

## Star Gate 891

### Chapter 891: I'll Invest In You (III)

“First, these plant spirits have consumed a great deal of indestructible matter over the years. They’re empty husks!” explained the Ninth Division leader. “Second, I was a peak Immortal, they were just mid or initial Immortal. There is a great difference between the two. Third, they are plant spirits and I am human—one of the elite generals of the human race. The methods I cultivate are far more sophisticated than theirs and the indestructible material I gather is of much higher quality.

“Fourth...” he paused. “My mental strength is far stronger. Ten plant spirits is just my estimate, it might take far more than that!”

“.....” Li Hao gaped with amazement.

The Ninth Division leader laughed at his expression, but his mirth was concealed by the golden armor. Are you done with your loud and empty talk yet? What, have you accidentally killed another Immortal plant spirit and brought it to revitalize me, so that I’ll work on your behalf?

What is brewing in your mind!

Everyone could see the inklings of Li Hao’s plotting and wanted to laugh. Meanwhile, the young man’s head throbbed and he suddenly looked at Director General Wang. “Will... the director general need that many? You’re just an initial Immortal.”

“Just listen to yourself!” laughed Director General Wang. “I don’t need that many as I’m a bit weaker than him and my mental strength isn’t as strong. I stand a chance of revitalization with just five plant spirits...”

“One Immortal plant spirit alone is difficult to revive a human with.” The director general was delighted that Li Hao had run into a wall. “It can awaken a plant spirit without issue because their primary bodies are still present. It can also revitalize the troop leaders, it’s just that ours...”

The man shook his head with a sigh. “They’ve become weapon souls. It might’ve been possible a while ago, but it will be an enormous hassle now.”

Li Hao was very conflicted. Why!! He was very unwilling to accept that Director General Wang was the only option. The Ninth Division leader was stronger and constantly bullied Li Hao. The commander would have to be Li Hao’s minion after he was resurrected, or face being shredded by the void.

But now, this plan was unviable!

You’re just an Immortal, but you need ten Immortal corpses to have a hope of revival. What’s with you?? Li Hao ran through every single swear word he knew. As for resurrecting Director General Wang... this one... wasn’t strong. He was just an initial Immortal, but it took five powerful plant spirits for him all the same. What the heck?

Should I say it? But I suddenly don’t want to say it anymore. How about... I say that I don’t have it?

He’d brimmed with ambition before, but was suddenly very depressed. Well, Director General Wang wasn’t that bad. He was a friendly guy, at the very least.

“Is this all you’ve summoned an emergency meeting for?” The Ninth Division leader grew impatient.

“Of course not!” Li Hao snorted reflexively. “I called this meeting to discuss the future of Battle Heaven. How is the Ninth Division leader to lead the army with this demonstration of impatience? Is a lack of patience the character of an army commander??”

“.....” The Ninth Division leader blinked. Li Hao inwardly cringed, ready to be beaten up. Who would’ve thought that the commander would incline his head after a moment of contemplation? “It would seem that death does still affect us somewhat. It is difficult to repress the rampaging of our mental strength. It might also have to do with you since I am irritated by the very sight of you. You speak correctly, a soldier should not be thus.”

“.....”

I thought you were going to beat me up again. Li Hao was delighted that the Ninth Division leader hadn't lost his temper. He was also resolved of his inner turmoil. "I will lead my men into the face of death for the future of Battle Heaven! My only hope is for the city to stand proudly over Silver Moon Territory once more!

"Therefore, I am making a decision today that I will resurrect Director General Wang. He will be able to walk out of the city and stand side by side with me. Let us fight together for a brighter future, to walk out of the Star Gate, and to return to the main world! This is for New Martial, for the Human King, and for the people!"

The trunks of five Immortal plant spirits appeared at the end of his declaration. A pin drop could be heard in the quiet great hall as everyone stared at the new items. Even Director General Wang was stunned. Five plant spirits?

Where had they come from? Hadn't Li Hao only left for a few days?

The Ninth Division leader was likewise surprised and didn't say a word. The old turtle and General Pagoda looked at each other, also silent.

Zhang Liang swallowed hard and muttered inaudibly, "I can be resurrected as well."

Why does no one mention me? As the deputy commissioner of Military Supplies, he'd had some strength to his name back in the day. How else would he be in his position otherwise? Although he wasn't an Immortal, he was a peak Apex who wasn't necessarily weaker than Ole Wang.

Meanwhile, Director General Wang was shocked senseless. What did the young man mean by this?

“Director General Wang, as one of the surviving leaders of Battle Heaven, you have a duty and obligation to exert yourself on behalf of the city!” Li Hao declared. “The outside world is dangerous, but I’ll be able to protect you and prevent you from being severed by the void. Of course, there will be restrictions in the sense of not being able to stray too far from me. That is unavoidable.

“Although some of your personal freedom will be curtailed, only in this way do we have a hope of restoring Battle Heaven to its former glory! There are too many strong enemies at large these days. I am spread thin by myself in the outside world!

“Of course, we will set the matter aside if Director General Wang is unwilling. I happen to know a powerhouse of the Zhao main city as well. I can resurrect a human from them to fight for the future of humanity...

“General.” Li Hao looked at the pagoda tree. “It isn’t that Li Hao is unwilling to revive plant spirits, but that for one, their primary bodies are still intact. For two, I also have some plans to shift some auxiliary generals to Skystar Island. I killed six Immortal plant spirits, resulting in abundant energy on the island. That leaves space for some auxiliary generals to devour their own energy and decrease the drain on the general as much as possible.”

The thought moved General Pagoda. It was very hard to absorb energy in Silver Moon as its descendants could hardly outcompete those old plants. If they were transplanted to Skystar Island... while it might not be as safe as the province, that would indeed result in more hope. Revitalization on their own was just as good.

The general didn’t say anything and simply nodded. These five plant spirit corpses could also be used to resurrect five plant spirits. As for why Li Hao didn’t do so... it was well aware of the reasons why. It still didn’t say anything as exposing everything underneath the sun wasn’t a good idea.

A certain degree of caution was a necessity.

The group had sunk into deep contemplation as they stared at the five trunks.

“How... did you do it?” Director General Wang asked with difficulty after a while. Killing one might be luck, but so many... was a very difficult undertaking. That required true strength!

“Hard won fights and great effort!” Li Hao declared. “Bravely forging forward in the face of death and not being afraid to put our lives on the line. What is death in the face of needing to return to the main world and to protect life itself?”

“.....” You say that like you actually mean it.

“Is Director General Wang afraid of a difficult path ahead?” asked the young man.

“You don’t need to try to get a rise out of me...”

“This is a military meeting, I’m not trying to randomly provoke a reaction!” Li Hao retorted hotly. “I ask you, are you confident in recovering your physical body? Are you confident in fighting by my side? If not, we can forget about this. This is a chance that was obtained through high sacrifice and the lives of countless people. It is not a joke. As part of the senior officers of Battle Heaven, does Director General Wang realize what you’re saying?”

“.....” The director general coughed gently. “I made too light of this action, my apologies.”

Li Hao nodded with satisfaction. “That is good. Then I ask again, is the director general willing to be revived?”

Director General Wang was conflicted himself and thought for a moment. “I am! I will fight for New Martial and humanity! I will not shy away from duty since you have selected me. There is no sense in asking a young man not of New Martial to sacrifice and fight for us. Those of New Martial can save ourselves!

“Everyone, since the Eleventh Division leader has brought back these items, I will take the first step to recover my body and march upon the cosmos again. Those of Battle Heaven will once more set foot into the universe!”

He reached out and grabbed for the five plant spirit corpses! Li Hao halted him with a cough.

“Is it true that you also need a lot of Water of Life to complete the task?”

Director General Wang started and nodded. “That’s right. Indestructible matter is one ingredient, as is Water of Life also critical.”

“How much do you need?” Director General Wang thought for a moment and carefully said, “I am an Immortal. If I am to recover that level of body... then I need at least ten thousand drops.”

You have that amount. You just took ten thousand drops a few days ago.

“So many resources just for an initial Immortal?” Li Hao took a deep breath. “I can revive plenty of plant spirits with that amount.”

“.....” Director General Wang was quite resigned. I’m full of heroic valor, but you’re talking money! You’re the one who wanted to resurrect a human, not me. “Well... humans are very strong. We can go one against three, isn’t that something!”

“.....” It was still a lousy bargain. Li Hao glanced at General Pagoda; the tree’s projection turned away. Don’t look at me, I don’t have any. I’m really, really poor right now.

“Then... can I be promoted after resurrecting Director General Wang?”

“.....” The Ninth Division leader snapped irritably, “What do you have filling your brains?? You are already a division leader. Do you want to become a reserve commander?”

Dream on!

Li Hao was speechless. I really expended a lot of effort for this!

“Um... how about we forget it?” Director General Wang felt compelled to say.

“No, since when do I give up halfway?” Li Hao was slightly regretful and only hoped that resurrecting the director general wouldn’t be a losing proposition. This one... would help him earn back this investment in the outside world, right? He would as soon as they killed a few plant spirits.

The young man sighed and took out a large water jug, pouring out roughly ten thousand drops. He looked at Director General Wang with reluctance. “I earned this in the outside world after risking my life a few times...”

What he’d gained from Battle Heaven might not measure up to this amount. Li Hao suddenly felt that he’d always been supporting the ancient city. Woe was he! Although Battle Heaven had also given him some items in return, it didn’t feel like a good trade.

Forget it, he would view it as an investment. Indeed, an investment. To outsiders, it appeared that Battle Heaven invested in Li Hao. It was the exact opposite to the young man. He was the one investing in the ancient city and no one knew how much he’d poured into Battle Heaven.

Chapter 892: I’ll Invest In You (IV)

As for Battle Heaven aiding Li Hao, they hadn’t supplied him that much apart from the identity of a commander, the two characters of the city’s name, and some armor and other equipment. It was far less than what the outside world thought.

Hence, while outsiders felt that Li Hao had reached his current status only through Battle Heaven, the reality of the situation was that the young man had relied more on Silver Moon martial masters and the little tree from the imperial palace. Those two parties had given him much more help.

Such was the situation that Battle Heaven understood as well.

“I will earn it all back for you when I have my body again,” Director General Wang promised when he saw how reluctant Li Hao was. “At my current level, regular Immortals are no match for me after I reclaim my physical body. Ah, the caveat is that I’m not churned to pieces by the void.”

He hadn’t thought of resurrecting before, but now, Li Hao had prepared Immortal plant spirits and Water of Life. The chance to step forward in a physical body again was right in front of him. He would be a fool to give it up!

“Very well then,” Li Hao sighed. “I hope that the director general can fight with me once we leave and obtain more opportunities for ourselves.

“Director Pagoda, I’ll need to take some of the auxiliary generals with me this time. Five, I think. Too many won’t do either and I may not necessarily be able to protect them all.”

“Five... will do.” The general thought for a bit after glancing at him. “But they’re almost completely inert and will need some core origin or other energy to stimulate their consciousness. Otherwise, they will be hard pressed to absorb energy of their own accord.”

I knew it! I have to leave behind something every time I come here.

“How much?” Li Hao nodded.

“Not too much, just Water of Life will do. It’s not a high price to stimulate their consciousness, a few hundred drops is enough.”



Li Hao rolled his eyes at himself. Is that not a lot? Five plant spirits means a couple thousand drops! I just gave you ten thousand, here goes another couple thousand drops. What I collected from killing those plant spirits is all going to you guys!

Embarrassment nipped at the heels of the group as well. New Martial powerhouses were accustomed to fighting for their own needs. Li Hao was the one giving them vast sums of resources again and again.

