

## Star Gate 851

### Chapter 851: An Eye for an Eye (II)

Silver Moon.

Li Hao traveled very quickly, so swiftly that his speed couldn't be believed. Even a long journey was very enjoyable when one was in good spirits. He headed not for White Moon City or any other place, but straight to Mount Cat Head.

The ruin of the imperial palace immediately opened up to him. The little tree's primary body swayed with befuddlement. "You've... come back?"

Where's my replica?

The little tree had no way of knowing what'd taken place if its replica did not return. Only when its replica returned could the tree gain the full picture.

"I've come back and brought you some goodies!" Li Hao smiled. A dense current of core origin wafted out.

The tree stilled with shock!

"Ah..."

"I bumped into the replica of a redwood spirit on my way here and decided to take it out."

The little tree was completely taken aback, the dense core origin further prevented it from regaining its composure. This all sounded so ordinary and run of the mill! There was so much core origin here that the other plant spirit was most likely just as strong as it. Its replica wasn't with Li Hao, so how was the young man supposed to kill the replica of an Apex under such circumstances?

“You... you killed it?” The little tree couldn’t even remember to be delighted.

“Yep.”

“So your... your strength has improved? But...”

“Senior will know when you meet your replica. I hope that the senior will improve quickly. Your replica is probably on par with your primary body now. This core origin energy is my greeting gift. Please raise another crop of rations for me, the more the better!”

The little tree was stunned beyond words. My replica has improved too? What has Li Hao been doing?

Li Hao looked at the hazy outline of the imperial palace close by while the tree grappled with its shock. He was reminded of the little tree utilizing the palace’s projection to suppress everything. That was indeed a domineering move. There were likely actual traces of a great emperor’s dao in the palace. Even if it didn’t have any treasures inside, this location itself was a treasure.

The little tree grew nervous to see the young man glance at the palace. Indeed, nervous. What if Li Hao decided he wanted the palace?

It could no longer see through the young man, particularly with his casual mention of killing an Apex redwood’s replica on his way here. That was a nerve-racking development—it hadn’t thought that Li Hao would grow so strong in such a short period of time.

“Don’t worry, senior!” Li Hao smiled. “I’m just looking around, I don’t have anything else in mind. Whether it’s the imperial majesty’s palace or the Human King’s palace... they’re just ancient architecture to me. There’s not much value in them.”

He was weak, but his breadth of view had grown greater. These were just temporary, abandoned palaces! He might be a little more interested if this was the primary residence.

“Please create more rations for me, senior, I’ll be off. I’m going to visit Battle Heaven and see if I can revitalize General Pagoda with the Immortal plant spirit’s trunk...”

“Immortal?”

“Mmhmm. I coordinated with the senior’s replica a few days ago to kill an Immortal plant spirit—one of the ten guardian spirits protecting Skystar Town back in the day. It was a coconut tree—the Golden Coconut.”

The little tree physically reeled from shock and even some horror. How was this possible?! The primary body of an Immortal!

“Li... Li Hao, aren’t Apexes not tolerated by the outside world?”

“Yep.”

“Then...”

“It tolerates me!”

Fine then. The little tree had nothing to say. It didn’t know why Li Hao could operate in the world outside; only shock and inexplicable reverence filled it. It was starting to grow afraid of how the young man’s strength changed by the day.

“Then I take my leave, senior...”

“Don’t you need any more Water of Life?” came the little tree’s ripples. “With so much core origin, I can supply some Water of Life to you...”

“It’s fine!” Li Hao laughed. “Just focus on the rations. If General Pagoda awakens and converts Water of Life faster, I’ll ask him. If not, I still have the senior’s replica. It converts very quickly these days too...”

The young man disappeared on the spot, leaving behind a suddenly anxious little tree. I... don’t seem as important anymore. It didn’t know what’d taken place all this time because its replica was still journeying outside. Li Hao was no longer taking its replica along when he traveled—that was a demonstration of utmost confidence! He was certain that nothing would happen to him even without the replica by his side.

Indeed, he killed an Apex replica when he happened to encounter it along the way! That was terrifying!

“What should I do?”

The young man had gone to revive General Pagoda. Would there be a place left for it after the old general came back to life? The little tree grew frantic. It’d finally latched onto this big thigh and even severed half of its core origin for the partnership. Who would’ve thought that Li Hao would improve so quickly that even its replica might be less than useful these days? This was too panic inducing!

Such a performance had only been seen in the Human King’s era during the ancient civilization. Only that group of people had this kind of fortune and potential. Li Hao was shaping up to be even faster than them!

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Li Hao was unaware of the little tree’s anxiety. He said all that to intimidate his plant spirit partner, to prevent any ulterior motives from developing. The second awakening might come at any time. It

was one thing if he was unfamiliar with a plant spirit, but those he was familiar with and had helped him before were targets that he was very willing to talk to.

They better not start to brew other plans in their minds.

Li Hao arrived at Rift Canyon before long; there were guards posted still. It was a much quieter place these days as Silver Moon was much calmer after Li Hao started his conquest in Skystar City. Regular supernaturals didn't dare visit Silver Moon anymore.

It was the deep of winter and white snow covered the canyon. The guards had relaxed their vigilance since all was quiet in Silver Moon these days. They blinked to see a figure appear in the void, tensing with nerves before erupting with glee and worship. "Director Li!"

"At ease, everyone!" Li Hao smiled with a nod. "You've worked hard!"

"Not at all!" A Night Watcher powerhouse immediately rushed over. Well, a Solar counted as a powerhouse in Silver Moon. Li Hao remembered the man—Deputy Director He, a water supernatural. "Director Li, are you planning on entering the ruin?"

"Yes!" Li Hao answered forthrightly. "There's no need to notify anyone else. I'm just making a quick visit."

"Understood!" The deputy director quickly nodded. Li Hao was their superior these days, no one exercised more authority than him. After all, the Night Watcher headquarters had joined the Skystar Commander Office.

The group watched Li Hao enter the ruins with mixed emotions. It'd been a short period of time since he left White Moon City, but he soared to the skies as soon as he departed. He'd brought all sides of the dynasty to heel and killed countless powerhouses. Arcanus felt like the rain. No one had anticipated any of this to happen.

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Battle Heaven.

Director General Wang sensed something and immediately arrived at the city gates. A figure hovered in the distance.

Li Hao raised his head to look at the towering pagoda tree—it was so much bigger than the coconut tree that he couldn't see its top.

“I'm heading into the city first, General Pagoda. I'll come back for you in a moment!” The young man set foot forward. There was no response forthcoming from the tree. Perhaps it was in full slumber.

Li Hao immediately appeared by the city gates as soon as he set foot inside, startling the three troop leaders. So fast! A light flashed within Director General Wang's golden armor.

“You're back!”

“Yes!” Li Hao smiled. “Long time no see, director general!”

Had it been a long time? Director General Wang was confused. It'd... only been a month! Just about. Was that supposed to be long? “You...”

The director general couldn't determine anything from a casual glance at the young man. Li Hao had completely retracted his five elements as he entered the ruins, sending them to the secondary dimension. He looked the same as before—two element Arcanus.

That had been his level of strength on his prior visit and he looked the same now, but the director general felt that something had changed about the fellow.

Li Hao was also much more confident than before, and much stronger. He could tell from a single glance that Director General Wang might have been an Apex or Immortal in his time, but he wasn't that strong now. What they'd once found invincible was simply a result of themselves being too weak. Now that he looked at it, Director General Wang was at most an Apex—on par with the replica of the big tree that he'd killed earlier.

He was... a little weak.

A light suddenly shone out of Li Hao's eyes and he looked into the city with a raised eyebrow. "Please don't look at me like that, senior." He smiled. "It's uncomfortable..."

"And why can't I look at you?" Director General Wang asked with surprise.

"Not you, director general."

"....." Director General Wang blinked and abruptly realized something. As expected, a voice rippled through the air.

"You... quite surprise me."

"The senior praises me too highly." Li Hao inclined his body.

"....." Director General Wang was surprised beyond belief and turned to the pagoda. The guardian spirit was speaking to Li Hao! What was this?

"Open the doors, director general. I'm entering the city."

“.....” Director General Wang was so startled that he didn’t know what to say. My image of a mysterious senior doesn’t seem to have lasted for long. This guy doesn’t treat me with as much respect as he used to. What is this?

The city gates swung open and Li Hao raised his head to consider the two characters of ‘Battle Heaven’. Perhaps... he would have some additional gains this time. These two words hailed from an ancient exalted emperor themselves. They contained the exalted emperor’s dao. He couldn’t understand them before and only saw some mirages. But this time, he might be able to study them again. Perhaps he’d comprehend something new. If he could turn these characters into his supernatural characters... that would be a tremendous gain!

### Chapter 852: An Eye for an Eye (III)

Li Hao walked into the city. The three troop leaders immediately appeared as well. Light flashed in the young man’s eyes and he turned his gaze onto his three comrades. He sighed inwardly when he did so, truly seeing the heart of their condition.

Souls residing in the armor!

The three troop leaders were fully dead and had become weapon souls. The Black Armor in Evenround Martial had said that true New Martial powerhouses would rather take possession of weapons than humans...

Li Hao finally believed him with this evidence. So many martial masters and supernaturals had come from the outside world on previous excursions. Why become a weapon soul if they could take possession of those targets? It looked like these were true New Martial citizens and cleaved to their faith and pride.

“It’s been a long time, troop leaders!”

The three troop leaders looked at each other. Long time? It hadn’t been that long! Li Hao’s memories were confused, weren’t they?



“Er... yes... long time...” They were unused to this treatment. When had Li Hao become so noticeable?

Indeed, he was carrying himself in a manner that made him noticeable. His confidence was off the charts, one that stemmed from the bottom of his heart. This didn’t mean to say that he could dominate Battle Heaven, just that he’d lost some of the innate fear modern humans had toward ancient powerhouses after killing a plant spirit.

He used to find them invincible. Now his thoughts were that I can kill ancient plant spirits!

Director General Wang was quite surprised at the changes in the young man and didn’t say anything for a while.

Li Hao looked at the Turtle Pagoda. He’d sensed some mental strength coming from it earlier—so it seemed that the pagoda was far from ordinary. It should be an ancient weapon with a soul? Was there such a powerful one around?

One had to know that even a Saint’s weapon was just a weapon at the end of the day. His own Stellaris didn’t demonstrate any overwhelming power. This pagoda, however, was different.

A Battle Heaven treasure? The turtle of the Wangs? He’d always thought that the Black Tortoise Seal was one of the weapons of the eight. Was he wrong and the true Black Tortoise Seal the pagoda?

Various thoughts rose in his mind and Li Hao wasn’t in a hurry to discuss other matters. He simply smiled and said, “I’ve just returned and must go to the barracks to meet the commander and give a report. I will be back to meet with the director general!”

“.....” Everyone was surprised. This guy wanted to stay as far away from the barracks as possible before. What’d gotten into him today? He ran for the barracks as soon as he returned! Was he not afraid of the commander anymore? How very strange!

Director General Wang wasn't at liberty to say much, so he nodded. "Very well, you should report in first."

Li Hao was gone before he finished. He really had rushed off to the barracks!

"What a strange fellow!" murmured the director general.

