

## Star Gate 861

### Chapter 861: Observing the Characters Again (II)

“Milord, we need to make a decision as soon as possible!” Lin Hongyu asserted as the redwood tree deliberated. “Otherwise, the City of Supernaturals might become Li Hao’s first target once he frees himself from the tasks at hand. The Lins will be an even bigger target!”

“I’ve been wondering how strong the rest of his people are when Li Hao is so strong. Can he alone stand against seven element Arcanus?”

“The twelve families of City of Supernaturals wanted to imitate Skystar Town and build a new cultivation sacred land of the new era. I thought I could do it, but then later realized that there are too many powerhouses from Silver Moon. It’s impossible for us to become a sacred land...”

Skystar Town, the sacred land of New Martial. It was said that countless powerhouses walked out of it and more than one exalted emperor. Some of them even took the ultimate step and were domineering among exalted emperors. Any of them could easily erase Silver Moon.

But now... Lin Hongyu had already felt pressure from Li Hao’s swift rise. Her emotions grew even more complicated after accidentally encountering him. There was no way to fight him in the outside world, and possibly still no way to fight him inside the ruins.

“The other eleven families of the City of Supernaturals want to replace me,” Lin Hongyu continued. “They speak of partnership, but ultimately wish to interfere with the city’s operations. It’s not only them, but my own family that doesn’t fully listen to me either...”

The swift rise of a woman was a hard pill to swallow for an ancient martial aristocracy like the Lins. Her absolute show of strength quieted the internal voices, but the other eleven families also possessed their own powerhouses. One person alone might not be a match for her, but she was unable to stand against their combined forces. Almost all of them were backed by ancient plant or beast spirits.

The support of beast spirits was less valuable than that of plant spirits as they could not supply Water of Life. At the same time, beast spirits themselves were incredibly powerful existences.

Lin Hongyu found herself rather dejected. She'd been confident before since she'd already contacted the Jade Flute and Sunset Mountains. An alliance of these three main factions would give her strength to fight those who'd entered seven elements.

But with Li Hao also part of these ranks... she was terrified. Ying Hongyue and the others had their own schemes in mind, so they weren't that impulsive or unpredictable. Li Hao was much crazier than the three great organizations and had only one thought in mind when it came to those that didn't get along with him—kill!

He didn't give his enemies any time!

The three great organizations might not have attacked her if she'd run into them. They might speak of partnership or offer some casual conversation. They wouldn't have attacked without another word.

With Li Hao, however, he attacked without offering a single word of greeting! He didn't care about one's background or backing. Their enmity was not that great as it'd always been the City of Supernaturals coming off worse for the wear after their clashes. The young man had suffered no damage.

The redwood tree debated for a long period of time before heaving a long exhale. "You can give it a try."

It acquiesced as it'd guessed that the plant spirit supporting the Hus was dead. It knew that it was in a very precarious position. Unless the second awakening began right now, there was no way to confine Li Hao.

"He wants the City of Supernaturals, but the city does not belong to my family alone," Lin Hongyu said slowly. "There are one million supernaturals in the city and they are a melting pot of good and bad. It is not up to my say whether or not he can have the city.

“He probably wants a whole and intact City of Supernaturals, not one million supernaturals fleeing through the land and causing havoc in their wake. If anything untoward happens to the city, it will easily spook our denizens to flight...”

“We stand a chance of placating the supernaturals in the city only if we instantly suppress the other eleven families, including some of our own fossils. Only through that course of action can we preserve the complete City of Supernaturals...”

The redwood tree was rather surprised.

“You... want to... provide a token of loyalty?”

“What else?” Lin Hongyu sighed. “Does Li Hao care about a peak six elements? Does he want only one of them? He isn’t even willing to talk partnership, he just wants submission. Otherwise, it’s all the same to the Hu plant spirit who it associates with. Why did Li Hao just kill it instead of striking up a new collaboration?”

The redwood tree stilled when it heard these words. It hadn’t considered the matter from this angle! So this was the case! That one just wanted complete submission.

“Powerhouses abounded in New Martial and we willingly bowed our heads to the era. How dare a kid fresh behind the ears want us to serve him...” Anger bubbled up in the tree. These were likely the thoughts of all ancient heavyweights.

Submit?! What cultivation level was Li Hao at? Did he have the right to accept their capitulation?!

“Milord, this is no longer New Martial!” Lin Hongyu said calmly. It was the calendar of the Star Era now.

You guys are just struggling for life. While Li Hao wasn't that strong and in fact, any of the surviving ancient plant and beast spirits could kill him, what did that matter?

Lin Hongyu had fully awoken to the true nature of the situation. She looked at the redwood tree flying into a frenzy and said slowly, "Unless milord is confident of immediately starting the second awakening now, this world might belong to the Lis!"

The Lis!

The redwood tree deflated and said dejectedly, "Belong to the Lis... Then... that's not unacceptable. It belonged to the Lis then and it belongs to the Lis now..."

That was acceptable for no reason other than identity. The heir of the Lis. Silver Moon had belonged to the Lis back in the day. New Martial belonged to the Fang clan, but Silver Moon was the domain of the Li clan. Of that, not even the Human King would deny. This place had nearly been the Lis feudal estate, but that naturally wasn't spoken of to outsiders.

This state of affairs was also a sort of compensation to the Sword Sovereign. As for why compensation was needed, no one knew.

There was a saying back in the day that the Sword Sovereign's cultivation path was convoluted. The Human King wished for the Sword Sovereign to take another step forward and truly become invincible. Hence, he gifted this minor world to the Sword Sovereign in hopes that the latter could create his inner world and supplement some internal flaws that way.

That was all that the lower levels knew. The details were beyond their grasp. The Sword Sovereign had disappeared and the Star Gate was closed. It didn't seem unfathomable for an heir of the Lis to once more oversee the world.

"What do you want to do, Hongyu?"

“The world is in chaos and unease is creeping into the City of Supernaturals,” said Lin Hongyu after some thought. “I’m thinking... of holding a conference of the twelve families! Not only that, but the wandering cultivators of certain strength within the city can also attend! I’d like to rebuild the cabinet of governing!”

“All those who are strong enough can participate. We will rule through superior force. Twenty powerhouses will be accepted for the cabinet. Does milord think that the twelve families and heavyweights of the city will participate?”

“So you... really do want to capture them in one fell swoop. Can you suppress them, however?”

“We... can go to Li Hao!” Lin Hongyu paled again when she thought of their earlier clash. She’d almost died to just one sword stroke! She’d never felt so much terror before in her life—his cold aloofness was a complete disregard of everything. The look in his eyes was terrifying.

“Perhaps he doesn’t care about me, but the haphazard fleeing of one million supernaturals is enormous trouble. No matter how strong he is, he doesn’t have a thousand copies of himself to keep order in all directions. The world will truly be thrown into chaos then.

“Therefore, there is use for the City of Supernaturals at present. At the very least, we stabilize one million supernaturals in one locale as opposed to randomly starting fires throughout the land. Whether he wishes to be king or emperor, an intact Skystar Dynasty is what he wants.”

Otherwise, the Silver Moon martial masters were so strong that they could outright occupy any of the nine ministries. And yet, that wasn’t one of Li Hao’s courses of action. He’d simply passively struck back on a few occasions.

The redwood tree didn’t say anything upon seeing that Lin Hongyu had come to a decision. She possessed a very high potential and a variety of governing methods. How else would she be able to bring the other eleven families to heel and become lord of the City of Supernaturals at thirty years old?

Unfortunately, the redwood tree hadn't foreseen that Lin Hongyu would be so decisive. Just one setback was enough to cause the genius who'd wanted to establish a sacred land to abandon her dreams and join Li Hao's camp. This was beyond its imagination.

There were many powerhouses in the City of Supernaturals and the twelve families. It had been difficult to create such foundations and, strictly speaking, they stood more of a chance to reign supreme than the nine ministries or royal family.

Of course, that came with their share of internal problems, but it was surprising all the same that she chose to give up so easily.

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Li Hao was naturally unaware of the conversation taking place in the Lin family secret location. He never imagined that a major faction would decide to join his side. Even the Inspectorate wasn't a necessity to him.

Although there was an agreement in place that the Inspectorate would choose to join Li Hao's banner after killing the Hu plant spirit—Chen Zhongtian had blatantly expressed that—the young man still didn't care. He was too affected by the Human King and could not forget the scene he'd witnessed that day.

"I told you guys to commit suicide, but you wouldn't do so. You force me to waste my energy instead. In that case, I'll kill you all..."

Indeed, this was an unforgettable declaration for Li Hao. What recruitment or suppression count for? The Human King wanted his enemies to commit suicide—if they didn't, he would slaughter everyone on their side. This kind of domination and killing intent was unparalleled!

Therefore, Li Hao was inspired in his actions against the City of Supernaturals. He would kill all of the leaders and send the rest of the supernaturals to the fields. It was a good idea that Hong Yitang had proposed. Any who resisted would be killed. As for surrender... that was an off the cuff remark.

The City of Supernaturals was very strong. One million supernaturals, twelve aristocracies, multiple plant spirits... they plainly wanted to take over the world or make a play for the throne. It was a joke that he wanted Lin Hongyu to surrender in ten days. The other families wouldn't agree even if she did. It was because of their high numbers that he'd yet to take action against them or even delineate rules for the city.

Currently, his target was the Wind and Cloud Pavilion. They had a treasure that could measure strength—that was what he urgently needed.

### Chapter 862: Observing the Characters Again (III)

Li Hao returned to Battle Heaven after traveling around Silver Moon for two days. He was here for more than the Water of Life this time.

After greeting General Pagoda, he went to the city gates. He'd been too weak on his first visit to gain much from studying the two characters of 'Battle Heaven'. The young man wanted to make use of this rare visit to comprehend them again.

The two large characters hung dimly over the city gates. Li Hao forced out a drop of blood and melded it into them. The projections of General Pagoda and the old turtle manifested in the air—so did the Ninth Division commander as well. They watched Li Hao from a distance away.

The old turtle was surprised by the actions, but didn't say anything. Li Hao had acted extremely carefully last time, so no one had sensed anything. This time, he openly demonstrated that he wanted to meditate over the characters.

"Those are characters left by the exalted emperor." General Pagoda was rather surprised. "Is he trying to gain more enlightenment through them?"

No one knew. These two characters were very sacred to Battle Heaven. The Wang clan that oversaw the city hadn't dared to touch them. The city's greatest treasure were these two characters. It was a treasure of the ink left by the Exalted Blood Emperor on a rare visit.

When the eight main cities were established, the city of the Lis was filled to the rafters. Although the Wangs had some relationship with the Exalted Blood Emperor, the connection wasn't that close. No one anticipated that the exalted emperor would visit in person on that day and personally bestow the name of Battle Heaven for the city. From then on, Battle Heaven became a faction directly affiliated with an emperor.

If Li Hao had dared touch these characters back in the day, he would've been crippled for his audacity despite being a member of the Lis. He would have to be the Sword Sovereign's son to avoid that kind of punishment.

But the times were no longer what they were. The Lis were still present and only Director General Wang from an auxiliary branch was left of the Wangs. He stood in the distance, simply watching and showing no signs of expelling Li Hao.

If the director general didn't stop the young man, then neither would the rest of them.

.....

Li Hao didn't know what his audience was thinking of. He'd incorporated his blood into the characters—they turned into the illusory realm once more. A different sight presented itself this time; there was more than one person.

One person wore a longbow on his back and a bloody blade at his waist. Li Hao had seen him before. Although he couldn't clearly make out the man's features, he knew that it was the exalted emperor behind Battle Heaven. His name seemed to be the Exalted Blood Emperor.