“Eleventh Division leader, Battle Heaven is not a glutton that only knows how to eat,” coughed the old turtle. “We are in some difficulties at the moment. Once the second awakening begins or when the world can accommodate the city again, we will be sure to repay the Eleventh Division leader in full.”

General Pagoda nodded as well.

“The Battle Heaven Army is never one to take without payment!” intoned the Ninth Division leader. “Don’t be miserly. Since you’ve set the process in motion, be more generous. Battle Heaven will remember this favor!”

“Just listen to the Ninth Division leader!” Li Hao grinned. “Am I the sort to expect payment when bestowing favors?”

Guess what, I am!

The group didn’t know how to respond.

“In that case, General Pagoda should stimulate the plant spirits’ consciousness first and tell them the situation. And another thing—they must listen to me when they leave Battle Heaven! That includes Director General Wang. We can discuss things, but they must obey my commands in important matters. We can give up this entire idea if anyone finds this inappropriate!”

“Don’t worry!” sighed a resigned Director General Wang. There was nothing to say to that. Li Hao was an interesting fellow—he was so materialistic that there was nothing anyone could say about it.

The young man grinned and turned to the others. “Everyone, it’s only a matter of time before I resurrect everyone if all goes well. There’s no rush! Battle Heaven is the first ancient ruin that I explored and I am part of its ranks as well. We are on the same side here. My first thoughts go to you whenever I gain anything and not anyone else.

“Battle Heaven’s spirit has survived through the years and it is sure to be the first to revive among the eight main cities...” Li Hao looked at Director General Wang after his speech. “Then please hurry and return to your physical body, director general. I don’t have much time and need to get back as soon as possible. I’m going to take care of a few matters now and will return in a day. Is that period of time sufficient?”

“Just about!”

“Then I am off! Meeting dismissed!” Li Hao turned and left, leaving another three thousand drops of Water of Life when he departed. His stores of twenty-five thousand were halved after one meeting.

He was off to visit the little tree and give it core origin to absorb as a reward. He also had to search out Huang Yu. As for the resurrection process, he didn’t need to watch it. Li Hao had a good hunch of what it would entail and couldn’t be bothered to take a look. That would just be a waste of time.

The group looked at each other after Li Hao left. It was a long while before the old turtle said, “I’d thought that the young fellow would need to rely on us, but... how surprising. He’s developed at such an incredible pace that he’s killed five Immortal plant spirits in such a short period of time. There must be people helping him.

“Recover as soon as possible, Director General Wang, and see what you can do once you leave. Us of New Martial almost have no face left to our name.”

“I’ll try my best, but I’m afraid I won’t be able to stray too far from him,” Director General Wang said awkwardly. “It’ll have to depend on the decision!”

“You only have one mission when you leave, and that is to investigate which of the eight main cities is the traitor,” boomed the Ninth Division leader. “That is all!”

“You...”

“Just because we don’t speak of it doesn’t mean that there isn’t one!” the commander snapped coldly. “What is the point of playing deaf and dumb and lying to ourselves? You only have one other point of consideration beyond this mission, and that is to follow Li Hao’s orders. He is a general in the army and you are subject to military orders in times of war!”

“My rank isn’t any lower than his.” Director General Wang was at a loss.

“That doesn’t matter!” The Ninth Division leader couldn’t be bothered and rose to leave. “Keep one thing in mind, Wang. We New Martial people have already died once and do not fear a second death. I hope you do not change once you are resurrected!”

“There’s no need for you to worry your pretty little head about that! You’re not the one paying to revive me, what do you care!”

“.....” The Ninth Division leader didn’t know how to respond to that. What was that little bastard being so arrogant for? “You have to rely on one from the Sword Sovereign lineage in the end. Capital Martial is only good for show!”

“.....” Fuck you back to the primordial times! “You do it if you’re so good! Get ten Immortal plant spirits so you can take his orders, follow by his side, and run his errands! Heh, so a direct student of Demonic Martial, descendant of the Sword Sovereign lineage, and side branch of the Li family has to rely on a Li descendant of countless generations for help. I’d shove myself into a manure pit if I were you!”

“You little gnat!”

“Guardian, you see that?? He wants to hit me! I’m the acting city lord! It’s mutiny if he touches me! Aren’t you guys going to do anything about it??” Director General Wang yelled as the sight of a Gold Armor spraying sword intent was terrifying.

The two guardian entities of Battle Heaven looked at each other and promptly vanished.

Clattering sounds sounded from the city lord manor. The Ninth Division leader took to the air not long after, leaving behind another Gold Armor sectioned into pieces in the manor. A strand of soul hovered tragically over them.

“He did it for your own good,” sounded the old turtle’s voice. “The golden armor was almost one with you. I was debating how to strip you out from it, but he did the job. This is good!”

“Is this how one should separate person from item?!” Director General Wang cursed loudly. He settled down after a few ominous rumbles. What was he supposed to do when he couldn’t beat the other?

“Hmph, just you wait until I recover my physical body!” The strand of soul disappeared with the five wooden logs.

The old turtle sighed. You... might not be a match for him even after recovering your physical body. That guy’s mental strength is growing ever stronger.

.....

The imperial palace.

Li Hao remained very polite toward the little tree. As waves of core origin energy appeared, the little tree's primary body devoured them without hesitation. This was heaven! It felt so good, goodness it felt so good!

Its massive crown swayed continuously. Was this a dream? It hadn't done much lately, at least its primary body hadn't done much other than growing a batch of rations. And yet, there was a continual stream of core origin for it to absorb. This felt so surreal!

It was too young in the consideration of Silver Moon Territory proper. It might be the first plant spirit after the New Martial era. Small and piteous compared to other plant spirits, it couldn't even absorb as much energy as the others.

If it wasn't for the eruption of energy twenty years ago, it might've died a while back. Even so, it could still intimidate Golden Spear back when Li Hao first arrived in its ruins. At that time, Golden Spear was a Nova.

Now that its replica had absorbed vast quantities of energy and its primary body also taking in energy, the little tree felt that it could return to the level of strength that its father wielded. Granted, it knew that this was a mistaken impression, but it was still very excited.

How comfortable this was!

Li Hao laughed at this time. "Senior Tree, do you have a name?"

"Eh?"

"A name," Li Hao repeated. "There are too many awakened plant spirits these days, I can't keep calling you Senior Tree."

The little tree paused. A name? It was just a plant spirit born of the last imperial palace guard, what kind of name would it have?

“How about I choose one for the senior? Imperial Guard? The one who guards the imperial majesty.”

“As you wish.” The little tree didn’t really care about what it was called.

“Senior Imperial Guard, do you wish to see the outside world?”

“Outside world?”

“Yes, the imperial palace is very safe now and no one dares come here. The senior won’t have the strength to continue guarding the palace if you stay here. The opportunity comes if you leave before the rest of the plant spirits are fully awake. Otherwise, how is the senior to guard the palace with this level of strength?”

#### Chapter 893: All In Readiness (I)

“There are a lot of Immortals in the world and quite a few Saints,” Li Hao sighed. “How is the senior to fight them if you are only an Apex? It’s better to take advantage of most being asleep and leave right now. You might not have this chance in the future.”

The little tree hesitated.

“My replica is outside...”

“A replica is just a replica. Its battle strength is run-of-the-mill and only rivals an Apex. How can it compare to the primary body?”

The little tree still hesitated. With the imperial palace right behind it, should it leave the ruins?

It wouldn't have had these thoughts before, but when it came to Li Hao, there were plenty of opportunities with the young man. Just as he said, how could one safeguard a place without sufficient strength? The little tree's thoughts were different from before.

"Do you still need rations though?" the little tree asked after a while. It'd created quite the harvest for Li Hao these days.

"That's easy," chuckled the young man. "I can pay some mysterious power stones to have Battle Heaven create the rations for me. Compared to General Pagoda, I feel closer to Senior Imperial Guard. I'll take you instead of the general."

Is that so? The little tree was gratified by the declaration. That seemed... rather nice.

"Then... the imperial palace..." The little tree would miss the place. "I'll use father's corpse to seal off the area. I'll come back to the imperial palace one day."

I'm only going out to grow stronger, so I can protect the palace better. I'm not going out to play and neglect my duties. Father, when I return after growing stronger, the palace will no longer suffer invaders!

It was too weak at present. Just as Li Hao said, anything surviving to present day were Immortals or Saints. How was an Apex to guard the imperial palace? Although the palace had been abandoned, the imperial majesty had been there once. No one was permitted to dirty its grounds! A variety of thoughts traveled through the little tree's mind; it ultimately decided to go with Li Hao, despite its great reluctance.

The young man smiled. He was abducting more and more powerhouses from Silver Moon... no, he was bringing people out to strengthen themselves. There were more helpers by his side these days. But the key was still his own strength.

Would there be a need for this if I could fight Immortals and Saints on my own? He'd been so busy lately that there'd been no time to improve his cultivation. Although his battle strength improved through his comprehension of the auras and domain of the five elements, it still wasn't satisfactory.

It'd been a dozen days since the Arcanus Ranking appeared, yet his strength had not improved by much since then. It was only after his teacher told him a bit about the personal domain that he improved. The amount of progress he showed after half a month was very little.

The key lies in the self! I can't waste the remainder of this Water of Life. I have to use some on myself to improve my own cultivation...

Li Hao left some instructions with the little tree that he would take it with him when he left the province. The young man was starting to be concerned that he was taking too many people with him on this trip. Would his personal domain bear up beneath the strain?

There was Director General Wang in his new physical body, the little tree's primary body, and the five auxiliary generals to be revived...

Granted, he wouldn't need to have them by his side the entire time. He would only need to look after them for a bit, Director General Wang included.

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Li Hao was a very busy young man. After he finished with the little tree, he raced toward the Silver Moon Army.

Within the barracks.

Huang Yu was rather surprised to see Li Hao. The young man had come by just a few days ago and even met Director General Zhao on his visit. What was this guy still doing here? Had he been here the entire time?



“Are you not busy lately?” Huang Yu couldn’t help himself. “How come you’re staying in Silver Moon?”

Was there no business to conduct in Skystar City? Didn’t they all say that the young man was moving against the Wind and Cloud Pavilion lately? Was he not taking action against that faction either?

“I need your help, Commander Yu.” Li Hao smiled.

“Who are you killing? The Wind and Cloud Pavilion?”

“No, the City of Supernaturals.”

“They’re tough to handle!” Huang Yu frowned solemnly. “They have the twelve ancient aristocracies in residence and nearly one hundred Arcanus. Lin Hongyu is formidable and each of the families has an ultimate weapon to call upon. I’m familiar with the situation at the City of Supernaturals, they won’t be an easy target. Creating too big a disturbance will also easily cause other factions to ally together and attack us in conjunction!

“There’s not much of a problem with you attacking the Wind and Cloud Pavilion because that’s a mysterious faction that everyone wishes for you to probe. Don’t always be taking action without thinking things through.”

“It’s not like I want to do so either,” Li Hao sighed.

“Then give up the notion!” Huang Yu declared.

“How can I?” Li Hao shook his head with resignation. “I’ve eradicated eleven of the families and all of the wandering cultivators. Lin Hongyu has surrendered and even the plant spirit behind her has sworn fealty. One million supernaturals are at hand, how am I supposed to give them up?”

“.....” Huang Yu looked dumbly at him.

“I don’t want to take them on right now either, but I have no choice,” Li Hao sighed. “The Inspectorate has joined my side and Chen Zhongtian won’t leave me alone. He wants me to take over the Inspectorate as soon as possible.

