gigantic net. It sealed off the void, but shockwaves crashed into it!

Rumble!

Supernatural characters crumbled away as the group toppled to the ground. However, the big tree was also halted for a split second.

Li Hao's Windchaser Boots sparkled as he vanished from sight. The scene momentarily flickered in front of the big tree. The little tree was beginning to buckle under the strain of suppressing the coconut tree's core origin dao all this time. However, the avenue of light that represented the other's dao was firmly locked into space by the projection of the imperial palace!

The incomparable strength of an Arcanus exploded out of Stellaris and the aura of the Lifeless Sword ripped out of the void! One sword stroke descended, cleaving the firmaments into two!

A crunch sounded from the great avenue that seemed to lead straight to the heavens as the stroke... cut off a portion of it!

"Li Hao!!" screamed the big tree. The young man was no longer attacking its heart of life, but had utilized the Windchaser Boots to disappear and shift his attention to the tree's great dao instead.

The coconut tree had been preoccupied with the little tree all along since the latter was equipped with the projection of the imperial palace. Although the tree's core origin dao had not been able to suppress the little tree, the coconut tree found it acceptable since it prevented the little tree from joining the fight.

Who would've thought that Li Hao would suddenly vanish, taking advantage of the rest of the group's actions?!

Just as the coconut tree sought to break through the air to kill Li Hao, a long blade abruptly arrived. It was as if a Saint wielded it and brought it down on its target!

Bam!

The big tree took a step backward; Chen Zhongtian suffered from incredible backlash as well. The one blade dimmed as multiple sky-level origin weapons exploded within the man's body. His supernatural locks snapped as well. He looked at Li Hao with resignation.

Woe is me! It's up to you now. If you still can't kill it after this... then we're out of ideas. I'll be able to become one of them supernatural character cultivators after this, if you live through it, right?

His origin weapons protecting his supernatural locks had exploded in fiery glory, resulting in his locks snapping. He was a martial master no longer. Water of Life appeared inside his body to protect his organs.

Chen Zhongtian crashed to the ground, blood streaming out of his wounds. However, he was smiling. There's no way you won't teach me after this. If we both survive, you'll have to teach me that method!

Chapter 833: Killing an Immortal (IV)

Li Hao bellowed with determination and swept forward with his sword again!

Crunch!

Another segment of the great dao in the void snapped. The young man whipped his head back and snatched a long blade out of the air. "Lend me your weapon, Minister Chen!"

"Alright..." Chen Zhongtian wheezed back and relinquished his control over the blade. Truth be told, it was hard for him to maintain control over his weapon in his current state. Not to mention, the long blade had expended all of its energy and wasn't of much use at the moment. It needed some time to recover.

What did Li Hao want with it?

Chen Zhongtian spat out a mouthful of blood just when the question crossed his mind. His connection with the blade disappeared. Li Hao had switched from hacking the great dao running the blade through with his sword. Stellaris was furiously devouring the weapon!

The long blade struggled ferociously and a figure appeared over it. It seemed to sense something and dissipated slowly. A voice could be faintly heard, "How unlucky, all you know is to eat someone else's weapon..."

Plainly, the shadow over the long blade recognized Stellaris as the Sword Sovereign's weapon! The weapons of Saints possessed their own spirit, but there was no helping it. Stellaris could only be permitted to devour this weapon.

The little sword's light intensified into resplendent splendor! This was the strongest weapon that Li Hao had ever fed it. Stellaris seemed exceedingly satisfied and burst forth with a killing sword intent that raced to the heavens. The young man swung the weapon once more!

Crunch!

The firmament ripped, the void shattered. Even the little tree jumped with shock and quickly moved away, taking the imperial palace projection with it. The coconut tree's great dao completely fractured with the loud collision!

"AHH!" A ghastly scream echoed behind Li Hao. The big tree's body was falling to pieces, its branches breaking apart. For a core origin cultivator, the backlash from their great dao being cut down was sufficient to kill them.

Thankfully, given the lack of core origin in the modern world, the backlash wasn't as great as it would've been. Hence, the big tree didn't immediately perish. Regardless, it suffered from heavy injuries and its mental strength was destroyed.

Its mind blank, the big tree seemed to see a figure flash in front of it. Water of Life surged within its body, churning toward its heart of life. It wanted to use the resource to forcefully heal the damaged core, but Li Hao plunged Stellaris into the exposed stone.

CRUNCH.

The heart of life completely split open, sending the big tree through a myriad of changes. It turned back into a tree, then humanoid shape, and continued flickering through the two. The coconut tree stared incredulously at Li Hao and unique ripples came to the fore of its body! These ants have killed me?? the tree wondered with despair and incredulity.

Its core origin dao had been shattered and its heart of life smashed! This was the end of the road, one that had never occurred to it.

“Li Hao...” The coconut tree regained its calm and looked coolly at the young man. Energy fluctuated wildly throughout its body and leaked into the surroundings—a sign of self-detonation. It was an unparalleled powerhouse! These ants would never kill it! Even if it was to die, these bastards would be its burial goods!

Although it’d betrayed humanity, it had once lived in the New Martial era. In that age, death was greeted by self-detonation. Going out in a blaze of fiery glory to ensure mutual destruction with the enemy was the common consensus of all humans and monster spirits!

Therefore, Li Hao would accompany it in death!

The Black Armor had cautioned Li Hao about this possibility, so when the big tree gathered its energy and built up to the detonation point, the young man roared and deployed a powerful devouring force from Stellaris.

“Panth!”

The black dog stirred from its depths of unconsciousness, recalling Li Hao’s earlier instructions. But it viewed its memories with a tragic air. Again?? This would be the death of it! But... there was no helping it.

A giant maw yawned in the void and devoured everything that was the big tree like a black hole. The energy that it'd accumulated was instantly shaved off and the rampaging ripples quieted somewhat.

And yet, the big tree sneered. That was far from enough! It'd returned to tree form; its trunk was splitting open. The complete explosion of an Immortal would annihilate all of these people with it!

Li Hao chose to close his eyes at this moment. The big tree thought that the young man had given up the struggle and laughed, "Li Hao, it is your honor to die with me..."

BAM!

A massive blow sounded as something darted out of the tree's body. It erupted onto the scene with domineering force, splintering the world and the tree's trunk. An enormous mallet hammered heaven and earth!

Rumble!

The tree's remaining mental strength was obliterated by the mallet. A shadow of a great tree manifested in the air. "How is this possible..." it begrudgingly murmured with disbelief.

Li Hao regarded it coldly. How is it not possible?

"The eight families are one and the Lis is revered as the head. I can naturally control the mallet if I dared give it to you. If I can direct the Windchaser Boots, why can I not do the same for the mallet of the Hong's?"

Was there a need to ask such a stupid question? You stored it inside yourself? You seriously had a death wish! You can't use it, so what's the point of hiding it in your body?

Li Hao hadn't called upon the Mallet all this time, no matter how dangerous the situation got. He'd been waiting for this moment to deliver a truly fatal blow. The Mallet of the Hongs attacked mental strength. What could the Coconut Tree use to detonate its energy with once it lacked that? Panther's and Stellaris' actions were feints!

The young man knew that neither of the two could erase the might of an Immortal's final self-detonation. Only the Mallet of the Hongs could prevent the explosion by eradicating the Immortal's mental strength!

Thank goodness the Black Armor had reminded him of this possibility; Li Hao wouldn't have considered it otherwise. He wouldn't have thought either that New Martial existences always kept self-detonation in their back pocket.

The Coconut Tree's shadow filled the vicinity. Although reluctant, it suddenly smiled with acceptance. "What a pity..."

A pity about what?

That the world had changed.

Otherwise, it was a right and proper Immortal. It would cause more of a disturbance with its death. Back in its day, the skies would rain blood to honor the fall of an Immortal. What a pity that they could not return to the past. What a pity that the times really had changed. What a pity that it'd died to a bunch of weaklings.

"Do humans... really enjoy such favoritism from the heavens?" Its shadow smiled at Li Hao. "Your kind can still muster such feats even in this era..."

"New Martial... is no more... As I am... no more... This is my end despite years of struggle..."

Some relief filled its sigh as the shadow completely broke apart. And so marked the end of an Immortal plant spirit!

Li Hao himself crashed to the ground, joining the pile of prone figures already on it. The little tree quickly coalesced Water of Life and scattered it on the group. It enveloped the fracturing tree at the same time, preventing the remaining ripples from exploding.

Everyone looked unblinkingly at the sky, resting with their own thoughts. They'd won!

"So this is all there is to them!" someone murmured among the toppled group.

So that was all there was to them. As it turned out, the ancient powerhouses weren't invincible. They died all the same. So what of the Immortal level?

Although this plant spirit hadn't fully recovered and had previously severed part of its core origin, dead was dead. No one of the modern age had dared resist these existences before because they were widely held as invincible, but some modern humans killed one today!

Li Hao didn't say a word. While his body continued to fracture, the ferocious tiger aura slowly disappeared with the fire supernatural character. His body swiftly recovered as sword energy surged through it, but the young man remained staring at the sky.

He suddenly smiled as he noted that his various auras were growing vigorously. His auras had fallen behind his improvement in other areas, but they seemed to break free from the shackles of cultivation in this moment and develop rapidly.

Whether it was the ferocious tiger or mountain peak, all were growing swiftly. The loot from killing the plant spirit was of secondary importance. The boost to everyone's confidence was the main focus.

The aura was their dao, and their dao came from themselves. Such had been the aura of invincibility from the ancients. They thought themselves as the strongest, that there was nothing they could not do. This was the sensation that everyone present today felt as well.

We are very strong! We can kill even heavyweights from the ancient civilization!