There was more than one eminent person present—there were many. The Exalted Blood Emperor was only one august personnel, not all.

Li Hao turned in another direction, at where sword intent agitated. The sword intent that would destroy everything reminded him of someone—his ancestor, the Li Sword Sovereign!



There was another person whose spear intent shot straight for the heavens. Li Hao's heart quailed; it bore hints of the Broken Will Spear. It was so powerful and unbounded that it might be the investor of the spear method that had been passed on to Hou Xiaochen.

There was another person who exerted unbounded pressure despite the untold generations that separated them. Instead of being seated at the head of the table, he was sat below the Exalted Blood Emperor. His physical body seemed unparalleled and could crush the void through its existence alone. Who was this?

There was another shadow at the head of the group that seemed very ordinary. It exerted no pressure whatsoever.

Only five people were present, but they made Li Hao's heart palpitate. Were these... all exalted emperors? The one at the head was the ancient Human King, right? What were they all doing here? What kind of enlightenment would he attain this time?

He couldn't see their faces clearly, just some of their accoutrements. For example, the longsword that might be Stellaris was being firmly gripped by the Sword Sovereign. He seemed ready to erupt in a sword thrust at any time.

A voice echoed in Li Hao's ear, one that seemed to travel from the distant past. It was the Human King's voice.

"I move not against people if they do not offend me! I care not for the vastness of the universe and have no desire for far-flung journeys. Long and arduous journeys do not interest me. Hundreds or one thousand years is required for every trip through the universe. One thousand years pass in the span of a single head turn, life is fleeting, and seas change into mulberry fields!

"I am not the Sun God with a drive to see the multiverse. And yet, these lords of their worlds go beyond the pale and take advantage of my kindness to invade us! I am a kindhearted man who hates killing..."

The rest of the group stirred skeptically at his words, drawing the Human King's ire.

"Do I not speak correctly? I am a goodly person forced to kill. The heavens can bear testament to my kind nature! I only wanted to raise cats and walk dogs, but we cannot live according to our wishes. The Sun God has returned heavily injured and tells me that the enemy's army has already forded the void. They have come to seize our Yin Yang world. There is no need to show them any courtesy!

"We raise our armies today to march on the worlds! The exalted emperors of the four sides will summon your armies today and run them through drills so they can follow me. We will defeat all enemies and bridge the universe to bring war back to their homes. We will crush the firmament, destroy their seed, seize power, and sweep through the multiverse. We will let these guys know that they can provoke anyone but the Fangs!"

Killing intent shot to the skies! Li Hao found himself in a confused haze when he heard the sword wielder—possibly his ancestor—declare in ringing tones, "Then we execute them all! I will return to Silver Moon Territory at once and assemble our troops to follow the army!"

"Silver Moon is newly formed and as such, unstable. Your efforts should focus on building cities and towns!"

"....." The various powerhouses immediately engaged in heated discussion. Numerous ideas were thrown out on how to travel through the universe, eliminate their enemy, trample their home, and seize their seed of power.

Li Hao didn't understand everything, but he grasped the gist. This group of unyielding characters were going to start a war that ended worlds simply because an enemy wanted to invade them. The enemy was yet to arrive on their doorstep, but they were already discussing how to fight back, eradicate the enemy amid the chaos universe, and trace their trajectory to exterminate their homes!

The scene grew foggier around Li Hao and the voices faded away until there was no one in front of him. One person materialized in front of him a long while later. It was the exalted emperor who'd named Battle Heaven. He had changed locations; another person appeared next to him before long—the Li Sword Sovereign.

“Teacher Li, although we are unafraid of anything when traversing the universe, we will be amid the chaotic void after leaving the Yin Yang domain. Unexpected developments can easily happen, particularly to Silver Moon Territory. It has broken free of the main world but is intricately tied to it. It might easily fully break free and seize world power...”

“I know,” answered the Sword Sovereign after prolonged silence. “So do you mean to... cut off communication between the two?”

“Not quite, I wish more for Teacher Li to incorporate it as your inner world and make Silver Moon your own. I understand your concern of weakening the territory once you strip its world power away. He will not mind, however. He wouldn’t have let the teacher continue to suppress the territory otherwise...”

“I will consider it!”

“Understood. I know that the teacher has your own thoughts, but just... consider it, please!”

The scene changed again before Li Hao could make sense of what he’d heard. He was still with the Exalted Blood Emperor; they stood in familiar surroundings—Silver Moon! It differed from the Silver Moon that he was familiar with.

The exalted emperor stood in the void and looked out over the land.

“I hereby suppress Silver Moon with the Formation of Heaven and Earth to prevent this land from giving birth to its own consciousness and becoming the next seed world. It will not break free of the main world’s control!” murmured the Exalted Blood Emperor. Light flashed in front of Li Hao’s eyes as the man unsheathed his blade and slashed downward!

The skies and earth fractured as fissures appeared in the world. Eight pieces dissected Silver Moon Territory, which were then stitched back together via a series of complex movements. Nothing remained in Li Hao’s incredulous gaze, just that incomparable stroke!

That singular move had split heaven and earth, dicing the world into eight pieces. The Exalted Blood Emperor seemed to have left something in each of the eight continents. Li Hao didn't have a chance to see it before the world was whole again.

Li Hao was shell shocked. Was this... what was meant by an exalted emperor? The world cracked from a single blow! Although he'd once seen his ancestor rip through the universe with a single stroke, that was just a feeling. This one really had split apart the world right in front of him!

Incredible!

That domineering blade intent and unending blood qi... The shattering of the world and spontaneous mending rooted Li Hao to the spot. The strength that he was so proud of seemed like nothing in this moment.

The Exalted Blood Emperor suddenly turned back and seemed to glimpse Li Hao—or was he simply flinging a casual look back?

“The myriad of worlds out there exist well in their corners of the universe. We have waged campaigns for many years, and now fighting is about to start again...” he sighed softly. “Those of New Martial are not afraid of battle, but peace is to be broken again. You were born of the fading remnants of New Martial strength. I was unwilling to deliver more slaughter than necessary and thus did not eradicate this world of life.

“Do not harbor intentions you should not possess in the future! I have suppressed this world with the Formation of Heaven and Earth. If it breaks and the world is completely separate from the main world... Then you will have to fare well for yourself!”

Who was he talking to? Li Hao floundered in a mental haze again. All of the illusions abruptly vanished. He was drenched in sweat and his eyes blank. After an indeterminate amount of time, he opened his eyes to see some old faces and a set of golden armor peering into his face. The young man stared at them, not saying anything like he'd completely gone lifeless.

“What’s happened to him?”

“His mind and spirit have suffered a grave blow. Is he scared witless after witnessing an exalted emperor’s move?”

“Probably!”

“Now what? Do we intervene?”

“.....” The group chattered to each other until the Ninth Division commander suddenly said, “There is no hope in training such a weak mind and spirit! The new recruit division is about to recover its functions. Throw him in there for training. He’ll be a decent soldier after a year or two!”

“Don’t!” Li Hao immediately sprang awake.

#### Chapter 863: Observing the Characters Again (IV)

Li Hao shook as he was still caught in the throes of what he’d just witnessed. “Are exalted emperors... very strong?” he couldn’t help but ask.

“.....” The others looked at him like they were gazing upon a fool.

“They are... very strong,” the old turtle said softly. “Stronger than us, in any case... After Saint comes Empyrean King. There are many levels to Empyrean King. After that comes the emperor levels, which the weakest of exalted emperors reach. We do not understand much more beyond that. They can more or less kill you with one exhale!”

“Will it require an exalted emperor’s breath to kill him?” the Ninth Division commander said coolly. “Even a Saint can accomplish that!”

“.....” Li Hao smiled ruefully. Seriously?

“Did you see an exalted emperor?” asked a curious General Pagoda.

“I did, and not just one, but many!” Li Hao nodded, prompting shifts in the group’s expressions.

“You saw an exalted emperor, and multiple ones at that?” repeated a mystified old turtle. “That’s... very strange!”

“I heard them discuss a campaign to attack someplace,” Li Hao recalled. “Was this before Battle Heaven was established?”

The old turtle shook its head, it wasn’t too clear on this matter.

“I’ve heard of this occurrence,” said the commander. “Silver Moon was a training ground for the army. There were already small skirmishes at the front lines when we started training the troops. Details beyond that were not for the likes of low level officers like us.”

Low level officers!

“How big is the universe?” Li Hao asked after momentary silence.

“I don’t know.” The commander shook his head. “It is unbounded and incomparably vast! No one knows the specifics, not even the Human King. One step in chaos means the passage of one thousand years and mulberry fields changing into the seas. No one would leave their local universe unless they were forced to.

“Time is the most terrifying of all in the world. The reversal of time and disappearance of New Martial may have something to do with this. Thousands upon thousands of years can flash by if one takes one step out of their part of the universe...”

Li Hao blinked, uncomprehending of the scale. “Is Silver Moon... that important?”

The group didn’t respond—possibly out of ignorance, and possibly out of a lack of desire to explain.

Li Hao took a deep breath and closed his eyes. A faint blade intent appeared on his body moments later. The others blinked. What... was this?

The young man replayed that blade stroke in his mind, the one that had fractured heaven and earth when it swung down. That was a true powerhouse! He himself was much too weak and insignificant compared to the august personages he’d seen. To Li Hao, the world was so enormous that he could barely cover it in flight. But to these people, it was but a speck of dust. They carved up continents with one stroke and divided it into eight!

He had the general idea of what they wished to accomplish. Combined with previous conversation with the little tree, Li Hao knew that Silver Moon Territory was a new world born from strength that drifted off of the New Martial main world. The Human King set the Li clan here in order to give the world to the Li ancestor, the Sword Sovereign, to supplement a few deficiencies.

The Li ancestor hadn’t been willing to utilize the new world in such a manner. The Exalted Blood Emperor had tried to convince him otherwise, but the Sword Sovereign was still unwilling because making the new world his might weaken the main world.

It was all too complicated and far above his understanding, but Li Hao remembered one thing. The ancient Human King had gifted the world to the Lis. What belonged to the Lis belonged to him. So... this world is mine?

The young man had finally made sense of everything. So this entire world belonged to his family! So I’ve been the king of the world all along! No wonder I feel so close to Silver Moon, no wonder I feel bad when I see people suffering. This is my territory!

He didn't want to think about anything else. It was too complicated! That was the business of the powerhouses. Now that his ancestor had disappeared and Silver Moon Territory plunged into disorder, he needed to put things back into order!

This incident strengthened Li Hao's faith and confidence. Of course, none of this was key. The key was that he'd strengthened some of his supernatural locks. A portion of his locks seemed to have been stimulated and strengthened by a great deal. Not only that, but a lock had materialized in his head. It came with a certain sharpness.

Li Hao hadn't absorbed any Water of Life, but the illusory realm had stimulated some of his locks into becoming mightier.

After another indeterminate pause.

The group was still there when Li Hao opened his eyes again. "Silver Moon Territory belongs to the Lis!" he took a deep breath.

"....." Various faces stared at him.

"Therefore, I'm going to take back what is my family's!" he declared.

"....." The rest kept staring. What was going on now?

The Ninth Division leader was very calm. "It is confidence if the strong voice these words. It is arrogance if you do! Don't think too much of yourself."

"I know." Li Hao nodded. "But we need to have such dreams in life. What is the difference between us and lowly creatures if we don't have a single goal? These two characters are very interesting. The exalted emperor seems to have bestowed it with certain emotion. New revelations can be discovered every time. Their stature is too great, however, making them a bit too far removed from me."



“Naturally,” nodded the old turtle. “This august personage ranked among the top of the exalted emperors.”