"The kid's had some unusual gains!" came the old turtle's voice by his ears. "I sense some things from him... he might have killed an Apex not too long ago!"

"....." The director general blinked.

"I don't know if it was the primary body, maybe it was just a replica. But he should've killed one. I can sense an air of slaughter and some of the lingering reluctance and resentment of an Apex. It should've happened recently—the signs wouldn't be so obvious otherwise!"

"How is that possible?" Director General Wang couldn't believe it, but immediately thought of something. "Does it have to do with the guard of the imperial palace? There was a replica with the lad last time..."

"I don't know, perhaps... not." The old turtle fell silent. It didn't sense the imperial palace guard on Li Hao anymore. Perhaps it wasn't with the young man.

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Within the barracks.

A crowd of Red Armors saluted at Li Hao. A troop leader was still an officer. An excited Li Hao made straight for the headquarters of the Ninth Division—his nightmare was almost over! The

leader of the Ninth Division was an Apex back in the day, how much battle strength did he have left?

You beat me with a single punch that day, but here I am back again!

Li Hao sauntered into the building and roared at the top of his lungs in front of the office, “Li Hao, leader of the Twelfth Troop of the Ninth Division has come back to report to the commander!”

His voice was extremely loud and reverberated through the surroundings! The door to the office immediately swung open of its own accord. Within, the Gold Armor always seemed to be busy.

“Are you yelling so loudly because you feel confident in yourself?” He raised his head with an aureate glint in his eyes.

Li Hao slammed his legs together with a loud clap and shouted, “As a soldier, our voices need to be loud to ensure sufficient decorum! Those with softer voices are wusses! Commander, I have come to report in!”

“.....” The Gold Armor looked at Li Hao for a while. “Mmhmm, I see. Dismissed!”

The young man did not leave. “Commander, I would like to be restored to my title of general!” he shouted.

The Gold Armor paused.

“Based on what the commander said that day, I have the right to be conferred a general rank due to being an heir of the Lis. However, I have been held back by the commander. I think I can be restored to it now!”

“On what basis?” The Gold Armor nearly laughed in his anger.

“The rules!” Li Hao roared with all his might. “These are the rules of Battle Heaven! I am a member of the Lis and deserve this kind of treatment!”

“.....” The Gold Armor sized up Li Hao and grinned. “Hmm, it’s not bad to be full of confidence! You probably think of yourself as invincible after killing some powerhouses outside. You’ve grown proud and cocky... Do you think my surname is Wang?”

Li Hao blinked.

“A soldier... should not be this smug!” The Gold Armor stood up aloofly. “Li Hao, do not think of yourself as being very strong. Remember, you are still just a weakling!”

Li Hao felt the world shattered around him! His supernatural characters of the five elements materialized and he erupted with the force of seven elements Arcanus, but an exceedingly strong sword intent erupted from the commander’s body!

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The city gates.

“Has that guy let loose with his full strength?” Director General Wang blinked. That one had been the highest ranked among military officers and would’ve long been promoted if it wasn’t for the unexpected happening to Battle Heaven. The frontlines had already sent orders that this commander was to lead their First Troop. Of that, the director general was well aware of.

Sadly, Battle Heaven later lost contact with the outside world. As time went on, that one continued to be the division leader of the Ninth Troop and no longer had opportunities to demonstrate his capabilities.

Is he... going to beat Li Hao to death this time?

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Bam!

Li Hao felt that a sword had appeared in his mind—the world was a foggy chaos. The commander's aloof voice traveled into his ear. "This is it? That's all you have? Strength almost on par with Apex? Strength like this would only make you a troop leader back in the day, where do you get the confidence to be a commander?"

"You are but half step Apex! One might have thought you were a Saint from the way you were carrying yourself!"

Bam!

One punch!

Li Hao slammed into the wall and slowly slid off it. The commander retracted his fist.

"Your physical body is too weak to be considered and the forceful amalgamation of the five elements has resulted in numerous flaws! Your mental strength is ordinary, leaving only the aura as something slightly worthy of note. Is this all there is to you?"

"....." Li Hao stared dumbly at the Gold Armor. Why was this happening?? It wasn't possible! I can fight Immortals and I just casually killed an Apex replica! Have you fully awakened?

“How much battle strength did that Immortal have left?” The Gold Armor seemed to see through Li Hao’s thoughts as the young man didn’t have a chance to protect his mind. “What you view as an Immortal is just completely useless trash! It’s just the supplemental guardian spirit of a military town—how much battle strength does it still possess after countless eons? Any of the main division leaders will not be afraid of it! Any troop leader can easily kill it!

“The only Skystar Town plant spirit that has truly recovered some of its battle strength is that bramble rose! But even so, it had to lower itself and bow when it saw me in my peak! Little fellow, don’t be too cocky in life!”

“.....” Li Hao continued staring dumbly. That was a powerful guardian plant spirit, supposedly at peak Immortal. It had to bow to the commander when he was at his peak?

Aren’t you... just a division leader? That makes you peak Apex at most, doesn’t it?

He was flailing around in befuddlement as his nightmare was upon him again. Why... have I been beaten around again?

The ninth division leader returned to his seat, took out a sheet of paper and swiftly wrote a few words. “Arrogant and overbearing, completely forgetting himself in his pride, and unworthy of his achievements. Recommendation: expulsion from the Battle Heaven Army!”

“.....” Li Hao could see the writing—perhaps on purpose. He bounced up. “Don’t...”

“Mind the rules!”

“I was wrong, sir!”

“.....” The commander looked at him for a long moment before saying, “Out!”

“Understood, sir!” Li Hao turned around and rang, resignation writ large across his face. Was this one still a commander? Other people’s strength decreased by a great amount when they died. Why did this one seem stronger?

The hell??

## Chapter 853: Another Promotion (I)

Li Hao was quite depressed when he walked out of the commander’s office. Why?? According to his assessment, a division leader was an Apex, a reserve commander was an Immortal, and an army commander was a Saint. Was there anything wrong with his thinking?

Not at all!

Even a peak Apex was doing well for themselves if they maintained being an Apex after so many years. Therefore, while I may be weaker than my opponent, it shouldn’t reach the point of being defeated with one punch! And he also uses the sword!

Although it’d been a punch that defeated Li Hao, a wave of sword intent had spontaneously suppressed his aura and mind intent. That was the manifestation of a sword cultivator! Various thoughts ran through the young man’s mind as he drooped with dejection. C’mon, he’d easily killed an Apex replica! His confidence was shattered!

He set one reluctant foot in front of the other and inwardly cried to himself. He still wasn’t free of this nightmare!

Li Hao sped straight to the city lord manor. Director General Wang was the best!

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The city lord manor.

Director General Wang had returned to his post and was jauntily seated in a casual manner. He seemed to be in high spirits and even smiled when Li Hao came through the door. Although his face was enclosed by the golden armor, the young man could sense the smile.

It was certainly a sardonic smile! Damn it!

“What... level is that commander?” Li Hao couldn’t help but ask.

“Not much of a level, he’s not that strong,” laughed the director general. “He’d only just set foot into the Immortal level that year, but he improved quite quickly and reached peak Immortal when the great silence was upon us. To be honest, that’s nothing worthy of note!”

Peak Immortal?

“Are all division leaders this level of strength?” Li Hao mumbled. Didn’t you say last time that they were Apexes?

“Of course they aren’t,” laughed Director General Wang. “Immortals are usually reserve commanders, but you know that’s under normal circumstances. They aren’t during special occasions. Your division leader was due for a promotion that year, then unexpected events delayed that from happening.”

Alright then! That was depressing! No wonder he had the right to confer military titles upon others. It meant that while he was nominally a division leader, he’d long since taken over the duties of a reserve commander.

Peak Immortal placed him on par with the bramble rose? The commander had said that the plant spirit needed to bow its head when it saw him. That was true—this was a major personage of the Battle Heaven Army. Skystar Town was on a lower ranking to begin with.

“It’s just peak Immortal. Do you have that right, director general?” Li Hao asked again since he couldn’t rest easy. “How much strength does he have left?”



What do you mean just peak Immortal?? Director General Wang wanted to roll his eyes at the question.

“How much strength he has left depends on whether his mental strength has increased over the years, or weakened in the great silence. The stilling of core origin dao may not have impacted him that much...”

“Oh?” Why not? Li Hao didn’t understand.

“Because he’s...” Director General Wang suddenly stopped speaking with a cough. “Nothing, let us move onto other topics.”

Li Hao was skeptical of the sudden change and looked at the director general. The latter had just been issued a hefty warning—damn if that guy isn’t overbearing!

Why had he been issued a warning?

Because the guy’s dao wasn’t that of pure core origin either. All methods led to the same dao, all became one in the body, Li Changsheng was the only one beneath the heavens! [1]

But that was only in the beginning. After that, the Eternal Sword Sovereign wasn’t the only one in the world. All methods led to the same dao!

The soldiers saw limited effects from the dissipation of core origin dao since all daos led to the same destination and not everyone pursued core origin dao. This branch in particular had very weak bodies. At times, Director General Wang wondered if the Li clan had influenced modern humans too much. Their bodies were so weak!

Who knew?

Back in the day, Silver Moon Territory revered the Li clan as their leader. Perhaps the Sword Sovereign's dao was so domineering that it affected the entire world. It wasn't as apparent before the great silence, but quite apparent afterward.

Countless thoughts ran through the director general's mind. It was also unknown how much strength that one in the army retained. He was a tough nut to crack. There weren't many who'd awakened to begin with and this one didn't like to talk. It made for lonely days in Battle Heaven. He sat in his office from day to night—it'd been tens of thousands of years!

"Then is the director general an Apex or Immortal?" asked Li Hao, breaking into Director General Wang's thoughts.

"Me?" the man chuckled. "Why do you want to know?"

"No reason, I'm just curious," Li Hao explained. "Because I've met Immortal level plant spirits, so I'm wondering if the director general of Security at a main city... is just an Apex?"

"Heh," snorted Director General Wang. "Don't ask about me, I'm just here to fill space. It wasn't long that I set foot into Immortal before everything happened and I am far less than your commander. Security is an inward facing agency, we don't fight external enemies. Otherwise, my rank is not a low one."

Someone who'd just set foot into Immortal? Then his strength should be less than the plant spirit. The plant spirits have been alive all this time and their physical bodies remained intact. None of these people had their physical bodies anymore.

"Don't think random thoughts," the director general said softly.

"Eh?"

“I haven’t read your mind, I can just make an accurate guess at your thoughts,” Director General Wang replied. “Don’t compare the powerhouses of the main cities with the plant spirits in the wilderness. Do not ever compare the heavyweights of the military with the monster spirits either! You must understand that in the New Martial age, human cultivators could fight three peers at once under normal conditions.

“Cultivation level is one thing, but battle strength is another. Humans conquered the world. Would monster spirits have come under our rule if we could not defeat monster spirits of the same level? Monster spirits have strong bloodlines and bodies, but what else do they have?” the director general snorted with laughter. “Nothing else! Whereas humanity has the strongest battle methods, weapons, commanders, will, and faith. That is why we were able to dominate the four cornerbacks back in the day and conquer the world!”

Li Hao sank deep into thought.

