

Star Gate 931

Chapter 931: Battle With the Scarlet Shadow (II)

New Martial was New Martial. A Silver Moon one hundred thousand years later was a completely different entity. It was a new age separate from New Martial and citizens of the latter felt absolutely no affinity with it. Whether Silver Moon denizens wished to walk a new dao or inherit New Martial's heritage... they could do whatever they wished.

Even the Human King wouldn't mind it too much if he was here. So long as Silver Moon denizens didn't look to invade New Martial, they could do whatever they wanted. He looked after only New Martial citizens—the people who once fought together to create an era.

When it came to the new generations after New Martial, the Human King advocated peace. He didn't grace them with special treatment as, in his words, what did it matter to him what happened in the world after he and his friends died?

If there was a new emperor, then it was the new emperor's duty to safeguard the people. He didn't give a damn about the newcomers so long as they didn't get in his way.

Yuan Shuo chuckled and set the topic aside. The group probed further into the passageway. Moments later, the Black Armor stopped, as did everyone else.

"I wonder which friend is it that has come," an aloof voice rang through the air. "Your presence is surprising—how were you able to enter this part of the mine?"

The Black Armor regarded the voice gravely and revealed himself.

Yuan Shuo felt the world spin around him as the group appeared in an empty clearing. No one expected such a spacious lot at the heart of the mine! As opposed to the scarlet shadow, his eyes first snapped to the massive lake instead.

The Black Armor also saw what was within, but didn't say a word.

"How dare you!" Director General Wang ground his teeth when he looked at the body hovering over the lake. "You used the treasures of the Skystar mine to form the body of an Empyrean King for your own use. Who are you?!"

A tremor ran through the three plant spirits when they heard the denouncement. The body of an Empyrean King! An... an Empyrean King was the next level after Saint!

During the peak of Silver Moon Territory, even the city lords of the eight main cities were but peak Saints. Only visiting powerhouses, the Sword Sovereign overseeing the planet, and the principal of Evenround Martial were exceptions.

No one knew if anyone on the planet eventually became an Empyrean King. But now, someone had borrowed the great mine to form the body of an Empyrean King! Were they planning on reaching the next cultivation level this way?

The consequences would be inconceivable if an Empyrean King appeared in this weak age! They would have no problem dominating the world. Not even a few Saints jointly withstanding one would have any effect.

"He hasn't done this on purpose," identified the Black Armor after studying the shadow. "He was injured by someone and had no choice but to undertake this course of action. He should be one of the powerhouses that attacked Skystar Town back in the day, but was injured by Jiang Yu of Skystar Town. He had no choice but to remain here and recover from his wounds. After the world was sealed away and core origin vanished, this spot worked well to his benefit.

"You have a keen eye!" The scarlet shadow took humanoid form and looked at the Black Armor. "Jiang Yu did indeed damage my core origin and even left indelible injuries. The dense energy within the mine is sufficient for my recovery.

"But when it comes to you... I am not too familiar with you. I recognize Wang Ye, but you are... from Evenround Martial University?"

“You don’t know me? Now that’s interesting,” chuckled the Black Armor. “All of the premier existences at the eight main cities should know me. It looks like you didn’t occupy a lofty position among the main cities then.”

“True enough,” laughed the shadow. “I am but an insignificant speck of dust compared to the rest of you. But that was then, and this is now.”

“There is no difference now either.” The Black Armor continued staring at him. “You may have changed your face and name, but your core origin remains silent and you act furtively even now. It looks like there should still be people who recognize you!

“Additionally, Vice Commander Sun Xin looks to have truly betrayed New Martial. What a pity, I thought that someone from the army had survived to stand at their posts and protect the mine! You guys should’ve been part of the same group back in the day. I am curious of one thing—what gave you the boldness to rebel against New Martial?”

“You can ask that question in hell!” smiled the scarlet shadow. The world spun around them again and they seemed to revert to Primordial Era!

“Someone from Initial Martial?” The Black Armor jerked with surprise. “A mental domain?”

Indeed, the world seemed to have turned into a world of chaos from the time.

“It is if you think it is,” sniffed the scarlet shadow. “I am curious about one thing as well. The void in the outside world is unstable. How did you enter the mine? You might be able to suffer less if you tell me!”

“Suffer less?” laughed the Black Armor. “I’d lost all hope, but now I see a rat like you eking out survival. Well then... if someone like you can live, why not me?”

An opening split the sky as a long blade hovered between the world. None of the others saw anything when it swung down—they simply found that chaos split apart. The Black Armor disappeared in a flash of light and transformed into an elegant young man with an extraordinary bearing!