“I didn’t have time to handle this before Lin Hongyu called for a cabinet meeting at the City of Supernaturals and killed everyone participating. She insists on giving me the city and wants me to send someone to take it over. I really don’t have anyone I can rely on, so I’m here to ask Commander Yu to hold down the fort for me at the City of Supernaturals in case the supernaturals riot.”

Huang Yu looked dumbly at him. The City of Supernaturals has surrendered? How come I don’t know anything about this? He’d somewhat anticipated the Inspectorate’s actions as he’d participated in the operation against the golden coconut. It would be very normal for Chen Zhongtian to surrender after that.

The City of Supernaturals, however, was completely unexpected! So he was to sit in residence at the city and oversee one million supernaturals? Huang Yu stared off into space.

“Commander Yu, Silver Moon cannot always focus on defense.” Li Hao frowned. “Isn’t keeping the enemy off home ground our goal? Even if all three hundred thousand Silver Moon soldiers become martial masters and elites, there is still greater merit in suppressing one million supernaturals...”

“Can it be... a conspiracy?” Huang Yu asked after a long moment.

“How can it be? We’re the ones who killed them and even killed five of their plant spirits...”

Huang Yu’s jaw sagged and he looked at Li Hao, murmuring to himself after a while, “Is Lin Hongyu crazy?”

Why would she surrender? She wasn't weak and commanded nearly one hundred Arcanus under her banner. Why would such a faction surrender so easily and be completely brought to heel in three days? This was possibly the last thought on anyone's mind.

"And why not?" Li Hao laughed. "I met her on the road a while ago and nearly killed her. She knows that she can't fight me and smartly chose to surrender. Only fools resist to the end, right?"

Alright then!

Huang Yu admitted wordlessly. "There are others who can command the Silver Moon Army, so that isn't a problem. But when considering Ole Zhao... Now that Kong Jie isn't coming back, Hou Xiaochen is gone, Zhou Chuan is gone, if I go too..."

He was embarrassed by the situation. Was it appropriate for all of them to leave? They were supposed to be the four defenders of Silver Moon, everyone was supposed to guard their home! It'd only taken a few months for all of them to go. The older generation of martial masters had left, a batch of powerhouses had left, and now that he was leaving too...

Indeed, he'd decided to leave and suppress one million supernaturals to stabilize the world! To be honest, it was a much better use of his abilities than standing guard at Silver Moon. Huang Yu was well aware of how much trouble it would cause after one million supernaturals spread out across the land.

It was just... he felt bad when he thought of Ole Zhao.

Ole Zhao had made a lot of preparations in Silver Moon. What if... Li Hao exterminated all of the enemies in territories outside the province without needing those preparations? Wouldn't Ole Zhao have gone to extraneous effort?

That'd be terrible!

But... it also seemed nice if war would never reach Silver Moon borders.

Various thoughts flitted through Huang Yu's mind before he coughed, "Then... I'll go to Ole Zhao and tell him all this?"

"No need!" Li Hao chuckled. "Just say that I'm going to move against the Wind and Cloud Pavilion lately and have Director General Zhao let you go."

"Are you on guard against him?" Huang Yu asked after momentary silence.

"Not quite," Li Hao responded after some consideration. "It's the main city of the Zhaos behind him. I know that at least one city out of the eight main cities has betrayed us. I don't know which one. Given his background, Director General Zhao automatically thinks that his family's city hasn't, just like I think Battle Heaven hasn't. In that case, we should keep out of each other's way."

Huang Yu swallowed his response; Li Hao was right. Director General Zhao wouldn't suspect his own family's city, he would suspect Battle Heaven first. Thus, it was very normal for Li Hao to suspect the Zhao city as well.

"Mmhhh, I understand." Huang Yu nodded after some thought.

"It's best that Commander Yu understands." Li Hao smiled. "I have no ill will toward Director General Zhao, but we must be cautious when it comes to resurrected ancient existences."

"Naturally!" Huang Yu nodded. "Us modern people can respect and revere the ancients, but we cannot become their puppets. Otherwise... we will become the next New Martial and may soon disappear from this land."

New Martial was very strong, but it was gone all the same.

“Then I won’t meet Director General Zhao, Commander Yu can tell him yourself. Additionally, select ten thousand elites to be outfitted for armor. They will be sheltered in the Lin family castle for now and potentially even inside the ruins. The plant spirit inside their ruin is very strong and can facilitate our cultivation. They will improve quickly and may become the key to us sweeping the central region in case of unexpected developments.”

“The disturbance caused by deploying ten thousand soldiers is too great.” Huang Yu’s expression changed slightly.

“It’s fine, I have a battle ship that can hold ten thousand. It can swiftly travel to a target destination and hide within a ruin. Let’s take advantage of no one paying attention to us...” Li Hao paused. “But it might attract attention if so many suddenly go missing from the Silver Moon Army.”

“That’s fine.” Huang Yu quickly came up with an appropriate excuse. “It’s happened before. Just say they’ve gone to eradicate pirates.”

“Very well!”

“Armor, did you say? What kind of armor?” Huang Yu asked with curiosity.

“Battle Heaven armor!”

Huang Yu sucked in a sharp breath. Holy hell! Where did the kid get ten thousand sets from? Had he cleaned out Battle Heaven?

#### Chapter 894: All In Readiness (II)

Ten thousand sets of armor and further cultivation in the ruins meant that this group of soldiers would sweep through the central region as soon as they appeared. They could even move quickly into other provinces. There were barely ten thousand in the royal family’s Black Armaduras, whereas Li Hao had two thousand more Demon Hunters that were also quite strong.

Huang Yu looked bright at Li Hao. “You really are a division leader?”

“Of course!” the young man grinned. “I can also create one hundred sets of armor a day. That’s not that many, but it’s enough to maintain combat readiness. The process requires some mysterious power stones. I leave that treasure in Commander Yu’s hands. This way, any holes that appear in our personnel can be swiftly supplemented for.

Huang Yu swallowed hard. A production line? He suddenly felt that he’d lived the last few decades in vain!

“I know the treasure you speak of, the main cities have it but do not sell it to outsiders. It’s also impossible to take a look at since it’s a vital component of the city’s weapon factories. You...”

“I’m a commander level personage in Battle Heaven now!” declared a pleased Li Hao. “I call the shots in the city!”

Bullshit!

As much as Huang Yu didn’t believe it, he was very shocked all the same. Ole Zhao had spent so many years in his family’s ruins to barely obtain his title of city lord manor participant—the city lord’s manager, in other words.

It contained no military authority, but was a position with some authority in the city. It wasn’t bad.

...it was also completely worthless compared to Li Hao’s position!!

Was it supposed to be impressive that he’d made it to a participant role after several decades? He’d thought it not bad before since that meant he could exchange some words with the city lord, but now... Pah!

He wasn't even a strategist! It was just an empty title that the main city of the Zhaos used to tie Ole Zhao to them so they could exchange information. But after all these years, Ole Zhao didn't obtain that many treasures for his efforts.

Such was the ancient civilization—quite miserly!

Anyone who wasn't one of theirs would be in for quite a difficult time if they wanted to procure any advantages. Take the plant spirits, for example. A drop of Water of Life that could be had for three thousand stones a drop cost outsiders fifty or sixty thousand as a normal price, or even one hundred thousand at first.

It wasn't just one or two plant spirits scamming the rest, but everyone being in on it. Despite the plant spirits being isolated from each other in their respective ruins, all of them operated in the same vein.

"Then I'll make my preparations right away, when should I begin?"

"The faster the better. The best is early this morning. There is less attention levied on movements at night. Can Commander Yu take care of these arrangements as soon as possible?"

"Of course, it's just ten thousand people. Give me half an hour and I'll get the ball rolling!"

"In terms of resources, we have sufficient storage rings." Li Hao nodded. "There should also be rations and such here. I have a lot of rations filled with energy as well, they're perfect for the military. Everyone should be experienced with what to bring into the ruins, so I won't be involved there."

"Be at ease!" Huang Yu laughed. "Then I'll visit the provincial government immediately. I should be able to start the selection tonight or at any time! I'll tell Ole Zhao that... we're going to exterminate bandits!"

It wasn't up to him whether or not Ole Zhao believed him. Li Hao wasn't permitting the true reason to be shared, so Huang Yu was in a difficult position as well.

“Very well!”

.....

All of Li Hao's goals were accomplished after this conversation with Huang Yu. It had been quite a day. He had to bring everyone back to the City of Supernaturals as well. The repeated trips were turning him into a transport plane.

His efforts weren't without compensation, however, as he emptied Silver Moon of a lot of treasures as well.

.....

Li Hao returned to Battle Heaven at midnight. It was his first time seeing Director General Wang. The golden armor was still present, but the director general no longer wore a mask. His true face wasn't the jovial fatty that Li Hao had pictured, but a burly man with a solemn expression. He looked quite dignified!

Director General Wang smiled when he saw Li Hao stare at him. “What, am I different from what you thought?”

Li Hao nodded slightly, taken aback by the roiling presence he felt. “The... director general's presence... is so strong!”

“I'm unaccustomed to my new body. I'll be able to retract my presence soon,” Director General Wang chuckled. “After all these years living in armor, I'm actually unused to having a physical body.”



He glanced at the city lord manor. “To be leaving after countless years... this really will take some getting used to.”

“Leaving is not a pursuit of enjoyment.” The old turtle manifested with a smile. “Be careful out there.”

“Thank you for your concern, guardian!” Director General Wang laughed and left the city with Li Hao. Thousands of Black Armors pounded their chests at the city gates, presenting a stately and dignified sight. The Ninth Division leader and others appeared on the city walls to send them off.

Director General Wang turned back to pound his chest and yell, “I depart to uphold the name of New Martial and Battle Heaven!”

“Salute!”

BOOM!

The sound of thousands of soldiers pounding their chest plates rang among the clouds. Director General Wang was so grim that Li Hao didn’t feel that it would be appropriate for him to say anything at this point. This was more like they were going to their deaths.

Everyone was so very grave that he wasn’t at liberty to say much else. They were going out to make it rich, not die. Why did this sendoff feel like a funeral march?

“We await your triumphant return!” The Ninth Division leader’s call pierced through the clouds. “We fight when called upon! We do not retreat! Military commands are to be obeyed above all else! Wang Ye, do not lose face for the Wangs! Remember, you are of New Martial!”

“I will commit this to memory!” Director General Wang roared and left without his customary bickering.

Li Hao quickly caught up to the man. The director general was so unsmiling and wreathed in such a tragic air that the young man couldn’t break the silence.

General Pagoda quickly presented five plant spirits that were in very weak condition. Only a faint hint of core origin wafted from them—they seemed less than the little tree of old.

“I’ve already explained the situation to them,” the general said softly. “They’ll listen to your orders outside. General Li... be... well!”

“I will!” Li Hao swiftly left without another word. He assembled his domain of the five elements when the ruins opened. Director General Wang stood next to him, furrowing his brows at the violent ripples that collided into them. Li Hao frowned as well. The spatial ripples that the director general attracted were greater than the redwood’s.

The redwood tree was a peak Immortal. Although its strength was less than yesteryear, its core origin remained very strong.

Director General Wang didn’t say anything as he summoned his golden armor. The Black Tortoise Seal hovered in the air, enveloping himself. When that proved insufficient, he summoned a large shield with a soft shout and shrouded himself with it as well.

The director general’s presence faded away.

“You will be my weak point when we take action together,” Director General Wang identified seriously. “Once you are defeated or when this personal domain of yours breaks, I will be in grave trouble. Of course, it’s fine enough in the ruins. In the outer world... I am done for if something happens to you.”

Li Hao inclined his head and vanished amid the ruin entrance. He was unused to a somber Director General Wang.