“That’s all there is to plant and beast spirits. You’d be quite mistaken to think you can handle heavyweights of the military after killing plant and beast spirits. You must commit to memory that if you meet with any New Martial military powerhouse—the kind that’s turned traitor—you must treat them as a higher level of existence when fighting them. You will be dead without a doubt otherwise!”

Li Hao bobbed his head up and down. So that was the case!

“And another point—there were many paths in New Martial, core origin was just one of many. There was another era before New Martial, that one trained weapons and the physical body. They were still unquestionably domineering without core origin dao! Of course…” Director General Wang thought for a bit. “They don’t seem to be present in Silver Moon Territory, are they?”

“Does the director general mean that these people were still very strong without core origin dao? That they retained peak condition?” Li Hao frowned.

“Not to that degree. After all, their physical bodies likely declined in the absence of energy. Only if their mental strength remained formidable would they stand a chance. Otherwise, they pretty much reached the end of the road when their bodies fell apart.” Director General Wang introduced more

of the situation back in the day to the young man. “Do you have more objectives at hand with your visit this time?”

“I’d like to try and revitalize General Pagoda.”

“Oh?” The director general was surprised. He took a look when Li Hao brought out a massive tree trunk. “The Golden Coconut is dead?”

“Ah, Director General Wang knows this plant spirit?”

“I do, it’s the guardian plant spirit at Security in Skystar Town. All of Security falls under my purview, how would I not know it?” chuckled the director general. “The Security of the eight main cities were higher placed than the one at Skystar Town and I visited the town a few times. I was familiar with the Golden Coconut, so... why have you killed it?”

“It supported the nine ministries behind the scenes and disturbed Skystar Dynasty. It should be killed!”

“Perhaps that should be the case from your perspective,” Director General Wang said slowly after a while. “But from my perspective... it is difficult to survive to present day...”

“They want to come to Silver Moon to devour all of you. Does the director general still think you’re on the same side?”

“.....” Director General Wang was speechless.

“I’ve been to the ruins and seen that those at Skystar Security are likely all dead. There is disordered core origin on the scene and only the Golden Coconut was alive. There aren’t even bodies to be found of the others.”

“Disordered core origin?” Director General Wang blinked and turned solemn. “Tell me what you saw there.”

Li Hao sketched out what he’d found at the ruins, resulting in prolonged silence from the director general.

“Did unrest seize Skystar Town? There is even disordered core origin... That means a large sum of powerhouses abruptly died on the spot...” sighed the man. “It looks like the town cutting off energy supplies back in the day might have had something to do with the unrest.”

Director General Wang looked at the Golden Coconut’s tree trunk with a smile. “This is a nice item that may really revive General Pagoda. It’s exceeded my expectations that you were able to come by it so quickly...”

“I have to thank the imperial palace guard for its help,” Li Hao chuckled. “It was so helpful to sever half of its core origin to create a replica.”

“Don’t tell me about that,” laughed the director general. “I cannot call the shots in this. Tell General Pagoda.”

Of course he understood the young man’s connotations, the lad wanted some benefits. However, the director general truly couldn’t make the decision. Li Hao fell silent with a wordless look.

#### Chapter 854: Another Promotion (II)

“I have another question, director general,” raised Li Hao. “Do you know Evenround Martial University? The dean of education there is a Saint level existence. He’s awake now—is he the only Saint level existence in Silver Moon Territory?”

“.....” Director General Wang paused. Another Gold Armor manifested in the next second.

“You say that there is still someone alive there?” came the Ninth Division commander’s aloof voice.

“That’s right!” Li Hao nodded. “The dean of education in black armor and with a cat head emblazoned on it!”

So he was eavesdropping all along! The heck man! You’re a soldier! Are these kinds of actions appropriate?

“Did he not withdraw with the army?” wondered the commander. “There aren’t that many people there and no civilians, it’s easy to fully withdraw from that spot. Why did he stay?”

“He... didn’t leave?” mused the director general. “Then...”

“Perhaps he ran out of time,” came a wizened voice in everyone’s ears. “The Star Gate closed in a hurry. He might’ve run into some trouble or was tasked to bring up the rear. Being one step too late was to be unable to leave.”

Li Hao listened quietly. It would seem that this dean of education possessed a high status.

“You said that unrest took place at Skystar Town?” The commander looked at Li Hao.

“Yes.”

“You can complete one of the three missions you undertook—the one of Skystar Town is considered complete. You can obtain your merits at Military Supplies.”

Li Hao recalled that it awarded ten thousand merits. To be honest, he didn’t think much of that sum anymore. It could be traded for one hundred thousand mysterious power stones or promotion to division leader. He didn’t have use for the promotion since he already had a set of golden armor. Its defensive capabilities... were acceptable. That was all. There was nothing of much use about it otherwise.

However, the young man recalled that the Voidbreak Incantation was ten thousand points precisely.

“Ah, there’s another thing,” Li Hao said after further thought. “Apparently the vice commander guarding the mine is still alive. He’s been carrying out his duties all this time and hasn’t let the bramble rose and others inside.”

“I see!” The commander didn’t care much about this detail.

“It’s good that he’s alive, but... what a blockhead!” laughed the director general. Li Hao blinked. Why did they say that? The vice commander was defending the mines even now, he was very impressive! He strictly adhered to his duties, but why did these two seem to think less of him for it?

“Since riots occurred at Skystar, something must have happened,” explained Director General Wang. “What was the point in standing guard over the mines then? Absolutely nothing! Just blow them up and go down with the enemy! What’s the point of putting himself through all this hardship for countless eons?”

“He plainly hasn’t comprehended the true spirit of New Martial! All of our large mines are equipped with explosive devices. He could’ve detonated them all at the same time and destroyed the entire island! It’d be fine if he died, but he’s still alive...”

The director general had nothing else to say.

“Being alive doesn’t mean that he’s a good guy,” the commander said coldly. “And there’s a very big issue with him not blowing up the mines! We would’ve sensed their destruction and known their fate. But with the mines remaining intact, we knew nothing about Skystar Town and missed out on the best timing to rescue them. Be careful if you run into him!”

Was that so? Li Hao came back to himself. So to these two, it was a dereliction of duty that the vice commander hadn’t blown up the mines. To be honest, he’d quite admired the man for sticking to his post until now. Was it wrong to steadfastly adhere to one’s orders?

And yet, this wasn't what those New Martial people thought. They felt that he should've gone down in a blaze of glory!

"Don't think too much, perhaps further unexpected events developed and he didn't have time to do so, or the explosives were sabotaged," comforted the director general. "All of that is possible. However, it is still a dereliction of duty if they were sabotaged. They were placed at the heart of the mines. Was he more worried about someone stealing the resources within?"

Fine then! There was nothing much to say to these ancients sometimes. They had their own judgment standard and way of conducting themselves. There were certain things that Li Hao could not understand.

None of them asked anything of the young man or asked why he'd gotten so much stronger. They could discern a thing or two, but didn't say anything. To each their own dao. Being able to improve was a testament of Li Hao's capabilities.

The commander likewise dropped the topic. "If you go to Evenround Martial again... please give my greetings to him. In addition, please tell him that..." the Gold Armor paused. "That the Battle Heaven Army is still at the ready and has not fully given up!"

Li Hao was confused why the message was phrased thus. He's much stronger than you guys, isn't he? But is he less resolved than you?

The commander didn't explain himself as he knew a thing or two about that one. This was a person with an eccentric personality and tended to veer toward the extremes. It'd taken him so many years to awaken and the state of the modern world was the first thing he saw. He might choose to give up entirely. That was what the commander wished least to see.

The two no longer discussed old events and brought up General Pagoda instead. "Can the Golden Coconut's tree trunk really revitalize General Pagoda?"

"It's hard to say."



“Let’s give it a try!”

“Um... it really was very hard for me to kill the guy,” Li Hao couldn’t help but interject. “I almost lost all of my people. If the general really does return, can...”

“Ask the general yourself.”

Li Hao fell silent with resignation. It hasn’t awakened yet, what am I supposed to ask? What if it says it didn’t agree to anything after it revives? What can I do then?

It was rather the old turtle who spoke with a trace of mirth, “Don’t worry, there will be benefits aplenty.”

Very well then! Li Hao wasn’t aware of the old turtle’s exact position in Battle Heaven, but it seemed very strong, so he would believe it for now.

“Then do I just shove the tree trunk at the general?”

“You can place it on the altar!”

Li Hao flew out without a word. The two Gold Armors followed him to the city gates and didn’t exit with him.

.....

Outside the city, where the altar was.

Li Hao gripped the massive tree trunk with some reluctance and wariness. “Li Hao of the Battle Heaven Army has brought the body of an Immortal for the general. Please awaken, General Pagoda!”

He placed the tree trunk bit by bit onto the altar. The altar was a marvelous construction as it took in the offering centimeter by centimeter, swallowing it at a very slow pace. It eventually picked up speed and the massive tree trunk started vibrating.

A loud rumble echoed by Li Hao’s ear and a ray of light seemed to dawn in the dim city. The rumbling grew bigger as the rest of the tree trunk was devoured!

Skies shook and earth quaked! An enormous pagoda tree’s branches started trembling as the entire world was illuminated.

.....

At the same time, Silver Moon province.

Light sparkled in various places as ruins trembled.

White Moon City.

Director General Zhao’s expression shifted and he quickly vanished, reappearing at a certain spot and darting inside. He emerged in a massive city! Several Gold Armors floated out of it and a towering tree shook outside the city. It only lasted for a split second before the tree stopped moving.

A Gold Armor on the city walls spoke in a trembling voice, “That... that seemed to come from Battle Heaven... Has General Pagoda revived?”

“Battle Heaven?” The director general’s eyes widened. “Don’t you guys say that the guards of the main cities are so strong that it is exceedingly hard to revitalize them?”

It would require at least one hundred million mysterious power stones! Silver Moon might not revive a single one even if the province bankrupted itself.

The Gold Armor was lost and shook its head. “I don’t know, but those ripples were immense. If someone has awakened, it must be a powerhouse from the eight main cities! The eight main cities were in charge of protecting all of Silver Moon. Only with one of their guardian spirits awakening would the ripples reach us...

“Perhaps General Pagoda really did revitalize!” he said with agitation. “But how is that possible?”

Director General Wang wasn’t aware either. His thoughts didn’t stray to Li Hao because someone surnamed Huang didn’t mention the matter to the director general at all. Huang Yu had promised Li Hao that he would keep their operation a secret and had gone directly to the military barracks upon his return. He didn’t meet with the director general.

“Then... is this development good or bad?” frowned Director General Wang.

“That will depend on whether the system of Battle Heaven remains intact.” The Gold Armor snapped back from his joy. “The guardian spirit will not rebel if the system remains intact, but it will be difficult to say if it is the only one alive.”

“Someone told me before, the one that I mentioned to you guys, that there is a Gold Armor in the city lord manor still...”

“Then there shouldn’t be much of a problem there.”

“But...” frowned the director general.

“Don’t worry, even an awakening will not change much because the general will have only just revitalized. There might be only new advantages to us with this change and no drawbacks. Of the eight main cities, Battle Heaven was the strongest apart from the Sword Sovereign. There is another exalted emperor’s heritage left there. Although Battle Heaven inflates its importance, there is indeed a direct connection to that exalted emperor...”