All seemed to be as it was in the past. In fine fettle, the young man brandished the long sword. White teeth gleamed when red lips stretched in a smile, casting him in a more feminine light. However, the blade he wielded clashed with that image.

“The monkeys come out to play when the tiger is away from the mountain!” He smiled at the scarlet shadow. “I once saw the Human King sweep through the world, yet he was not half as arrogant as you. I saw my grandfather disseminate dao throughout the world, and neither was he as supercilious as you!”

“How dare you speak so wildly, rat!”

The blade descended, splitting the firmament and crushing chaos! Yuan Shuo and the rest watched with open mouths. The old man suddenly wanted to yank Li Hao out of the secondary dimension so he could see what a true clash of powerhouses looked like!

Boom!

The scarlet shadow grew thousands of times bigger in the void, like it was a giant shaping the world. It raised a massive ax and chuckled, “Perhaps... I do know who you are, but that was then. You are just a broken Saint now, so throw everything you’ve got at me!”

The Worldcarver Ax swung down, reducing the world to chaos again.

“You certainly like to talk big!” laughed the Black Armor. He, too, destroyed the world with a swing of his blade. A book of dao appeared in his hand—the world spun when he opened it. The sun and moon appeared, as did thousands of stars sparkle.

Whether it was Director General Wang or the plant spirits, all swallowed hard at the sight. This was a book of great dao!

BOOM!

Chaos transformed into a world; light blossomed in the darkness. The scarlet shadow grunted with pain as the young man grasped at the air, fashioning chaos qi into a blood-red longbow. He pulled back on the bow and fired an arrow!

The firmament ripped apart!

A spear then appeared in his hand and tore through the world, smashing it apart once more. Cracks had appeared on the towering giant and red liquid dripped from them.

“Hmph!” The giant punched with a cold snort. “As expected of a descendant of a premier heavyweight, you have quite a few exalted emperor techniques to draw from! But you possess such a motley array of skills, it’s no wonder that you weren’t as well known as your younger sister.

“At least your sister made it to peak Empyrean King, but you didn’t even set foot into Empyrean King. You bit off more than you could chew. One exalted emperor’s techniques is sufficient for an entire lifetime, but you learned so many of them!”

He learned too many of them, and they were all abilities from exalted emperors. The blood-red longbow was the Exalted Blood Emperor’s, the spear ripped through the air was the Exalted Broken Will Emperor’s, the book of great dao was Supreme Zhang’s, and the blade method was possibly the Human King’s...

There were too many techniques in play! Each of them would make the Black Armor a supreme existence among his peers, but after learning so many, how would he have the concentration to dedicate to advancement?

The feminine young man laughed softly. “That’s true. My father once yelled at me and my grandfather said I should not conduct myself in such a manner. The principal also said that I should not imitate her. Although she also possesses a random assortment of knowledge, she can go to the Green Emperor and have him refine it all. I cannot...

“So I went to school and became a teacher! What a pity that you bastards don’t give me sufficient time... Damn you!”

The scarlet shadow split apart once more when he swung his blade. It grunted with pain again!

Light bloomed in the world as a golden giant materialized. Wang Ye’s face tightened with apprehension.

The scarlet shadow was no match for the Black Armor, but it’d nurtured an overpowering physical body after so many years. The body had absorbed almost all of the essence in the mine. By now, the scarlet shadow knew that it was no match for the young man with an illustrious background, so it brought out the unfinished body to do battle with.

The world was filled with aureate light when the body appeared!

“You should not have been able to come here before the world has awakened,” the scarlet shadow said with some annoyance. “Only when my physical body is perfected and the remains of the mine detonated to release it will the second awakening take place. I’m very curious, how did you get in here?!”

It raged with an unwillingness to accept the situation! Things should not be thus! According to the plan, it would successfully build the physical body and ascend to Empyrean King. When the mine exploded, it would emerge in the world as an Empyrean King and quickly dominate the four corners. After the remnants of the eight main cities were defeated, it could swiftly complete the rest of the plan.

But now... a Saint had come, and an exceedingly strong Saint at that.

One had to know that it wouldn't be concerned even if both of those guys fighting outside entered the mine. It would deploy the body ahead of time! But now, it had no choice but to do so.

Although the Black Armor's learning was too scattered, one had to take note of what the Black Armor knew. Every battle method was from an exalted emperor, which meant that his motley assortment of knowledge was incredibly powerful.

Chapter 932: Battle With the Scarlet Shadow (III)

"That's just the body of a faux Empyrean King. Do you really think of yourself as one?" sneered the young man who was the Black Armor. The book of great dao appeared in his hand once more and a person manifested in the void.