A radiant grin split the man's face when the ruins vanished behind them. "We're finally out! Hells yeah! That guy wanted to intimidate me before I left. Does he really think he's the city lord?"

"....." Li Hao paused.

Director General Wang chuckled and flung an arm around his shoulder. "Stop looking, that was stifling. Of the ones who are awake in the city, the old turtle is a guardian, General Pagoda is a guardian. Your Ninth Division leader is a soldier and I am not. I'm just from Security... Having to face those guys day in and day out is damned irritating."

"....." Li Hao listened woodenly.

Director General Wang looked around with a chuckle. "So much has changed in the world! Mulberry fields have turned into seas, it's really all different! But the presence of life... I like it! We're in the same boat from now on, Little Li! We need to work together well. I haven't eaten in countless years—what kind of amazing delicacies can you recommend to me?"

The golden armor swiftly vanished and turned into athleisure. The director general's long hair transformed into a pompadour. Open-mouthed, Li Hao watched as Director General Wang quickly completed his change.

"We should blend with the surroundings when traveling," he laughed when he saw the young man staring at him. "I respect the local customs. Strange garments will make me out of place, no? By the way, do you have money?"

"What?"

“Money. Don’t you guys use money? You need money to eat and stay at a place, don’t you? Give me some. How can we travel around outside without money?” Director General Wang declared solemnly, “I’m not the type to eat without paying!”

“Um...” Li Hao truly didn’t know what to say!

“Don’t um ah me! You have to pay me wages at the very least, don’t you?” chuckled the director general. “Oh, right. How far away can I get from you at most?”

“Within one hundred meters.”

“That range is a bit small.” Director General Wang frowned and clapped Li Hao’s shoulder like he was a big brother. “Work hard to expand your domain. It needs to cover at least ten thousand meters, yes? Otherwise, you’ll even see me use the restroom at one hundred meters.”

Do you need to go to the restroom? Li Hao didn’t know what to say!

“Little brother, you can’t show your thoughts so blatantly on your face.” Director General Wang patted his shoulder again. “Surviving is different from living. At times like these, we should eat and drink when we should. A life is a life, whether we spend it in misery or happiness. I’ve thought this through in Battle Heaven long ago. We should enjoy what we can, when we can.

“Don’t pull such a long face, be happier! Kill enemies in comfort and bring about the downfall of your opponents in comfort. That is life!”

“Director general, this...” Li Hao wanted to interrupt.

“Call me Brother Wang!” responded a giddy Director General Wang. “I already said that it’s so stuffy inside. Drop that nonsense. We’re all free men when we’re out here and should act accordingly, understood?”

Li Hao rolled his eyes. You changed too much, too quickly. And who's your brother? How old are you, anyway?

### Chapter 895: All In Readiness (III)

Li Hao and Director General Wang flew toward the imperial palace ruins as they chatted with each other. The little tree was surprised by the newcomer's presence when the director general entered its territory. Director General Wang didn't mind; he scanned the structure behind the tree.

"The imperial palace is not what it once was," he sighed. "The building is still there, but those that populate it are no longer. I visited a few times back in the day, but to think that this place would fall into disrepair as well!"

The little tree was a bit wary, but didn't make a sound.

"There's no need to pay attention to him, Senior Imperial Guard," Li Hao laughed. "Let's go. Just seal this place away!"

The little tree still remained silent; it swiftly transformed into a tiny, crystalline tree.

"Are you headed out too?" laughed Director General Wang. "Come, hitch a ride on my shoulder so you're not torn to pieces! You can hold up, right, ole brother Li?"

"Just about!"

"Then good. Otherwise, whoever kills you now will also get me, this imperial palace guard, and the five auxiliary generals in one go!"

What's with this doomsaying! Li Hao groused to himself. Who can kill me on land? What a joke! Plus, aren't you recovered now? You seriously talk a lot.

The little tree was also feeling ornery. If I'd known that someone was going with Li Hao... then I wouldn't have gone. This guy looks at me very strangely.

Director General Wang seemed to sense the little tree's regard. "What a pity that you're a cottonwood tree and not a fruit bearing tree. Otherwise, we'd have some fruit to eat. I didn't think it was a good idea when Battle Heaven brought the pagoda tree in..."

Li Hao couldn't be bothered to respond. This one hadn't ceased talking from the moment he left Battle Heaven. When they left with the little tree, the imperial palace ruins trembled. The young man could vaguely see a withered tree shift to enclose the entire structure. Plainly, the little tree had used the corpse of its father to enshroud the palace.

.....

When Li Hao convened with Huang Yu, the selected troop of ten thousand was already clad in armor. Not a sound could be heard from those assembled. It was eerily quiet, like there was no one alive on the parade ground.

Director General Wang blinked when he saw the soldiers, finally adopting a more serious attitude. He seemed to see the Battle Heaven Army of yore, albeit this army was much weaker. Its discipline was just as strict. He glanced at Huang Yu, but didn't say a word.

Huang Yu also cast a sidelong glance at the newcomer. He frowned slightly, not recognizing the unfamiliar face. He wouldn't possibly have recognized the man either. The only thought that Huang Yu had was that Li Hao had fished out another powerhouse from somewhere, one that was very strong.

The young man truly had some tricks up his sleeves!

Li Hao didn't say anything either; a flying ship quickly appeared in the air. Huang Yu took a deep breath and commanded, "Board the ship!"

Ten thousand soldiers swiftly marched onto the vessel.

“They’re weak, but their discipline is good,” transmitted Director General Wang after a period of observation. “They’ll... pass muster when wearing Battle Heaven armor. I won’t accept soldiers that are too useless.”

“This is the Silver Moon army, the most elite army of the modern age.”

“Is that so?” Director General Wang smiled without another word. Was this all there was to the most elite army? Alright then. It wasn’t his place to say anything else.

The flying ship was quite large and could travel through the void at a clip of five hundred kilometers per trip. They were typically used against Apexes, but the only thing it was good for now was to present an intimidating front. It was still spacious after ten thousand people poured in. There was another world contained within it.

Li Hao boarded the vessel as well and connected it to the golden armor. It instantly threaded through the void and vanished on the spot. The young man didn’t mind that utilizing this vessel consumed a large quantity of mysterious power stones.

.....

Director General Zhao abruptly manifested a long while after they left. “They left so quickly, the little bastards... Was it Li Hao again?”

He hadn’t come near just now, but when Huang Yu said that he wanted to leave, the old man knew that it was likely that little jerk Li Hao that’d come to headhunt his people again.

“He’s taken the army with him this time...” The director general furrowed his brows. What use was the army to Li Hao? He didn’t understand it! Although he hadn’t drawn close earlier, he could vaguely sense an enormous threat in the air!

What was that?

Director General Zhao sighed to himself. They were all gone, but Silver Moon was the heart of the world. How are you guys going to protect us after running off?

.....

Li Hao's speed was very fast aboard the flying ship. It was just that the rate of resource consumption was rather high. However, he was also enduring too much of the world's pressure at the moment. Hence, anything that shortened this period of time was worthy of utilizing. He needed to transplant the five plant spirits to their new territory as soon as possible.

The flying ship traveled through the darkness and arrived at the City of Supernaturals before long. Li Hao was in more of a hurry to settle down the five plant spirits than Huang Yu and the army. With these five, the nearby energy tide would soon be depleted.

As expected, the dense concentration of energy vanished in the blink of an eye as soon as the five entered the ruins.

.....

Where the redwood tree was.

The redwood jerked awake and cursed lowly to itself. Had a pile of starving firewood arrived? Who had Li Hao brought? The abundant energy was suddenly no more. Although it wasn't hungry these days, it was like the newcomer had never seen energy before.

Damn it!



It swayed with surprise as a massive ship threaded through the air. Li Hao?

“Isn’t this a communication station?” A familiar voice rang in its heart. “I remember there being a redwood tree here before, right?”

The redwood’s heart pounded with alarm!

Director General Wang manifested—there was no need for Li Hao’s protection in the ruins. He laid a hand on the startled tree’s trunk. “Yo, you’re still here! ...it is you, right?”

The redwood swiftly projected a human shape and stared at Director General Wang. It couldn’t believe its eyes. “Director... Director General Wang...?” it stammered.

“You know me?” chuckled the man. “I wondered whose territory this was, so it’s yours.”

“How... can... Director General Wang... be...”

“Alive?” the man laughed. “Are the other plant spirits dead?”

“Ah... dead.” The redwood’s heart pounded with fear, even when the other was weaker than it. It was still shocking to see Director General Wang actually step forward in front of it.

“How did they die?”

“From... lack of... energy.”

“And their bodies?”

“Um... um...”

“You ate them?”

“N-no...” The redwood jumped with dismay. “I... was... too weak... They decayed directly upon death... They naturally collapsed when... I extracted energy from them...”

“Do you know what the crime is for killing those of your kind?” Director General Wang asked calmly. “Of course, those were unusual circumstances and it’s difficult to investigate events from that time period or pass judgment. This is no longer New Martial. But if I remember correctly, you are subordinate to the military. You have a title of major general, don’t you?”

“Y...yes...”

“But there are standing orders that if you meet peers from a major city, you are automatically considered half a rank lower, correct?”

“Yes!”

“Then why did you have so many thoughts otherwise when Commander Li wished to requisition you before?” Director General Wang frowned. “Is that true?”

“Director general, I... I...”

“That’s enough, this is not to be repeated again!” Director General Wang flicked a glance at it. “Don’t think of yourself as something just because you are a peak Immortal. You’re a broken peak Immortal and a plant spirit at that. Of humans, beast spirits, and plant spirits, it is plant spirits that

are the weakest! I will execute you next time you defy orders! Or do you think that I cannot execute you anymore?”

“Of course not!” The redwood hastily bowed. “This is a misunderstanding, director general! I just...”

“That’s enough!” Director General Wang didn’t want to bother with it anymore. “Ten thousand Battle Heaven troops are going to set up camp here! You will assist them in cultivation even at the cost of utilizing your core origin! You can die, they cannot! If not, you will join them in death!

“Additionally... you must know the locations of the other eight communication stations. Give me a map and where the others are. The nine of you have a ninety-nine percent chance of being able to communicate with each other. Don’t speak of any other nonsense to me, do you hear?”

The redwood didn’t dare waste a single word and quickly coalesced a map for Director General Wang. Li Hao’s jaw dropped! This was a peak Immortal measuring up to an initial Immortal. So their affairs could be conducted in this manner as well?

Director General Wang inclined his head. “At least you recognize the situation you’re in. Do not tell anyone of my resurrection. You will be the first to die if word leaks!”

“Understood, sir!” The redwood quickly responded.

“That’s more like it.” Director General Wang inclined his head. “You have Water of Life on you, don’t you? Give me one thousand drops...”

“Director general, this...”

“What? I’ll return it to you once Battle Heaven awakens. This is an emergency requisition of resources and it is an era of military rule. Do you understand?”

The redwood tree looked like its father had died. After a beat, it brought out a large quantity of Water of Life.

“Don’t look like you’re about to die. Do you think I don’t know how much you’ve embezzled over the years?” snorted the Director General Wang. “You should be happy that I’m not taking you to task for it. What’s with the expression? Do you want to rebel?”

“I would never dare!” the redwood hastily responded with some suffering. Oh my heavens! Someone had awakened in the main cities. How were they all supposed to get by from now on?

#### Chapter 896: East Wind Arrives (I)

“I don’t think you would dare rebel either! The bramble rose possesses a mutinous heart, you don’t seem to have reached that stage yet. I’ve come out to take care of that fellow. Once I have enough resources after killing it, I’ll return your Water of Life!”

“Understood, sir!” responded the redwood rose. It truly brought no attitude to bear with Director General Wang.