Huang Yu had spent the entire battle doggedly grappling with their target. He suddenly said softly, “All of us in Silver Moon, including even Ole Zhao, think that only those of the ancient civilization can withstand the ancient civilization when the second awakening takes place.

“Our thoughts were to borrow the ancient civilization to strengthen ourselves and defy modern powerhouses. We’d never thought of killing ancient powerhouses!

“Although Ole Zhao is dedicated to safeguarding Silver Moon, he also knows that it’ll be very hard to!” Huang Yu smiled as he laid on the ground. “He probably didn’t consider the possibility that we’d move against ancient heavyweights before the second awakening.”

No one in the modern world had ever spoken of such an idea. Whether it was the nine ministries or royal family, their first thought was to borrow plant spirit strength in their rise and break the restrictions of heaven and earth after the second awakening. Perhaps they could all ascend then and scabble for some safety.

No one thought of killing the ancient powerhouses because everyone relied on their strength. And today, someone had accomplished the impossible.

No one spoke of dividing the spoils and they ignored the coconut tree’s corpse. They laid on the ground and stared up at the sky, beaming brightly despite their injuries. They were as innocent and carefree as children. Even the overcast gloom seemed particularly radiant. The world was clear and bright to them in this moment.

So we really can create miracles, so the ancient civilization isn’t that frightening. They have their ultimate heavyweights, but it took only a few decades for us to be able to kill an Immortal. A

crippled or withered Immortal is still an Immortal. Is there a need for us to be so wary or fearful of the ancient civilization anymore?

Chapter 834: Harvest, Ranking (I)

Li Hao had said that this battle would smash their internal demons and the gods that they looked up to in their minds. They had done so. Every member of the group lay quietly on the ground, permitting blood to dye their clothes as their thoughts ran wild. Various auras billowed with might and the fractured supernatural characters reformed.

Auras bloomed over the blade, spear, sword, and halberd as the aura reflected the heart. It grew stronger when the wielder grew stronger.

Li Hao quietly perceived the changes in his body—the five auras were rapidly developing within. The immensely strengthened auras had the same effect on the supernatural characters. He also attained some new insights throughout the process.

The tiny dot hovering over the golden character in the lungs turned into a golden sun. The willow tree formed out of the wood aura grew vibrantly and the mountain peak of earth turned into a mountain range. The sound of waves lapped against the kidneys.

All of the auras seemed to be celebrating; Li Hao glimpsed a new world in sight. He smiled as the power of the five elements overburdening his organs began receding.

Following their auras, the other four supernatural characters slowly sank into the depths of their organs and completely vanished from existence. Indeed, they disappeared just like the fire aura had. They'd entered the secondary dimension, as Li Hao called it, and would not appear unless they were called upon like the supernatural locks.

Li Hao's presence swiftly declined, leaving only the elements of wind and thunder, compared to the motley array it was before. The strengthening of his auras was a greater gain than anything else, in the young man's opinion. His mind seemed to be elsewhere at the moment; he made out a patch of the cosmos. The stars glittered radiantly amid the backdrop of the night sky. Chains criss-crossed his view like they were giant dragons. Some of them were oddly shaped—a ferocious tiger, a mountain peak, a wave, a willow tree...

Li Hao looked around in a bleary haze, regarding the cosmos with stunned shock. Was this... the secondary dimension? What were those countless dragons? ...the supernatural locks?

He found it hard to believe and couldn't believe it. The explorations of the five auras had brought his mental strength into another area. He was actually observing the mysterious secondary dimension!

The Silver Moon martial masters in the surroundings looked sharply at the young man the moment he entered the mysterious dimension. There was a layer of light enveloping him. Upon taking a closer look, Li Hao seemed to be part of the boundless universe, the cosmos.

The group thought they were seeing things and sat up for another look, ignoring the state of their injuries. Li Hao was indeed shrouded by starlight. Not only that, he was also faintly emanating the power of the stars. It was similar to sword energy but not quite.

Everyone held their breaths and watched incredulously. What was going on here? Had the young man broken through? But it didn't look like it!

After an indeterminate period of time, Li Hao abruptly opened his eyes. Stars swam in them and he stared dumbly upward. After a very, very long period of time, he murmured to himself, "Do you guys know how many supernatural locks are in the human body?"

People shook their heads. How would they know?

"I know, fourteen of them," He Yong chuckled. "The four limbs, five organs, wind, thunder, light, and dark, as well as the head!"

That was such an easy question!

"Fourteen?" laughed Li Hao. "If it was only fourteen, wouldn't that mean that both supernaturals and martial masters, or us, can only make it to ten element Arcanus?"

Since the locks of the four limbs were unattributed, they had to be subtracted from the count. Seven elements were on par with Apex; ten elements might be the same if a second metamorphosis stage didn't appear. Wouldn't that limit modern humans to Apex at their very strongest?

That wouldn't hold true!

"It might... be far more than people think!" Li Hao laughed.

Everyone looked at him, but he didn't explain himself further. I've simply seen a few things, but that doesn't mean they're real. All the same, he was filled with motivation again! It would be quite interesting if each of the dragons represented a supernatural lock. Could he locate them all?

"Um... I really am about to explode, and I'm not joking," someone said at this time.

The group cast their gazes at a certain corner, where a pathetic figure crouched on the ground. Although Water of Life rained down on it, blood continuously flowed from its wounds and its body showed signs of detonating.

How could it not? Chen Zhongtian had broken all of his origin weapons and supernatural locks at the same time. The only reason why he was still intact was because the little tree was keeping his condition under control. One had to say, sometimes the little tree was much more reliable than the rest of them.

No one cared about him. It was only through the little tree's ministrations that he was still alive.

"The old thug has quite the pretty scheme in mind!" He Yong snorted with laughter. Everyone knew what Chen Zhongtian was planning. Had there been a need to snap all of his supernatural looks right at the very end?

Well, there had been, but the action hadn't been that imperative. The old man had put his life on the line with the trick he was playing. As expected of someone who'd gone from a martial world thug to one of the nine founding ministers eighty years ago—Chen Zhongtian possessed a certain degree of resolution and boldness.

“Minister Chen... is an interesting one!” Li Hao laughed as he looked at the old man.

Although Chen Zhongtian's face was cracking, he smiled as well. “This is what we gotta do if we're to survive in this world. I'm just doing this to put food on the table.”

Li Hao had said he was interesting, he responded that he was just putting food on the table.

“Martial Uncle Hong... teach Minister Chen how to trace the characters!”

Hong Yitang laughed and didn't say anything to the contrary. He regarded the old minister, finding the man to be quite interesting. Chen Zhongtian was a gambler, but he'd made the right bet this time.

He explained the procedure without hesitation. Chen Zhongtian listened raptly and soaked in the new information. Having witnessed the method before, he quickly grasped how to operate it. He only needed to understand the key points of characters.

Li Hao remained unmoving, taking a while longer to recover. He rose only when his injuries were mostly healed. He looked at where the little tree had enveloped the petrified coconut tree. The immense body was in tattered condition and its heart of life fractured. Water of Life slowly flowed from it, also enveloped by the little tree. Part of it had been used to save the group.

The young man walked up for a close look; the tree was completely dead, yet it remained durable without comparison. Water of Life trickled within its trunk—not in drops, but as a small river. It'd wanted to use Water of Life to heal its heart of life in its last moments, but Li Hao had stopped it.

“I think I can fulfill my dream of taking a bath with Water of Life!” laughed the young man before he looked at the little tree. “Senior Tree, it’s hard for me to tell how many drops are here.”

“About five thousand!” answered the little tree.

Was that a lot?

Not that much. Based on the little tree’s rates, it was fifteen million mysterious power stones since each drop cost three thousand stones. The group had consumed much more than that for this occasion since a large quantity of Water of Life had been depleted during and after the battle. All of it had been hastily produced, so the resource consumption had been greater than usual.

Five thousand drops was just earning back their capital. Granted, their accounts couldn’t be calculated thus since Water of Life strengthened the physical body and recovered life force. Everyone present had received tangible benefits; their strength had not stagnated.

“That’s a bit too little...” Li Hao shook his head. Was this all the mysterious power stones that the Ministry of the Judiciary had supplied to the coconut tree these years?

If at fifty thousand stones per drop, and apparently this one had a price of sixty thousand stones, there were plenty of Arcanus in the Ministry of the Judiciary that’d had to trade for Water of Life. Hu Mingfa was nearly four elements, which meant he needed more than two hundred drops himself, much less other people.

Trading for more than five hundred drops was a normal figure—that was thirty million stones. There was also more energy in the central region, resulting in the plant spirits recovering on their own, albeit at a slower pace. Five thousand drops after twenty years was a bit too little.

Of course, it was also acceptable.

Li Hao breathed in the core origin force wafting around the scene. “Senior Tree, Deputy Zhou, and... Panther, you guys should absorb this power!”

The lifeless Panther immediately sprang to life. It hurtled into the little tree’s defensive shield and gulped down energy. There was always a seat at the dinner table for the dog, and it’d truly accomplished a deed of great merit this time. Almost all of the blood in its body had evaporated and the Monster Spirit Envoy projection that it’d coalesced had dealt a grave blow to the coconut tree.

Deputy Zhou smiled and followed suit. He’d expended a great deal of energy in battle. Given the absence of core origin dao in the modern world, there was no energy source with which he could replenish from. It was very hard for his golden body to improve any further, and he’d depleted a great deal of his golden body’s indestructible matter to fortify Li Hao’s physical body. That could only be replenished through Water of Life and core origin strength. Devouring energy could also save the same purpose, but the rate of recovery then would be so slow that it would cause one to despair.

The others present could also absorb and derive comprehension of core origin dao from the energy, just as Li Hao had once done so from the little tree. However, the improvement wasn’t noticeable from this course of action and it easily led one to a cultivation tangent.