"The Exalted Blood Emperor..." gasped the crowd.

BOOM!

The figure hovered into view as a bow twanged, sending an arrow forward with a twang and shattering heaven and earth. The arrow traveled straight through the physical body, creating a bloody hole.

The scarlet shadow grunted and darted into the golden body. An extremely domineering presence instantly emanated from the body while the blood hole immediately closed.

"Trying to kill me with these puny tricks?" It taunted with chilly harshness. "You think too little of this seat!"

The young man frowned and opened the book of great dao again. Another figure broke out of the void with a long spear in hand. As the spear ripped through the air, the scarlet shadow met it with an ax.

The ax shattered in the fearsome collision and the golden body retreated once more. The pages of the book continued to flip rapidly, producing figure after figure. Wang Ye and the others didn't know what to do with themselves—these were shadows of exalted emperors!

It wasn't actual imitations of the exalted emperors. These were just exalted emperor techniques that the young man had learned and manifested as shadows of their respective owners. They erupted with tremendous power through the book of great dao.

Yuan Shuo felt his present circumstances absolutely surreal! He could sense unbounded presences flurrying around him and the magnificence of a newly established world. Finally, he could absolutely feel the possibility of being blown to death by one exhale.

Damn it! Were all these people still so strong in this new age? That was both horrifying and exhilarating!

Yuan Shuo watched with wide eyes, even forgetting about Li Hao. Hot excitement gripped him; the young man form of the Black Armor knew so many tricks. This was quite up Yuan Shuo's alley!

His own knowledge was a motley assortment—there would be no Five Styles otherwise. The same went for the young man.

The book of great dao was as if a projector, bringing forth countless figures of exalted emperors. Someone wielded a giant mallet that fissured the earth when they brought it down, beating the scarlet shadow's golden body like they were forging a weapon.

One of them was unquestionably domineering, rocking chaos with explosions when they delivered a punch. Someone rushed out with a sword and cut off the golden body's arms.

Yuan Shuo watched with utter delight, but the young man sighed internally. His opponent was covered in blood and riddled with injuries, but the golden body possessed ample energy to stay in the fight. The amount he'd received from Li Hao was far from enough.

Without a physical body and just a bit of energy to maintain himself, he'd been pulled into a mental domain of chaos as soon as they arrived. This was to prevent the young man from absorbing energy and recovering from injuries suffered during the fight.

It was plain to see that the enemy had identified his weakness. That gave the scarlet shadow an unassailable upper hand. If it wasn't for that, the Black Armor would be able to cut down a true empyrean king in his prime!

For now, that was impossible.

He wasn't hurt and hadn't even let his opponent come close. To outsiders, the fight seemed all too easy. And yet, he knew that this outcome was predicated on sufficient energy in his body. Otherwise, his doom would be nigh once energy was exhausted and he was left with pure mental strength.

The Black Armor cast a look at Yuan Shuo out of the corner of his eye and then looked at Wang Ye. Both men were utterly enthralled by the fight. Have you guys forgotten that I'm just a broken body? Haven't you watched enough already?

Wang Ye, you idiot, recall that you're an Immortal. You will still be of some help if you lend a hand! Or do you think I'm having such an easy time that I don't need help?

A soft sigh echoed in his heart. What a pity that the times were different. As many methods that I have to call upon, as much as I can fight against ten people at once, the opponent has a body that he has nurtured for countless eons. He is also formidable and has extracted a large amount of the mine's essence. He isn't someone that a cripple like me who's slept for thousands of years can measure up to.

But the Black Armor quickly marshaled himself once more. There was hope! Their opponent had not fully melded with the physical body; the two weren't a perfect match. If they delivered a blow strong enough to force out the mental strength and weaken him further, Li Hao would still have a chance to eliminate the enemy!

Having Li Hao hide himself had just been to create another ace to pull out of their sleeves. The Black Armor had been quite confident that when it came to purely mental conflicts, he would fear no one in this world. But now... Li Hao might actually be of some use.

The book of great dao flipped through endless summons while the Black Armor's thoughts rambled. All of the methods he brought to bear were the culmination of a lifetime of knowledge. Techniques as major as the Human King's blade and minor as an Apex method were brought to bear.

All of the shadows abruptly combined as one in a stream of light that resembled a dragon. It transformed into a long blade that the young man brandished!

Boom!

The opponent responded with an ax blow. The ax promptly crumbled and more cracks appeared on the golden body.