“Did my family’s ancestor rank in the top five of the ancient civilization?” Li Hao was curious.

“.....” The group looked at each other instead of responding. Did he? Who knew? But... probably... not? The sword of the Lis was indeed strong, but there were too many heavyweights in that era.

Li Hao suppressed an eye roll at the sight and understood their reaction. So his ancestor likely hadn’t. These people wouldn’t be responding with this attitude if he had. Was his ancestor so poorly off that he couldn’t even rank in the top five?

“What about the top ten?”

No one made a sound. Who knew? But... perhaps... still not.

Li Hao rolled his eyes this time. That bad??

“Is there a point to wondering about this?” intoned the Ninth Division commander. “You’ve been here for three days and were here three days on your last trip. That’s six days total. Aren’t you a busy person?”

Six days!

Li Hao blinked. “I’ve cultivated here for three days?”

No shit!

“Of course!”

Li Hao started with dismay. Six days was a long time! “Then I must leave immediately. General Pagoda, my Water of Life...”

The general handed over a large vat without further word. Li Hao scanned it with his consciousness upon receiving it. There were more than ten thousand drops inside. This was the most Water of Life he’d seen at any given time. There’d only been five thousand when they killed the coconut tree.

“My thanks, general!” Li Hao rose. “Then I must take my leave, seniors. There is much that awaits me in the outside world.”

The commander was displeased to see the young man prepare to storm off. “You must be calmer in your manner and still your mind when great happenings are upon you! There is no need to care about what you’ve seen, it has nothing to do with you. The world of the strong is far away from you. Also, take heed not to give up the sword aura. Remember that in this world, the sword is the master of all!”

The sword is the master of all? As in, master of everything in this world?

“Thank you, Ninth Division leader!” Li Hao vanished.

Ninth Division leader? The Gold Armor paused. Calling him by his title imparted a very different meaning. This kid was talking to him as a peer! Li Hao was the Eleventh Division leader and he was Ninth Division leader. The brat was basically saying that we’re of the same level, so let’s be nicer to each other in the future.

The commander could say nothing in response. He snorted after a long moment and asked after the young man left, “Why is it that he can see something in the exalted emperor’s words?”

That was odd!

“Perhaps the august majesty purposefully let him see it?” smiled the old turtle. “No one can see a thing if he so decides. They can if he wishes it. This world has never given birth to its own consciousness ever since the Sword Sovereign took up residence. But it has been so many years since his departure... no one can say. Li Hao has improved so rapidly—has he done so with some aura of heaven and earth? Have you seen his new abilities?”

The commander blinked and took a moment to gather his thoughts. “I have, I see! The Sword Sovereign has been gone too long and the formation is broken. A new dao is about to be born in this world, isn’t it?”

“Perhaps!”

“No wonder!” laughed the commander. “This is good timing. A powerhouse is about to rise from the humanity of the new age. Out with the old and in with the new. Losing the inhibition of New Martial means that more changes are about to take place in this world.”

“Mmhmm, but it’s fine. It has nothing to do with us.” The rest didn’t say anything as it was truly irrelevant to them. They were not of this age. Li Hao could glean something from the characters possibly because of his new abilities. But, judging from the young man’s words, he had already seen something before.

Had this fellow been blessed by the mandate of heaven long ago?

“There are countless heirs in the Li clan and he’s not of the direct line. Has this kid forgotten about that?” The Ninth Division commander was a bit jealous. The old turtle and pagoda tree didn’t respond.

“I’m going to absorb energy from the surroundings and see if I can revitalize more of Battle Heaven. Don’t disturb me for a bit!” The tree vanished, as did the old turtle. Only the Gold Armor was left. He looked into the distance for a long moment and sighed softly.

Don’t be too confident, Li Hao. You’re far from adequate. Perhaps your greatest danger will arrive only when the Star Gate opens.

#### Chapter 864: All Sorts of Bad Creatures (I)

The North Sea.

Li Hao flew over the North Sea—it was frozen over. It was simply too cold in the north. Of the four seas, it was the only one to be completely frozen. It spanned five hundred kilometers, but could still freeze over. That was a sign of how cold the weather was this year.

Not only that, but there were still people walking over it despite the frigidness. They were fleeing from the north to the central region. Although Silver Moon had started to accept refugees, that was a drop in the bucket in the grand scheme of things. Unrest continued in the north and there were far more than one million refugees seeking shelter.

Li Hao looked at the frozen expanse and felt that with one million supernaturals to change the weather, though such actions would be a slight violation of the rules of nature, at least it would save quite a few people from freezing to death in these conditions.

The characters of his five elements had melded into the void. He’d wanted to dispel some of the chilly air, but decided to forgo the notion after seeing how many people were on the ice. It’d be another problem if the ice melted.

One person was hard pressed to change everything. He was not the Exalted Blood Emperor who could part the land with one blade stroke.

It was then that he saw a familiar face on the ice. Li Hao was surprised, but also found the sight to be expected.

Lu Chuan.

It was the Starlight who'd been accompanying refugees over the sea. His cultivation seemed to have improved and he'd possibly set foot into Darkmoon. At present, his duties were to refreeze some parts that had broken up.

The North Sea pirates had a difficult time this season as well. Silver Moon presented an unforgiving front to them and many of them ran off after the death of the North Sea King. A portion of them chose to hole up in their hideouts; the White Shark Raiders that Li Hao wanted to kill were nowhere to be found lately.

.....

Lu Chuan was freezing the patch in front of him when someone abruptly stood in front of him. He focused his eyes to see... the man from last time!

Information flowed unevenly throughout the dynasty. A powerhouse like Li Hao was instantly recognizable in the eyes of the powerful and strong, but not to civilians. Official authorities such as the Inspectorate and Night Watchers had his photograph, so they would identify the young man even if they'd never seen him before. Meanwhile, the rest of the people only knew Li Hao's name, but not his features.

"Have you come to take in the sights again, milord?" Lu Chuan was more at ease at their second meeting. He'd been very worried that Li Hao would take some sort of action at their last meeting, but the young man hadn't.

"No, I'm just passing by." Li Hao shook his head with a smile. "How have you been?"

"Me?" Lu Chuan was confused, but still smiled. "Quite well. At least, better than before. There were more pirates in the North Sea before and all sorts of disturbances rocked the land. They've quieted down with the onset of winter and there are fewer pirates these days.

“The Skystar Commander Office established at Skystar City has the authority to execute supernaturals that commit crimes throughout the dynasty. Even the supernaturals keep a much lower profile now. We should be able to enjoy a respite so long as the Skystar Commander Office stands.”

Li Hao’s actions already had an effect. Although he’d yet to commence an official cleansing of villainous supernaturals, the Inspectorates and Night Watchers of various provinces had increased the scope and breadth of their patrols. There was a new superior in charge, after all. Although the same leader helmed the Inspectorate, that institution had issued many orders as of late.

Local armies had also received orders from the Ministry of Armed Forces to keep their troops in check, that they should not incur unnecessary trouble. The ministry did not wish for disputes to occur—that would give Li Hao the chance to seize any incident to make an issue of. It would give the young man the perfect opening.

Therefore, those such as Lu Chuan felt very noticeable changes. It was only because that true war had broken out in the three northern provinces that no one paid attention to Li Hao. Otherwise, there wouldn’t be anyone fleeing for foreign lands in this kind of weather.

“So the Skystar Commander Office is good for something?”

“Of course!” laughed Lu Chuan. “You might not know, milord, that the supernaturals were unfettered before. Although the Night Watchers were present, they lacked confidence and didn’t dare easily invoke supernatural wrath. But now that they have backing, regular supernatural organizations don’t dare run afoul of the Night Watchers. It doesn’t matter that the Skystar Commander Office hasn’t fully completed its desired reforms, no one wants to give that institution a pretext for any action...”

He looked at Li Hao as he spoke, unsure of which side Li Hao was on. Was he part of the Skystar Commander Office or was he from another faction? He seemed to be from Silver Moon, however, and was likely from the Skystar Commander Office.

Li Hao nodded and looked at the refugees around them. “Isn’t Silver Moon accepting refugees from the three northern provinces? Why are they still heading south?”

“Silver Moon is indeed accepting people,” sighed Lu Chuan. “And many have rushed over. But it’s a barren land itself, so how many can it keep alive? Not to mention, bandits and robbers abound at Near River. It’s a complete mess, making the North Sea a safer place to be.”

Near River again! Li Hao frowned faintly. How dare a mere Near River province cause trouble over and over again? Where had they stolen such courage from? Fan Chang had just been a metamorphosis expert! He might be an Arcanus now, but how dared he make things difficult for Silver Moon after the latter’s full strength was displayed?

As for the supposed explanation of robbers and bandits at large inside the province, Li Hao felt that was on purpose. Could a provincial government not handle some robbers?

The young man viewed Skystar Dynasty as his own territory now. It felt differently to hear of Near River’s wrongdoing. Fan Chang deserved death!

At the same time, it was the entire province that engaged in evil. Just killing Fan Chang wouldn’t accomplish anything and would only stir up chaos. Li Hao was no longer the young man of limited vision who only knew to kill people. His thoughts now were to kill every single one of the executive leadership, not just Fan Chang. An infusion of new blood was necessary!

Indeed, in times gone by, he might’ve thought that just killing Fan Chang was sufficient. But now, all of them deserved death! There wasn’t a single decent person among them from the military to the Night Watchers, the Inspectorate, and the provincial government!

Li Hao nodded and concealed his killing intent. “It’s good enough to go to the central region. The situation there is relatively calm these days and it’s close to Skystar City. Nothing should happen in the short term.”

Lu Chuan was beginning to grow curious about the speaker’s identity. These matters were beyond the authority of ordinary supernaturals, but this person seemed to oversee a lot.

“Indeed, milord...” Lu Chuan wanted to speak further, but suddenly glanced into the distance. He paused as he saw a figure appear in the distance. It seemed to have always been there, but also seemed to have just appeared as well.

It was a woman—a very pretty woman. She wore white silk robes that whispered opulence and blended with the snow when she landed on the ice. She appeared to be an immortal of legend. It only took one peek for Lu Chuan to realize that she was likely a powerhouse. She really was very pretty.

He wanted to recollect his thoughts when he heard the noble personage next to him say, “I recommend you attend the Skystar Martial Academy once you’re done here. They need talent and I think you’re a great one!”

“But I’m not a martial master...” Lu Chuan was surprised by the sudden suggestion.

“That’s not important. It looks like current marketing is insufficient. The Skystar Martial Academy recruits anyone, you don’t have to be a martial master.” Li Hao tilted his head at the woman not too far away. Though he smiled, killing intent flashed through his eyes. The snowflakes drifting through the air nearly froze!

Lin Hongyu watched silently from a near distance, not saying a word. She was just slightly surprised that Li Hao would be engrossed in conversation with a Starlight. As expected, the extraordinary did not conduct themselves in an ordinary manner. In her eyes, Starlight really were as if ants.

She’d tarried around the North Sea for three days, waiting for Li Hao. She didn’t dare go to Silver Moon as the province was very dangerous. She hadn’t expected that Li Hao would appear only now. The young man was truly confident, alright. What if someone marched on his base of operations and took down the Skystar Commander Office?

Lu Chuan looked at the woman in white, then at Li Hao. He roughly guessed that the two knew each other. Perhaps they worked together? He didn’t linger upon seeing Li Hao look at the woman as well. “I thank milord for your recommendation. I will seek my fortunes in Skystar City once I complete my tasks at hand here.”



“Very good!” Li Hao nodded with a smile, the very picture of affability.