The man set aside the topic and spoke a while longer before commanding, “You can stay here and help them with peace of mind. I will be withdrawing for now. Also, be more modest in your absorption efforts. Five of General Pagoda’s descendants will be recovering nearby, you should take care of them when appropriate.”

Now the redwood knew who it was that’d been furiously gulping energy. Its head ached even more so!

It was doomed... General Pagoda? Was Battle Heaven about to fully awaken?

Huang Yu led the troops out of the flying ship. The ruin was spacious enough that although ten thousand people made it a bit cramped, there was sufficient room for everyone. He didn’t say anything upon hearing their conversation and inclined his body at the redwood. “I am Huang Yu of

the Silver Moon army, here to be stationed in this locale. We will have to trouble the senior in the days to come!”

“I wouldn’t dare!” the redwood heaved a sigh of relief. Thank goodness this guy wasn’t as overbearing as Li Hao or arrogant as Director General Wang. It couldn’t do anything about those two and just wanted them to leave as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, Director General Wang truly wasn’t interested in staying longer. He’d just left his own ruins and didn’t want to be in another set. “Commander Li, let’s go. We can leave this place to them!”

Li Hao nodded with a smile. He stowed the flying ship as the two walked out.

“You don’t need to give too much face to the plant spirits. They’re just a bunch of fellows that bully the weak and are afraid of the strong.”

The young man nodded again. He could see this, but he also smiled, “The director general sure commands a lot of respect!”

“More or less!” chuckled Director General Wang. “I’m a director general of Security at a main city, after all. While these guys may be stronger than me, their rank isn’t higher than mine.”

Besides, who knew who was stronger? Did that guy dare fight him?

New thoughts ran through Li Hao’s mind. Who would’ve thought that an initial Immortal Director General Wang would be able to fully intimidate the redwood tree? It looked like the humans of New Martial did indeed have a trick or two up their sleeves.

Li Hao swiftly made a trip to the City of Supernaturals and conversed with Lin Hongyu, telling her about Huang Yu. He then rushed to Skystar City with Director General Wang and the rest. His people had mostly zeroed in on the Wind and Cloud Pavilion’s position. Now that he had the director general with him, it was time to gather his troops to march on this faction.

Otherwise, his side's strength might be exposed if the Wind and Cloud Pavilion decided to scan everyone's cultivation again. That would place them in perilous circumstances; the only thing Li Hao could do at the moment was pray that they did not undertake such a course of action.

.....

Li Hao returned to Skystar City.

At the same time, in a ruin.

Darkness shrouded the land; the only hint of radiance floated upward from a city to illuminate a moderately sized metropolis. A smear of black floated in the center of a massive hall located in the center of the city. It shifted with gloomy displeasure and rumbled, "Are those people from Silver Moon still lingering in the surroundings?"

"In response to the pavilion master, they are!" A voice quickly responded. "Not only that, but they may have locked onto our position. They've narrowed their search range over the past couple of days and have drawn closer to our entrance!"

"Useless trash!" cursed the black shadow. These people truly were trash! It was mortifying!

The pavilion had lost the first engagement after their first official appearance and problems then developed with the Arcanus Ranking. Li Hao's group soon locked onto their position and the agents they installed in the outside world were swiftly eliminated.

After laying low for so many years, the Wind and Cloud Pavilion had wanted to stun the world with their first appearance. Who knew that they'd encounter Li Hao and be unable to shake off that mad dog?

Indeed, mad dog.

In their eyes, Li Hao was a mad dog who latched onto them after taking the slightest whiff of them. He ignored the nine ministries, royal family, three great organizations, and even the Ying Hongyue that he shared a blood feud with. All he did in the past month was keep his eyes fixed on the Wind and Cloud Pavilion!

The pavilion master had known that Li Hao was tracking them after their spies in the outside world were removed, but he hadn't thought that the young man would narrow down his range so quickly. They would've long been unearthed if it wasn't for them hiding in a ruin.

"Mad dog!" cursed the black shadow. Radiance streamed in from a window, revealing his true form. His face was a bit pale from prolonged lack of exposure to sunlight. He didn't seem to partake in the illumination that was available in the ruins.

His face appeared young, but his brows were knitted together in a faint frown of irritation. The Wind and Cloud Pavilion... Wind and Cloud Ranking...

In the ancient times, the world shifted with each publication of the ranking. Daoist Wind and Cloud who controlled the ranking was unmatched in the world. His family had produced four emperors and he'd thought that he could continue the family glory with the ranking, but... he'd died before he could accomplish his most grandiose feats!

How inauspicious! The man muttered to himself. "Li Hao keeps at us—does he really think that we can't do anything to him? Where are those of the Eight Legions?" [1]

"Here, sir!" chorused a group of heavyweights outside the great hall—there were several hundred of them.

"If those people dare linger in our territory any longer... kill them all!"

“Understood, sir!” came the resounding shouts.

An old man in black robes stepped forward from the crowd. “Might you reconsider your actions, pavilion master?” he asked softly. “Silver Moon martial masters are not weak and neither is Li Hao. Although the Wind and Cloud Pavilion fears no one, fighting with him now will only benefit others, particularly Ying Hongyue. Red Moon has a strong backer as well. Our future enemy may be Li Hao, but our greatest enemy now is Red Moon...”

“No no, you’ve got that wrong, Left Guardian!” The young pavilion master shook his head. “Our greatest enemy now is Li Hao. Red Moon is our future enemy. I know about their backer and can take care of them after the second awakening. Li Hao is our greatest trouble. He won’t wait until the second awakening as too few Silver Moon powerhouses have revived. He’ll stir up a great deal of trouble for everyone before the second awakening!”

The pavilion master’s judgement was very accurate, so he did not agree with the Left Guardian.

There were three main guardians of the Wind and Cloud Pavilion—left, right, and middle. They were all powerhouses, but they were unfamiliar with Li Hao.

An old woman walked out with white hair and spoke in a slightly shrill voice. “I rather think that it’s right for the pavilion master to make an example out of them. These Silver Moon martial masters are just a bunch of people who have just entered the Arcanus level. There’s nothing to fear about them...”

The two guardians had very different viewpoints about the situation. Some in the great hall looked at the young woman who was the Middle Guardian. Seeing the pavilion master look her way, the woman in black robes said softly, “It shall be as the pavilion master decides! We should activate the Mirror of Wind and Cloud again before this and verify Silver Moon’s collective strength...”

“It’s been only twenty days since the last instance,” frowned the pavilion master. The treasure consumed a bit too much in resources—at least one million mysterious power stones for each probe of the four directions.



Although he possessed numerous stones, this was still an astronomical figure to expend. It'd been less than a month since the last usage. He'd refrained from giving in to his urges these days as he wanted to activate the treasure closer to the end of the month.

The Central Guardian didn't say anything, leaving the decision to the pavilion master. She was well aware of her master's character. It was not a good idea to oppose his decisions. The pavilion master was obsessed with becoming the second Daoist Wind and Cloud, or at the very least, being able to dictate the world like the daoist. He didn't like being restricted or provoked by others.

Li Hao had irritated him. Hence, refusing the pavilion master's proposal at the moment was not a wise choice.

The pavilion master nodded when he saw that the woman didn't speak again. He looked at those assembled beneath him and said slowly, "My Wind and Cloud Pavilion possesses the three guardians, eight protectors leading the Eight Legions, and countless Arcanus to astound the world as soon as we make our presence known!

"That Li Hao does not know what's good for him. I wanted to publish the Arcanus Ranking to rein him in and have Red Moon and the nine ministries make trouble for him, but to think that he would be so brazen as to provoke them instead...

"In that case, he shall be made a prime example of and we will show to the world that the Wind and Cloud Pavilion is the true heritage of the ancient civilization. Our might knows no bounds!"

"The pavilion master speaks truly!" everyone concurred.

The man they beheld said no more. The Eight Legions outside the door vanished with a wave of his hand—to kill the Silver Moon martial masters nearby. As for exposing themselves... they would expose themselves whether they made a move or not. So what if they did?

It was only Li Hao's people outside. Any who dared enter the ruins would die!

Blast them! How would Li Hao have the room to be so arrogant if it wasn't for the second awakening not starting yet?

Muttering curses to himself, the pavilion master dismissed the rest of those assembled.

.....

Moments later, the pavilion master entered a residence in the rear yard. A tree soared into the sky, one that was snowy white all over. It was a very different sight from the usual golden color of other plant spirits.

"Pavilion master." The big tree bent slightly, as if conducting a bow. The director of a Night Watcher branch had once said that he suspected the pavilion master of being an ancient due to the different attitudes that the plant spirits demonstrated.

His suspicions were borne out. If Li Hao was present, he would be very surprised to see a plant spirit bowing to a human. That was such a rare sight!

The pavilion master frowned and didn't mind the tree's attitude. "Li Hao improves by the day. Revered White, do you think it's possible that this person is the reincarnation of a powerhouse?"

"Most likely not," came the white tree's mental ripples. "If he was, he would have to live within the ruins like the pavilion master. An awakening would only be possible twenty years ago..."

"Don't compare me with him!" The pavilion master was highly dissatisfied. "He's not worthy!"

The white tree didn't respond, but it sighed to himself. Losing the effects of the yin and yang worlds of the main world to reincarnate in a vassal world was, as it thought, very unwise. The pavilion master had been a wise and brilliant person in New Martial, but now he was rather arrogant and pompous. He had slept for countless years and awoke recently. Who knew if that was good or bad?

## Chapter 897: East Wind Arrives (II)

“Why does it still consume so many resources for me to utilize the imitation of the Mirror of Wind and Cloud?” The pavilion master changed the topic with a frown. “My memories tell me that it should deplete very few resources...”

“Pavilion master... there is an owner of the imitation of the Mirror of Wind and Cloud,” the white tree said softly.

“And am I not the owner?” The pavilion master grew irate.

The white tree didn't respond, taking a moment to say slowly, “You reincarnated once, after all, and need some time to get used to your new body...”

“Hmph!” The pavilion master was highly dissatisfied. This is mine! Although it belonged to the prior me, it's still mine. It was highly aggravating that it would cost so much for him to use again. Otherwise, he would want to scan the land once a day to suit his preferences.

It cost several million stones per instance at the moment; the reserves in the city were almost empty.

“I'm heading out... preferably to Skystar Town,” the man said with a frown. “The energy reserves in the city are almost empty. This trash only knew to consume resources over the years. I'm going to the mine to extract some energy back...”

The white tree was at a loss. How could the man entertain these thoughts now?

“It's best not to, pavilion master. The void is unstable at the moment...”

“I know, but with the treasure imitation present, how can mere void incisions harm this seat?”

“The imitation of the Mirror of Wind and Cloud is not fully melded with the pavilion master yet...”  
The white tree tried to speak some sense into the man.

“This again!” These words grated on the ear. Not fully melded! My own treasure not being a perfect match for me would be an absolute joke if word of this gets out!

“Please don’t be in a hurry,” the white tree continued. “Once the world stabilizes, your strength will erupt once again. Neither Li Hao nor Red Moon will be a concern for you then.

“Apart from a few in Evenround Martial University, there is no one else in Silver Moon Territory who is as noble as the pavilion master...”

“Are they worthy of being mentioned in the same breath as me?!” the young man interrupted irritably. “Are their families as powerful as my family?? I am a Hong! A family that produced four emperors! Even the Li family of Tranquil Star is less than my Hong family! Not even the Fangs would’ve become the masters of the world if it wasn’t for my family’s aid...”

“Please be careful of your speech, pavilion master!” The white tree trembled.