"Impressive!" commented the merry scarlet shadow. There was no sarcasm in its tones. It could also feel that the Black Armor's presence was weakening. If it'd encountered this person in his peak, death would be forthcoming even if it was an Emyrean King. As expected of a direct descendant of a premier powerhouse!

But now... how much longer can you hold out?

One hundred thousand years of decline, one hundred thousand years of slumber. Energy had completely disappeared from the world and its supply was cut off to Evenround Martial long ago. Where did you get this little bit of energy from, and how much longer will it last?

The young man raised his blade without a word—stroke after stroke!

Wang Ye also sensed something amiss by now. The blade intent was growing stronger, but he could feel that his martial uncle's energy being exhausted at a rapid rate!

A most undesirable result would occur if this continued. Growing panic stirred in Wang Ye's heart. His battle strength was formidable, but now that the opponent was in the body of a faux Empyrean King, he might not have an effect even if he made a move now!

And yet, he had to do something!

The city lord seal blazed in his hand and the shadow of the turtle shield draped around him. The seal transformed into boxing gloves. When Director General Wang punched forward, the force that erupted from the gloves shook the world!

"Go!" The little tree and other plant spirits jerked with surprise at the order. The projection of the imperial palace appeared in the next second to suppress the world!

However, the projection that'd reigned supreme in other fights shattered when the golden body roared with blood qi!

"The imperial palace? How laughable. That's just a temporary palace without much presence of the great emperor. It can be used against ordinary people, but me? You're but an Apex plant spirit that reaches beyond your abilities!" sneered the scarlet shadow.

This truly was an overreach. There was an enormous gap when it came to faux Empyrean Kings and Apexes. It was true that core origin dao had fallen silent, but the inherent differences of cultivation level remained.

This is what you want to harm me with? Hah!

The redwood and jujube tree also made their moves. Branches shot through the world, but were completely hacked to pieces with a singular ax swing. The two plant spirits trembled with fear. This person... was too strong!

Yuan Shuo had long taken shelter far, far away. Just one shockwave from battle was sufficient to kill him, given his level of strength. His only mission was to stay safe and pull out Li Hao at a critical moment. However, he felt that there was no point in having his disciple join the fight.

Even if Li Hao was stronger than him, he rivaled the little tree at most. But the little tree's imperial projection had been outright ripped to pieces. What use did Li Hao provide in joining the fight?

It wasn't that Yuan Shuo thought lightly of his student, but that this level of encounter was far above them! This might be the end of the road for them. That wasn't a problem either—the only problem lay in the outside world if they all died here.

"It looks like today is my doomsday," the young man said slowly after a soft sigh. "I don't have any regrets, I just want to know who it is that you've colluded with in the outside world. Was it New Martial powerhouses or heavyweights from other worlds? If there are no co-conspirators, how were you able to isolate Silver Moon..."

"Didn't the Human King say to let the dead go without peace?" laughed the scarlet shadow. "The dead can talk, so it's better for you not to know!"

"How are you fit to mention the Human King?" glared the young man. It looked like their opponent wasn't going to say a word. He snorted and raised the book of great dao high. A figure appeared over it, one different from before. Curvaceous and elegant, it plainly belonged to a woman.

The book abruptly went up in flames!

The young man looked sadly at the figure sharpening into focus. He smiled and shifted to glance at the scarlet shadow's golden body. "Principal, he says that this world no longer belongs to the Fangs!"

The shadow's strength exploded!

The young man retired to the form of a Black Armor and became one with the shadow. The long blade swung down!

“To sever life!” The roar reverberated throughout the void!

The enormous body was hacked into two, but it started healing at a speed far beyond one’s imagination. A scarlet shadow floated out of it, weakened by the blow. “You showed some bite in your final strike, but what a pity...”

“Now!” The Black Armor’s voice rang in Yuan Shuo’s ear.

Yuan Shuo didn’t dare drag his heels; he spat out a mouthful of fresh blood that he’d kept at the ready in his body. Five kinds of auras manifested!

They came into existence near the scarlet shadow—the combined auras held a stone blade in its mouth. A bloody-red path floated in the world!

Unease pricked at the scarlet shadow, but there was no time to consider that. It sent the desperate Director General Wang reeling with a punch, then punched the redwood tree so hard that the plant spirit threatened to disintegrate.

Its next punch was aimed at the extremely fragile Black Armor. This was such a rare opportunity, it was going to kill this man!

The scarlet shadow was rather excited because this kind of existence was hard to kill even in New Martial. This person’s status was exceedingly high; killing him might fully smash the lingering fear of New Martial that was imprinted in the shadow’s heart!