Reserving the energy for these three was the best way to maximize the effects.

“Its body will be of great use to you!” came the little tree’s mental ripples. “It’s an Immortal level existence and contains a great deal of indestructible matter within its body. This was a key ingredient of golden bodies in the ancient civilization!”

“Although it is dead, it might revive again countless years later if given enough time. It can resurrect if there is enough energy for it to pull from. But a new consciousness will be born then, so it will no longer be its same self.”

“Are you saying that... the physical body will live on so long as the golden body is not destroyed?” Li Hao was surprised.

“Yes!” The little tree quickly educated him. “Almost all ancient powerhouses were undying and immortal, but the precursor was that there was sufficient energy to support them. Otherwise, they would slowly fade away. That is why almost all ancient human powerhouses lack a physical body these days—their energy slowly dispersed until they ultimately fell apart!

“Plant spirits survive partially because we have a habit of storing Water of Life, partially because we are rooted in the void and can absorb some free-floating energy. Even so, our consumption is great. My father fell apart because he was unable to remain to the last. He passed the last vestiges of his power to me. I am weak, so I consume less energy...”

Chapter 835: Harvest, Ranking (II)

Li Hao nodded and looked at the colossal golden tree. So everyone’s body would be strengthened if they devoured the indestructible matter! Although there were many resources at present that could enhance the body, such as sword energy or Water of Life, or even additional possibilities from Li Hao’s own inspiration, anything that could swiftly fortify the body in the here and now was a good development for everyone.

“How do we absorb this matter?”

“You have not cultivated the golden body, so you will find it difficult to. Let Deputy Zhou do so. You can cultivate with what he exudes after devouring the matter!”

“I can indeed do that.” Deputy Zhou nodded. This truly was out of reach for most people.

“Thank goodness for the deputy.” Li Hao grinned. “Those two hundred drops of Water of Life weren’t a waste!”

“.....” Deputy Zhou didn’t dignify that comment with a response.

“Stop lying down, everyone. It’s time for a feast!” Li Hao laughed loudly.

The group promptly surged in their direction; Chen Zhongtian churned with panic when he heard the announcement. He was still coalescing his supernatural characters and was so strong that he needed to do multiple characters at once. Hence, he needed time. But wouldn't he be missing out on the indestructible matter if everyone went to absorb it right now?

Therefore, he forcefully broke off the process of tracing characters and permitted rampaging energy to explode in his body. He dragged his tattered body in the group's direction and nearly crawled to cover the distance! He wanted a share of the bounty no matter how painful it was!

The rest of the group ignored him. It was a testament to his own ability if he could drag his battered body to them. Li Hao was in no hurry to take in the energy. He looked at the partially shriveled coconuts at the top of the tree and asked curiously, "What are those coconuts used for?"

"Those aren't coconuts," the little tree responded after some thought. "This plant spirit is known as the Golden Palm among monster spirit pedigree..."

"So... coconuts then."

"....." The little tree didn't want to argue. "These coconuts have the effect of strengthening one's core essence. I'm not certain what their actual function is either. They might not be ripe yet as they look like they're still growing to me. Regardless, they'll have some effect. Strengthening the body is a given and they might be able to fortify mental strength..."

Li Hao glanced at the fruit—there were forty-two coconuts total. He reached out for one, but found that he couldn't pluck a fruit off the tree. He summoned Stellaris to cut them off and slice into one.

The same power that could be found in Water of Life surged out amid a milky-white liquid. Li Hao dipped his finger into it and licked it for a taste. A faint sense of life energy surged into his body. The young man raised the coconut for a drink; energy burgeoned within his body as his depleted mind intent began revitalizing.

"This is great stuff!" Li Hao raised an eyebrow. It was much more useful than Water of Life as it could both strengthen mind intent and the physical body.

Since it wasn't fully ripened, the taste was a bit bitter and dry. That was no problem as the fruit likely wouldn't have gone to Li Hao if it'd ripened. Perhaps the coconut tree itself would've eaten it. It wasn't impossible for a plant spirit to consume its own fruit.

Li Hao looked at the big tree again—there were naturally more benefits to be had after killing the coconut tree. There was also its main body to consider. Since its defensive capabilities were so strong, perhaps its body could be compressed into a shield or a club. That would make for a very powerful weapon.

Or perhaps he could let the little tree devour it?

On second thought, the little tree was limited in its capabilities. It should also be much stronger after everything it'd absorbed on the battlefield.

“Senior Tree... Have you mostly... recovered to peak strength by now?”

“I should be there after I finish absorbing the core origin,” the little tree answered after some silence.

“True peak Apex?”

“Mmhmm.”

“Do you stand a chance of entering the Immortal level?” Li Hao nodded.

“That... would be hard!” sighed the little tree. “With a lack of core origin dao, it would take a large infusion of core origin energy for an advancement to be possible. This is why the plant spirits at Tranquil Star want to invade Silver Moon—there's a lot of powerful plant spirits asleep in the province.”

“Then... can General Pagoda awaken if I feed the coconut tree’s body to the general?”

The little tree regarded the question with resignation. It wanted to devour the coconut tree, but knew there wasn’t much hope of that after Li Hao’s question. It wouldn’t make it to the Immortal level even after eating the tree, but if that one devoured the tree... It could probably awaken.

“Ah... pretty much!”

“Don’t rush, Senior Tree, this was just the first occasion,” Li Hao laughed. “There might be a second, and a third to come. Senior Tree can just store enough core origin power for now, you won’t lack this resource when you have a hope of rising to Immortal!”

That made sense to the little tree upon further thought, so it didn’t say anything else. Li Hao, on the other hand, thought rapidly. If this tree could revitalize General Pagoda... that would be quite the unexpected surprise. Director General Wang had mentioned that they would need at least one hundred million mysterious power stones to help the general recover. Li Hao had collected a great deal lately, but also expended a lot of their gains. He only had roughly forty million stones left.

That wasn’t enough for General Pagoda. But if the big tree’s body could be used in place of one hundred million stones, that would be an ideal recycling of useless material. At least, the body was useless to Li Hao’s group because they lacked the means to forge it into a weapon. There was no craftsman skilled enough or powerhouse strong enough to utilize an Immortal’s body.

Li Hao said nothing further and refrained from further observation. He sat down cross-legged and operated the Five Styles Breathing Method. Large quantities of indestructible matter entered his body to nourish his organs and physical body.

He quickly switched to the secret art of wind and thunder as he most ardently wished to grasp their auras. He had some thoughts in mind when it came to the aura of thunder, thanks to Panther’s usage of the Monster Spirit Envoy projection. The young man had truly sensed a wisp of the power behind a heavenly tribulation when the golden horns erupted with lightning—it was the strength of utter destruction, like it would annihilate the world!

What a pity that it'd lasted for only a split second before vanishing. Otherwise, the coconut tree might've been struck down on the spot.

All sorts of thoughts floated into his mind and Li Hao thought of the cosmos he'd seen before. He abruptly summoned a vast quantity of energy, concentrating it on a blank spot in his body instead of the usual areas. Gradually, a tiny supernatural lock floated into view.

A strange look entered Li Hao's eyes when he opened them. The dark and light supernatural locks manifested in his body—stronger than before. He casually tossed Stellaris into the pool of Water of Life. The little sword furiously absorbed the resource and sent a peculiar wave of sword energy into the young man's body.

Li Hao directed the sword energy to certain areas according to his memories. Large sums of sword energy wafted out of his body; the powerhouses around him absorbed the leaking sword energy in return. The young man didn't mind and continued his motions.

He slowly shifted more supernatural locks into visibility. They were very small and very weak. Despite the large quantity of energy he'd expended on them, they weren't of any help to him. They were so weak that there would be no effect whatsoever if he snapped them. This was just a process of laying foundations to the young man.

He lit up with joy. As he thought, there were more than fourteen supernatural locks in the human body. He couldn't discern what attribute these new locks were or what their purpose was, but they were the basis of his future strength.

Even the little tree winced at how much Water of Life Li Hao was consuming. The rest of the group looked at the young man with confusion. Can you digest so much? This is a bit of a waste, isn't it?

But no one voiced their concerns. Their bountiful harvest today was already a rare occasion in their lives. Not to mention, Li Hao, the little tree, and Panther were the main reasons for their success.

Everyone furiously drank in energy—sword energy, Water of Life, indestructible material... Any one of these types of strength was a highly sophisticated force that they'd never encountered before.

.....

As Li Hao's group cultivated.

An endless expanse of darkness separated the end of this set of ruins. At its other end was a city. A plant spirit that looked like a rose swayed in the middle of a great palace hall. It transformed into a feminine humanoid shape and looked toward the end of the darkness!

There was a peculiar relationship between the nine ministries and royal family. Or rather, the ruins that they occupied had a special relationship with each other. Just as General Pagoda and its subordinates protected Battle Heaven, there was often more than one plant spirit protecting one city.

Thirty-six plant spirits safeguarded Battle Heaven—General Pagoda was just their core. The same went for Tranquil Star. The nine ministries occupied the nine most critical spots, but the royal family controlled the central area. The rose's status was similar to General Pagoda's.

An old man sitting in the middle of the palace opened his eyes with confusion. One of the chains on his body had suddenly snapped. It was for that reason that he'd shaken off some of his constraints. "Honored One," he looked at the rose. "Have there been more disturbances outside? Has someone killed the old thing?"

Chen Zhongtian seemed to be dead!

The nine ministers once placed nine seals on him, but now three were broken. The other two were negligible, but the destruction of Chen Zhongtian's seal represented an enormous opportunity for the old king!

He could sense that the nine ministries could barely keep him under control! The woman that the rose had transformed into stared intently into the distance. She asked with bafflement after a while, "Perhaps! Chen Zhongtian... the old minister of the Inspectorate you speak of? If he's dead..."