“What are you afraid of?” Despite the bluster, the pavilion master was momentarily afraid as well, until he thought of something with a sneer. “This is no longer New Martial, what are you afraid of? Not to mention, don’t I speak the truth?”

In New Martial, it was the four emperors of his family that went to their deaths together to facilitate the glories of the age. It would not have been such a prosperous era otherwise. Therefore, he thought nothing of the Lis and Jiangs of Tranquil Star.

The white tree didn’t say anything. It was finding more and more that perhaps... something had gone awry with the pavilion master’s reincarnation. He shouldn’t have reincarnated. He wouldn’t be thus even in the form of lingering mental strength. The master had... changed.

Such were the drawbacks of reincarnation. Although there were advantages, the problems were also severe. The pavilion master was openly sneering at the Human King!

This was a complete death wish!

Had New Martial completely fallen apart?

The white tree didn't think so. Perhaps the great distance made it hard for certain things to be detected, but once energy flowed freely again, these words might be sensed by another. By then, it was one thing if the pavilion master was sentenced to death for his impudence—all of the Hongs might be impacted as well.

The Human King was not someone to provoke. One could even curse the Hong patriarch to his face, but had to be exceedingly careful when gossiping about the Human King behind his back. If angered, he would execute even the four emperors in his rage!

Of course, that shouldn't be the case. But the pavilion master's own family would have to kill him for such words.

The white tree grew ever more resigned. Some words were better off left unsaid. The pavilion master was the true master of this place, the tree was just a guardian of the city. Its first mission was to protect this one and nothing else.

Thankfully, the pavilion master didn't say anything else as he was also slightly wary of potential repercussions. Though he snorted otherwise, he regretted his words after saying them. Short-tempered and uneasy, he couldn't be bothered to discuss this further with the tree. He'd been out of sorts lately.

"Revered White, give me one thousand drops of life essence. I need to cultivate for a few days!"

"Pavilion master..."

“Hurry up, I’ll compensate you after I take over the mine!”

“Understood.” The white tree sighed to itself and coalesced drops of Water of Life. Its inner body was already a bit dry. The city’s reserves were almost out. Their pavilion master consumed this resource too quickly and sometimes spent it much too extravagantly.

In times past, he had many Saint-level plant spirits beneath his banner. Everyone showed him face. But now? He was still this spendthrift despite the change in times. Just random showings of favor alone were sometimes dozens, if not one hundred drops. How would that not deplete their stores?

As the pavilion master walked off, an aged face appeared on the white tree. It looked around with a sigh. Its old friends had been emptied over the years and fallen silent. That was the same fate lying in store for it if this continued. Their income did not cover their expenses! And they could not refuse to supply the life essence.

I really hope that the pavilion master recovers sooner rather than later. How can success be at hand in a situation like this? The reincarnation that he planned so much for will be more of a loss than a gain then.

.....

In the Wind and Cloud Pavilion, the white tree hoped for its master to grow more mature.

In Skystar City.

Li Hao frowned and swept a glance in the four corners. This was odd. Whether it was the Ministry of Armed Forces or Administration, a certain oppressive atmosphere emanated from them. They weren’t located far from the Skystar Commander Office and their people were present at their desks, but there seemed to be a constant coming and going from the ruins. What was going on?

He could also sense the presence of life. Someone was using large quantities of Water of Life!

Inside Skystar Commander Office.

Director General Wang happily sprawled on a chair, a braised chicken leg in his left hand and a roasted duck leg in his right. Li Hao frowned at him. There was... really... nothing he could say about the man. There were also two puppets drooling next to him, quite envious of the director general!

“I didn’t think I’d bump into you two here,” smiled the director general. “It’s been such a long time! How are your parents? Do you want a bite? Have Li Hao prepare some for you, they taste really good...”

Jiang Yingli’s nose twitched. Well, the puppet’s noses wouldn’t twitch, but Li Hao seemed to hear a sniffing sound.

“It smells so good!”

“Doesn’t it? It’s nice to take a sniff even if you can’t eat it.” Director General Wang ate with such gusto that there was grease smeared around his mouth. “How is your dean doing?”

“Very well!” the two puppets answered half-heartedly. Who knew if he was doing well? The teacher wouldn’t tell them the truth. They weren’t familiar with this Director General Wang, but showed him a friendlier face since they’d met him before.

“Then you need to coordinate well with Li Hao and kill more plant spirits.” The director general laughed as he ate. “Collecting more energy might help you resurrect your teacher. You’ll be able to eat whatever you want then.”

“Teacher is very strong, he’s different from Director General Wang. The director general is too weak and easily revived, it will be very hard for the teacher...” Li Shengzhang answered quite matter-of-factly, nearly causing the director general to choke on his food.

She spoke the truth, so he coughed with great resignation. “That may not be the case either. I remember that your teacher ultimately didn’t set foot into the Empyrean King level? Then that makes things easy...”

What are you guys showing off for? He’s so much older than us that he’s practically of the previous generation. Of course he should be a Saint. He has the protection of the Human King’s younger sister but still didn’t make it to Empyrean King...

“You don’t need to say that to us,” said Jiang Yingli. “You can say that to teacher himself. He’ll make sure to punish you for it. Maybe he’ll make you clean up the restrooms for one hundred years if he gets you!”

“.....” He had no clever response to that. Director General Wang concentrated on eating. This was why he wasn’t willing to go see that one. He didn’t want to, and there wasn’t much use in seeing him. Their standings were very different. Back in the day, it was his grandfather who met with the Evenround Martial dean, not him.

Director General Wang was a distinguished member of a Wang side branch, which was how he came to be the head of Security. But he didn’t have the right to say anything when he stood in front of that one, so he could only throw his weight around a little before that one came back to life.

Li Hao watched them silently, not bothering to insert himself in their affairs. When Director General Wang was finished eating, he wiped his hands casually and turned to the young man. “What are you looking at?”

“The guys next door.”



“I see!” Director General Wang looked next door as well. “Who says Water of Life is precious in the outside world? Those guys are drinking it like water because they’re so weak, what a waste!”

“The director general can sense it?”

“Of course!” chuckled Director General Wang. “Nothing can stay hidden from me if I wish it!”

He could be considered the strongest in this world at the moment, right?

Li Hao found present circumstances a bit strange; he could sense that it should be Qi Pingjiang’s son utilizing Water of Life. The current minister of Armed Forces had been four elements Arcanus according to his last assessment. After a few days of absence, he looked to be five, even six elements now.

What a waste! How much Water of Life was involved in this advancement?

The same sensations were traveling out of the Ministry of Administration. The current minister, Zhao Huaimin, also seemed to be strengthening himself. Damn if they didn’t have money!

As Li Hao inwardly rolled his eyes, a new thought struck him. “I’m heading out, does Director General Wang want to come with me?”

“Of course!” No shit, what am I supposed to do when you want to leave?

Li Hao rose and swiftly headed to the rear yard. There was nothing that the director general could do but to follow in kind. This was immensely irritating!

The two puppets also quickly followed them. It was a joyous occasion to see someone from their era! Although this fellow purposefully ate food in front of them to tempt them, they were magnanimous people who wouldn't take it up with him.

The group of ancient personages followed Li Hao to the rear yard, whereupon the young man opened the ruin entrance. Director General Wang was hot on his heels.

### Chapter 898: East Wind Arrives (III)

Inside the ruins.

The little tree swayed, seeming to sense something. Another little tree shot out from Director General Wang's body and the two melded together in a very natural fashion in the blink of an eye. A surge of presence rose from them, one that was much stronger than before. With the combination of replica and primary body, the two quickly exchanged knowledge of their respective experiences to date.

"Not bad." Director General Wang looked at the newly fused little tree and nodded. "Looks like it had good luck and stands a chance of entering the Immortal level. It might be soon. It will probably be able to make the leap if it gets some indestructible matter to digest."

"Didn't I give it all to you?" Li Hao laughed. "There was no way around it or I could've helped the imperial guard ascend instead."

With that, he set the matter aside and looked at Yuan Shuo close at hand. The man was enveloped by a cocoon of light. Li Hao had just returned to Skystar City and didn't have a chance to enter the ruins before Director General Wang kicked up a fuss about wanting to eat. The young man only entered the ruins after sensing something and being summoned by the little tree. He frowned at the sight of his teacher.

"Senior Imperial Guard, what's happened to my teacher?"

"I don't know either," the little tree said swiftly. "Your teacher was cultivating just fine before this and I was producing Water of Life for him to cultivate with. He suddenly emitted a lot of energy

yesterday and started cocooning himself with it. I sent word for you guys to come over as soon as I sensed your return.”

Li Hao assessed his teacher with a frown. What was this nonsense?

“Teacher...” he called out, but was waved off by Director General Wang. The man stepped forward to have a look and then turned to Li Hao.

“This isn’t a bad development, but I don’t know if it’s a good development either.”

“What?” Li Hao didn’t understand.

Director General Wang stooped down for close observation and said uncertainly, “This cocoon seems to be a peculiar force. Your teacher may have entered a deeper level of training. I’m unable to determine what kind of energy this is because I’m not able to touch him at the moment. However, I can sense that your teacher is in a state of metamorphosis.”

Metamorphosis?

Li Hao treated the revelation with some bafflement. “Is there any danger to him?” he asked upon a glance at his teacher.

“It’s hard to say.”

Li Hao grew despondent. You’re an Immortal, how come you can’t say if there’s danger or not? My teacher’s turned himself into a silkworm cocoon! Wasn’t his cultivation proceeding just fine? Why did he turn into this thing?

Although the young man stepped forward for a closer look, he didn’t dare move Yuan Shuo either.

“I didn’t do anything, he did this all to himself...” the little tree said with a guilty conscience. It was stationed here, but this had happened to Li Hao’s teacher. It would be hard pressed to defend itself if responsibility was to be assigned.

“Don’t worry about it,” Li Hao took a deep breath. “My teacher likes to do strange things.”

He extended his senses toward the cocoon and found that it was a mixture of many energies. There was even the aura contained within. Who knew what his teacher was doing now? Perhaps he was modifying the Breathing Method of the Five Styles?

“Ah, right,” the little tree piped up. “The bramble rose came to investigate the premises a while back. I rebuffed it.”

“Well done!” Li Hao nodded.

Director General Wang shifted his glance away from Yuan Shuo. Although the old man was in a peculiar state, the director general was more concerned with other places. He swiftly approached the Security headquarters in front of them.

Li Hao followed him after a quick glance at his teacher. Director General Wang went straight for the main lobby—the young man had taken a prior look at it. It was completely empty inside.

The director general headed straight for a desk, summoning a seal in his hand as he did so. It was the Black Tortoise Seal; he stamped it a few times on the back of the table, causing it to eject a hidden compartment.

Li Hao was rather surprised as he hadn’t seen or sensed the compartment on his previous visit.

“This is a secret compartment for those who work in Security,” Director General Wang explained dismissively. “In times of emergency, if we want to leave a message but are unable to send it through any other means, we leave it here and wait for colleagues or superiors to find it.”

He opened the compartment door and found that it was... empty.

“There’s nothing there,” Li Hao sighed softly.

“No!” The director general was very calm. “There was something there, but someone took it. The only ones who can do so are those above first rank, or those with a command from Security or the city lord.”

“Why do you say that?” Li Hao furrowed his brows. “Perhaps nothing was left behind in the first place.”

“We were prepared for that, so there is always something readied in this secret compartment—a recording talisman. This one’s gone. Each Security division’s talisman is different. That this one was taken means that whoever did it knew of the secret compartment’s existence...” Director General Wang laughed. “They admitted to their crimes without us interrogating them!”

Of course, greater trouble might’ve been in store had the perpetrators not taken the talisman.