There was a difference in strength between the eight main cities—Battle Heaven was stronger than the rest, for example. It bore a greater background and was on par with the city of the Lis.

“I’d like to take a look around Battle Heaven.” Director General Wang could not rest at ease.

“Go on!” answered the Gold Armor. “Take a look inside if you can enter. If you can communicate with them... tell them that we are still here!”

“Alright!” Director General Wang swiftly vanished, a thousand thoughts churning in his mind. Who could revitalize a plant spirit of a main city? That was one hundred million mysterious power stones!

Paying forth so much in resources only resulted in awakening the other. One had to offer more if they wished for more gains. One could revive four or five plant spirits with this level of resource—there was plenty to gain there.

Who’d done it?

Li Hao?

Was that kid that rich?

Although he'd apparently gotten a lot from his last operation, didn't they say that it'd all been turned to Water of Life and used to strengthen those around him? How else could he become peak six elements so quickly and take He Yong and the rest with him?

### Chapter 855: Another Promotion (III)

At the same time.

Ruins throughout the lands shook in reaction.

Skystar City, underneath the palace.

The bramble rose transformed into a humanoid shape and looked to the north with confusion.

"How strange..." it said after a long while. "There was a ripple through earth and sky just now, and it seemed to come from the eight main cities..."

The rose was too far away from the disturbance to sense clearly, but there was a faint perception of... someone awakening? The bramble rose frowned. It would be enormous trouble if one of the main city plant spirits revitalized. Hopefully, that wasn't the case!

The rose's frown deepened when it glanced at the entrance to the mines in the distance. The second awakening was yet to start and it couldn't leave the ruins at the moment. There was no meaning in sending out a replica as it couldn't withstand any of the true powerhouses in any other ruin. It was also highly risky to sever sufficient core origin for a replica.

They could only hope for the second awakening to take place as soon as possible.

Damn it! If it wasn't for the others constantly standing in its way, the second awakening would've happened long ago. Unexpected developments often took place during long nights.

.....

Red Moon headquarters.

Ying Hongyue was cultivating when his eyes snapped open. The scarlet cloak materialized in the air. “Something’s happened at Battle Heaven. Li Hao might have gone back and supplied a large sum of energy. General Pagoda might have awoken!”

“Where does he get so many treasures from?” Ying Hongyue frowned. “Although the various factions supplied quite a bit at their last attempt to kill him, you also said that the revitalization of the Evenround Martial powerhouse depleted most of it. He’s been furiously cultivating all this time, so where does he get so many mysterious power stones from?”

“I don’t know.” The scarlet cloak was equally nonplussed. “Thank goodness that the disturbance wasn’t great. Even if General Pagoda has awoken, it will barely be conscious. It would be frightening only if he’s revitalized to the point of activating Battle Heaven. Right now... it’s almost a nonexistent possibility!

“We need to eliminate Li Hao as soon as possible,” it insisted nonetheless. “He will bring us a lot of trouble otherwise. He’s been working towards the revitalization of the entire city this entire time. Battle Heaven is ranked number two among the main cities, it was on par with the city of the Lis back in those days!”

“Eliminate? How should we do that?” Ying Hongyue scowled at the difficult task.

“You can do it!” offered the scarlet shadow.

Ying Hongyue sneered. “I can do it? How?”

The scarlet shadow was silent again. “You do not need to be on guard against us, you should focus on eliminating Li Hao first! Our goals are the same. Haven’t you been hiding your strength throughout our partnership because you’re worried that we’ll take action against you?”

“You think too much!”

“It is a threat to both of us if Li Hao is permitted to develop like this,” cautioned the scarlet shadow. “Don’t forget, you’re his biggest enemy and you always have been. Be careful of raising a tiger that turns on you! Certain matters are open knowledge between us, be careful of being tripped up by matters of your own making!”

‘I don’t know what you’re talking about!’

“If you say so,” laughed the scarlet shadow. “Perhaps you have your own plans in mind, but the danger is borne by us all. Just make sure you don’t regret your actions in the future!”

The scarlet entity vanished. Ying Hongyue stared in its direction with a menacing look. They certainly had strong intelligence networks! It knew of the changes in Battle Heaven as soon as the disturbance occurred. He hadn’t even received word yet!

Li Hao...

Ying Hongyue looked to the north with a deepening frown. The kid certainly had a few tricks up his sleeves! How had he done it?

The man sank into deep thought and laughed eerily after a long moment of silence. Then let’s give it a try.

.....

Battle Heaven.

The massive city rumbled as it expanded. A towering tree that had stilled in silence emanated a faintly aureate glow. Overwhelming presence gradually manifested in the surroundings, exerting so much pressure that Li Hao had trouble breathing.

He backed out of the tree hole and tilted his head back, finding himself able to see the skies overhead now. A tree with slightly sparse branches radiated with new life. A leaf larger than a person grew out of its branches. Mental strength swept in all directions. It didn't hurt Li Hao and simply spread in the environment.

"It's been so long!" sighed an astoundingly aged voice. "I'm alive again, old turtle!"

A faint glow erupted from the Turtle Pagoda and the old turtle's voice drifted back, "Indeed, it's been so long that I thought you would not be able to revive ever again."

"I really did almost die. I likely wouldn't have made it to today if I didn't absorb some energy twenty years ago... There are too many bastards in Silver Moon and they took too much. Entirely too little made it to me..." the big tree said slowly.

The other places were well enough, but there was a large group of powerhouses and plant spirits in Silver Moon that were all very strong. They fought each other for the initial wave of energy as they all wanted to survive. That drained all of the energy that flourished in the province!

A middle-aged, old man appeared on the massive tree trunk. Despite appearing middle aged, he had a head of white hair while the rest of his face wasn't that old. He walked out of an illusory haze from the trunk and stopped in front of Li Hao. "Well done, little fellow!"

Li Hao grinned, slightly on the alert, but quickly responded, "Li Hao greets the general!"

"Well done!" the old man responded, but didn't mention anything else. He looked at the city with an emotionally laden sigh. "So I see Battle Heaven again... I thought the opportunity would never come upon me ever again."



Another old man materialized in the air. He was bent over with a walking cane; a turtle shell would complete the look.

“Congratulations, Ole Pagoda!”

“To both of us!” The white-haired General Pagoda smiled. “But I haven’t recovered enough, I’ve just barely regained my sentience. There is no more energy to absorb in Silver Moon... ai!”

“That’s good enough!” chuckled the old turtle. “You’re better off than the others.”

“That’s true enough.” General Pagoda inclined his head and glanced at Li Hao. “Troop Leader Li has accomplished a magnificent feat. I am honored to be part of it.”

“This was only to be expected!” Li Hao beamed radiantly. “It was just the killing of an Immortal plant spirit. My people almost all died, but we still succeeded. It’s fine that we suffered some injuries, we’re all part of the Battle Heaven Army! It only cost us one or two hundred million mysterious power stones and thousands of drops of Water of Life. Some people were also left with injuries that they cannot heal from, but giving up even our lives would be worth it to review the general!”

“.....” The premises quieted down. General Pagoda didn’t say a word and the old turtle immediately vanished. This has nothing to do with me.

“I do understand the hardships within...” The old man inclined his head after a while.

“It’s fine, it’s really fine!” Li Hao shook his head. “This is as we should do! The general doesn’t need to stand on ceremony! The imperial palace guard actually asked to devour the Golden Coconut’s trunk and said it would give me twenty thousand drops of Water of Life in return. But I didn’t find that appropriate!”

The young man frowned. “It takes three hundred stones to coalesce one drop, twenty thousand drops would just be six million stones. That’s the equivalent of sixty million modern stones, but it takes one hundred million to revive the general. That would be my loss!

“Not to mention, I am a Battle Heaven troop leader, not the imperial palace!” Li Hao finished with another wide grin.

“.....” General Pagoda said slowly, “I have just awoken and find that my strength may not match my ambitions...”

“That is true and completely understandable,” Li Hao nodded. “The general should rest more!”

Is this a matter of resting more? thought the old tree.

“I’ll go kill a few more Immortal plant spirits to fortify the general with. They’re all bad guys, so there’s no need to think too much about this. As for the danger... there’s nothing to it. The general doesn’t need to sever a core origin replica for me, that would damage you too much!”

“.....”

Did I say anything about that? Did I say anything at all?

“But we get injured too easily and need Water of Life for that,” Li Hao continued. “We can recover faster that way and collect more for the general. I hear the imperial palace guard say that the stronger plant spirit seniors can convert Water of Life faster and at a cheaper rate.

“It requires three hundred stones for one drop. Apparently someone of the general’s level only needs one hundred. I still have a couple million energy stones at hand—about three million. Can the general help me convert them to thirty thousand drops? I’ll summon various powerhouses when I leave so we can hunt down foes together!”

“.....” It was so silent that everyone’s ears rang from the lack of sound.

“One hundred stones a drop... and you say you heard that from the imperial palace guard?” General Pagoda said slowly after a very long moment.

“That’s right!”

“The little fellow who came last time?”

“Yes.”

“Is he still at the imperial palace?”

“Correct.”

“Go back and tell it that I will visit it when the world can accommodate us.”

“.....” Li Hao coughed dryly. “Then... I shall pass on the message when I return.”

“Give me the energy stones,” General Pagoda said with resignation. “My consumption rate is not that low. If times were as before, you could have as much Water of Life as you wished. But it is truly out of the question for the moment as my own reserves have run dry. Give me three million energy stones, I can give you ten thousand drops in return, but I will need three days.”

The times were different and it was nearly starving to death itself. There was nothing it could offer to Li Hao. Although it wouldn’t retain much energy from the stones, the passage of energy through

its body would more or less moisten its parched trunk. That would be a kind of revitalization as well.

Doesn't that make you the same as the little tree? Li Hao looked down on General Pagoda. Well, the general was much faster. It could coalesce ten thousand drops in three days! It would take the little tree thirty days for the same amount, or it could operate day and night to produce Water of Life, but that would consume mysterious power stones at three times the regular rate.

Mighty were the strong, alright. They converted mysterious power stones at a much faster rate.

Li Hao poured out all of his stones, unconcerned that the pagoda tree would keep them for its own use. He had more than thirty million mysterious power stones on hand. Some could be kept for the little sword—although Stellaris wasn't quite willing to eat them lately. Still, having some was better than none at all.

#### Chapter 856: Another Promotion (IV)

All of the mysterious power stones disappeared when General Pagoda waved his hand. He was rather resigned to see Li Hao still looking at him. A man's ambitions were not far reaching when he was poor, and this same were a tree's ambitions. After some thought, he sighed and commanded a crystalline branch to fall off of the massive tree.

"This is the tree heart formed out of the core essence of my primary body..."

"It's just a regular branch!" The old turtle's voice could be faintly heard on the wind.

General Pagoda looked at the city and then at Li Hao.

"I don't mind!" coughed the young man.

"....." General Pagoda was well and truly resigned. "It is indeed a regular branch, but it's still different! There's not much use to this item, but if you carry it on you, it will be a deterrent to

regular plant spirits that you meet. So long as they are not higher ranked than me, the natural difference in ranks will somewhat constrain their power.”

“It’s not as useful as your dog’s bloodline power!” The voice came again from the city.

Li Hao looked innocently at General Pagoda. I didn’t say nothing, it came from that one!