This was a Li Hao that Lin Hongyu had never encountered before. The only time she’d come across the young man was when she lost a plant spirit replica and nearly died. This was a true demon to her, and today, she saw the demon smile!

Lu Chuan swiftly departed. When he turned back, he saw the two approaching each other. The man didn’t dare observe more beyond a quick peep. Was it a wife coming to meet her husband? It seemed a bit like that... but not quite. As expected of someone from noble origins, just her outfit alone was different.

.....

“Apologies for disturbing Commander Li!” Lin Hongyu offered easily, not the least bit afraid or cowering.

Li Hao smiled and walked toward her. “Have you come with an Immortal replica this time? City Lord Lin is rather bold. It is my first time meeting someone as bold as you...”

Heaven and earth shifted; the skies seemed to tilt as a surge of the five elements enveloped the vicinity! The facade of ice was durable and immovable. Li Hao grinned radiantly, but was also on the alert. Lin Hongyu was truly being inconceivably daring.

“Why the need for killing intent so quickly?” Lin Hongyu smiled as well. “Didn’t the commander say for me to lead the City of Supernaturals into surrendering within ten days? It has been six days—almost the commander’s designated deadline. Here I am!”

“.....” Li Hao paused, his eyes narrowing. What was she cooking?

Lin Hongyu smiled again to see the young man obviously on guard. “The commander’s words are worth their weight in gold. Are you willing to accept us if I bring the City of Supernaturals to you?”

Li Hao stared frostily at her, ignoring the possibility of schemes or plots. He wouldn’t dare say he was completely invincible in the outside world, but it wouldn’t be that easy for a regular seven elements or even Apex to kill him.

“Why wouldn’t I?” he responded coldly. “But can you make that decision?”

“I cannot.” Lin Hongyu shook her head, her smile widening. “Therefore, I have come to the commander for help.”

#### Chapter 865: All Sorts of Bad Creatures (II)

“This is not an ideal place to converse,” Lin Hongyu smiled as Li Hao looked at her. “If the commander is willing, we can change to another location, drink some tea, and have a chat. It’s a bit chilly over the water in the dead of winter.”

Li Hao nodded with a smile. Lin Hongyu was about to say something further when it felt like the world shifted beneath her feet. An unending expanse of white flashed in front of her eyes as the power of the five elements manifested. Alarm rang in her mind—was Li Hao attacking her? Her expression shifted when she saw a large ship in front of her.

The ship broke through the ice covering the sea. Just as Lin Hongyu marveled at how far Li Hao could move in a split second, countless agonized screams sounded from the ship. Thousands upon thousands of thin swords swept through the vessel like needles of death.

There was no sound coming from the ship in the blink of an eye.

“C’mon, let’s talk aboard the ship.” Li Hao grinned. “Looks like pirates don’t take it easy in the wintertime. What are they doing breaking through ice and running around at a time like this? Come, it’s warmer aboard!”

Lin Hongyu watched with wide eyes as Li Hao soared into the air and landed in the ship's hold. There were corpses everywhere sealed with ice. It wasn't a bloody scene as blood was frozen inside the body. There were nearly one thousand people aboard the ship, but Li Hao had killed them all to the last!

This fellow was at times kind and at times cruel. One could not see through him at all. He was terrifying!

Li Hao reached out with a hand and sent the tables and chairs flying out of the hold. Various jugs of alcohol landed on the deck. A flame appeared in his hand to warm the cold wine.

"Sit!" He pointed at a chair. Lin Hongyu sat down with a smile. The young man plonked himself down as well and brought out two cups. Hot wine automatically filled them before he served the two.

"This is a nice place," Li Hao laughed. "Tell me, do you think supernaturals have too much time on their hands? If they really have nothing to do in the dead of winter, they can go ashore and look for gigs, work in the fields, or the fire types can start a greenhouse... Isn't any of that better than twiddling their thumbs on a ship and robbing others?"

"It's said that there are more than one million residents in the City of Supernaturals and they're all superhuman!" he said with curiosity before Lin Hongyu had a chance to respond. "I have some questions about them. The city lord won't mind answering, will you?"

"Please go ahead, commander."

"With all these superhumans in residence, what do they do for a living?"

Do for a living? Lin Hongyu blinked with surprise. "They each have their own tasks to attend to and don't always stay in the city. They'll conduct some transactions and sparring inside the city. Under normal circumstances, they'll head out as well."

"What do they do when they depart?"

“Hmm... many things. Running some errands for major families, for example, or guarding a merchant convoy. Exploring ruins is another possibility, or attending to businesses they run outside.”

“So do they steal and loot?” mused Li Hao. “Will they seize someone’s money when they run out?”

“.....” Lin Hongyu didn’t respond. Of course they would.

“Do they eat on a normal basis?”

“Of course!”

“Then what do they eat? Where does that money come from?”

“.....” Lin Hongyu found Li Hao very hard to talk to sometimes. She’d thought that he’d ask about the city’s level of strength, the twelve families, or leaders among the wandering cultivators...

But he cared not about any of that, asking a bunch of questions that no one cared about.

“It’s said that the City of Supernaturals also possess quite a large number of academies. There is one from the city, ones from three great organizations and the nine ministries. They recruit some supernaturals to attend school, who then join them after graduation, correct?”

“Yes.” Lin Hongyu nodded faintly. “This was what everyone agreed on back in the day. Otherwise, even with the twelve families’ might, it is hard for them to find their footing in the central region without spilling blood.”

Li Hao smiled and sipped from his cup. “And apparently, you guys killed some of the original inhabitants who refused to leave. Of those who remained, many died as they fled for safety, didn’t they?”

“.....” Lin Hongyu’s expression changed and she said after a moment, “That is true, but there are details that the commander is unaware of. It wasn’t the twelve families that built the city together in the beginning. Some of the families started first, then invited us. We were latecomers and took over their places.”

Li Hao thought back to what he knew about the City of Supernaturals—that did indeed seem to be the case. Of course, this wasn’t important. The important thing was that many had died during the course of the city’s rise.

“Let’s drink!” Li Hao raised his cup with a smile. “I’m quite surprised that you would appear in front of me again. I stayed for a while and looked around, but didn’t see anyone. I would’ve thought that I would sense the arrival of other seven elements or peak six element Arcanus, but I didn’t.”

“This is all a misunderstanding, commander!” sighed Lin Hongyu. “I am here with utmost sincerity, not to be deliberately mysterious.”

“Now that’s not possible,” Li Hao burst out laughing. “Do you take me for a fool?”

Struggles for supremacy abounded these years and every faction had a backer. No one would surrender so easily. Not to mention, the City of Supernaturals hadn’t suffered much in terms of losses yet. Only a few of their Arcanus had died, and those didn’t necessarily belong to the Lins. Lin Hongyu was the sovereign of her domain. How would she choose to surrender just because of one setback?

Li Hao didn’t believe it. He wouldn’t take this course of action if it was him. Lin Hongyu knew he didn’t believe her, so she didn’t explain herself further.

“Does the commander wish to take down the City of Supernaturals?” was the only thing she said.

“I do.”

“I will summon the twelve families and most powerful wandering cultivators in three days to discuss grave matters. I will posit the need for a cabinet in our government. If the commander wishes to take down the City of Supernaturals, that is a chance! You can arrest or kill the various powerhouses of the city’s families, as well as the rogue factions that do not belong to the twelve.

“You can also seal off the city so that one million supernaturals cannot leave or enter. Send the Demon Hunter Army to occupy the city—I will have our city guard work in tandem to pacify the denizens. That will ensure that the commander smoothly takes over the City of Supernaturals. Otherwise, greater disturbances will rock the land.

“The difficulty associated with this endeavor is very high. Perhaps the commander is wondering if this is a trap. After all, the twelve families have a great many powerhouses associated with them if they could hold their own after all of these years. Perhaps they lack premier powerhouses, but all of them have at least five Arcanus. With twelve families in total, it ought to be easy to estimate how many Arcanus there will be at minimum.

“Additionally, they will have plant spirit replicas with them, as well as the essence blood of beast spirits and supreme weapons of note. Taking into account that some of the wandering cultivators might have come across immense fortune, that means that there might be more than one hundred Arcanus present on that day!” Lin Hongyu looked at Li Hao. “Does the commander... dare attend?”

She was also curious what Li Hao would do. Would he dare? She knew of his strength. How would he handle plots from the shadows?

“Additionally, heavyweights from the nine ministries, three great organizations, and seven divine mountains are in residence at the city...”

Lin Hongyu thought Li Hao was hesitating when he stroked his chin, but the young man asked curiously, “Will they all be there?”

“Yes...”

“That’s so nice!” Li Hao exclaimed with surprise. “Don’t be lying to me, now!”

This was a fantastic opportunity! These powerhouses were scattered all over in regular times; congregating together meant a prime chance to catch them in one fell swoop. As for it being a trap or the dangers associated within... that was fine. I like taking risks. Having everyone together is the result I want.

My Demon Hunter Army can be put to great use This is also a perfect opportunity to try out the babies I got for establishing the Eleventh Division.

“Are you not worried, commander?” chuckled Lin Hongyu. “As strong as you are, the commander shouldn’t have reached the stage of being able to ignore plant spirit replicas, have you?”

Li Hao was very confident, but being too brazen wasn’t a good idea in Lin Hongyu’s eyes. It was the custom of this age that modern humans find a backer to cleave to. If Li Hao only knew to barge around like a bull in a china shop, she would have to reconsider her decision. Someone like that easily dragged his people down into hell with him due to overconfidence.

“Perhaps you guys can kill me in return.” Li Hao bared his snow-white teeth. “I like excitement! I don’t care if you’re really here to surrender or not, notify me when everyone is gathered in three days!”

I need to prepare certain plans if I dare to attend! I don’t care what you’re thinking. If this is a trap, or if there’s ruins in the City of Supernaturals that can swallow us all, I’ll be prepared for anything! I only need all of you to be present.

If I succeed, then the City of Supernaturals is mine. So are the one million supernaturals within it. Hong Yitang wants nothing more than to send them all to work in the fields. I’d been having a headache with his request, but here’s a perfect chance to fulfill it.

As for the Wind and Cloud Pavilion... who cared about them. They would be eliminated as soon as they were found. He would find the Wind and Cloud Pavilion and exterminate that faction first. If they were located after three days, then he would take care of the City of Supernaturals first.

As for the level of strength, Li Hao didn't dare ask Lin Hongyu. Who knew the truth of what she said? He would make his own judgment call!

Lin Hongyu raised a cup and took a sip, toasting Li Hao. "In that case, I await the commander's arrival in three days! Additionally, how will the commander treat the city, my family, and the plant spirit behind me once you have the city?"

"If you genuinely surrender and have not committed villainous acts, then you can be forgiven," Li Hao smiled. "I can set aside the matter of you trying to kill me. I am a magnanimous person! But if the blood of innocents stains your hands... I can again ignore those of supernaturals. If the blood belongs to civilians, however, I will execute you first. You can't blame me for not warning you of this first."

"I am the Lin clan matriarch and the lord of the City of Supernaturals," Lin Hongyu burst out laughing. "I have no need to fall to such depths."

"That's good." Li Hao considered the matter at hand as he sipped his wine. "I have my arrangements for those of the city. All those supernaturals gathered together in debauchery, no one pursuing honest work or operating a business... What use is there in that? The City of Supernaturals is a haven of criminals and doesn't really need to exist!"

Lin Hongyu's expression flickered slightly.

"As for you, you can choose to retire in peace or join the Skystar Commander Office. I don't mind having more powerhouses under my banner. And your plant spirit... we can partner if that's possible. It can return to sleep if not. If it raises a fuss, I'll just kill it!"