“There must be one city among the remaining seven that turned traitor that day!” He shook his head with a sigh. A black barrier manifested in front of him as he walked ahead. Director General Wang shoved his hand into it and gripped a surge of disordered core origin that agitated in his grasp.

His body shook as he dealt with it—a black aura floating over him as well. The director general seemed to be in pain and quickly took in a deep breath. “How vicious! The attackers killed them in one go and didn’t spare a single one. The director general here was an initial Immortal, the same as me. He commanded six deputies that were peak Apexes and at least three hundred fully equipped members of Security.

“Any formation assembled through their joint efforts would hold off a regular peak Immortal! There was also a guardian plant spirit here that was an Immortal. The only person that could instantly kill them all was a Saint! So this meant there was a Saint present that killed them in a split second!”

Director General Wang looked into the distance. “There are at least another nine places like these to be dismantled. This means that at least ten Saints took action at the same time!

“The commander-in-chief of the Skystar Army was a powerhouse of the Saint level. He commanded one hundred thousand troops. It would take an Empyrean King or multiple Saints to exterminate them...

“Apart from the Sword Sovereign, only the eight city lords of Silver Moon were close to the Empyrean King level. But none of them had reached that—or they could’ve and I was simply unaware.” Director General Wang considered the situation with an arctic glint in his eyes. “To instantly eradicate this place of soldiers... but leave one troop in the mines...”

Who’d done it?

The frowning man looked at the center of the city, then turned to Li Hao. “Are you sure that vice commander is still alive, Li Hao?”

“Absolutely! Granted, it was the plant spirits that said it, I’ve yet to visit myself.”

“Alive...” Was he afraid of the mine blowing up? Or had Skystar Town fallen before he’d identified the enemy? “I’d like to visit the mine...”

He had one mission for his excursion, and that was to investigate the situation. Therefore, he wanted to take a closer look since he was inside the Skystar ruins. If the vice commander was possibly still alive, then he had to pay a visit no matter what.

“He might be a rebel remnant,” Jiang Yingli said frankly. “Wouldn’t you be going to your death then? He might’ve only been an Immortal back in the day, but will at least be a peak Immortal now after so many years of guarding the mine. He might even be a Saint!”

“Even so, I still need to take a look!” Director General Wang insisted.

“You’re so headstrong even when you lack sufficient strength!” Jiang Yingli grumped.

Now that was a hurtful comment. Director General Wang stewed with indignation.

“He won’t be a Saint yet, will he?” Li Hao interrupted. “If he is, then the bramble rose and others won’t dare plot against him. The two sides seem to have fought each other before. Perhaps he’s purposely letting them be? With the plant spirits there absorbing energy, they’ll delay the expansion of the mine and prevent it from exploding.”

That made a certain amount of sense as well.

Li Hao looked at the director general. You’ve just left Battle Heaven, you’re not that eager to court death, are you? He may just a peak Immortal, but you’re just an initial Immortal. And the key thing is, they haven’t been asleep all this time. Perhaps they’ve been just fine and dandy.

That was the most frightening of all!

As for whether they were friend or foe, perhaps it was better to treat them as foe to prevent not having an opportunity to feel regret.

A dark expression dawned on Director General Wang’s face. The look in the young man’s eyes stung!

“Why don’t we wait for our strength to grow stronger,” Li Hao persuaded. “I can eliminate the Wind and Cloud Pavilion first, kill the plant spirits, and perhaps the director general will have absorbed some more indestructible matter?”

Why must we go now? I want you to help me after leaving Battle Heaven, not die before you can do anything. My investment will be a complete wash then!

The Director General Wang didn't think much and simply nodded, "You make sense..."

He'd probably be apologetic with fury if he knew what the young man was thinking. So you think my defeat is a certainty, huh??

The man glanced through the barrier as they spoke and abruptly smiled, "How interesting."

"Oh?"

"I seem to sense something... The bramble rose may be wanting to make a move."

Li Hao blinked. The director general closed his eyes to concentrate. "It feels that way as there's movement at the commander manor. It may want to activate some sort of formation... Forget it, that means there's a show to watch."

The young man was rather lost, but then thought of how those of the nine ministries had been furiously devouring Water of Life. "Does the director general mean that... the bramble rose may want to seize the mine?"

"Regular people can't sense it, but we can sense a thing or two when the formation is activated." Director General Wang nodded. "Regular cities have two or three sets of formations. One is for the military, one is for the city lord manor, and a third is for the guardian plant spirits. One of them is being activated, just look at the ground."

Li Hao didn't see anything when he lowered his head, but could see some lines of energy when red appeared in his eyes. Was that... a formation?

Chapter 899: East Wind Arrives (IV)



“There’s not enough energy,” Director General Wang determined after studying the red lines coming together in the ground. “It will take time to activate. Judging from the looks of things, the guardian plant spirit formation will be activated. But will the commander manor one also be activated?”

“They have a division leader!” Li Hao quickly said when the thought occurred to him.

“Then they do stand a chance!” the director general amended. “So this means that the vice commander might have truly become a Saint. Otherwise, the bramble rose isn’t weak either and it’s backed by the other plant spirits. That it still needs to activate the formation means that it’s taking utmost care... How interesting.

“And what a coincidence! Thank goodness I happen to be here or I’d miss out on the fun.”

Li Hao’s head hurt. So these people wanted to seize the mine? But I’ve earmarked it for my use! He had to claim it before they did.

He was suddenly very conflicted. The Wind and Cloud Pavilion’s position was now known, but the royal family and nine ministries seemed to have struck up a partnership to explore the giant mine together. What should he do? His head pounded from the dilemma.

“How much longer until the formation activates, director general?”

“It’s hard to say as it depends on if their division leader can locate the heart of the formation and activate it. It’ll take at least a few days and numerous energy stones. But division leader?” Director General Wang shook his head with incomprehension. “Skystar City can give rise to new division leaders? How strange!”

He shook his head as it was very hard for one to become a division leader unless one was a direct subordinate of the ancient military. Of course, he didn’t much care about this.

“Under normal conditions, the formations inside the city require coordination from all sides.” Director General Wang grinned when he suddenly thought of something. “Now that they’ve activated the formations... it’s easy for you to stall for time if you want to.”

“How do I do that?”

“Have the imperial guard furiously absorb energy from the surroundings so they can’t complete the activation. They’ll have to keep pouring in more energy if they want to succeed, which means that the imperial guard can absorb energy until it can no longer take in any more. A few days of this will cause them to bleed a lot in resources!”

Li Hao raised an eyebrow. That was a good idea, but it also meant that the little tree wouldn’t be able to join him on the next operation.

Whatever, screw it!

He was in no hurry when it came to the mine since there might be a Saint level character present. He would take care of the Wind and Cloud Pavilion first, obtain their treasure, and probe everyone’s strength first. That way, he could make his plans being one hundred percent certain of what he was going up against.

If worst came to worst, he could try and see if he could lure the dean of education out of Evenround Martial. Otherwise, there was no way he was willing to go against a Saint. Li Hao was well aware of their might!

He explained the situation to the little tree, delighting the latter when it heard that it could devour energy without restriction. It might not have been able to take in anymore before, but now that its primary body had joined it, it was stronger and could absorb a little more.

Having settled all that, Li Hao left the ruins. Liu Long met him as soon as he emerged.

“Senior Sky Sword just sent word. He couldn’t find you just now, so he contacted me. A group of people in black robes have suddenly appeared at South Peak province and attacked the Silver Moon

marital masters in the area. Some Night Watchers are dead. They're pretty strong and might be from the Wind and Cloud Pavilion!"

Li Hao's expression shifted and he snorted coldly. So they'd gone on the offensive! The pavilion was far bolder than he thought. Thank goodness he'd sent Sky Sword in that direction; they might be in real trouble otherwise. But since the senior had said they were pretty strong, then they really were pretty strong!

.....

At the same time, the Red Moon headquarters.

"Armored warriors in eight different colors of armor?" Ying Hongyue raised an eyebrow at the report. "How interesting, is it the Eight Legions?"

The scarlet cloak manifested as well with understanding. "It's the Eight Legions! Then I know who it is. But how strange, how is it them?"

Ying Hongyue also knew a bit, but he understood less than the scarlet cloak. "What's so strange about it?" he laughed.

"If my memory serves, the Wind and Cloud Pavilion disappeared before the great silence. I thought they left Silver Moon Territory. What are they doing here again? Or is it a ruin that's been left behind? But in that case... that doesn't make sense either. They might really have a replica of the Mirror of Wind and Cloud if they can detect everyone's strength..." The scarlet cloak was slightly mystified as it couldn't immediately make sense of the situation.

"Is it a true heritage or one obtained by accident? A true heritage would not be thus and displayed in such a brazen manner. There's no hint of calmness to be seen at all. They've jumped out ahead of time to aggravate all sides!

“But it’s good that they’ve clashed with Li Hao. There’s a show to be seen then. Are you going to participate?”

“Let’s take a look first,” Ying Hongyue laughed. “I’ll decide whether to participate or not based on the situation!”

The scarlet cloak nodded. “Then we need to be careful. If they really have that kind of treasure... your movements will be revealed with it as well. It’s just...”

Forget it, he was still utterly baffled and couldn’t make head nor tails of anything. If such an imitation treasure existed, could outsiders use it? As for descendants of the Hong bloodline... none existed in Silver Moon Territory, did they?

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At the same time, the royal palace.

“The Wind and Cloud Pavilion sends out a dozen Arcanus with a single move!” laughed the Skystar King. “Even Sky Sword and the others are preoccupied by them. How interesting! Now wonder the pavilion dared publish a ranking, they’ve got a lot of heavyweights on their side!”

A small tree manifested in front of him—the replica of the bramble rose.

“The heavens are on our side!” smiled the plant spirit. “You were worried that he’d cause trouble for us, now trouble has come for him. Notify the others that they should make use of this opportunity to enter the ruins.

“Success is at hand as soon as the formation is activated and seals off the mine. The world will belong to the Jiangs, but remember that our goal isn’t Silver Moon Territory!”

“I know!” the Skystar King chuckled. “Then, shall we intervene slightly with Li Hao’s matter...”

“No. What if our interference causes him to forgo moving against the Wind and Cloud Pavilion? Do you want to be responsible for that?” The bramble rose was speechless at the king’s suggestion. Having one matter less to attend to was always preferable to one matter more!

Intervention? Can you suffer the consequences? Your greed knows no bounds! Having the mine in hand is better than anything!

“I understand.” The Skystar King smiled and didn’t say anything else. Whatever thoughts he had in mind were quickly dismissed. Let’s see how Li Hao responded first. The Wind and Cloud Pavilion sent out a dozen Arcanus in one deployment—the faction was clearly formidable. It was not yet time to pull out one’s trump cards. Li Hao was in grave trouble this time, wasn’t he?

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The young man was currently sending messages to all sides.

“Approach South Peak from the Sagittarius direction. All powerhouses in the vicinity are to reinforce them. I am currently unable to get in contact with Senior Sky Sword and the others. Pass on word for me that no one is to reveal their strength and all Night Watchers are to retreat! Dog the enemy’s footsteps so they cannot withdraw...”

Li Hao turned to Director General Wang when he finished giving his orders. “I’ll have to rely on you this time, director general. There must be powerhouses in their ruins and they’re banking on the fact that we don’t dare enter them!”

“Don’t worry!” laughed the man. “Now that I’m alive again, there’s few in this world that I wouldn’t dare run afoul of. This Wind and Cloud Pavilion is not one such entity!”

That was good! With the two puppets at his side, Li Hao dared take the fight to them even if the other side was very strong.