"Maybe he died over at Security," it concluded after some musing.

"Security?" A thought occurred to the old king. "The ruins that the Hus occupied?"

"Yes."

"What would he go there for?" The Old Skystar King was surprised.

Who am I supposed to ask? The baffled rose didn't answer. Although they were separated by some barriers and were separated by darkness, there had indeed come the ripples of one's great dao being snapped just now. Of course, identification was difficult these days due to the lack of core origin dao. If this was back in the day, the snapping of someone's dao would arouse natural phenomena.

Chapter 836: Harvest, Ranking (III)

This shouldn't be the case! thought the rose. They might've judged the situation incorrectly. As opposed to Chen Zhongtian dying, perhaps he was killing someone and his great dao wavering too wildly to maintain his portion of the seal. It would seem that the weapon of a Saint was still useful in the current world. Judging from the old Skystar King's condition, Chen Zhongtian might have broken his weapon that'd belonged to a Saint.

"If Chen Zhongtian is dead, then his weapon must be broken too!" The Skystar King was quite happy. "I don't think those two fellows behind the two strongest seals will hold me for long!"

The rose didn't say anything; it simply continued looking into the darkness. There were nine strategic points within the city that had been some of the most important locations back in the day. Plant spirits stood guard over all of them, and they'd betrayed the rose after awakening. It constantly wished to open the Skystar mine, but they prevented its attempts each time...

Of course, those nine fellows weren't the key. The key was that there was another one at the entrance of the mines. Too bad those nine bastards weren't willing to join forces with the rose. Would there be a need for all this otherwise?

Were the other nine worried that it would devour them all?

New Martial was over and the divisive nature of the monster spirits was coming to the fore. The humans weren't much better off either. This was what happened in the absence of a strong character keeping the world in check.

The plant spirits at Skystar were unable to come together as one. They might've occupied first mover advantage otherwise and broken through to the mine. A full recovery would already be in their grasp.

What a bunch of idiots! cursed the rose. It sighed imperceptibly when it looked at the old Skystar King. What a pity! It'd chosen the Jiangs back in the day because it thought they were very strong and possessed the requisite decisiveness to execute their decisions. With its support, they would be able to swiftly dominate and subdue their opponents. In return, the rose would receive a large amount of resources despite being cut off from the outside world. It would recover at first light and eliminate those of its kind that stood in its way.

Who would've thought that the Jiang trash wouldn't be able to overcome their nine opponents!

"Break your seal as soon as possible! The second awakening is upon us and the large mine cannot be kept under wraps even without action from us. Too much energy has accumulated and it is about to explode!

"You are useful before then and completely useless after the second awakening!" the rose said brusquely without care for the listener's feelings.

The old Skystar King's expression flickered as he quickly responded, "Don't worry, I'm almost there. Li Hao is a shit stirrer alright. I would've found it difficult to break free without him, but with him.... If anything further happens to the old farts of Armed Forces of Administration, I'll be able to break right out!"

It was also fine if nothing happened to them. He would be able to force his way out all the same if the divine weapons stabilizing the seal were removed. The old Skystar King didn't dare openly show his thoughts, but in the depths of his heart, he felt that if it wasn't for the rose being unwilling to help, he would've been freed a long time ago.

The rose was worried that the nine weapons might turn on it or somehow harm it. The divine weapons would have a difficult time recovering their usual strength in the outside world, but they could be very strong inside the ruins if they awakened. Nine of them attacking at once was a nigh impossible proposition for the rose as well.

The rose ignored the old king's mood. It had absolutely no desire to endure an offensive from nine weapons for the sake of a piece of trash. Those weapons had once been divine weapons of the human race. As a monster spirit that'd turned traitor, its course of action would provoke the weapons' will. They would gravely harm it, if not kill it altogether.

Perhaps those nine plant bastards nearby would join forces to devour it then.

But... now that one of them was broken... was the Golden Coconut injured?

After some thought, the rose felt that the Golden Coconut might be fine since it was just one singular divine weapon. If it chose to attack now, that might cause the others to rise up in joint defense.

The rose vanished, not wanting to think about this any further. A rose vine once more swayed in the void, but it looked in a certain direction.

The second awakening is inevitable and you cannot possibly hold us back then. You are already dead, so why be so stubborn?

.....

At the same time, day broke in the outside world. It was the third day. The Wind and Cloud Pavilion had announced that they would publish their Arcanus ranking today, so many people were watching and waiting.

A pale Chen Yao sat in the Inspectorate. He'd been watching the Ministry of the Judiciary all night long, but did not see his old man coming back. Was he dead? Was he really dead? He'd said that Chen Yao should make a run for it if he hadn't returned by dawn, to send the others to Administration and ask the Zhaos for protection.

But... his old man was so strong, could he possibly die?

Chen Yao was on pins and needles; the world was hazy around him. As for the ranking that everyone waited for with bated breath, he didn't care about it at all.

"Attend to me!" he growled. A subordinate quickly came through the door. "I had you call the Skystar Commander Office so we could discuss how to respond to the Wind and Cloud Pavilion. Did you not notify them?"

"We did, sir, but they said that Commander Li led a group out of Skystar City yesterday because they discovered traces of the Wind and Cloud Pavilion. All of the Skystar Commander Office's powerhouses are away for the moment..."

Chen Yao didn't say a word. The Wind and Cloud Pavilion? No, that wasn't the case. His old man wouldn't have told him to run away if that was the target. It must be something even more frightening!

On this day, everyone learned that there were no heavyweights in residence at the Skystar Commander Office. Even Yao Si of the Night Watchers was gone. There seemed to have been traces of the Wind and Cloud Pavilion discovered.

.....

An Arcanus ranking was swiftly disseminated throughout the land before Li Hao's group reappeared. It was quickly made general knowledge. Everyone who saw it paused, unable to believe their eyes. This was a ranking that Li Hao had modified with careful thought and based off of the real ranking.

Number one, Ying Hongyue. Seven element Arcanus.

Number two, the old Skystar King Jiang Chen. Seven element Arcanus.

Number three, the old minister of Administration. Seven element Arcanus!

Number four, the old minister of Armed Forces. Peak six element Arcanus.

Number five, Li Hao. Peak six element Arcanus.

Number six, the current Skystar King. Peak six element Arcanus.

.....

Li Hao had made a great number of changes, but he'd also put himself in as peak six elements. Many who obtained a copy blinked with consternation. Apart from a few whose strength had been changed, everyone else's was accurate. The three seven element Arcanus was the most stunning of all.

Wasn't that impossible before the second awakening? Whether it was the City of Supernaturals or Celestial and Yama, all factions were taken aback. Three seven elements?

.....

Red Moon headquarters.

Ying Hongyue had also obtained a copy of the ranking at first light and frowned silently at it. What was... the Wind and Cloud Pavilion after? Everyone had thought that Li Hao would be number one. Even if that wasn't an accurate placement, it would be Li Hao all the same. Otherwise, there would be no need to create that disturbance during the Skystar Commander Office's inauguration ceremony.

But now?

Although there were multiple Silver Moon martial masters on the ranking, including Yao Si and others, why was he number one? And seven elements!

A vicious look entered Ying Hongyue's eyes. His concealed strength had been revealed! How was that possible?? Did they really have the powerful Mirror of Wind and Cloud?

Damn it!

"Congratulations to Leader Ying!" A scarlet cloak fluttered in the void. "Seven element Arcanus places you first among Silver Moon! It looks like Leader Ying has some special methods that I am in the dark about."

"This ranking is complete nonsense." Ying Hongyue frowned. "The Wind and Cloud Pavilion is targeting me!"

But why?

“Can it... have something to do with you guys?” His eyes narrowed. “They’re not targeting me, but doing this because they’ve learned of your existence? Why else would they list me as number one for no reason?”

The scarlet cloak sank into deep thought. That was true. The two sides hadn’t had any dealings before this and Red Moon didn’t bear any enmity toward the Wind and Cloud Pavilion. It was Li Hao who’d made up his mind to eliminate the other. It was a colossal joke to list Ying Hongyue as number one during this time.

“I don’t know either...” the scarlet cloak offered after a long moment. “We don’t know much about the Wind and Cloud Pavilion, they’re rather mysterious. I thought it might be that group of people, but now it looks like it might not. Do they really have the heritage of Daoist Wind and Cloud?”

“I’ll have people look into it. Be on the alert these days!” The scarlet cloak vanished.

Ying Hongyue frowned and scanned the ranking again. This ranking... listed a lot of Silver Moon cultivators, so it did seem aimed at Silver Moon. But... what the hell was all this! Li Hao wasn’t in the top three!

Ying Hongyue, the royal family, and the nine ministries were widely acknowledged as the three strongest factions beneath the heavens. Wasn’t it a joke to list the three of them? They were already the strongest in everyone’s hearts!

Of course, this was just confirmation to the rest of the world. It further verified the truth of the ranking.

“Bastards!” The unflappable Ying Hongyue was frowning ferociously. This ranking was ridiculous! What was the Wind and Cloud Pavilion thinking of—did they want to offend the rest of the strongest factions in the world so that everyone joined hands against them?

.....

At the same time, within a ruin.

A loud crash traveled out of the Wind and Cloud Pavilion as a frosty voice demanded, “Why did this happen?!”

They’d known that something was wrong the moment the ranking appeared. A lot of people weren’t on it and the order had been changed. Deputy Zhou was nowhere to be found, Director General Zhao’s placement had decreased significantly. Yao Si and Hong Yitang were still present, but they were lower than twenty. There were fifty people on Li Hao’s modified ranking and his changes made it seem that the organization was targeting Ying Hongyue.

Although Ying Hongyue was indeed number one in their real ranking, this wasn’t the result that they wanted to see.