Chapter 866: All Sorts of Bad Creatures (III)



“The partnership that the commander speaks of...”

“It can create rations to feed the people or provide Water of Life. An exchange of five thousand mysterious power stones per drop is acceptable. It just can’t be too greedy! That allows for a high profit margin already as those who partner with me normally do not charge any processing fees and produce Water of Life for free...”

“Five thousand pieces?” Lin Hongyu’s heart skipped a beat. Would the redwood tree erupt with outright hostility if she spoke of this?? The best price that anyone had at present was fifty thousand pieces per drop!

“It can agree if it finds this rate acceptable.” Li Hao smiled. “If not, it can keep a low profile and wait for the second awakening! But if it is reluctant to accept the situation... I will show City Lord Lin some face and seal it if I can. I will kill it if not!”

“.....” So tyrannical! This was her first time meeting a modern powerhouse who was so overbearing towards ancient heavyweights. Lin Hongyu couldn’t help but ask, “Does the commander display the same attitude toward General Pagoda of Battle Heaven?”

“That one?” Li Hao laughed. “I supplied thirty million stones for it and it paid me back with ten thousand drops after three days. If it wasn’t for the amount of time needed to coalesce the Water of Life, I would have as much as I want! Therefore, I do not lack partnership and aid from a plant spirit!”

“How is this possible?” Lin Hongyu could scarcely believe her ears! “They need energy to revitalize as well. They earn nothing from such a transaction!”

“And how do they not?” Li Hao laughed. “Don’t I invest my own resources when I awaken them?”

That... counts? Lin Hongyu had nothing to say. She felt that it would be very difficult for Li Hao to reach such an agreement with the redwood tree. He was truly offering too little, and the young man wasn’t the one who’d awakened the redwood tree.

“Everything else can be discussed and I am amenable to any arrangement as well,” she had to say. “But the plant spirits are powerhouses of the ancient civilization. We rely on their Water of Life for cultivation now. Perhaps the commander does not lack for this resource, but there are many who do in the world...”

“Ancient humans are hard to find, as are ancient beast spirits.” Li Hao frowned. “But there is an endless mountain of ancient plant spirits! Just Battle Heaven alone boasts of thirty-seven. They can quietly remain in place if they aren’t willing to cooperate. We kill them if they stir up trouble! What is the meaning of persistently accommodating their demands?”

“.....” Lin Hongyu felt a headache set in. “But...”

“Are you worried that it won’t agree?” Li Hao burst out laughing. “It’s fine, leave it to me. I’ll talk to it if you’re worried!”

You... probably won’t be just talking to it, will you? Lin Hongyu sighed, “I’ll try my best...” and said nothing else on that matter. “There is one more thing I’d like to tell the commander that you may not be aware of, and that’s the ancient aristocracies really do come from the ancient civilization, or they might’ve stumbled upon ruins early on, or their legacies might not have broken throughout time. Some families have their own ultimate weapons of note.”

“Are their weapons stronger than the ones owned by the nine ministries?”

“That’s... hard to say!” Lin Hongyu explained. “The nine ministries wield ones that likely belonged to Saints. It’s a similar story for us.”

“They’re all shabby hunks of metal in the outside world!” Li Hao didn’t mind this much. Weapons of Saints didn’t have much power outside the ruins. None of them were awake. He’d smashed the one that belonged to the Chens and fed it to the little sword.

Granted, it was still prudent to be on his guard. The twelve ancient aristocracies... the heritage of the ancient families. Li Hao thought of someone—a snake. “Are you all of the ancient families in the dynasty?”

“Pretty much!”

“Has anyone ever given pointers to the snake in Kui Mountains?”

Lin Hongyu blinked and shook her head. “No, but I do know of it. It resided in the mountains more than one hundred years ago. Back then, people said that there was a dragon in the mountains. This is recorded in the Lin family history—the snake was already very strong in those days. Regular martial masters wouldn’t run afoul of it, much less give it pointers. There was no way to communicate with it.”

Li Hao started. But he recalled that the Kui snake had mentioned someone teaching it. Could it be members of another family that the Lins were unaware of? Additionally, it was surprising to hear that the snake hadn’t surfaced only in the past twenty years, but one hundred years ago. It was an old snake then.

“That will be all for today!” Li Hao wasn’t willing to say too much to this one. It was difficult to say whether this was a genuine capitulation or precursor to a trap. All would be revealed in three days’ time.

“Then I await the commander’s arrival in three days!” Lin Hongyu promptly vanished on the spot. Li Hao glanced in the direction where she’d vanished in—she was strong, alright. She should be a martial master like Chen Zhongtian, one with weapons protecting her meridians. That equipped her with the strength of peak six elements and made her quite strong.

“Interesting!” Li Hao downed his wine and broke through the ice on the water with a hand. He grabbed a large fish and smiled at it. “What are you spying on me for?”

The big fish struggled for freedom and powerful energy ripples undulated over it! However, its body crumbled as Li Hao tightened his hand. It gaped with anguish and transmitted, “Mercy, milord. This minor spirit is only following orders...”

“Whose orders?”

“The... orders... of the Sea Pacification Envoy...”

“He’s certainly bold!” Li Hao laughed. “And quite decisive! If I remember correctly, the Human King personally bequeathed the titles of the Sea Pacification Envoy and Monster Spirit Envoy in the ancient civilization. The Monster Spirit Envoy oversaw all monster spirits beneath the heavens and the Sea Pacification Envoy oversaw all monster spirits in the sea. That makes it a localized emperor, so who is so bold as to borrow its identity?”

“Milord... this minor spirit... really... is here on behalf of orders from the Sea Pacification Envoy...”

Li Hao frowned and was about to squeeze the fish to death when his eyes widened. The great sea fell silent and a faint tendril of core origin landed on the big fish. It was still a fish, but there were changes in its presence.

“We have made a fool of ourselves in front of the heir of the Sword Sovereign. However... this old one truly is a monster spirit in the service of the Sea Pacification Envoy!”

“You show incredible determination to venture into the outside world!” Li Hao’s eyebrows shot up.

“No, this is just a tendril of my core origin!” agitated the big fish’s mental ripples. “I was asleep when your utilization of a plant spirit’s core origin started me awake. I was wondering who it was that dared to employ core origin in the outside world.”

When was this? Li Hao blinked. When did I ever utilize core origin in the outside world? It took him a while to recall the first time when the little tree gave him a core origin replica. That wasn't even a replica, just a tendril of core origin that Li Hao used to sense the wood aura.

Was that the instance?

Monster spirits from the ancient civilization? Li Hao frowned slightly. He knew that a Sea Pacification Envoy's residence was located on Skystar Island, but that was the island, not in the North Sea. Not to mention, so what if this monster spirit was in service to that one? I've met even the guard of the imperial palace. The Sea Pacification Envoy is also less than the Monster Spirit Envoy, and the latter is working for me. So is the guard of the imperial palace!

As strong as this monster spirit might be, Li Hao was not afraid. He wasn't afraid of any one of them in the outside world. However, it was unacceptable that they were keeping tabs on him! He had been discussing important matters with Lin Hongyu! This monster spirit was entirely too forward!

"Simply show yourself no matter what you want to do, or if you wish to see me," Li Hao said brusquely. "Keeping me under surveillance is not a good idea!"

"That is a misunderstanding... I am just unable to continuously expose my core origin to the outside world and so borrowed this minor spirit's body. I do not mean to keep you under surveillance, I just wished to be acquainted with you..."

"What is the point in that?" Li Hao barked with laughter. "I am a weakling of the modern age and the senior should keep yourself hidden well in the ruins. Brashly exposing your core origin like this might lead to it being destroyed!"

The powerhouse temporarily borrowing the big fish's body was quite resigned. The young man... ran utterly wild and did not fear authority at all.

“Alright then, I shall speak frankly. I seemed to sense the presence of the great Monster Spirit Envoy a few days ago. Although it dissipated quickly, I still sensed it. I have intelligence reports that say Commander Li has a strong dog with the bloodline of ancient monster spirits?”

“So?”

“.....” The big fish briefly choked. “I also sensed a few days ago that General Pagoda might have awoken...”

“Yep, so?”

“.....” The big fish wanted to break into curses! So your ass! “I mean to say that New Martial has ended its rule of Silver Moon. Perhaps we can all meet after the second awakening. Communication is difficult at the moment, so could the commander please pass the word to the others? We should discuss how to face the situation to come...”

Li Hao understood the fish’s intentions, but was baffled. “Is there a need for that?”

“.....” Whyever not?!

A large beast spirit in the ruins of the North Sea wanted to bash its head into the sea bed with frustration. Whyever was there not a reason?? The descendant of the Monster Spirit Envoy had appeared and General Pagoda was awake. These were all powerhouses of New Martial and its colleagues!

We have matters to discuss and cannot communicate easily at the moment. Just relay the message! What’s with all this talk! Also, although I don’t know the particulars of the first core origin ripples, it felt legitimate as well. You’re the one who can contact everyone, which is why I came to you. Do you think I want to talk to you?

“I have some things to discuss with them, some important matters...”

“What things?”

“You...” The fish gaped, wanting to erupt in a rage.

“Alright, I’ll convey your words.” Li Hao grinned. “What is the senior’s name? I need to make sure that they know who is talking to them.”

“Capsize Sea.”

Li Hao committed it to memory. What kind of weird name is this? Monster spirits choose really weird names. I’ve run into a ton of weird people on my way back. First it’s Lin Hongyu, then it’s a heavyweight under the Sea Pacification Envoy’s banner. When was I this popular?

#### Chapter 867: All Sorts of Bad Creatures (III)

All the same, Li Hao committed the name to memory. There were major monster spirits in the sea, ones truly worthy of note. It was terrifying that they could emanate their core origin from a very far distance away. One had to know that the plant spirits could only extend their influence roughly one hundred meters outside the ruins.

Where was this guy’s residence? It had to be at least ten thousand meters away, didn’t it? Perhaps even further!

That meant that this monster spirit was so strong that it might be on par with a Saint. And it had important matters to discuss with General Pagoda? It’d almost lost its temper when Li Hao asked it probingly, so he dropped the subject.

“Senior, are there many monster spirits in the sea? I mean ancient ones.”

“Not that many.”

Capsize Sea was less wary with this topic and was more willing to discuss it. He warned through the big fish, “Do not brashly enter the sea, something seems to be amiss in it. There is unrest in the currents brought in from the Forbidden Sea. They have traversed Silver Moon and become a hidden river. I do not know why this has happened, but this cannot be good. I wish to discuss this matter with them as well...”

Li Hao started from the new information. The Forbidden Sea! He knew about this body of water since it was mentioned in a mission at Battle Heaven. It said that the waters of the Forbidden Sea were flowing backward. He’d met a few major monster spirits at Ash Mountain a while back. Hong Yitang had managed to lay hands on half a Goldensky Lotus that they were guarding. It was said to be a specialty of the sea.

The tiny lake in the mountains might be an outlet for the sea.

So it’d become a hidden river that ran through Silver Moon? Did the monster spirit mean Silver Moon the province or the entire world? Well, most likely the entire world. When the ancient powerhouses spoke of Silver Moon, they meant Silver Moon Territory.

But... was there an issue with this? Li Hao wasn’t too aware of the particulars, but this matter could be made a note of. “Alright, I will tell those you mentioned! Is there anything else, senior?”

“Additionally, I need some energy in order to revitalize...”

“Ahem, senior, you should go to someone else for that. I’m so poor lately because everything I own has gone to awakening General Pagoda.”

The big fish was at a loss. Its thoughts were that with its identity, there should be plenty of those willing if it wanted to partner with a weakling. The young man outright refused before it had a chance to finish its words!