The pagoda tree wanted to smite the one in the city! It fell silent for a bit before continuing, “That’s fine, it can also nourish your physical body...”

“It’s less useful than one hundred drops of Water of Life.”

“Get out here!” General Pagoda flew into a rage.

The old turtle glanced outside the city from its position on top of the pagoda and couldn’t be bothered to respond. It piped in with commentary because it couldn’t stand how miserly the old tree was being. Its penny-pinching ways couldn’t be tolerated! It would be the shame of all Battle Heaven!

.....

The old tree mused silently for a very long time. I’ve only just awoken, what do you want me to give him? I don’t have anything to give!

Li Hao didn’t suggest anything and merrily accepted the branch. “There’s no need to mind any of this, general. We do not seek a reward, we did all of this voluntarily!”

Do you really not want a reward? The old man projection from the tree wanted to roll his eyes. Then why do you keep saying all this and keep looking at me? What’s with that expectant expression?

“You’re not a division leader yet, are you?” he finally said after prolonged thought. “With the changes in the world, Battle Heaven’s city lord and commander-in-chief are not in residence. I and the old turtle can make some decisions on their behalf.

“I hereby promote you to leader of the Eleventh Division of the Reserve Defenders in accordance with wartime regulations! This will be valid so long as the old turtle agrees and certifies it with the Black Tortoise Seal. You will be able to commandeer ten thousand sets of armor from Military Supplies and issue orders according to your own will. The command comes with ten sets of silver armor and one hundred sets of bronze armor. Internal assessments can be delayed until further notice given that we are at war...”

Li Hao’s jaw dropped.

“Is this... appropriate?” came the old turtle’s voice.

“Why not?” the general said faintly. “He revived me. Is that not a deed of great merit for Battle Heaven?”

The old turtle was at a loss for words. How are you turning it around on me? It wasn’t a grave matter, but that this promotion might cause some problems.

“Guardian, it is not out of the question to promote Li Hao to the Eleventh Division leader,” the Gold Armor commander said coldly at the gates. “But if anything untoward develops, it is the guardian who is at fault!”

The position of division leader didn’t matter much; giving Li Hao the authority to recruit more Black Armors was inconsequential. But giving him authority over denoting more Silver Armors—troop leaders—was very problematic.

“I will take full responsibility!”

“Then I have no opinions otherwise after receiving the guardian’s assurance!”

“I don’t have an opinion either...” stated Director General Wang.

“It doesn’t matter even if you do,” chuckled General Pagoda. “Security’s jurisdiction does not include the military.”

“.....” Director General Wang swallowed the rest of his words. Will you listen to yourself?

Li Hao ducked his head and swallowed hard. This was not bad! Ten thousand sets of black armor, ten sets of silver armor and one hundred sets of bronze... Heh, not bad! Not bad at all! He knew that the old tree was poor, but this was an unexpected surprise. I’ll take it!

“My thanks to Sir Guardian!”

“Go to the barracks,” General Pagoda didn’t say anything else. “Come find me in three days!”

The human projection vanished and Li Hao immediately ran back to the city. The Gold Armor on the city gates had vanished, the old turtle remained silent, and Director General Wang was quite dejected. So Li Hao really had become a division leader... there was no helping it!

The three troop leaders on the city gates looked at each other with some envy.

“Favoritism... we don’t need to be bothered by it!” transmitted one of them. The other two looked at the one who’d spoken. Seriously now?

Even if he made use of nepotism to get to his position, we have to acknowledge it all the same. The key thing was, he's been promoted! Although the Eleventh Division no longer existed and was merely an empty shell, the young man was still a division leader in title.

Golden armor manifested over Li Hao and he swiftly moved toward the city gates. He looked mirthfully at the three troop leaders. "Then I'm off to the barracks, gentlemen..."

"Greetings to Division Leader Li!" The three snapped salutes, as did the thousands of Black Armors on the ground.

Li Hao roared with laughter and vanished, but quickly returned a few seconds later. "I forgot to say just now that we should all have a drink later..."

"Greetings, Commander Li!" The group saluted again.

"Don't be like that, at ease, everyone!" Li Hao said humbly and vanished again. The three room leaders were speechless and nearly went up a wall when the young man came back.

He's gone crazy, hasn't he?

"Greetings, sir!"

"At ease. I just remembered that the seventh troop leader gave me some advice before. My thanks! Let's talk about it later!"

The three watched him leave before looking hesitantly at each other. Their heads drooped when he didn't come back this time. He might've heard their transmission. This guy did all that on purpose!



In the barracks, the commander of the Ninth Division was equally at a loss. After a long moment, he said to a Red Armor next to him, “Throw him out if he comes again!”

“Understood!”

The doors to the Ninth Division headquarters slammed shut. The commander couldn’t be bothered to see Li Hao’s smug face. Out of sight was out of mind.

Meanwhile, Li Hao plainly didn’t care and sped straight to Military Supplies. What a pity he hadn’t been made the commissioner of Military Supplies. He’d be able to throw his weight around the deputy commissioner who didn’t treat him with much respect!

.....

Military Supplies.

Li Hao was here again. Zhang Liang had already heard General Pagoda’s words and was already morose for it. The irritating fellow was a division leader now, the rank of a general. Wasn’t it nice to have a backer? Even though their army commander, reserve commander, and city lord were gone, he was still promoted when he ought to be.

“He’s here...” Zhang Liang mumbled to himself, his vat of jealousy overflowing.

“Hello, Deputy Commissioner Zhang!”

“.....” Zhang Liang’s moroseness deepened. Now you know I’m a deputy commissioner? People change when they come into power! You’re such a petty person, pah!

“Deputy Commissioner Zhang, I’ll mention to General Pagoda later that Military Supplies needs a commissioner,” Li Hao chuckled. “Someone has to take over the position, right?”

“Greetings, commander!” Zhang Liang snapped to attention and was full of energy. “What do you need, sir? Zhang Liang is at your service!”

“.....” Li Hao remained chuckling merrily. Now there’s a real enthusiast of bureaucracy. I’m not. I just want some benefits and don’t care about titles. This one though, won’t be happy unless he’s promoted.

The young man was so joyful that he was in an even better mood.

“Give me ten thousand sets of armor!” He’d already taken five thousand before, so strictly speaking, all he needed was another five thousand to round out his numbers. But... who said what he requested before was part of this count?

“The newly designated Eleventh Division is so poor and lacks everything!” Li Hao sighed. “It’s all up to you, Deputy Commissioner Zhang. Now that General Pagoda is awake and has time, I can chat with it. It won’t be hard to accomplish this with wartime regulations in effect, right?”

“Ten thousand sets of armor, did you say?” the deputy commissioner quickly responded. “Not a problem! The reserve defenders have their own reserve armor that hasn’t been in use for many years. There’s no use for them anymore now that everyone is dead. I’ll go fetch it for the commander. Is there anything else you need other than the armor?”

“What else are the other divisions equipped with?” Li Hao smiled.

“Energy cannons, do you want them?”

“What are those?”

“Um... weapons that can fire on cities...”

Energy cannons? Why do they sound like our city annihilation missiles?

“I do! How many do you have?”

“Regular divisions are equipped with a company in charge of energy weapons. That makes for ten cannons and one thousand rounds of ammunition.”

“Just ten?” Li Hao’s eyes gleamed. “Mine’s a new division, isn’t there an allowance made for a certain scrap rate?”

“.....” Zhang Liang no longer had teeth or his would be aching by now. Where did you learn this concept? He mumbled, “Yes... then... I’ll assign twelve cannons and twelve hundred rounds of ammunition to your division?”

“Yep, Deputy Commissioner Zhang is the best!”

Zhang Liang didn’t know what to say, but at least this was all within the rules, so it didn’t count as him opening a back door for Li Hao.

“What else are regular divisions equipped with?”

“Under normal circumstances, a division’s functionality is to be taken into account when assigning equipment other than armor and energy cannons. But there are many parts of the city that are inactive and some that we do not have in storage, so I’ll speak of what we do have.” Zhang Liang quickly ran a mental checklist. “A newly designated division is allotted ten signal towers that can expand the range of communication by tenfold. That’s ten times five hundred kilometers, not just

fifteen hundred kilometers... With these towers, communication can range over five thousand kilometers and each troop is equipped with one.”

Signal towers! This was great. Li Hao quickly nodded rapidly.

#### Chapter 857: Luxurious Equipment (I)

“Other standard equipment includes ten inner world tents. They can expand or contract space and instantly enlarge. Their maximum capacity is one thousand people and they possess extremely strong defensive capabilities. They’re suited for resting in all sorts of environments and can transform into cubes when not in use to transport military supplies.”

“How are their defensive capabilities?” Li Hao’s eyes lit up.

“Effective against anything below Apex!”

Li Hao beamed. Hot damn! That impressive? So this is a real division. I was just playing house before! I didn’t get anything in terms of equipment.

“What else?”

“A flying ship for aerial battles, a sea cruiser for navy battles, an earth driller for underground battles...”

“And how do they work?” Li Hao swallowed hard.

“Those are specially assigned and thus are naturally used to great effect. The flying ship is most suited for battles in the sky and can even enter the void for void battles. The sea cruiser can intimidate and repel sea monsters. They’re forged with the essence blood of monster spirit powerhouses. The earth driller burrows through five hundred kilometers in a split second, but a large sum of energy stones are needed each time. The equipment is meant to hunt down Apexes with!”

Li Hao continued to swallow hard.

“There’s also a void shield that can obscure the void and block attacks from that direction. It prevents Apexes and above from reaching through the air! Another is the void chain that can seal off a radius of five hundred kilometers and prevent Apexes from breaking through the void to escape...”

Li Hao’s jaw sagged at this point. All of the equipment was aimed at Apex and above. That meant that the Battle Heaven Army only fought Apexes and above in their time!

My heavens! Such a strong army of millions was gone, just like that! And this was only Silver Moon Territory. What of the main world? Could the ancient civilization really have fallen? It was so hard to believe!

One division could absolutely overcome an Apex or even Immortal. It was absolutely festooned with all sorts of machines for war meant for Apex and greater. This was terrifying!

“Do you have all of this in stock?”

“Yes!” Zhang Liang nodded, but explained with difficulty, “I can... give you all of them, sir, but there are no corresponding reserves of energy to go with them!”

“What do you mean?”

“These weapons consume a lot of resources. The city has run out of energy ever since contact ceased with Skystar Town. We only have a little bit of cultivation energy stones left and their sum is very, very little. That is insufficient to power the commander’s equipment.”

“Do they consume a lot of resources?”

“A lot!” Zhang Liang was the very image of cooperation now. “According to the standards of your age, any weapon will require at least one hundred thousand mysterious power stones for activation. This is the bare minimum! You must throw in even more if you’d like to continue operating.”

Li Hao opened and closed his mouth, shocked by the response. The hell? I only have thirty million or so stones left and gave almost all of them to General Pagoda. There’s only a few million in my storage ring now. Are mysterious power stones that useful??

“Then... aren’t they useless without energy stones?”

“Pretty much... but not entirely. The tents, for example, are still usable. Their defensive capabilities just greatly decrease compared to their full abilities...”

So basically what I said. Li Hao wanted to vomit blood. These were money hungry monsters! How much did the Battle Heaven Army have to expend in energy stones if it brought its full strength to a battle? No wonder the army’s strength greatly declined when its energy reserves were exhausted.