“Pavilion master, we... we don’t know either. We gave the ranking to Wu...”

“Idiots!” A black shadow came into view and jerked with angry movements. “Look into it! Exercise some care! Damn it, it was such a small matter, but you still managed to mess it up!”

Could they come out and say that this ranking was a fake? That there was another version they wanted to publish? They really would be a laughingstock then!

The black shadow was infuriated, truly incensed beyond words. Utilizing distribution channels was just a small matter, nothing had ever gone wrong before. But this mess developed in a most critical moment! This threw all of his plans into disarray!

“Understood!” Someone swiftly sped off outside while the pavilion master brooded over the development.

Ying Hongyue might think that the Wind and Cloud Pavilion was targeting him. He wasn’t afraid of Ying Hongyue—it was the forces behind Ying Hongyue that were a headache.

Chapter 837: Invincible! (I)

The ranking quickly disseminated in all directions and raised a hubbub of discussion. Seven elements... and three seven element Arcanus at that! All sides were stunned and nervous. How had they done it? Had they all broken through inside the ruins?

But there was no point in doing so unless they wished to stay within the ruins for the rest of their lives or emerge only after the second awakening. That would make for one less heavyweight in residence at their faction.

Were there other methods that they could call on?

The world was also stunned at Li Hao being peak six elements, but he wasn't worth mentioning compared to the three seven elements.

As for the veracity of the ranking... some people felt that it was real because the ranking's estimation of their strength was accurate.

"Which side does the Wind and Cloud Pavilion stand on? So they're not targeting Li Hao, but Red Moon, the nine ministries, and the royal family?" No one could make any sense of it.

.....

The Arcanus Ranking was hotly discussed on all sides, but it had nothing to do with Li Hao and the rest. Having tossed out the ranking, the young man didn't care whether Wu was captured or killed as a result. The supernatural character that he'd planted in the man's head had long dispersed.

They were so far removed from each other that he didn't have the ability to continue manipulating the character. It had faded away a long time ago, but the young man wasn't sure if the other was aware of that fact.

His goal with the ranking was very simple. Would anyone believe any further rankings that the Wind and Cloud Pavilion published? They would have to wait until next month to publish their next edition, but it was already an unknown if they would survive until then.

.....

Within the ruins.

The group stopped cultivating after an indeterminate period of time. The enormous tree trunk was slightly withered as the pool of five thousand drops of Water of Life was... dry!

Indeed, the tree trunk was empty.

The group stared dumbly at the dry internals. Some looked at Li Hao, some looked at the little tree. Others exchanged glances among themselves. ...someone had stolen the Water of Life and hidden it, hadn't they?? That was five thousand drops, not five hundred! None of them had the ability to absorb so much Water of Life at once.

Li Hao was lying on the ground, like his soul had departed his body. If anyone could see supernatural locks, they would see that a mass of locks had floated upward on his body. They were tiny, like ants, and those with trypophobia would find their scalps crawling.

The young man's scalp crawled with numbness as well! He'd absorbed almost five thousand drops by himself—and that wasn't even the problem. Although the consumption rate was terrifying, the key was that his strength had barely improved. The ants had absorbed almost all of the resource to give rise to so many supernatural locks.

What horrified Li Hao was that... there were so many locks in the human body. How was this possible?? Although he'd seen some locks through the five auras before, the actual appearance of more than one hundred locks was still a jaw-dropping sight.

He'd broken eleven locks as of present, making him a seven element Arcanus. But how many more were there to get through? Could anyone break them all? How much in resources would be needed? How much time? How many types of aura?

Li Hao was shaking all over, suddenly feeling that Hong Yitang had proceeded down the better path of using one character to encompass a myriad of methods. Would there ever be an end to his hard work thanks to his insistence on one word per aura? He'd yet to succeed with the wind and thunder auras, not to mention this dense concentration of terrifying locks. He hadn't had time to practice the light and dark auras either.

"One hundred and twenty locks!" murmured the young man. That was the number that'd appeared on him—one hundred and twenty locks. It was a frightening prospect!

The human body was a treasure, that he knew, but he hadn't thought that the human body would contain such terrifying potential. He might not be able to fully excavate it for the rest of his life. The ancient humans didn't have supernatural locks, they only had the three cavities and the like. Their anatomy wasn't as complicated.

Was the modern cultivation system this terrifying? Did modern humans possess too much potential, or were they that pathetic in this age of martial dao decline? They were shown so many supernatural locks to explore, but could only look upon these locks for the rest of their lives and never reach the end goal? How agonizing that would be! Not to mention, the humans of this age possessed weak bodies, which made it even harder for them to develop their locks.

Modern humans had to consume thousands of drops of Water of Life to barely manifest some of their locks. This had been the reserves of an Immortal! Li Hao felt that it could've given rise to a large batch of Arcanus. It'd been wasted on him.

Was it a waste?

Li Hao didn't know. His first thoughts were to summon a few locks and lay a firm foundation for himself, but he'd ended up unwittingly absorbing all of the Water of Life. This was no longer a question of setting foundations, but a question of how horrifying everything was.

The rest of the group had begun to notice Li Hao's abnormal mood. The young man was sprawled on his back, an empty look in his eyes. What'd gotten into him? Shouldn't he be excited and happy that he'd killed an Immortal level plant spirit? Why did it seem like he'd died?

"Li Hao, I'm a four element Arcanus now," He Yong coughed. "My body seems a lot stronger than before and it can endure the strain of another element. I just lack a bit of Water of Life. Have you put it all away?"

Everyone's bodies had been strengthened after absorbing significant quantities of indestructible matter. He Yong had directly set foot into four element Arcanus and was on the cusp of five elements. It felt like he would succeed at any time, but that he also lacked the necessary replenishment of Water of Life. He didn't need it for fortifying his physical body, but that coalescing the supernatural characters devoured life force.

He had just finished tempering his body and wanted to trace the fifth character. But now, they were out of Water of Life! There'd been so much! Thousands of drops, where had it all gone? Had Li Hao taken it all?

Everyone present had shown marked improvement, particularly Hou Xiaochen. His body was extremely weak to begin with and he'd been sickly from youth. Thanks to the fortifying effects of indestructible matter, he showed greater improvement than Sky Sword and the rest. He'd already mastered the elements of his organs as well as the wind element, placing him in six element Arcanus.

He also wanted to point out the insufficient quantity of Water of Life. While he didn't need it anymore, there were others who did. Yu Luochoa!

Yu Luochoa had gained a great deal from this operation. She'd been weaker before and with a more flimsy aura, but killing an Immortal had caused a change in her aura. She'd just managed to set foot into four element Arcanus, making her slightly weaker than He Yong.

Hou Xiaochen felt that she stood a chance of rising to peak four elements or even five elements if she had a bit more Water of Life. If the weakest Yu Luochoa displayed such improvement, then it was easy to imagine how much the others had transformed by.

Yao Si and the others had been premier five element heavyweights to begin with. They'd forcefully set foot into six elements before, and if it wasn't for worrying that they'd explode in the outside world if they were seven elements, Yao Si might've made that step already.

However, they were yet to discover the secondary dimension like Li Hao had. They couldn't fully conceal one of their elements. Thus, not only did they have to worry about being churned to pieces by the void, but they also had to consider if their own bodies could endure such an eruption of power.

There were many six elements on the scene. Yao Si flicked a side glance at Earthturner Sword and his brethren. Those guys were likely all six elements, perhaps even peak six elements. Just like him, they didn't dare set foot into seven elements.

Even less needed to be said about old fart Chen Zhongtian. That fellow could utilize six elements under normal conditions. He had easily set foot into peak six elements.

There was one person who Yao Si could not see through—Zhou Chuan. This was a powerhouse who walked the path of the ancient martial dao. Though he'd lacked core origin strength before, he was on par with peak six elements. Had he improved again after absorbing significant indestructible material?

One wasn't necessarily weak just because they only walked the path of the golden body. What if he was able to break his limits?

Finally, Yao Si's gaze rested on Panther. No one talked about the dog, but they were all immensely stunned by it. The projection of the Monster Spirit Envoy that'd gathered out of its blood was truly terrifying. It had erupted with the strength of an Apex inside the ruins!

The coconut tree had almost been struck down with one bolt of lightning. It was plain to see that the dog had supped at the table of countless treasures, and that its diet had been put to good use. Yao Si was highly envious—spending one's life eating and drinking. The dog lived a good life, alright!

Yao Si then looked at Northern Fist and his companions; they showed marked improvement as well. Under normal circumstances, they would be five or six elements. There were very few four elements left in the group—He Yong and Yu Luocha counted among their weaker members. Light Sword was stronger than both of them, so she should be a fifth element Arcanus as well.

Yao Si inwardly sighed with emotion. It'd only been half a year since he decided to follow Li Hao. The Arcanus level had just appeared then, but an entire group of cultivators had set foot in it in the blink of an eye.

This kind of change was very unexpected, but also fostered incredible competition! The heavyweights of the nine ministries and other factions were forced into swift improvement as well. Perhaps they'd all emptied their family vaults, which rather benefited the plant spirits.

The plant spirits of the various organizations must have benefited greatly in recent days. Everyone had advanced at a prudent rate before—there was no need to drain the pond to catch all the fish in the waters. There was a limit to their improvement before the second awakening arrived. It was sufficient to set foot into six element Arcanus before then.

But now, everyone bristled with competition!

“This can't be allowed to continue!” Li Hao suddenly interrupted Yao Si's line of thought. The group blinked at him. What?

“We must study how to strengthen the body, and not just through Water of Life or indestructible matter.” Li Hao frowned. “There must be a cultivation method, a unique method that is comprehensive and swiftly develops the physical body!”