Li Hao couldn’t be bothered to explain himself. I don’t have extra energy to revitalize you guys with, it’s not like I know you that well either. There’s so many waiting for this energy! Battle



Heaven has a ton of plant spirits, Director General Zhao apparently has another main city. There's also a hidden ancient Li city and the little tree, as well as a bunch of random fellows that might appear later.

Get in line!

Ancient monster spirits were also a bit useless. They couldn't produce Water of Life and their blood essence wasn't that useful. What could he do with it, other than give it to Panther? Besides, who knows if you're on the side of good or bad.

He couldn't be bothered saying too much and Capsize Sea needed to recover from the slight. "Then remember," it rapidly concluded. "To spread the word, especially to Battle Heaven!"

Its core origin faded away, leaving the big fish staring blankly. It didn't know what'd happened. Li Hao casually tossed it back into the sea. A heavyweight had possessed it, after all, so he would give it face and not stew it into fish soup.

"Weird!" Li Hao immediately disappeared. He didn't say anything about the powerhouse that'd stopped him. The sooner he left, the better. One that could send out its core origin was truly powerful!

.....

At the same time, in a manor in the depths of the sea.

A massive beast spirit was slightly weakened after it retracted its core origin. Taken aback by what'd happened, it rumbled after a while, "So I was refused. That's... certainly unprecedented!"

It put the beast at quite a loss! This wasn't key. The key was that the current of the Forbidden Sea had broken free of the four seas' control. It threaded through Silver Moon and there seemed to be a problem with it, putting it ill at ease.

This had happened over many years, but hadn't the first awakening just taken place?

"There might be grave changes once the second awakening begins!" murmured the big monster spirit with a foreboding feeling. The four seas had grown beyond the control of the Sea Pacification Manor.

.....

At the moment, Li Hao was traveling through the sky and thinking that he needed to excavate the Skystar mine! Powerhouses needed energy to revive, the second awakening needed energy, production of Water of Life required energy, nurturing heavyweights needed energy...

Life was difficult for him these days without large sums of mysterious power stones! He couldn't allow the mine to detonate and facilitate the second awakening. The ancient powerhouses will absorb all of it then, what will I do instead?

"I need to resolve the matters of Skystar Town as soon as possible. Why do I have so many things to get to?" Li Hao's head pounded. He needed to speed things up and settle everyone as soon as possible. Once his matters were clear on the outside, he would be able to swiftly invade Skystar Town for the mine.

.....

It was already night by the time Li Hao returned to Skystar City.

The Skystar Commander Office.

The complex was empty as everyone was very busy with their own affairs. Powerhouses bustled about their own matters. Regular people needed sleep to recover their vitality, whereas powerhouses

such as Li Hao and the rest were always in high spirits. They just needed the occasional night of sleep to adjust their bodies with.

Someone visited as soon as he returned. Li Hao didn't even have the time to rest before Hong Yitang floated into the main hall in the front of the complex.

"You were back for a long time."

It'd taken Li Hao almost a week to make the return trip, despite his fast pace. It was still tiring to have traveled ten thousand kilometers, but the young man knew that Hong Yitang wouldn't come to him unless he had serious matters to discuss.

"Does martial uncle have something to talk about?" Li Hao smiled.

"Yes." Hong Yitang cut straight to the chase. "I'm going to start the school year at the Skystar Martial Academy in half a month. The first batch of students will likely exceed the numbers projected before—I'm thinking about five thousand. I wanted to ask you what subjects you think we should focus on?"

Martial dao was a necessity at a martial academy, but he wanted to take Li Hao's opinion into account for the rest. It didn't seem like an important issue, but this would set the precedent for the various schools to be opened in Skystar in the future.

Li Hao rubbed his temples and said after a while, "I'm not certain of the particulars, so let's go with primarily technology, the people's livelihood, and research and development. Additionally, some reforms in thought processes is a must."

Hong Yitang inclined his head and thought over the response. "How shall we arrange for these people once they graduate?"

Li Hao blinked. What do we do with them once they graduate?

Indeed, it was a very valid question. Even if one learned a great deal at a school, one would have no place to employ themselves if there was no corresponding system in society. No matter how sophisticated the technology one developed at school, it would be useless all the same if there was nothing relevant to it outside the institution of learning.

“Let’s not be in a rush about that for now.” Li Hao pondered the question. “Let’s... have them focus on education first after they graduate—focus on sharing this knowledge. We need time to improve Silver Moon step by step as well! In fact, that’s what we need most of all at the moment. Has there been word regarding the Wind and Cloud Pavilion?”

“Yes!” responded Hong Yitang. “We found traces of their people in a big mountain between South Peak and Sagittarius provinces according to Chen Hai’s information. We didn’t venture in, however, in case we spooked them ahead of time.”

Li Hao was invigorated by the news! There was finally headway in this matter.

“Summon everyone in the city for a meeting.” He also had the City of Supernaturals to discuss. “Ah, you can also send word to Chen Zhongtian!”

Hong Yitang nodded, upon seeing how urgent the young man spoke. Although it was midnight, the man didn’t protest. Li Hao was a very busy person these days. Everyone involved in the meeting was a heavyweight. It wouldn’t matter if they went without sleep for a day or two.

.....

The group quickly convened. Almost everyone was present and accounted for after half an hour.

Those such as Hou Xiaochen and Yao Si had just finished the reorganization of the Skystar City Night Watchers over the past couple of days. The administration of the Skystar Commander Office was now finalized.

Upon seeing that no one else was here yet, Yao Si quickly murmured when he entered the hall, “Commander, I have a small matter to report.”

“Go ahead.”

“It’s about money,” Yao Si quickly responded. “There are numerous Night Watchers, but also a portion of mundanes. Mysterious power stones and energy can be used to pay supernaturals, but the same does not apply to mundanes. Supernaturals actually need money too. The Night Watchers do not operate on cash flow and, as such, lack sources for it. We could earn money through unorthodox manners before, but that is not available to us anymore. The Ministry of Finance has long cut off our money supply...

“We do have mysterious power stones and energy, but some of our basic supplies are in short supply. We can barely supply the daily necessities of food and drink, housing, clothing, and training equipment...”

Li Hao stared. He hadn’t thought that the first issue facing the Skystar Commander Office would be a lack of money.

“What about the Demon Hunter Army?” He was suddenly reminded of his old troops.

“The same!” Liu Long had arrived in the capacity of the vice commander of the Demon Hunter Army. He nodded as well. “We don’t lack cultivation resources, but as our numbers grow, we are also short on the supplies that the director mentioned.”

He hadn’t mentioned this in regular times

Li Hao frowned, the only consideration on his mind before had been that of cultivation resources. Whether it was the Night Watchers or Demon Hunter Army, he’d saved a portion of mysterious power stones for their salary.

“This is a common problem that plagues heroes,” said Deputy Zhou. “The dynasty is currently prosperous enough with ninety-nine provinces. While some provinces have halted their tax collection, the Ministry of Finance is still very affluent. Most of the provinces are still paying their taxes as they should.”

“Where has the money gone?”

“It’s been divvied up by the other eight ministries and royal family,” Deputy Zhou responded promptly. “The Ministry of the Judiciary could receive a portion before, but the Ministry of Finance has completely cut off cash flow ever since Judiciary fell.”

Li Hao frowned. It wasn’t useful to have martial might at times, not unless he wanted to outright seize the money. But he would no longer be the Skystar Commander Office if he took the money by force, and who was he supposed to rob?

Civilians? Or the eight ministries? That was what the City of Supernaturals did—they robbed convenient victims when they ran out of money. Was the Skystar Commander Office supposed to imitate them?

Well, that was fine enough since no one would dare say anything with the number of powerhouses on their side.

“The Lius of Finance are certainly bold!”

## Chapter 868: Plan (I)

“It’s not that the Lius are bold, but that they really don’t dare supply anything to you right now. None of the other ministries will agree to it and will pen them in for it. Their lack of support isn’t a great loss for the Skystar Commander Office, but continued expansion is impossible if this goes on.”

There wasn’t much of an issue in the short run since Li Hao had ample cultivation resources, but expansion of operations would be difficult. Trading mysterious power stones and energy for money

was an option, but such a massive outflow of cultivation resources would quickly cause a collapse of the mundane economic system.

Trading small sums was fine, but large scale transactions would crash the economy. Deputy Zhou understood the implications, so he quickly piped up, “I understand that the commander may wish to utilize mysterious power stones for money and resources. The problem with that is that star coins are worth so much less than cultivation resources.

"A single mysterious power stone can cause a minor disturbance in the economy. Insufficient money in circulation will cause the government to print more money. When there is too much in the money supply, inflation will quickly follow. There are only so many goods and materials out there. Having too much money will make all star coins worthless!

“If that happens, the rich and superhuman will be fine, but it will be an unmitigated disaster for the poor! Half a kilogram of rice may go for one hundred coins now, but after inflation and increased salaries... A monthly salary of one thousand coins that could’ve fetched one hundred kilograms of rice will only result in five kilograms after. A great swathe of civilians will die in the end.”

Li Hao didn’t understand the particulars of economic activity that well, but he immediately grasped the severity with the deputy’s explanation.

“So you mean to say that once a large sum of cultivation resources flows out, that will result in enormous trouble?”

“That’s right!” continued Deputy Zhou. “This is a very difficult issue to tackle! If you lower the prices of cultivation resources, that will cause a shortage in them instead. Regular people won’t sell what they have, but you’ll be selling hundreds of millions of them in star coins with any given transaction. Superhumans usually sell them to accumulate necessary supplies, so that will cause inflation again.

“That this hasn’t happened in recent years is mostly due to the plant spirits. They need large sums of cultivation resources, so the various factions haven’t sold theirs to the outside world. Regular cultivators don’t have enough for personal use, much less sell any of it.

“Although the Skystar Commander Office has an abundance of resources, we cannot start this trend even with our lack of money. It will set off a disastrous chain reaction!”

Li Hao’s head ached and he stared at the deputy. How should he handle this? Based on his previous thoughts, a lack of money shouldn’t be what he worried about. Any one of his mysterious power stones could be sold for a high price.

“We can hold on for a bit,” Deputy Zhou responded upon seeing the young man look at him. “But financial reforms are very necessary. The key lines in the publishing and circulation of star coins. That needs to come under our control to prevent greater trouble from developing. For example, the Ministry of Finance might lose their minds and print star coins with wild abandon.

“Sometimes, issues that don’t seem to be a problem can bring down the entire dynasty! Once trouble rocks the financial system and our money is worthless, that will herald extreme chaos through the land! I wanted to talk to you about this before, but so much has been happening lately...

“The greatest threat to us at present isn’t the Ministries of Administration or Armed Forces, but the Ministry of Finance!” Deputy Zhou looked at Li Hao and spoke rapidly, “When they decide they have nothing to lose, they can cause untold damage since they control the coin factories. They can create endless star coins and impact the entire dynasty that way. The collapse of our society will be imminent!”

Li Hao froze with complete stillness. He’d never thought much of the Ministry of Finance. But now that the deputy spoke of it, he understood the troubles within. Once everyone’s money was worthless pieces of paper and not even soft enough to use as toilet paper, then the dynasty would truly experience trouble for the first time!

The collapse of the financial system would spell the end of the road for the poor. The rich could survive as they had a sufficient stockpile of resources, but it would immediately be the doomsday of the poor!

“So you mean... that we should... eliminate the Ministry of Finance?” Li Hao took a deep breath, his head throbbing. That would mean outright hostility with the nine ministries right this very second!



“No, on the contrary,” Deputy Zhou shook his head. “We can’t hound them too closely for the moment, not unless we’re confident of taking down all of the nine ministries. We need to keep a low profile otherwise. It will be troublesome if they feel that there is no road ahead for them.