As dismaying as these revelations were, he still wanted the equipment. All of it had to come into his hands!

“Anything else?”

“No.” Zhang Liang shook his head. “This is it. There was more before, but their shelves are empty. I’ve given you everything we can.

Alright then! Li Hao was quite regretful. Although they were costly to operate, these were all great treasures.

“Then... what else would be allotted to a division if this was still back in the day?” he couldn’t help but ask. So much had been given already, was there more?

“Temporary transportation passages, emergency voidbreak talismans, and the Forbidden Sea compass... These are all standard for first rate troops.”

There was no need for further explanation! Li Hao could tell what those were from their names alone. How nice!

“This is for a first rate troop, the true core troops are equipped with other treasures such as dominating weapons that can erupt with Saint or above level power under the direction of the army. The first troop of Battle Heaven was equipped with one. Us reserve defenders don’t have one.”

Fine then, Li Hao was numb to it all. One could do whatever they wanted when they possessed sufficient money!

“Ah, I received ten thousand merits for accomplishing a mission. What do you think I should trade it for?”

The Voidbreak Incantation?

It existed at Evenround Martial as well, but Li Hao wasn’t qualified to trade for it. He’d gone with The Accounts of Evenround instead. He wasn’t qualified to further trade for core technology, but could do so in the army. But was there anything other than this that they could trade for?

As the head of Military Supplies in everything but name, Zhang Liang should know more than him.

“Ten thousand merits?” Contrary to before when Zhang Liang threw over a booklet, he treated Li Hao with utmost respect this time as Li Hao was now a person of great note. He hoped for the young man to get him the position of Commissioner of Military Supplies!

He racked his brains before some thoughts finally revived in his memories.

“I can give you three choices, sir,” he said after a long moment. “They’re all suited for you. The first is the Voidbreak Incantation. If you’d like to focus on the sword, sir, then this is a very suitable choice for you!

“The second is that of a war puppet. This is not standard issue. It can house one thousand soldiers and connect their blood qi. Utilizing a formation will instantly activate the puppet and an eruption of strength. The level of strength is based on soldiers. It can bring Immortal level battle strength to bear under the strongest conditions! Of course, that will require one thousand ninth rank soldiers to do so.”

Ninth rank... that’s six element Arcanus. One thousand six elements to kill an Immortal... forget it. Li Hao shook his head. It was very tempting, but where was he supposed to gather so many six elements? Not to mention, his group killed an Immortal by themselves.

Granted, the deputy commissioner was undoubtedly speaking of one at full strength and peak condition, not a partially crippled one like the big tree. On Li Hao’s side, whether it was the little tree, Li Hao, or Deputy Zhou—they were all stronger than ninth rank cultivators. It was a different notion.

“Third...” Zhang Liang looked at Li Hao and suddenly stopped talking. The young man blinked. Keep going!

“Commissioner Zhang?” What’s number three?

“Will you... really talk to General Pagoda about my promotion?”

“Of course!”

“You’re not lying to me?”



“Of course!”

Zhang Liang debated silently for a while. “Then... please swear on the honor of the Lis, sir, that you will speak of my matter!”

“Is my reputation that bad?” Li Hao rolled his eyes.

“Um... I don’t know, sir.”

“Is the third choice that important?” the young man had no choice to ask.

“Mmhmm!”

“I swear on the honor of the Lis that I will talk to General Pagoda about promoting Zhang Liang. However, I do not promise success!”

“That’s fine too!” Zhang Liang nodded. That was just as well. It didn’t matter if the attempt succeeded. It was just the worst feeling to have no one remember him. “Third, I recommend that the commander trade for a weapon forge if neither of the two satisfy you.”

“What is that?” Li Hao blinked.

“Where do you think the million soldiers of Battle Heaven Army obtain their armor, repairs, and spare sets from? Battle Heaven Army does have a complete military system and a weapons factory, but most of our equipment is standard issue and not personalized. They are mass produced.

“The weapon forge comes from the Weaponry department. It was overseen by an exalted emperor in my time and there were one hundred forges operating in the factory. The armor is cast from one

mold and one forge could produce one hundred sets a day at most. We could craft ten thousand sets of armor per day at our peak!”

Li Hao was tongue-tied at the explanation. An assembly line for ancient armor?

“This item normally isn’t traded for and is jointly overseen, but it consumes a lot of energy and materials. Battle Heaven started running out of resources in the late stage. Authorization for usage was relaxed in order to encourage everyone to overcome the difficulties by themselves. Some division leaders and reserve commanders could trade for one so that they could make repairs in a timely manner when they were outside or fighting.

“They can still be traded for, authorization has not been retracted yet.”

“Then... is it difficult to use?” Li Hao asked excitedly.

“Not at all, it’s very simple to operate. The most troublesome part of it is the materials required.”

“What materials?”

“Just some of the usual ore—such as gold, silver, bronze, and iron. Old armor can be used if you have none of that. Didn’t you give me the armor from other troops before? All of that was actually dumped into the forges...”

“The key to the armor lies with the operating system. Is that system automatically installed into newly crafted suits of armor?”

“Yep, it’s all one format. You just need to connect it to the Battle Heaven Army system,” Zhang Liang responded. “You are in charge of a new division, sir. There is a lot more authorization available to your golden armor now. You can find it all with some study and activate new sets of armor by yourself.”

Li Hao hastily nodded. He'd wanted to trade for the Voidbreak Incantation, but isn't it better to trade for this instead? He could create one hundred sets of armor a day... with enough materials, of course.

But I don't lack armor! How would I? The royal family has thousands of Black Armaturas and they're all going to be mine. I'll throw them all into the forge. Waste not want not! I won't have to come here and trade for it everytime. That's too much of a hassle.

Of course, one hundred sets is still too little. It's best if I can get one thousand sets a day. I'll create ten thousand as soon as I eliminate the Black Armaturas.

#### Chapter 858: Luxurious Equipment (II)

The key to Li Hao's decision lay in the fact that he also needed the weapon forge more. He couldn't just rely on the Battle Heaven Army for all of his armor needs. If he could study it and replicate his own equipment, that would be for the best. The key to a division was exercising control over a weapons factory.

"Then I'll take the weapon forge!"

"I thought that the commander would choose this one!" Zhang Liang wasn't surprised. This was a very useful item. "I'll fetch the items right away. Don't forget about me, commander..."

Li Hao rolled his eyes. This guy was seriously a bureaucracy fanatic.

"I won't!"

Zhang Liang entered the warehouse and spent a lot of time before emerging. He handed multiple storage rings to Li Hao. They were crammed full of armor and a variety of armaments and supplies. Li Hao swallowed hard, he was rich! So these were the benefits enjoyed by true division leaders!

His troop leader position before had been too fake. It came with nothing! There wasn't even a salary, just a set of armor. Li Hao had been thinking that the old tree was just giving him a nominal honor, but now it looked quite worthwhile. This was so much better than hundreds or even one thousand drops of Water of Life!

This was a treasure that couldn't be purchased with money!

Li Hao was overjoyed and didn't stay long. He exchanged a few more words with Zhang Liang and promised again that he would raise the request before leaving.

.....

It would take three days for the big tree to finish converting all of the Water of Life. Li Hao wasn't planning on remaining in Battle Heaven during this time. Time was of the essence for him these days.

He left without bidding farewell to Director General Wang and the others. Upon seeing the crystalline tree at work when he exited the city, Li Hao asked, "General, Deputy Commissioner Zhang of Military Supplies has been acting commissioner all this time. The army commander and city lord are absent and there is no one to officially install him in that position. I hope that the general can do so."

"....." The old man projection manifested from the tree trunk and stared at Li Hao. Had the kid gotten addicted to requesting favors to the point of asking for promotions for others?

Regular guardians would not be involved in matters like these unless it was an emergency situation. Zhang Liang's condition was not an emergency. The general wanted to refuse outright, but Li Hao coughed.

"General, I hear that there are still thirty-six auxiliary plant spirits that are yet to revitalize in the city. They need large sums of energy as well. Although the general is awake again, that was barely managed. I will seek out more treasures to help the general recover..."

The general swallowed his original response. This kid is getting interesting!

“I’ll bring it up with the old turtle, this is but a small matter.” He nodded with a smile.

“Thank you, general!” Li Hao beamed brightly. See, I took care of it for you! “But why... haven’t I seen the thirty-six auxiliary plant spirits yet?”

“They’re almost dead,” sighed General Pagoda. “They gave up absorbing their own energy in order to save mine. I brought them into my core origin sea at the last possible second. They are still alive so long as my core origin remains. However... they will all die if I fall silent.”

Li Hao snapped to attention with profound respect. These thirty-six plant spirits had given up their chance of survival in order to let this one survive. This was very worthy of respect.

“Then I will revitalize them as best I can!” Li Hao promised. “Ah... what level of strength is the general and those auxiliary generals?”

“Me?” laughed the old tree. “Not worthy of mention. All of the guardian plant spirits of the eight main cities are of the Saint level. The auxiliary plant spirits have varying degrees of strength. The weakest is only Apex and the stronger is Immortal.”

“Then the ten of Skystar Town are all Immortals...” Li Hao frowned. Were the plant spirits of the main cities weaker? There were even Apex level ones! As for the old tree being a Saint, that was to be expected.

“It’s normal, there’s more energy there, so they improve faster,” laughed the general. “The... plant spirits there... are also... wilder...”

Li Hao didn’t understand.

“They were recruited from the wilderness,” General Pagoda had to be frank. “So they are indeed strong, but they lack certain things. Our side comes from a right and proper heritage, we’re even from the same clan. The thirty-six auxiliary generals, for example, are all of the pagoda tree bloodline.

“Our coordination is naturally stronger when it comes to synchronized action, joint defenses, and setting up restrictions. But since our origins are simple, that makes for varying levels of strength. One clan will not produce that many powerhouses...”

Plant spirits have clans too?! Li Hao started.

“Beast spirits have families and bloodline heritage, so why not plant spirits?” The pagoda tree smiled as it seemed to know Li Hao’s thoughts. “The origins of my family are respectable as well. There are several major clans among the monster spirits, ones such as the Monster Spirit Envoy and the Sea Pacification Envoy.

“First among us is the one at the imperial palace. That the imperial palace guard could gain sentence and take up its position has much to do with the august personage at the imperial palace.”

Li Hao nodded, this he knew. He’d once seen a wretched old man in the little tree’s memories who fed a fruit to the little tree’s father.

“Second among us was the first tree since the dawn of time. If the first did not benefit from the imperial majesty... then that tree would’ve been ranked behind this one.”

The first tree to ever exist! Okay that was pretty awesome.

“Third is our bloodline. Our ancestor was partnered with a supreme powerhouse. They brought order out of chaos in New Martial and turned to the light from the darkness, swearing loyalty to the Human King. Therefore, we were the first plant spirit to serve the Human King in the New Martial era.”

Li Hao understood. That was quite an impressive background, no wonder the pagoda tree was so proud!

“Then are there plant spirits at my family’s ancient city?” He couldn’t help but ask. Where was his clan’s city, anyhow? He had no inkling of a clue even now. Where was the Li family city out of the eight main cities?