They were faced with these straits as a seven element Arcanus. What about when they reached eight or nine? Were they to continue killing plant spirits? But there were limited numbers of plant spirits as well, humans couldn't just hunt them to extinction! That wouldn't be enough for their use in any case!

Those of the group looked at each other before He Yong said in a muffled voice, "Then we need to get your master back here!"

"Who the hell knows where he's gone!" Li Hao's head ached at the task. "He doesn't respond to any of my messages, so he's probably thrown the transmission pendant away. He didn't come back for the Skystar Commander Office inauguration ceremony, so he's probably entered a ruin!"

Chapter 838: Invincible! (II)

A series of dry coughs rose and fell throughout the group. Yuan Shuo had missed out on quite a great deal with his absence. A ruin? Wasn't it plant spirits or ancient powerhouses that were the strongest existence in a ruin? What could they offer?

Water of Life? One hundred drops, maybe. What else?

Nothing else. But with Li Hao, all of them had already received a varying quantity of Water of Life. They'd also absorbed core origin strength from an ancient powerhouse and the indestructible matter used to forge golden bodies. Their auras had also undergone quantitative changes after killing an Immortal plant spirit.

With this in mind, the group rather pitied Yuan Shuo. How tragic! The old man had insisted on striking out on his own and completely missed out on these incredible gains. Although he was Li Hao's master, he might only be peak metamorphosis at the moment or barely an Arcanus. He might even feel very proud of himself for reaching that level!

Little does he know, we're all five and six elements now!

But they still had to go to him when it came to researching cultivation methods. Some of the ancient powerhouses might have a wide span of knowledge or be very strong, but they were not as

accomplished as Yuan Shuo when it came to studying the human body and aura. The old man himself was the greatest target for research.

Even now, Li Hao was yet to meld the five auras as one. No one was able to do it other than Yuan Shuo. He had completely fused his together as opposed to utilizing them separately like Li Hao.

“Is there more indestructible matter?” Li Hao suddenly asked upon hearing the group mention his master.

Silence.

No one said a word. It was all gone, along with Water of Life! They’d truly had a grand feast. Everyone had been afraid of seeing lesser gains if they took in less than the others. They wouldn’t be able to continue advancing if their physical bodies weren’t strong enough, so who would hold back out of politeness?

All of them absorbed the available resources for all their worth! Even late-joiner Chen Zhongtian took everything he could. He was so full that he almost wanted to burp. He’d wanted to stash some away for his son, but hadn’t had the chance to do so before everyone else emptied the reserves.

The coconut tree had expended its own resources for many years, so there wasn’t as much indestructible matter within it as one might think. Although it was an Immortal, it was closer to being an Apex.

With so many near-Apex Arcanus powerhouses furiously drawing on it, as well as the little tree, Panther, and Deputy Zhou... there wasn’t anything left. Only the trunk remained on the ground. Li Hao had put the coconuts away.

“I forgot to save some for my master.” Li Hao smacked his head. “Forget it, I’ll save some for him next time we kill a plant spirit if he’s still not around.”

“.....” Just listen to the young man! But everyone’s eyes brightened all the same and Chen Zhongtian swallowed hard.

“I’ve got one at home!” Indeed, his family’s ruins had a plant spirit in residence, one that was particularly arrogant and cocky. What if... they killed it?

Li Hao couldn’t be bothered to respond. He was only voicing his thoughts, he didn’t plan on killing more plant spirits at present. The group needed some time to digest their gains. He also needed to make further plans if they were to go after the Chen plant spirit. That one would be a completely whole opponent without previously splitting itself for a replica, unlike the partial target of the foolish coconut tree that they’d fought.

Of course, the Chen father and son could also try and see if they could trick a replica out of their plant spirit. These plant spirits existed by themselves at the moment. None of them could exchange information with each other.

Li Hao set the matter aside and turned his attention to the ruin in front of them. He hadn’t had time to observe it before their battle. These seemed to be the gardens of a certain building structure. It was completely pitch-black ahead without a speck of light.

“Everyone should take some time to settle down with their new gains,” Li Hao breathed out. “Improving too fast isn’t a good thing either. It’s best to temper ourselves for a bit, and this is something the seniors all know better than me. Let’s wait a while longer before we kill another plant spirit.”

No one had an opposing opinion, whereas He Yong still couldn’t help himself in the end. “Ah... is there no more Water of Life?”

“.....” The group cursed to themselves. What a shameless guy!

“No, it’s all gone!” Li Hao burst out laughing. “We’re not in urgent need of it now, so we can have Senior Tree take its time with conversion. The cost will be a lot lower!”

The cost was too high when they were in a hurry for Water of Life. When it came to mysterious power stones, he had quite a lot left at thirty million. He'd been burning through mysterious power stones lately. What he'd obtained from killing the plant spirit had been used on the spot, but it also resulted in a rapid increase in strength among the group.

A slow utilization of thirty million stones would result in ten thousand drops. An urgent order would result in three thousand drops. There was no need to waste the stones on He Yong's behalf!

Indeed, such were Li Hao's thoughts. What are you in a hurry for, it doesn't matter whether you're a four or five element Arcanus!

The young man had reaped a great harvest lately—his reserve of mysterious power stones and Water of Life was truly incredible. But having to support so many people meant that he only had a few mysterious power stones left. They would soon be expended since everyone had use for them.

What terrified Li Hao was that he had too many supernatural locks! Who knew how many more stones he'd have to consume if he wanted to keep improving?

"Let's investigate these ruins first..."

"It's probably one of the critical parts of the city," Chen Zhongtian didn't really mind. "It's not a large place and you won't be able to probe too deep into it. There's a barrier ahead that will block your path."

"The ruins at my home are where the ancient Hall of Education was back in those times. It's a more important place, but also just a building. There's nothing special about it. The Department of Education was the core of the ancient civilization, but there's not much use to it as there aren't many treasures left in it."

"It's basically the same as the nine ministries. We obtained their inheritance by accident a long time ago. How should I put it... it was the plant spirits that chose us. They wanted people in the outside world to help them, so they set the revolution of the nine ministries in motion!"

“The bramble rose of the royal family was the true guardian plant spirit of Skystar ruins. It’s very strong and has always wanted to devour the other nine. That was why there was the uprising eighty years ago and why the royal family was overturned. The bramble rose can individually suppress any of the plant spirits, but it cannot when all nine are allied against it.”

Chen Zhongtian was much more talkative than usual. “We hold the vital points of Skystar, but the true heart of the ruin is the entrance to the mine. However...” The man thought about his next sentence. “There is a guard at the entrance!”

“Even now?”

“Even now!” Chen Zhongtian nodded. “We’ve been waiting for the second awakening for a while, but it hasn’t begun mostly because of the guard at the mine. Skystar Fortress used to be filled with a Skystar Army of one hundred thousand strong. The guards at the mines were their elites and part of that army. There weren’t many of them, just three thousand or so, but they were the best of the best. It’s said that their leader was a vice commander in the Skystar Army!”

A leader of ten thousand made one a first rank division leader. That meant he was at least an Apex. The commander-in-chief of the Skystar Army was at least an Immortal, which meant that a vice commander was ninety-nine percent an Immortal.

So this vice commander was an Immortal, but he was sent to watch the mines?

“Were the guards humans? If so... shouldn’t they be long dead?” Li Hao was confused.

“I have no idea.” Chen Zhongtian shook his head. “It would also be normal if they aren’t dead. They are undying and indestructible, simply guarding the energy stone mines. So... wouldn’t it be expected that they’re still alive?”

“That’s true!” Li Hao laughed. He’d almost forgotten. Standing guard over a massive mine didn’t make them the same as others of the ancient civilization. The guards would have a bountiful supply

of energy and their golden body was indestructible. Perhaps they were alive in the true sense of the word.

“So, they’re still watching the mines?”

“Yes!” Chen Zhongtian nodded. “I also heard it from the plant spirit, but the plant spirit said that the mines will blow sooner or later even if they’re inaccessible. Energy will sweep through the world at that time! This is because energy has recovered in the world after the first awakening, which means that the big mines in Skystar will also slowly recover and accumulate energy.

“Plant spirits were permitted to absorb this energy in the ancient civilization to prevent explosions. That was also the purpose of guardian plant spirits. But now that the ten plant spirits of Skystar Fortress are unable to siphon off that energy, a great amount is accumulating. Although that vice commander can absorb some energy, one person alone can’t alleviate the pressure on the mines. It’s only a matter of time before they explode!”

Once they did, the energy would sweep through the land and the second awakening would begin.

“Will... Skystar City still remain if the mine explodes?” Li Hao frowned.

“That won’t have an effect. It will explode only inside the ancient city and won’t affect the outside world. A large mine once exploded in Silver Moon and prompted an awakening, but that didn’t have too great an effect.”

That particular mine didn’t measure up to the one at Skystar Fortress.

Li Hao said nothing more. He reached out and stowed the towering tree’s trunk in his storage ring. He had an abundance of storage rings lately; the young man chose a big one to ensure it could hold the trunk.

The group stepped over the corpses of the Hus—well, the pieces of their remains since they'd been blown to pieces—and walked forward. When they reached the edge of the yard, the group realized where they were. Security!

Li Hao knew it to be an institution similar to the Inspectorate. It was just empty now with nothing remaining. A layer of black fog writhed ahead of them. The young man took a closer look, but didn't recognize what it was. The little tree did; it rummaged through its memories.

“This is disordered core origin!”

“What is disordered origin of chaos?”

“When large sums of core origin heavyweights die and no one collects their core origin, it jumbles together into disordered core origin and forms a particular barrier...” The little tree fell silent for a moment.

“There were... riots and unrest in Skystar Town back in the day.”

Li Hao blinked. Now that was an abrupt change in topic.