“They are also keeping themselves in check because they haven’t suffered much in terms of losses yet. But I suspect that the ministry may have accumulated enough money to instantly flood the market if anything happens to them. They also have jurisdiction over the banks of the dynasty. Countless people have their savings stored in the banks, once banks start failing...”

It would cause another cascade of tremendous trouble.

Li Hao’s jaw had dropped a long time ago. This was another unexpected shock to his plans, one that gave him a migraine.

“There’s no need to be so nervous, Commander Li,” Chen Zhongtian spoke at this time. “Currently speaking, neither the Ministry of Armed Forces, Administration, nor the royal family think they will be defeated. They won’t let Finance do so. Plunging the dynasty into chaos is the last possible option...”

“Is that so?” Li Hao raised an eyebrow. “I seem to remember that all of you want the dynasty to be engulfed by mayhem and become the new king among the disorder. Once you receive the worship of the citizens, you will become the so-called Human King. This is shaping up to be perfect timing, are you sure they don’t think that way?”

Chen Zhongtian fell silent. He couldn’t easily promise that those thoughts weren’t running through their minds.

The young man tamped down budding irritation in his heart. He didn’t fully understand some of these matters, so there was no need to speak of it in great detail for now. “Let’s set this aside. None of this is an issue so long as we move fast enough! I have two matters to announce!

“First, we march against the Wind and Cloud Pavilion! Second, we attack the City of Supernaturals!”

Li Hao quickly described his dealings with the City of Supernaturals; his listeners were stupefied. A local tyrant such as Lin Hongyu had surrendered after one fight? And she was voluntarily calling for a meeting of the twelve families to create an opportunity for the young man?

“Is this a trap?”

“Very possibly. Lin Hongyu is only thirty, but she’s completed her dominion over the City of Supernaturals. It’s plain to see that she possesses methods, ambition, and strength in conjunction. Would she surrender after just one setback?”

“.....” A hubbub of discussion arose. Meanwhile, Hou Xiaochen cleared his throat.

“Regardless of whether or not this is a trap, do you plan to go for the Wind and Cloud Pavilion first, then the City of Supernaturals?” he asked slowly.

Li Hao nodded, to which the man immediately shook his head.

“Not good, that’s an inappropriate course of action! At the very least, the City of Supernaturals is a known factor and the Wind and Cloud Pavilion in the shadows. The latter’s strength is uncertain and hard to determine, whereas we can hazard an educated guess for the former’s.

“We are also too pressed for time as the operation at the City of Supernaturals will commence in three days. Are you certain that you can finish at the Wind and Cloud Pavilion during this time? It would be maddening if we missed the chance to eliminate the City of Supernaturals because we were tied down there.

“On the flip side, the City of Supernaturals is certain. Once we conquer and swiftly consolidate our position there, we can enhance our battle strength by adding Lin Hongyu and the others to our ranks. We’ll have their strength to deploy against the unknown Wind and Cloud Pavilion!

“We take what is known first, then the unknown!” rumbled Hou Xiaochen. “This order cannot be reversed. We’d only be creating trouble for ourselves if it is. Additionally, it’s best to not move against their ordinary supernaturals yet when we attack the City of Supernaturals. Our operation must remain a secret!

“We should capture their senior executives in one go. With Lin Hongyu’s coordination, we can absolutely change their rulers without making a single sound! And don’t be in a rush to publicize our victory. We did so before because we wanted to find our footing, but now, we need to proceed at a slow and steady pace. We can’t continue to deepen the sense of danger for the nine ministries!

“Therefore, we shouldn’t send too many people. At the very least, we need to keep someone behind for defense. We also need to finish our business at the City of Supernaturals as soon as possible and keep the disturbance to a minimum.”

These ideas were the complete opposite of what Li Hao had in mind before, but the young man sank into deep thought and found that they made sense. “I’d thought to summon everyone and attack together. With our strength and numbers, we won’t fear any scheme. But Director Hou’s suggestion is that... we should keep ourselves in check?”

“Correct!” Hou Xiaochen exhaled. “We just need to take out their leadership team. As for the one million supernaturals, we can do that one step at a time. You haven’t finished consolidating the Night Watchers yet as some of the central region provinces have yet to fully commit their branches to you. We need a bit of time!”

Had his dream of sending one million supernaturals to the fields just shattered? Li Hao was a bit glum, but there truly was wisdom in Hou Xiaochen’s words.

“Accepting so many factions and supernaturals at once easily leads to complete disorganization,” Chen Zhongtian concurred. “Not to mention, you haven’t finished consolidating the Inspectorate

either. Being in such a rush to take down the City of Supernaturals right now... might lead to some indigestion."

"....." Everyone stared blankly at him. What did Chen Zhongtian mean by that? Since when had they started consolidating the Inspectorate?

"Didn't my son come by last time and say that the Inspectorate would join the Skystar Commander Office if you killed the Hu plant spirit?" Chen Zhongtian asked with surprise. "What... do you guys think... that my son was joking?"

The City of Supernaturals is coming for our business! he cursed to himself. He hadn't thought that this faction would join Li Hao's side at the drop of a hat. Li Hao's current troubles were that he'd spontaneously expanded too much; he didn't lack people.

It was just as the man had said, Li Hao needed to spend a bit of time digesting his conquests to come. If he focused on the City of Supernaturals next, then the Inspectorate's addition would appear a bit superfluous. That was unacceptable to Chen Zhongtian! What the heck was Lin Hongyu thinking??

Chen Zhongtian never thought that this would be a possibility, so he had to raise this concern as soon as possible. The Inspectorate's defection would be completely meaningless if this situation developed.

## Chapter 869: Plan (II)

"There are 3,216 cities in Skystar Dynasty at the moment and tens of thousands of smaller towns and villages." Chen Zhongtian smiled to see everyone looking at him. "The Inspectorate has branches in almost all of these places, making for more than 3.2 million personnel! Although not all of them are supernatural, the Inspectorate is the most basic level of law enforcement and an indicator of the stability of society. It's more important than the army, so it's very important to gather up the Inspectorate's strength!"

3.2 million inspectors weren't that many as there were ten billion people in the dynasty. There were one million in Silver City alone. Li Hao had been an inspector once, so he knew that at least three hundred inspectors were needed to maintain basic public security in a city that size. That was the

minimum amount of personnel as their jurisdiction would also span nearby towns and villages. In actuality, only three hundred inspectors would often cause a shortage in staff.

Ten billion meant three million inspectors were required, and that only satisfied a basic level of need.

The group looked at each other after Chen Zhongtian's words. Hou Xiaochen nodded in agreement. "The Inspectorate is a vital faction. We can forgo the one million in the City of Supernaturals, but lacking those three million inspectors would entail chaos beneath the heavens!"

This group had started considering their problems from the perspective of the entire world at some point in time. Previously, their thoughts had only spanned Silver Moon province. Even Hou Xiaochen had never fathomed that he would one day stand in Skystar City and discuss the matters of the world.

Chen Zhongtian smiled to see Hou Xiaochen agree with him. "That's right, so we need to consolidate the Inspectorate first. When it comes to the City of Supernaturals... to put it bluntly, their presence isn't crucial and their absence isn't of great consequence. It wouldn't affect anything if all of them died!

"They're a bunch of bastards who only know to cultivate day in and out and don't do anything else. They don't maintain the order of society and only know to wreak devastation. Getting to them a day earlier or a day later won't affect anything.

"Although they're strong, they're quite useless!" Chen Zhongtian looked at Li Hao. "Commander Li, sometimes the value of one's worth is measured not in terms of strength, but by their delegation of duty in society! The Inspectorate is in charge of very important duties. You were an inspector once before and should understand what happens when an Inspectorate branch falls apart. Will there be peace to be found in the city then?"

This question touched upon Li Hao's area of expertise. "Pandemonium will ensue!" He nodded. "Robbery and looting will spontaneously rise, a city is plunged into mayhem without its law enforcement agency. The Night Watchers are the law enforcement personnel for superhumans,

whereas the Inspectorate is the only one for ordinary people. Not everyone is a bad person, but not everyone is a good person either. The people will follow as soon as a precedent is set!"

He was well versed in this subject and instantly understood the importance of the Inspectorate. As for Chen Zhongtian's haste in delivering the Inspectorate to Li Hao, the young man wouldn't say anything.

Now as he looked at it, the division of labor between the nine ministries was very logical. Even the Ministry of Finance that Li Hao had thought only knew how to accept money was a vital component of the dynasty's operations.

It was the Ministry of the Judiciary that'd had part of its duties replaced by the Inspectorate and Night Watchers. Therefore, it didn't cause too much of a stir when it vanished. Otherwise, they would already be a hotbed of trouble.

"So right now, we need to secretly take down the senior executives of the City of Supernaturals. In that case, we don't need to go with too many... A large force will raise attention." Li Hao took a deep breath. "Then I will go with Deputy Zhou. Who else wants to join us? We need to keep it to ten people!"

"I'll go. I have nothing better to do and no one will keep tabs on me," volunteered a resigned Chen Zhongtian. When had the Inspectorate's allegiance become an inconvenience for their backer? Li Hao didn't have time to consolidate everyone he'd recruited to his side.

At the same time, this was good news. It meant that his decision was correct because Lin Hongyu also felt that Li Hao showed the signs of becoming a sovereign. The key laid with strength and patrons, of which Li Hao had aplenty. In this age, having those two factors and the support of Silver Moon meant that the young man stood a strong chance of victory.

Added to that support from the Inspectorate meant that Chen Zhongtian further felt that after taking down the City of Supernaturals, Li Hao's chances of winning would increase by infinite times.

He was worthy of their investment!

“We can leave just one at the Night Watchers.” Yao Si looked at Hou Xiaochen. “Should you go or I go?”

“I’ll go, Director Yao is the heart of the Night Watchers.” Hou Xiaochen smiled. The old man didn’t say anything in response.

“Count me in,” said Hong Yitang.

Hou Xiaochen interrupted He Yong when the man wanted to speak, “Don’t think about it, you’re too weak.” He Yong wanted to break out in curses.

“You’re still entangled with the royal family,” Hou Xiaochen continued. “They’re also keeping an eye on you. They won’t mind it if we leave. We’ve been pursuing the Wind and Cloud Pavilion all this time and sending a few from our side won’t raise any eyebrows. If you go, however, it will seem like we’re ready to start a battle.”

He Yong’s presence blatantly signaled the beginning of a fight. Li Hao and the rest could be passed off as searching for the Wind and Cloud Pavilion.

The young man took a quick count of his forces. It was him, Hong Yitang, Hou Xiaochen, Deputy Zhou, and Chen Zhongtian. The weakest of Hou Xiaochen was between five and six elements. Indeed, Director Hou was their weakest, but he should’ve set foot into six elements, no?

Li Hao wasn’t certain either. It was hard to fully see through a person at times after they crafted their supernatural characters. They were also all on the same side, so he rarely used his eyes on them. If Director Hou had also advanced to six elements, then they would all be between six and seven elements. That would bring them victory even if they met a true Apex.

Should he bring the little tree’s replica? After all, there would also be plant spirits to contend with.

Li Hao's only concern with that was that other plant spirits in the Skystar Town ruins might choose to investigate when the little tree was gone. Undesirable developments might easily occur without the little tree to confound them. The rest of the plant spirits would know ahead of time that the Golden Coconut was dead.

I'm short one plant replica! What a pity that General Pagoda didn't give me one. Damned shame!

The silent Sky Sword suddenly said, "I'll go with you and swing by Sky Sword Manor on my way back. Li Hao, do you want to come with me?"