General Pagoda paused before responding, “There should be some... but I don’t know if they’re still there.”

What did that mean? Were they dead?

The general coughed gently. It was only now that Li Hao realized they were communicating via speech and not mental strength. This was different from the other plant spirits.

“The Li clan... is the Sword Sovereign’s territory. We didn’t visit there in regular times, but did know that there was a sword tree there before. It didn’t talk much to us. The Sword Sovereign is a... a bit ah... um...”

Um ah what?

“A sword tree?” Li Hao asked curiously.

“Yes, a sword tree. It was a bit eccentric and didn’t like to come in contact with us. Therefore, I don’t know either if it left with the Sword Sovereign in the final critical moments or stayed. Or maybe it’s already dead.”

Alright then, a cranky and unsociable tree. Sounds difficult to get along with.

“Then can I go look for my family’s city?”

“That would be difficult,” General Pagoda answered outright. “It isn’t that we’re keeping it a secret from you for you to supply more resources to Battle Heaven, but that the Li city was the heart of the eight cities back in the day. After the world changed around us, it might’ve moved to the Star Gate. In that case, it would be almost impossible to find now. You might be able to after the second awakening, because the city might’ve entered the broken space...”

“Do you mean the void that is created when an Apex rips through space?”

“Yes.”

Alright then! Li Hao sighed. That was impressive and entirely out of reach. Of course, this might not be the truth. It was a conjecture. Meanwhile, the young man daydreamed that he might be able to outright become the city lord after entering the city.

The pagoda coughed gently as his thoughts ran wild. “Ah, you should refrain from seeking out the ancient city.”

“Why?”

“If there is anyone alive in the Li city, you might be locked up when you go there and beaten everyday!” sighed the general.

“.....” Li Hao paused. What the hell?

“You’re too weak and you cultivate a motley array of mismatched methods. The Lis focus on the sword. They’ll see you as forgetting your origins and force you to train exhaustively with the sword. Dying from too much training is a very normal occurrence.”



That crazy? Li Hao was speechless. Although he didn't fully believe what he heard, it still sounded terrifying. On second thought, he wouldn't look for his family's city for a while.

"Ah yes, General Pagoda, I have the mallet of the Hongs. I might know where their land of heritage is. Can I go with the mallet to access it?"

"You better not for now!" the general hastily responded. It hadn't known about this beforehand. "The opening of each one of these places causes a certain change in the world. These lands furiously absorb energy and might cause an explosion at the Skystar mine. That would immediately cause the second awakening!"

"I've only just awoken and if the second awakening occurs ahead of time, Silver Moon will be hard pressed to resist the traitorous soldiers or plant spirits from all sides..."

"Is that so?" Li Hao's eyes shot wide open. "I have an enemy who also has weapons of the eight families. Will he cause the same effect if he accesses a land of heritage?"

Ying Hongyue!

"Correct! Of course, the caveat is that he is able to use the weapon and find its corresponding location. He will be able to accomplish that then."

Ying Hongyue could use the weapons, but it remained to be seen if he knew where to use them. Li Hao was familiar with the Hong family location and he had their mallet. Had Ying Hongyue not discovered that stone door before? Or did he know of it and feel that there was nothing in it for him to bring about the second awakening?

After all, setting that into motion ahead of time didn't mean any benefits for modern humans. They were too weak and wouldn't improve that swiftly after the second awakening. It was only now that everyone was stuck at the same bottleneck was a second awakening a good idea.

The possibilities ran through Li Hao's mind—he didn't want the second awakening to take place now, so he had to stop Ying Hongyue. Since he'd asked everything he wanted, there was no time to waste.

"Then please take your time, General Pagoda. I will return in two days." Li Hao swiftly left after bidding the general farewell.

The tree relaxed only after the young man left. The little fellow was difficult to send on his way!

### Chapter 859: Luxurious Equipment (III)

The old turtle's shadow formed after Li Hao left. "Well?" it asked with a smile.

"What?"

"What do you think about this person?"

"It's hard to say," General Pagoda responded softly. "Do you also want to open the Star Gate and leave this place?"

"Everyone's of this mind, but I don't really care," laughed the old turtle. "You likely wish to leave too, right?"

"It might not be safe around the Star Gate!" said the general. "It's a very dangerous undertaking, let's wait and see."

The old turtle nodded and said nothing else. They might really have to depend on Li Hao to open the Star Gate.

“Once the second awakening begins, the motley array of things out there will probably want to swallow me and you,” said the old turtle upon further thought. “You haven’t awoken by much. Can you withstand them?”

“They want to devour us?” sneered General Pagoda. “We’ll detonate Battle Heaven if they really back us into a corner and take them all down with us! An explosion of the eight cities will sink Silver Moon Territory. We can all perish together!”

“Are the eight cities... still willing?” sighed the old turtle.

General Pagoda looked at it.

“Communication was cut off between the eight cities and Skystar Town suffered a sudden attack. Large numbers of powerhouses spontaneously died. Did nothing really happen with the eight cities? Remember that the eight form a large Eight Trigrams Suppression Formation! How could contact so easily have been lost? How could we have so easily lost our control over the world?

“It would be more understandable if something had happened to one of the cities and it voluntarily terminated the formation. There were one hundred thousand troops stationed at Skystar and it wasn’t a main city. Who could’ve toppled it so easily?

“What do you think, Ole Pagoda?”

General Pagoda quieted down and he shook his head. “I don’t want to suspect any city or any family. The eight major families were personally denoted by the Human King himself! The Sword Sovereign was an exalted emperor who personally oversaw Silver Moon Territory. I cannot fathom anyone turning in betrayal. They were the Li, Zhang, Zhao, Liu, Wang, Hong, Zhou, and Zheng clans. Apart from the Wangs and the Lis, who do you think could’ve turned traitor?”

“I do not know. It’s hard to say, unable to be spoken of, and I dare not speak of it.” The old turtle shook its head.

The eight families were factions directly under the Human King's command and sat in residence in this world. They were deeply connected to various exalted emperors. To suspect the families would be to suspect the emperors beyond them.

But some matters had crossed everyone's minds. Who could instantly extract the energy of an entire world? Who could sever the connection to core origin? Who could instantly break through the Eight Trigrams Suppression Formation?

Who could do all that apart from the eight main cities?

Their formation had been laid down by supreme powerhouses. Only when their inner core was breached and communication completely cut off could the connection be broken. The pagoda tree didn't want to think about it and wasn't willing to think about it.

But some matters... had to be considered.

They hadn't known about Skystar Town before; they did now. Even disordered core origin had appeared, which indicated that large sums of powerhouses had been slaughtered on that spot in a split second. Skystar's defenses would not be so lax, not unless one of the eight cities led troops there in the name of reinforcements and destroyed the city from inside!

At the same time... the armies of New Martial wouldn't choose to turn traitor, would they? The Human King and others were still present then and lines of communication were open. Who would be that crazy?

Even if they were crazy, the people beneath them wouldn't join their leader in such insanity. The old turtle couldn't make sense of it no matter how it thought about it!

"Perhaps... someone suspects us,"

it suddenly said.

“How can that be?” The general paused. “Battle Heaven was personally named by that one.”

it was the Exalted Blood Emperor who’d bestowed the city its name. The Li clan would revolt before the Wang clan did! Of course, they couldn’t say that as the Sword Sovereign would cut down the speaker with one stroke.

“That would be normal,” chuckled the old turtle. “The one that your ancestor was partnered with... often drew suspicion.”

Oh for... cursed the old tree. This was ancient history, why was this being brought out again? However, the turtle made sense. Its ancestor’s partner was a renowned fairweather supporter in New Martial. He joined whichever side was winning. Dignity was of no consideration to him. Although he eventually survived all of the conflict with his formidable strength, no one dared mention him again. His reputation was clearly heinous.

“This is the city of the Wangs and not that one’s. What does it have to do with me?” General Pagoda set the matter aside. The wise knew that he knew nothing and the weak felt that he knew it all.

“I’m concerned that others will misunderstand,” laughed the old turtle. “Forget it, so what if they do! It’s enough to keep the possibility in mind, we don’t need to mention it much.”

“Do we need to tell the little fellow from just now?” That would prevent Li Hao from running around and into another main city. It would be troublesome if anything untoward developed.

“We don’t need to do so, they might not do anything to him,” answered the old turtle after some debate. “Even if they still exist, surely they don’t want to be trapped here forever. Nothing is important so long as the Star Gate remains closed! Li Hao is the best choice to open the gate.

“As for the Ying Hongyue he speaks of... the traitors from yesteryear might be behind him. Ying Hongyue is not of the Lis, after all, the Li clan is the primary choice to open the Star Gate. That one is much more like backup.”

“How do you know he isn’t of the Lis?” General Pagoda asked faintly. “Can’t the clan have two heirs?”

“But Stellaris is with Li Hao,” laughed the old turtle. “It doesn’t matter even if the other one is, Stellaris is the core. The possibility you speak of does exist though.”

The tree and turtle chatted with each other. They’d been still and silent for so long that they had quite a lot to say. As for Director General Wang—the turtle couldn’t be bothered with him. That guy spouted a lot of nonsense and couldn’t hold a proper conversation.

.....

At the same time.

Li Hao paused when he walked out of the ruins. He saw someone in the distance, someone equally surprised to see him. It was Director General Zhao!

The young man immediately approached the other. “What is the director general doing here?”

“Has General Pagoda awoken?”

Li Hao frowned slightly.

“The disturbance was great, so great that some ancient powerhouses could sense it,” sighed Director General Zhao.

“Yes, the general is awake again. They can sense it?”

“Yes,” nodded the perplexed director general. “How... did you do it?”

“Through money!”

No shit! I know you spent money, but where did you get that much from?

“Did General Pagoda... just revitalize... or has the general been awake all this time?”

“What?”

“Nothing,” coughed Director General Zhao. “The general probably did just come back. The disturbance was great enough for that.”

Li Hao frowned slightly. Now those were interesting words. So the director general suspected that the general had long come back to life? What did he mean by that?

Director General Zhao was behaving oddly on this occasion; the old man didn’t dare speak of his suspicions either. Some thoughts were commonly held surmises, not the truth. Great trouble might arise if he spoke of it.

Li Hao was nonplussed to see the old man continue to wait. “What does the director general want to say or know?”

“Nothing, it’s just that... you can’t put all your eggs in one basket,” coughed Director General Zhao. “Next time you have sufficient resources to revive someone, you can consider another powerhouse. Do you know what I mean?”

“One from a main city or a minor city?” Li Hao raised a brow. “Or a powerhouse by themselves in the ruins?”

“A main city!”

“Which one?”

“.....” Director General Zhao stayed quiet for a bit. “The Zhao clan.”

Sword of the Lis, blade of the Zhangs, fists of the Zhaos... The Zhao clan were ranked third according to the folk song. Li Hao assessed the old man. So he'd found the ancient city of the Zhaos? Was he an heir of the Zhaos? One of the eight families?

“I thought the heirs were all dead apart from me.” Li Hao said after a long moment.

“All of us couldn't have stayed put in Silver City after thousands of years,” sighed Director General Zhao. “Some branches moved. But in this age, we can no longer tell who is from the main branch and who is from a side branch.”

It had been too long and there was no longer any meaningful difference between them. Plainly, he was admitting that he was from one of the Zhao branches.