Chapter 839: Invincible! (III)

“According to my father's memories, energy suddenly disappeared from the world one day,” the little tree slowly began. “And then core origin dao disappeared. We spontaneously entered a period of no energy or great dao. No one could go anywhere as the void turned extremely fragile. Powerhouses that left their main cities easily perished.

“Therefore, they could only stand against the siege and wait for rescue, safeguarding the cities.

“The powerhouses didn't all immediately die in a split second. They slowly fell silent as they ran out of options. They fell asleep amidst despair, but firmly recalled their mission and typically wouldn't abandon their duties.

“Skystar City’s mission was to protect the mine. There should’ve been energy left at the mine after it disappeared from the world. Logically speaking, the guards should’ve continued to defend their positions or come to the aid of the other positions. They wouldn’t have experienced a sudden death of their powerhouses and lack the means to collect their core origin...

“Therefore, there’s only one possibility. There must have been a rebellion in Skystar City and a traitor within. That caused a scene of heavyweights fighting each other and the death of many, creating the kind of energy barrier that we see here.

“The ruins under nine ministry control are that of the city’s vital locations. That means that these places suffered attacks, resulting in the deaths of the experts standing guard. That’s why there’s a barrier of disordered core origin where they died!”

Since the little tree knew where the disordered energy must come from, it quickly deduced the matters of yesteryear. Riots and uprisings must have occurred at the ruins that the nine ministries occupied. That resulted in a high number of heavyweight deaths. They were all core origin powerhouses, making for no survivors in these locations.

“So... how are... the plant spirits alive?” Li Hao frowned. Were they the traitors? The ancient civilization was still prosperous then, how did the plant spirits dare rebel?

The little tree didn’t know and was unable to deduce a possible theory. The coconut tree was dead, it would have to ask the other plant spirits to learn of what’d happened back in the day.

Meanwhile, Li Hao remembered that he had a mission at hand. He was to investigate why Skystar City had cut off energy supplies that year, plunging the eight main cities into silence. The eight cities had been able to battle through flight, but when their energy was depleted and no longer replenished, they could not be activated any longer.

“Can we.. go there?” asked Li Hao.

“We can, but it’s very dangerous,” answered the little tree after some thought. “It’s even more dangerous for core origin cultivators. The mine will cause fluctuations in core origin energy. It... should be fine for you guys, but I’m not sure. We can have Southern Fist give it a try.”

“.....” He Yong looked around blankly. What did that mean? Why are you sending me?

The little tree had simply picked a person at random. Everyone disliked He Yong, so the tree felt that it wouldn’t matter to pick the man. That wouldn’t result in hostility from the rest of the group, so it was a marvelous choice!

Li Hao laughed and looked at the black fog. Disordered core origin... Now that’s interesting. The young man didn’t explore further and thought for a bit. “Senior Tree, please stay here and stand guard...”

The little tree blinked.

“I’m worried about the other plant spirits from Skystar Fortress sensing something,” explained Li Hao. “Although we might not be able to pass through the black fog, Minister Chen says that the bramble rose wants to move against these plant spirits. In that case, there might be a way through. With senior on guard here, you can intimidate them at an appropriate time!”

Their partnership and the little tree’s existence could not be exposed at this time. The tree understood and sent back, “Will do! But if I’m not with you...”

“Don’t worry, I’ll be fine so long as I don’t encounter an Apex. I’ll make sure to come back for the senior if I enter another ruin.”

That satisfied the little tree. That worked just as well.

“Then let us leave this ruin, everyone!” There was nothing else for Li Hao to address. He was certain to visit the core zone of Skystar Town one day, but not right now. He needed to dismantle

the plant spirits one by one. It'd be best if he could kill all of the plant spirits in the nine ministries before moving on to the one at the center.

He contemplated certain matters as he walked and suddenly said, "Is the Qian weapon the Hover Sword?"

"No, it's the Blazing Ax." Chen Zhongtian shook his head.

"Then what about the Hus?" Li Hao frowned. "I didn't see their weapon when I killed Hu Mingfa. Your weapon is exceedingly strong. If Hu Mingfa had used it against me, I would've been in for a terrible time."

The weapon of a Saint! One that could awaken and appear nondescript in the outside world, but be truly formidable inside the ruins. The Qians might not have brought theirs along because they wished to suppress the Skystar King.

How had Hu Mingfa not brought his along after his father was dead? It was his last gamble that he'd staked everything on. Li Hao hadn't discovered an ultimate weapon in Hu Mingfa's belongings. If there'd been a weapon of a Saint present, the Black Armor would've given him a high price for it.

"The Hu weapon is a curved blade. I'm not certain what it's called either." Chen Zhongtian gave it some thought. "Someone might've taken it after you killed Hu Xiao—it'd be Armed Forces or Administration."

"Taken it?"

"Yes." Chen Zhongtian nodded. "The Hus weren't strong enough. There was one less person keeping the old Skystar King contained with Hu Xiao's death. They might've taken it to reinforce the seal!"

“Would Hu Mingfa have handed it over?”

Chen Zhongtian smiled without a word, leading to instant comprehension. Yes, Hu Mingfa would’ve handed over his family’s greatest treasure. He wasn’t strong enough to keep it. If he insisted, he would offend the premier heavyweights of two ministries and might even lose his place among the nine.

It was also a dog eat dog world with the nine ministries.

“Then this means that the nine ministries took a Saint weapon from me!”

“.....” Chen Zhongtian had nothing to say to that. The rest of the group also tilted their heads back at the sky. The young man... made some sense, but wasn’t it inappropriate to blatantly give voice to it?

.....

A group of people walked out of the ruins. Everyone looked worriedly at Li Hao when they set foot back in the outside world, but nothing developed. The young man smiled, this was the expected reaction.

There were also unexpected reactions. Deputy Zhou frowned as a bloody mark appeared on his body, vanished, then appeared again.

The group paused and stared at him.

“Ah... I might’ve absorbed too much energy,” he coughed gently.

Those gathered were stunned! It was apparent from a glance who among them was strong and who among them was weak. Being injured by the void represented that Zhou Chuan was infinitely close to the level of breaking the void.

Deputy Zhou sighed with resignation, feeling very uncomfortable as another bloody mark appeared on his body. “To think that space really would be this fragile... Thank goodness I suppressed myself somewhat. Otherwise, I’d have to remain in the ruins and wait for the second awakening...

The void as they knew it was simply too fragile. His strength had not yet reached the level of breaking the void, so it rather felt like he was being confined ahead of time.

Inspiration struck Li Hao and he summoned four out of five auras. He could sense some pressure, but when his fifth aura appeared, the void suddenly agitated. The young man frowned, then let his fire aura appeared.

And then... there was nothing else.

“Is Deputy Zhou stronger than me?” Li Hao found the discrepancy odd.

The deputy looked back at him with a slight frown, then shook his head. “It’s not that, but have you discovered that no bloody marks have appeared on my body after you displayed the fifth element.”

“Eh?” Li Hao raised an eyebrow. What did that mean?

“The times are different now,” sighed Deputy Zhou. “The cultivation path of the ancient civilization is slightly repulsed by this world. It does not fit mainstream knowledge, so it is subject to greater restriction. You seem... less affected.”

Is that so? Then doesn’t that mean I can utilize my full strength?

He punched outward, yet space seemed to rip apart. He immediately retracted all of his auras in the next second—only then did people notice that his golden armor had almost been shredded.

“Um... it’s not a problem for me to be exposed,” Li Hao said with resignation. “But that I am restricted when I take action as well. The void really will tear me to pieces and my physical body will likely fall apart in a few seconds!”

His body wasn’t as strong as Deputy Zhou’s! There was nothing that could be helped about this situation.

“How interesting.” The deputy couldn’t help but laugh as well. “This means that the void doesn’t reject you, but that your physical body is too weak and cannot endure its strength. It’s probably too hard for you to tear through the void and travel five hundred kilometers at once!”

Li Hao could quietly survive in the world, but his physical body wasn’t durable enough to support further action. Otherwise, he might be able to cover five hundred kilometers at once like the Apexes of old could.

“That may not be the case either,” Li Hao suddenly laughed. “There is such a thing as spatial supernaturals.”

The group paused.

“I remember that we once spoke of the spatial attribute among supernaturals, right?” continued the young man.

People exchanged glances with each other for a while until Chen Zhongtian intoned, “I’ve heard about this before. There was even someone who once sold a storage ring that was said to belong to a spatial supernatural, but we never found the owner. It’s hard to say whether such a supernatural exists or not. There’s been no sign of them among the major factions, at least.

“If they really do exist... I suspect one of them is a spatial attribute cultivator.”

The group focused on him. Who?

“The one at Administration!” chuckled Chen Zhongtian.

“Isn’t he a martial master?” Li Hao raised an eyebrow.

“He is!” Chen Zhongtian nodded. “But a martial master who’s saturated his spatial lock will also possess those powers. Of course, I’m not certain. It’s just that he ran off really quickly in some prior engagements. He was faster than anyone, so I kind of suspect him.”

Everyone understood Li Hao now—the spatial supernatural lock! But... where was it? Li Hao didn’t know either.

Chapter 840: Invincible! (IV)

Of one thing Li Hao was certain of, and that was if he couldn’t strengthen his physical body, he could try enhancing his spatial lock. He might have different results traveling through the void with that. Hence, Deputy Zhou’s concerns that the young man wouldn’t be able to tear through the void were misplaced. Li Hao had just caused more than one hundred locks to surface. Was the spatial one not part of it?

No way! Not only is the spatial lock in there, but I’ll find even the invisibility one. I’ll turn invisible so you guys can’t find me.

The group chatted for a while before Chen Zhongtian left with reluctance. No one spoke up to keep him, which quite disappointed the old minister. What a pity that these people were still on guard against him.