"Me?"

"Yes, to meet a plant spirit."

Li Hao blinked.

"How can Sky Sword Manor not have ruins of its own if it's part of the seven divine mountains?" Sky Sword pointed out calmly.

Li Hao started. That was right!

"It's just that I'm typically busy and I don't like asking favors from others," Sky Sword explained. "I prefer handling things myself and just trading with the plant spirit for some Water of Life. They are not part of the Skystar Town ruins collective, so let's chat with it. Our partnership has existed for a few years and it can continue if it's willing. If not, we can eliminate it!"

Li Hao soundlessly opened and closed his mouth. He hadn't considered that Sky Sword Manor would have a plant spirit of its own. Sky Sword typically kept a very low profile and usually took action by himself. He never had a plant spirit replica with him and had exceedingly little Water of Life. The young man had suspected at one point that there were no ruins within Sky Sword Manor, but now he knew that they did exist!



“It can be inconvenient without a plant spirit being part of the task force at times,” Sky Sword said calmly. “But that imperial palace guard is better off staying here! Bring Panther with us. If it can coalesce some projections like last time, we might be able to take down the plant spirit if we head to the ruins alone!”

Panther!

The dog had been investigating the whereabouts of the Wind and Cloud Pavilion lately. Had it come back yet?

“Alright!” Li Hao nodded after some consideration. “Then it’ll just be us and no need for anyone else. We’ll head to Sky Sword Manor first. Our cover story can be that we’re going to meet the sword cultivators of the world. We’ll head to the City of Supernaturals in secret!”

The young man swiftly came to a decision. The rest of the people present were regretful that they couldn’t attend and some of the older martial masters were very regretful. Being unable to participate in a fight was a grave loss to them.

That concluded the conversation for Li Hao. The group decided to leave early in the morning. There was no need to specially conceal anything and they could spend the night waiting for Panther.

.....

Li Hao sought out Liu Long after the meeting and handed the man multiple storage rings. His reaction was even more pronounced than Li Hao’s—his eyes almost fell out of his head when he heard the contents of the rings. Void shields, void chains, an earth driller, flying ship, sea cruiser... He was stunned beyond belief that Li Hao had obtained so many treasures with one trip to Battle Heaven!

It was incredible!

Li Hao didn't say anything in particular and handed over a set of silver armor as well. "You are hereby promoted to a troop leader. Silver armor can contact one thousand Black Armors at once. Communication will be easier with the silver armor and your defensive capabilities will increase."

Liu Long was delighted. He was only a Black Armor before and there were only two Bronze Armors in Li Hao's division—Hong Yitang and He Yong. The suits of silver armor offered much more defense and most crucial of all, they could contact Bronze and Black Armors under their command at will. This would prevent mismatched timing in battle.

"We're the newly established Eleventh Division and you are the leader of the first troop!" Li Hao smiled. "We can use these designations in private, we'll keep to the previous positions in public. Additionally, I'm giving you twenty sets of bronze armor. You can assign them according to your needs!"

Liu Long quickly nodded; he was in a wonderful mood.

"Chief, you should focus on cultivating more. Although the military formation is strong, there will be times when you're alone."

With the military formation present and with the latest treasures he'd collected, the Demon Hunter Army would greatly improve once more. But as a troop leader, Liu Long's individual strength was too low.

Liu Long nodded solemnly. He understood his shortcomings as well. If it wasn't for the fact that he'd been with Li Hao since Silver City, his current strength would make him completely insignificant.

## Chapter 870: Plan (III)

After Liu Long left, Li Hao debated how to allocate the remaining nine sets of silver armor. The armor could effectively defend itself against any being below Apex. The identity of a Silver Armor was also immensely useful, while the on-demand communication with Black Armors was also pivotal. Also, they would be recognized in any ruins that were of an official city that still recognized New Martial.

Various possibilities flitted through the young man's mind; he was in no hurry. It was time to make more preparations for the City of Supernaturals, just in case it turned out to be a trap. Although he was bringing a strong team, the appearance of a true Apex or Immortal would cause tremendous trouble all the same. If he couldn't take the little tree with him, what about... other things? Like the puppets?

Inspiration struck the young man—the puppets in Evenround Martial weren't weak. The Black Armor was strong, as were the puppets. The puppets lacked core origin and their bodies were made out of metal. Would the void also seek to cut them to pieces?

Even if it did, it wouldn't matter much. His domain of the five elements could help them stabilize the nearby void. Li Hao could barely sit still after the idea flashed through his mind. Safety was more important than anything, he had to be prepared for everything!

.....

Evenround Martial University.

The Black Armor flew into a rage! Again?! He'd thought that peace was at hand after a week of no more Li Hao visits, but here the young man was again!

Boom!

The void nearly split open the second Li Hao appeared. A robot cat abruptly smacked him, startling him so much that he quickly jumped through the air and disappeared.

The robot cat disappeared as well, breaking through the void with a rumble. Li Hao flashed into view, then disappeared again. He manifested behind the Black Armor, startling the man.

"That's enough!" shouted the Black Armor.

“He touched me!” The robot cat stopped with reluctance.

“.....” Li Hao was speechless and recalled that he’d patted this robot cat last time before he left. He’d simply found its shape cute as it had a cartoon cat’s head. Who knew that the other would still remember this, and they were quite strong to boot?

There was no talk of martial dao battle methods, just pure strength. The pure strength of a puppet!

The Black Armor was equally resigned and took a while to respond, “He touched a metal construct, not your body.”

“.....” The robot cat went mute, those words were too sad to hear. It flashed back to the school gates and took an unmoving position, turning into pillars at the gates with the other cat puppets.

Li Hao wiped off nonexistent sweat from his brow, heart palpitating from the earlier exchange.

“Senior, is that one of the female cultivators from back in the day?” he transmitted to the Black Armor.

“.....” So you know as well! “What do you think? Don’t go around randomly touching or feeling things!”

These students hadn’t been that old when they died. After spending so many years silent or sleeping, their personalities haven’t changed much. Do you think you won’t be smacked for touching a girl in her twenties?

“Do you have a reason for your return?”

“Yes, the Ninth Division leader of the Reserve Defenders wanted me to pass on the word that Battle Heaven is still fighting the good fight. They wish to reactivate the city, leave Silver Moon, and return to the main world.”

“He’s still there?” paused the Black Armor.

“Yes, do you know him, senior?”

No shit!

“And he didn’t beat you?”

“What?” Li Hao blinked.

“I said, why didn’t he beat you to death?”

“.....” Li Hao was speechless. The heck man? I haven’t antagonized him, why would he attack me? Granted, I was beaten twice, but not to the point of being beaten to death.

Judging from the young man’s reaction, the Black Armor understood that Li Hao didn’t know the particulars. He said nothing further and inclined his head. “He thinks too much. I might truly despair if I was the only one here, but right now... I still have my responsibilities!”

He didn’t matter, but these puppets had been students in their time and were the descendants of exalted emperors. They were the Human King’s most steadfast supporters, so he had to bring them home.

Li Hao didn't mention the students, but they themselves ought to know that the Black Armor wouldn't give up. He might despair or rage against his circumstances, but he wouldn't give up because they were still here.

"Is that it? Did you revive the pagoda tree?"

"Do you know about that too, senior?"

"I sensed some of it," the Black Armor said calmly. "That was not a good choice. That guy's family... forget it, I won't speak ill of others. The eight guardian families were the core strength of New Martial, they should be worthy of trust."

As for whether or not anyone had turned traitor, that could be left unsaid. He didn't want to speculate wildly. There might be traitors, but baseless guesses without evidence would only wound the feelings of the other main cities.

Li Hao could vaguely make out the connotations behind his words. Director General Zhao had spoken of them before as well. The young man didn't say anything and simply committed everything to memory.

"Senior, I'm going to run a few errands, but it won't be safe," he explained the purpose of his visit. "I would like a senior student or several of them to accompany me. I'd like to bring them out with me."

"Don't even think about it!"

"Are you worried about the void churning them to pieces?" Li Hao furrowed his brows. "I've mastered the personal domain and can isolate them from the void."

“It’s not that,” answered the Black Armor. “They’re just puppets made from durable material and lack core origin. They won’t incur a backlash from the void, not unless they utilize their strength. However, the void may not be able to slice them to pieces even if they do take action!”

“Then...”

“It’s because you’re not qualified!”

Li Hao blinked.

“They are reserve troops for the Demonic Guards. No one has the right to give them commands apart from the principal and Human King.”

The young man looked speechlessly at him. “This is a misunderstanding, I’m not looking to order them around. I’m inviting the seniors out on a field trip with me!”

“.....” It was the Black Armor’s turn to be at a loss for words.

“Seniors! Does anyone want to go on a field trip?” Li Hao yelled. “It’s a fascinating world out there and too boring in here!”

A hundred puppets appeared in a split second. No one made a sound, but they all looked at him, including the robot cats at the school gates. Even the one who’d hit Li Hao stretched out her cartoony looking head.

“They are but puppets.” The Black Armor glanced at Li Hao. “Not to mention, you won’t be able to use them in battle if they enter the outside world. Their internal energy is depleted and they’ll need large sums of energy stones to fight. Do you know what the concept of a ‘large sum’ is? The one who hit you, for example, requires a minimum of five hundred thousand energy stones if she is to maintain her full strength for five minutes.”

Li Hao blinked. Five hundred thousand ancient stones... were five million modern stones! That was a crazy consumption rate, and for only five minutes! One minute was the equivalent of one million stones!

His head nearly exploded from the requirements. Were their needs so great? The ancient civilization needed energy to operate everything! Well, that made sense since how was one supposed to erupt in the absence of energy?

“Then... how is their strength?”

“Stronger than you!”

“.....” Li Hao was speechless. Of course, that’s a given, I can sense that!

“Do they consume energy when not fighting?”

“Very little! Additionally, I’m just talking about this. You have many thoughts rattling around in your brain, but allow me to remind you that if you really do bring someone out and they get lost or anything happens to them... my vengeance will be overwhelming! I will issue an order to all of Silver Moon for all New Martial existences to exterminate you! Do not play with fire!” The Black Armor felt that Li Hao was simply out of line. The puppets here weren’t real puppets, but students of the university. They all came with great backgrounds. If Li Hao lost one or broke one of them, he wouldn’t be able to shoulder the consequences!

The young man nearly reeled from the conversation. That harsh?? And this one probably wasn’t joking! The little tree had mentioned before that this one could give commanders to the city lords of the eight main cities. He was just here to find helpers, not be a babysitter.

“Then... forget it...”



Hundreds of puppet heads snapped toward Li Hao. There seemed to be vicious glares bubbling out of them! You're the one who said you're going to bring us out on a field trip, and now you say forget it?? Are you playing with us??

Hundreds of puppets immediately appeared around him. They didn't say a word, but simply clenched their fists or brandished their weapons. They were ready to slice and dice Li Hao at any second!

"You're the one who created this trouble for yourself," the Black Armor remarked indifferently. "I told you not to do anything untoward."

"It's not me who's not bringing you guys out, but the dean!" Li Hao said with resignation. "I can't do anything about it either!"

What are you guys looking at me for?

The puppets promptly swiveled to the Black Armor.

"And what do you want to do out there? You have no bodies, so you can neither eat nor drink. You might get lost in a moment of carelessness and be unable to return. And what happens if someone smashes you guys?"

"Teacher..."

"Don't bother beginning, it won't work!" he cut them off coolly. "Don't go mad alongside this fellow. He has his goals, what do you have?"

"But... when our junior grows stronger... he can open the Star Gate!"

“.....” The Black Armor stared at them. Li Hao was their junior now? Junior my ass!