“Does Ying Hongyue know about this?” frowned Li Hao.

“No, his goal was the eight families in Silver City, not the entire dynasty. If that was the case, he would've killed everyone long ago...”

“Then did you know that Ying Hongyue was butchering those of the eight families?”



“No,” Director General Zhao shook his head. “There’s no need to lie to you about this. To be honest, I hadn’t even known that the eight families still existed. I learned about some details later on, but didn’t think that they would all be in Silver City.”

Such a small city had long been forgotten. If it wasn’t for Li Hao and Ying Hongyue stirring up trouble there, no one would pay attention to it.

“Silver City’s folk song has been passed on for many years, does no one know about it?” Li Hao’s frown deepened.

“Who else would know about it other than Silver City residents?” the director general smiled ruefully. “Therefore, Ying Hongyue is more like than not from Silver City! And born and bred as well. How would he know about it so clearly otherwise?”

That made sense to Li Hao. So Ying Hongyue was a Silver City local! He ignored the rest of the director general’s words. Don’t put all my eggs in one basket... that’s right. I’ll give the little tree some more next time. As for the Zhao city, well, I’m not familiar with it. Do it yourself if you want to revitalize it!

The old turtle and General Pagoda were thinking too much in worrying that Li Hao would be hoodwinked by another city. He had some ties only to Battle Heaven. If it wasn’t for repeatedly weighing up the pros and cons, he wouldn’t easily revive anyone in Battle Heaven either.

He hadn’t forgotten that the current mess in the world was all because of these ancient old farts.

## Chapter 860: Observing the Characters Again (I)

“I know now, Director General Zhao. I’ll head to the city of the Zhaos next time and revitalize the guardian plant spirit there. I can’t right now though, I’m out of resources. I’m so poor that I only have the clothes left on my back!” sighed Li Hao. “This one eats too much! It’s devoured even my cultivation resources. I have a huge headache about this!”

The director general didn't press the point. Seeing that Li Hao was ready to leave, he said, "It's best if you don't provoke Ying Hongyue for the moment. Seven element Arcanus is another notion entirely. That level is too strong! You might not be fully aware..."

"I am!" Li Hao nodded. "It's very strong and on par with the Apex level. Don't worry, I know. You don't need to be worried, director general."

Director General Zhao felt a headache of his own develop upon seeing how perfunctory the young man was being. Are you sure? But with Li Hao's attitude, he wasn't at liberty to say much more.

"I really do," Li Hao emphasized upon seeing the man's expression. "If the director general isn't at ease about me, are you similarly worried about Deputy Zhou and the others? They'll stop me from doing anything."

That's right! Director General Zhao relaxed a bit more.

"Then... you won't be clashing with the nine ministries or any other faction, will you?"

Li Hao regarded the director general speechlessly. Do you take me for a kid? Why are you so worried about me? I'm super dependable!

"Don't worry, director general. I won't take any risks unless I'm fully confident in my chances."

"That's good, that's very good." Director General Zhao nodded.

"Then I'll be on my way, director general," said Li Hao. "I'll go back to Silver City for a look before directly returning to Skystar City."

"Mmhhh, then be careful..." The director general still wasn't reassured and transmitted as the young man prepared to go, "Don't fully trust any of the ancient existences or any of their people! It

was a complicated situation in the ancient civilization as well. You can borrow their strength, but you can't entirely rely on them!"

"I know!" Li Hao nodded and vanished on the spot.

Director General Zhao shook his head to see the young man run off so quickly. The young were so impatient! He took another look at Rift Canyon. Was Battle Heaven reliable or not? He didn't brashly venture inside, but left after looking a while longer. Although they partnered with these ancient existences, one still had to be on their guard.

.....

Li Hao was already far removed from the scene. He had his own thoughts regarding Director General Zhao's concerns. It would seem that the director general had his wits about him—at the very least, he saw things more clearly than the nine ministries or royal family. No wonder he was undisputed in his position in Silver Moon.

The nine ministries and royal family depended on the plant spirits. Silver Moon, on the other hand, possessed very little Water of Life. Director General Zhao might not even want to revive the ancient plant spirits even with sufficient mysterious power stones on hand.

Lack of plant spirits was no issue since there were plenty of ruins throughout the province. Who knew how many ruins there were apart from the eight main cities? A random one that Li Hao had stumbled onto produced the imperial palace. Surely Director General Zhao and the others had excavated more than just the city of the Zhangs over the years?

And yet, he rarely heard Silver Moon citizens mention plant spirits. The only ones they did were the ones sleeping in the main cities.

.....

General Pagoda's revitalization caused quite the disturbance. It was felt on all sides and caused panic and consternation. It was a grave matter if a powerhouse of the eight main cities awoke. One had to keep in mind that all of the plant and beast spirits in the land were waiting for the second awakening. That was the signal for them to quickly enter Silver Moon and devour the province's powerhouses.

Those plans were based on those powerhouses being unable to awaken or had their revival delayed. Once they were revived, they were easily Immortals or Saints. How could anything contend against them?

.....

The Lin family's secret location, not far from the City of Supernaturals.

Lin Hongyu was ashen-faced as she stood in a tiny ancient city. A redwood tree rustled its branches.

"Milord, has the pagoda tree of Battle Heaven come back to life?" she asked.

"Most likely," the redwood tree answered ponderously after a period of silence. "You say that Li Hao is incomparably domineering and killed my replica in a split second. That itself is evident that his strength is on par with an Apex. Perhaps... he's killed similar replicas before, or even the primary body of weaker plant spirits.

"Outsiders might not know how he revived the pagoda tree, but you and I do."

"Does milord mean that... he's killed other ancient powerhouses as well?" Lin Hongyu paled even further.

"What do you think?" asked the redwood tree after more silence. "You say that he previously summoned the martial masters of the world to Skystar City, wanting to eradicate the Wind and

Cloud Pavilion. However, it was yet to appear before the martial masters went on their ways. Do you think he brought together all of those powerhouses just to demonstrate his might?”

Enlightenment abruptly descended upon Lin Hongyu. That was right! Li Hao had summoned Silver Moon martial masters to congregate at Skystar City. Everyone thought he was going to move against the Wind and Cloud Pavilion. When the ranking came out, however, Li Hao was not number one. The martial masters left after that, so the world thought that the young man’s actions had to do with the Arcanus Ranking.

The martial masters had likely dispersed after they felt that the faction wasn’t targeting Li Hao.

“So milord means that he had different goals then.” A light sparkled in Lin Hongyu’s eyes as she carefully turned the matter over in her mind. “He took down the Ministry of the Judiciary—the ministry should’ve been supported by a plant spirit of Skystar Town. That Li Hao so swiftly summoned his reinforcements... was perhaps to move against that one?”

The woman was quick-witted and quickly came to certain conclusions. However, they were so horrifying that she paled even further. So Li Hao had emerged from that campaign and then rushed to Silver Moon to revive General Pagoda.

It was easy to connect the dots—the plant spirit backing the Hus... was likely... dead!

That was impossible to believe! Lin Hongyu almost couldn’t believe it. The plant spirit was dead!

“Of the ones at Skystar Town, the bramble rose is the strongest,” pronounced the redwood tree. “It’s almost a Saint. The rest are of the Immortal level and cannot have recovered much due to heavy depletion of energy. However, neither are they targets that can be killed by regular Apex—your seven element Arcanus. Seven elements only comes close to Apex—there is a division of weak and strong among Apex as well.

“If Li Hao really can kill the plant spirit... that means he has other trump cards that he is yet to play.” The redwood tree was equally stunned and dazed by this conclusion. It was impossible to

believe. “What do you think of his demand for you to lead everyone to surrender instead of pursuing you to the end?”

It was Lin Hongyu’s turn to be silent, she said slowly after a long while, “He thinks too much. I am not the sole voice in the City of Supernaturals. It is the joint endeavor of twelve ancient aristocracies. Although I am the city lord, I am just one of the spokespeople.”

The redwood tree didn’t say anything.

“The outside world is currently unaware of the particulars of his strength,” Lin Hongyu murmured to herself. “Only we know and have speculated that he killed the plant spirit behind the Hus. Milord, how... do you think I should decide?”

“Skystar Town is of one system with plant spirits guarding ten locales,” mused the redwood tree. “Nine remain with the death of one. If news of this is spread, they will know that he can kill one by itself, but not all nine together. He will be dead the next time he sets foot into a ruin!”

They could spread word of Li Hao’s capabilities. Of course, people might not believe him, but their words could be verified. Skystar Town was one system, so certain investigations could be made without leaving the ruins.

Lin Hongyu, however, quieted down. “What if he doesn’t enter the ruins and stays outside? He didn’t chase me down and permitted me to run. Perhaps he’s thinking that the moment news leaks is the moment he marches on the City of Supernaturals. Perhaps he cannot defeat the plant spirits of Skystar Town, but what of you, milord?”

The redwood tree stilled with surprise.

“Milord cannot leave a ruin and the other plant spirits cannot enter. They dare not enter, and they will not enter. There are powerhouses backing all of the ancient aristocracies, but they are separate forces. If Li Hao can kill one Skystar guard, can he not kill milord?”

The redwood tree swayed like it'd suffered a vital blow. Indeed, if Li Hao could kill one, could he not kill a second? Not to mention that it'd already suffered the grave loss of one replica. It'd only just entered Immortal in its time and wasn't too strong.

Who could save it if it lost again? These ruins were no longer its home ground, Li Hao could kill it even here.

"So what you mean, Hongyu..."

"Li Hao is improving too quickly," sighed Lin Hongyu. "His rate of advancement is incredible, and that is not even the key. The key is that he can deploy strength beyond six elements prior to the second awakening. Not even backlash from the void can contain him. This is highly unusual.

"Now that he's revived the pagoda tree at Battle Heaven, I suspect that the city has decided to fully support him." The woman paused and said hesitantly after a long while, "Milord... what will happen if I decide to throw myself under his banner?"

"....." The redwood tree didn't have an immediate response. Its original thoughts were to share the news so that the plant spirits of Skystar Town would kill Li Hao. But Lin Hongyu responded that the young man might not care and just refuse to set foot into the ruins again. Who could kill him in the outside world before the second awakening?

On the other hand, plant and beast spirits residing alone in a ruin were in the most precarious position after news spread. They were solitary and without reinforcement. These locations had seemed like good residences before, but now they felt more like cages.

Once powerhouses that could kill them appeared in the outside world, they wouldn't have any place to run to. They would be churned to pieces by the void if they ran out of the ruins. If they didn't flee, they would have to bear the brunt of Li Hao's attentions head-on. Could they do so?

Throwing ourselves under Li Hao's banner...

The redwood tree weighed up the pros and cons. Danger would decrease immensely, but unfortunately, it hadn't supported Li Hao to his present position. Battle Heaven stood behind the young man, and possibly other plant spirits. He'd given Water of Life to his followers a very long time ago, prior to General Pagoda's awakening.

Of course, it could be that the auxiliary plant spirits of Battle Heaven had awakened beforehand. No matter what, it demonstrated that there was more than one plant spirit standing behind Li Hao. If they joined him, they would be ranked further back.

Another issue of note was that the plant spirits outside of Silver Moon had their eyes set on the province's powerhouses and heritage.