The rest followed Li Hao through the doors of the Skystar Commander Office. When Liu Long sensed their return, he quickly shot out of his office. “The ranking’s out!”

“What’s the situation in the outside world?”

“They’re all discussing it!” Liu Long responded quickly. “The ranking says that there’s three seven elements. The full reaction hasn’t taken place yet. We’ll have to wait and see how people react.”

“Alright!” Li Hao nodded. “You should ascend to Refiner of Spirit as soon as possible, chief. Only then will you improve rapidly.”

Liu Long smiled and didn’t say much else. He quickly left after greeting the rest.

“What a pity about Golden Spear!” Hou Xiaochen suddenly said. A hush stole over the group.

“That may not be the case,” Manager Yu interjected. “Golden Spear will progress faster if he can shatter his internal demons and complete the saturation of his locks. His aura will increase as well. He wouldn’t have been of much help even if he’d stayed.”

Surprised, Hou Xiaochen glanced at Yu Luocha. What, have you also found the courage to talk back to me now?

Li Hao couldn’t be bothered with the exchange. He took out a transmission pendant and frowned at it, sighing after a long moment. “This teacher of mine... is seriously... Forget it, I can’t find him again. Please keep an eye out for me, everyone. I don’t know what ruin he’s gotten into now.

“Seniors, please go out and walk around if you’d like to leave. I don’t need that many people even if I’m to take action against the Wind and Cloud Pavilion. I’ll be sure to invite everyone next time I enter a ruin to eliminate another powerhouse.”

They didn’t need to stay together in regular times; everyone present had their own business to attend to on a regular basis. Someone immediately disappeared right after Li Hao finished speaking.

The young man blinked and looked at the empty spot. He couldn't help but say, "Senior Thunderleg... really moves very quickly!"

"He's just feeling guilty!" Hou Xiaochen said faintly.

"Don't bully him, do you think Silver Moon's martial world is full of pushovers?" Tyrant Blade retorted coldly. This was an open threat at Hou Xiaochen!

A dangerous light glinted in Hou Xiaochen's eyes before he abruptly shut his mouth. Southern Fist, Northern Fist, Sky Sword, and Tyrant Blade were all glaring in their direction. Hou Xiaochen, Huang Yu, Deputy Zhou, and Kong Jie worked for the government, but the others were part of the martial world.

There was no further task at hand now that they'd eliminated the powerhouse in the ruins. It wasn't as if they enjoyed everyone's company on a regular basis. Since Hou Xiaochen had dared glare at them, the martial masters naturally wouldn't respond kindly.

Hou Xiaochen was rather dejected by the response. These martial world guys were seriously petty!

"Then I'm heading back to Silver Moon." Huang Yu rose to his feet. "It's time to go, Ole Kong."

"What?" Kong Jie blinked. "You can go if you want, what are you bringing me with you for?"

"Eh?" Huang Yu paused.

"Eh what?" snapped Kong Jie. "You go back, I haven't seen my daughter yet. I'm here to see her! What do you know? You don't have a daughter! I'll leave in a few days!"

"....." Huang Yu was speechless. Fine, I get it, you want to stay. You're so damned... shameless.

“Is Commander Yu leaving?” Li Hao was confused.

“There are military matters to take care of, so I should not stay for long,” Huang Yu declared solemnly. “I would stay if my strength was lacking, but now... I do not need to do so. Call upon me whenever you have need!”

“Then go well, Commander Yu.” Li Hao nodded. “But let’s not tell Director General Zhao about the matters here for now.”

“Oh?” Huang Yu was puzzled, but nodded after some thought. “Alright!”

He was off.

“Are you wary of the director general?” Hou Xiaochen looked at Li Hao.

“Not entirely!” the young man responded after some silence. “It’s just that he has a deep relationship with the ruins. I’m wondering if some of the Silver Moon powerhouses in the ruins will be leery of me now that I’ve killed a plant spirit. After all, strictly speaking, they are the ones on the same side and we... we are of the new age!”

He was even debating if he should deliver the coconut tree’s trunk to Battle Heaven. Granted, he was very familiar with them, so it should be fine, right?

“There are many ruins in Silver Moon!” Hou Xiaochen answered after turning over the thought. “We do need to take certain precautions, but there aren’t any problems at present. Ole Zhao should know a thing or two, but we can keep this under wraps if you wish.”

Li Hao smiled. It was good that Hou Xiaochen understood.

“Then our next step is to locate the Wind and Cloud Pavilion!” said the young man. “I need their treasure.”

He had great use for it as he wanted to probe everyone’s strength. Those in the outside world weren’t important—it was those inside the ruins. He would easily be accidentally defeated if he didn’t have full information about them.

What the Wind and Cloud Pavilion possessed could detect the strength of someone’s life force. That was perfect for these ancient powerhouses. Li Hao truly wasn’t moving against the faction because they were at odds with him. He simply had great use to come for their treasure.

“Seniors, please spread out and make a close investigation for me. South Peak is key. Don’t alarm them if you bump into them. It’ll be time for us to flex our muscles once we take them down!”

He was just making small, probing feints at the moment. Li Hao’s words invigorated the group!

“Sounds good!” They smiled. They would find the Wind and Cloud Pavilion and seize their treasure that measured strength. Once Li Hao found a weak plant spirit after that, he was sure to exterminate it. That would be an opportunity for all of them.

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At the same time, Silver Moon.

A head popped out near Ash Mountain. It dusted itself off and complained loudly, “The exits are always in shitty places. Why can’t they be in nice spots?”

The rest of the body burrowed out after a round of cursing. It took a deep breath and threw its head back with laughter. “It’s only been half a month and I triumphantly emerge from seclusion today! Who else is there but me in this vast world? I can stand even against Arcanus now!”

I, Yuan Shuo, have taken another step forward in half a month. I can battle and kill Arcanus! This time, those bastards won’t be able to measure up to me no matter how fast they improve! There’s one flaw to my character—I love slapping faces!

You guys snap your supernatural locks, but I don’t! I’ll tell you what it means to be the Five Styles Demon King!

Yuan Shuo further cackled as he thought of the core origin replica in his ring. That guy said that it’s absolutely on par with six element Arcanus. It might even be able to battle a seven element if it’s inside a ruin!

I, Yuan Shuo, am now invincible in the world! Did you guys really think that I wouldn’t dig up one of those antiques? I know plenty of them—this one’s easier to negotiate with. But it’s also because I have extraordinary potential that they think this is a good investment. Very good!

“Jadelight, the dynasty is our oyster from now on!” Yuan Shuo was in fine fettle. The world was vast, but there was no one who could stand against him. He might not be the strongest, but he held a powerful core origin replica. He was invincible before the second awakening!

Foolish disciple, I’ll let you know this time who’s the granddaddy and who’s the grandson!

Jadelight also crawled out of the exit and nodded without objection. Yuan Shuo now possessed the battle strength of an Arcanus and could call upon the strength of a six or seven element Arcanus. What was that, if not invincible? It’d only been a short while since the Arcanus level appeared!

“C’mon, let’s go to Skystar City!” Yuan Shuo brayed with laughter. Old Demon Five Styles was arrogant to begin with. He’d suffered quite a blow last time and was here to stage an ultimate comeback!

It's only been half a month! Your jaws will drop from shock! They'll fall right off your face!

Jadelight smiled as well. Those guys would truly be surprised this time. Yuan Shuo was indeed incredible to catch up to them so quickly, and the key thing was, he hadn't even snapped his supernatural locks. This fellow truly knew a lot.

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The central region.

There wasn't much news about the Arcanus Ranking in Silver Moon, but it was the hottest topic in the central region. Yuan Shuo rushed to the central region in the highest of spirits, but he wilted when he obtained a copy of the ranking.

Three seven elements!

Fine then, he could let that slide, but what was his disciple doing at peak six elements? And what about all these Silver Moon martial masters??

Even though Li Hao had added more names to the ranking to make it a list of fifty, the weakest started at three elements. The battle strength that Yuan Shuo was so proud of wouldn't even earn him a place on the ranking.

The old man was incredibly dejected!

Jadelight also perused her copy of the ranking and couldn't find any words to express herself with. Even He Yong was on the ranking! Although he was ranked last, it stated clearly that he was three elements Arcanus. So even He Yong was three elements?

She snuck a sidelong glance at Yuan Shuo. He was probably suffering from a devastating blow.

After a long while, Yuan Shuo snorted and ripped the ranking to pieces. “These guys must’ve opened their supernatural locks and ascended to the supernatural domain. That is not the proper way! If I wanted to, I could open them at any time and stomp on three and four elements!”

Jadelight didn’t say anything. A hot flush crept onto Yuan Shuo’s face.

“Come, let’s go to Skystar City and determine the situation...” He made quick time amid deep confusion. Had they all broken their supernatural locks? That was not a good development for a martial master. Had Li Hao broken even the ones of his organs?

His disciple had a chance of returning to martial dao before and Yuan Shuo had instructed him not to be hasty before the old man departed. Had Li Hao encountered a critical condition?

Yuan Shuo collected information as he traveled and finally learned that Li Hao had only started his counterattack after the nine ministries exerted pressure and the Wind and Cloud Pavilion appeared. He killed numerous powerhouses, including even Qian Wanhao and Hu Mingfa. Those such as the lords of Buddha and Sky Roc Mountain were also dead.

It’d only been a few days, but it seemed like a drastic upheaval had seized the world. Yuan Shuo suddenly felt that he’d been cut off from the outside world for ages. Each of his closed door sessions resulted in such a sensation. He’d been in seclusion for longer this time, but it was still only half a month. It was as if the entire world had changed and society’s rate of development was faster than a few years ago.

He was equal parts uncomprehending and resigned. Yuan Shuo made quick time for Skystar City.