“Then we’re off!” The young man quickly set out, not bringing the little tree with him. It would already be quite a feat to protect Director General Wang since he might need to fight as well. This wasn’t simply making a journey. They were all done for if his personal domain broke.

However, Li Hao wasn’t afraid. If Director General Wang proved unable to settle the enemy, then the young man could depart the ruins at any time to summon reinforcements. At the very least, the redwood tree and little tree were all mobile. He would leave the five auxiliary generals be since they weren’t strong yet after their recent awakening.

With such thoughts in mind, Li Hao swiftly led his people to South Peak.

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South Peak.

The Wind and Cloud Pavilion could no longer contain themselves and sent out their Eight Legions, shaking the land with their arrival. It was almost pure Arcanus that took the field, and this wasn’t the sum total of their Arcanus power. People poured out from the ruins, each of them mighty and ferocious.

.....

Inside a forest on a mountain.

He Yong sent an Arcanus flying with a punch and cursed to himself. Li Hao wanted them to not reveal their strength, which forced them to only retreat. It was fine if they met one or two enemies, but a dozen Arcanus meant that they had to run for the hills.

“How are you guys doing?” He Yong asked through the bronze armor.

“There’s so many of them!” Northern Fist answered through his armor. “Where does the Wind and Cloud Pavilion get so many Arcanus from? How much Water of Life did they have to expend for this?”

Modern day Arcanus represented walking bags of Water of Life. Only through this resource was this cultivation level possible. The constant outpouring of supernaturals started Li Hao’s forces and made them abruptly revise their assessment of this faction.

“A big fish has appeared, possibly their leader,” came Hong Yitang’s voice. “He’s at least five elements Arcanus and dressed in red armor. Be careful, everyone!”

“I’ve got a big fish here too!”

“.....” Communication flew thick and fast as everyone swiftly withdrew. The enemy had fielded a lot of powerhouses for this engagement. Li Hao didn’t want them to expose their strength because he was worried that killing pavilion members would cause the faction to scan them with their treasure. At the moment, the Wind and Cloud Pavilion’s assessment of their strength should still be from their prior probe. Otherwise, they should understand that sending out these Arcanus was to send these people to their deaths.

“Stall for time! Don’t let them go back, but don’t kill them either! Or, you can kill one or two, but make sure you pretend to be injured in the process!” Hou Xiaochen swiftly commanded.

Angry shouts rose in the distance before long while He Yong’s group wailed. Rays of bloody light crossed the scene as they managed to kill an enemy before fleeing!

Chapter 900: Entering the Ruins (I)

On a small mountain.

Some of the leaders of the Eight Legions were observing the surroundings through a small mirror hovering in front of them. They frowned to see their people being killed.

“Silver Moon martial masters are strong indeed.” One nodded slightly. “Almost all of them have a strength equivalent to Arcanus. However, there’s too few in peak battle condition. Earthturner Sword and Sky Sword are roughly four elements, which means we need to be more cautious of them.”

“Right.”

“Our goal is them. Killing them will let Li Hao know that the Wind and Cloud Pavilion is not an existence he can trifle with!”

“That’s right!” The powerhouses looked at each other with a smile and took to the air. They were going to kill a few Silver Moon martial masters so that the Skystar Commander Office learned to properly respect them!

The Eight Legions were not the strongest among the Wind and Cloud Pavilion, but they were the elites. Nearly half of them were Arcanus—this was the greatest source of the pavilion’s strength. If it wasn’t for this faction keeping a low profile before, there would be no room in this world for the three great organizations.

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Just as the Wind and Cloud Pavilion sent out their people, numerous heavyweights rushed over from various parts of the world. They didn’t participate in the battle; they simply watched from other vantage points.

In a certain area of Sagittarius province.

Blue robes fluttered into view, sword light flashing over the wearer. It was the mysterious Celestial Sword Immortal, the leader of Celestial.



Moments later, a magnificent presence oscillated through the air as a young man landed on the ground. He was uncommonly calm and collected. The lord of Yonder Mountain!

“Yonder!” The Celestial Sword Immortal called out to the other in a slightly aloof voice, but an imperceptible hint of a smile graced her face. The mountain lord inclined his head.

The three great organizations and seven divine mountains were the first batch of powers to be established in the world. The newly risen Wind and Cloud Pavilion and Skystar Commander Office were battling in these grounds today. Everyone wanted to take stock of the new factions’ strength.

Yonder Mountain kept an exceedingly low profile, especially compared to the brazen three organizations. Its lord, however, might be the strongest among the seven. The world at large had always considered him on par with the leaders of the three great organizations.

The mountain lord looked into a distance, a third eye seeming to appear in the center of his forehead as he pierced through the woods. He stood with his back to the Celestial Sword Immortal as he murmured, “Martial masters from Silver Moon remain very strong. The Wind and Cloud Pavilion has fielded many Arcanus, but they are unable to hold the advantage. At the same time, this may not be a showing of their full strength.”

“Perhaps,” laughed the Celestial Sword Immortal. “But I’m more curious when Li Hao will arrive and how strong he is now.”

Yonder grunted, having seen something unusual. He wanted to take a closer look when Li Hao’s voice reverberated through the air. “The Skystar Commander Office is here to eradicate the Wind and Cloud Pavilion today! All irrelevant personnel are to remove themselves! You will get the hell away from here if you don’t wish to suffer my wrath!”

He was exceedingly tyrannical, domineering, and cocky—the height of conceit!

Sword splendor pierced through heaven and earth—boom! Several pavilion members in black armor shot upward and were immediately churned to pieces by the sword light. Dominating sword intent swept the four directions.

The Celestial Sword Immortal furrowed her brows. “What immense sword intent!”

Li Hao had grown stronger and the key thing was, he was too high-handed in his manner! He expelled the onlookers as soon as he arrived and casually killed a few powerhouses as well.

“I know you’re here, Ying Hongyue! Fight me now if you have the balls to! Piss off if you don’t! Watch yourself when I’m done with the Wind and Cloud Pavilion!”

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South Peak, the air over the provincial government building.

Ying Hongyue stood over the building and ignored everyone beneath him. He laughed at Li Hao’s declaration. The little guy sure liked to run his mouth! The Wind and Cloud Pavilion’s Eight Legions were in the field, it wouldn’t be so easy to take care of them.

Next to him, Indigo and Violet Moon stood side by side.

“What an overweening fellow!” Indigo Moon flowered. Her idea was that Red Moon should send out all of its forces while the Wind and Cloud Pavilion preoccupied Li Hao and take advantage of the opportunity to raze the Skystar Commander Office to the ground.

Li Hao did not know the meaning of death to be so impudent after offending such strong heavyweights!

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The young man was the epitome of impertinence. He killed several Arcanus with a single sword stroke and issued through the armor, “Encircle the surroundings and don’t let a single one get away. Force them back to the entrance of their ruins...”

KABOOM!

Battle was fought in earnest as soon as his command was given. A keen light sparkled in Li Hao’s eyes as he looked around and vanished from the spot. He reappeared next to a small mountain where several heavyweights were convened. They were dressed differently from the Eight Legions and were either five or six elements. Eyes widened with shock to see the young man appear next to them.

Li Hao had arrived so quickly, and he was so much stronger than they imagined! A regular peak six elements didn’t seem as strong as him! They’d seen their fair share of heavyweights before this, but Li Hao gave them a very dangerous feeling.

“The Eight Legions?” Li Hao smiled. “According to my knowledge, the Eight Legions are indeed part of the Wind and Cloud Pavilion. But the pavilion vanished from Silver Moon Territory a very long time ago. It disappeared before the eight main cities fell silent, so what Eight Legions are there to speak of?”

Director General Wang had given him an overview of past history on the way here. The Eight Legions had indeed been under the pavilion’s banner back in the day, but this faction had withdrawn from Silver Moon Territory before the great silence. Who were these guys then? Just borrowing the name?

Those in front of Li Hao leapt into motion instead of responding. There were four of their leaders here, each with domineering strength.

Energy rippled with each of their attacks and seemed to assemble into a formation that enveloped Li Hao. A bloody dragon appeared in the center that sought to swallow the young man.

Li Hao disappeared, then reappeared to shatter one of the leader's armor with a palm strike. The latter paled and vomited blood, incredulously gasping out, "Seven elements?!"

That was impossible! But how would the young man be so strong if he wasn't seven elements??

The pavilion member didn't understand, but there was no time for him to dwell on the matter.

"Retreat!" he howled. The others quickly followed suit.

Li Hao didn't bother chasing after them. Instead, he slashed to the side and sliced a hiding Arcanus into two. He calmly followed that stroke up with more strokes. In the distance, one of the fleeing powerhouses took out a bugle and blew into it. The Wind and Cloud Pavilion members that'd spread out swiftly converged on a single spot.

"Interesting." A solemn Director General Wang appeared after everyone was gone. "These guys knew the Eight Legion Confinement Formation of old. There were only four of them just now, so the effects weren't apparent. You would've been in trouble if it'd been eight. Even a five or six element Arcanus would've been able to confine you!"

Li Hao raised a brow. That impressive? He was a seven element titan!

"Judging from this display, I haven't run into an old friend, have I?" frowned the director general. He turned to Li Hao. "Keep chasing them and force these guys back."

The young man nodded and swiftly relayed instructions through the armor. Vast quantities of powerhouses hunted down their quarry. As for those watching even further away, Li Hao couldn't be bothered with them since they were so far in the distance. The Wind and Cloud Pavilion was the more pressing matter.

Numerous powerhouses headed Li Hao's way.

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Hong Yitang floated in with a frown. "So many Arcanus came for the purpose of testing us. There might even be more in their headquarters. They're a difficult opponent."

Li Hao nodded. "Forget that, let's force them back first. Also, everyone retract your supernatural characters and don't easily display them to those watching outside."

"Understood!" Almost all of the Skystar Commander Office's forces were gathered here, apart from Chen Zhongtian, Yao Si, and a few others holding down the fort in Skystar Town. Li Hao wanted to eliminate the Wind and Cloud Pavilion in this operation and not let a single one get away.

The group followed Li Hao, hot on their quarry's heels.

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At the entrance of a mountain cave.

Several Eight Legion leaders flushed with mortification. "Report back that Li Hao is much stronger than imagined," one of them muttered. "He's nearing seven elements and might have truly set foot into seven elements..."

"Understood!" Someone darted into the ring of light behind them.

In an underground ruin.

A ring of light manifested. Several powerhouses guarded the spot and looked sharply at the ring when they sensed someone entering. They dismissed the brewing energy in their hands when they saw it was someone from the Eight Legions.

“Report! Li Hao has arrived and is immensely strong. He’s killed multiple Eight Legion members and we cannot stand against him...”

The pavilion master arrived before he finished speaking. Black robes fluttering around him, the pavilion master looked coldly through the ring of light. “He’s fast. He already had the life force of peak six elements last time we checked. It’s to be expected that you guys can’t withstand him.”

Despite the logic, he was still immensely irritated. He’d wanted to deliver a resounding blow to the young man’s people, but his own had been beaten back instead. Li Hao had arrived too quickly and the Eight Legions were too slow. How had they not eliminated the Silver Moon martial masters in the vicinity?

“Damn it, what a pity that this seat cannot leave the ruins, otherwise...” The pavilion master frowned, finding it a slight shame. There were drawbacks to being too strong, such as being unable to leave the ruins. Not only him, but many powerhouses among the Wind and Cloud Pavilion were similarly confined. His three guardians were as well.

These were the true foundation of the pavilion’s strength and they all exceeded the current limits of the world. Hence, to him, none of the fellows in the outside world were worthy of caution no matter how strong they were. The true heavyweights were all hidden in the ruins.