Indeed, all powerhouses from that age revered New Martial.

It was at this moment that nine celestial bodies appeared in the void! Li Hao's body appeared, the nine stars revolving around him. He gripped Stellaris and looked around with a lost expression. It wasn't until he saw the scarlet shadow about to deliver a final blow to the Black Armor that he snapped back to his senses.

Chapter 933: Battle With the Scarlet Shadow (IV)

The nine celestial bodies combined as one and vanished, sinking into Stellaris. Li Hao grunted and swung the sword down!

There were nine supernatural abilities contained within his blow. Seven elements were strong and two were weak, but they barely managed to come together as one. A peculiar strength surged out from the sword stroke—the scarlet shadow reacted with dismay and rapidly backed away. The void around it seemed to be sealed off!

“Break!” it shouted with surprise.

Boom!

The sealed void shattered explosively as the scarlet shadow erupted with mental strength to dismantle Li Hao's move. Both forces were annihilated. The scarlet shadow jerked with both surprise and delight.

So this was its opponent's final ace?

It was indeed dangerous, but this youngster wouldn't kill it even if its mental strength wasn't in peak condition! What was more interesting was where the other had been hiding, and how the force of nine elements had appeared!

Perhaps it would take Li Hao alive! The youngster may be the key to how the Black Armor had entered the mine.

A variety of thoughts flitted through the scarlet shadow's mind. Meanwhile, Li Hao smiled. He gently tapped Stellaris on the stone blade that'd pulled him back. It crumbled amid the scarlet shadow's surprised look. The Windchaser Boots quickly followed suit!

Two of the eight family weapons were broken in this moment! The mallet of the Hong's had been destroyed before, which made for three total. Stellaris' presence expanded explosively after it swallowed the two. Countless supernatural abilities materialized over the sword and endless auras churned toward it.

Eyes glittering coldly, Li Hao brought down the sword again!

BOOM!

Countless celestial bodies floated in the air, locking onto a particular world. That wasn't enough! Li Hao growled and transformed the stars into a sparkling longsword that melded into his!

"Sever!" The sword descended with his yell.

The scarlet shadow backed away in horror! What kind of method was this? It'd never seen the likes of it before! Stellaris... the heir of the Lis... but what kind of method was this??

This sky full of stars was similar to core origin dao, but also completely different. The scarlet shadow was unable to touch it! They seemed to be worlds away!

Its fractured body closed swiftly, wanting to envelop the scarlet shadow within. The shadow should be able to withstand this blow so long as its mental strength was contained by a powerful body. But the second the golden body was about to fully heal, a bolt of lightning darted out from an unknown source.

Soundless and with no forewarning, it smote the body, jolting it into a split second of petrification. That prevented the body from fully closing its wound.

By the edge of the chaos, a dog toppled over with extreme fatigue, its tongue lolling with seemingly no desire to live. It'd only had one mission, and that was to strike at an opportune moment. The dog was to decide for itself when that moment was.

Panther had judged that this might be the best moment. It could only strike once, so that had to be the strongest blow it could bring to bear.

Even though the formidable faux Empyrean King body stuttered from the lightning bolt, it didn't suffer much damage. Panther was much weaker than any of the combatants in the field. And yet, the lightning bolt jolted it to a stop for a split second.

That created an opening for a strike containing Li Hao's full force, one that encompassed held two dismantled heritage weapons, to arrive!

Humm! Crunch!

Something seemed to be shattered when the sword passed through the scarlet shadow. The body fully closed, wrapping around the tattered remains of the scarlet shadow.

Li Hao's side gasped with horror. Had they failed? This had been the sum total of everything they could bring to bear! If even that had failed... then they were all done for this time!

Even the Black Armor looked on solemnly. Although Li Hao's stroke had been powerful, it might not fully cut down the other. Any bit of lingering mental strength inside the fully healed body... could eradicate all of the weaklings present.

He wasn't afraid, just found the outcome saddening.

It was at this moment that Li Hao grinned and threw his head back. "Explode!"

Kaboom!

An explosion rang in the healed body as various supernatural characters seemed to pass through worlds and explode. An agonized wail was next to follow!

Li Hao's face drained of color as Yuan Shuo looked sharply at him. "This is..."

The supernatural characters had detonated! That was Li Hao's auras, Li Hao's dao! Although the situation was dire, but...

However, the young man beamed radiantly. "The great dao is in my heart and I can coalesce more whenever I want to. Don't worry, teacher. But... is that one still alive?"

He swayed on his feet; the world started crumbling around them.

"It's dead!" The Black Armor heaved a sigh of relief.

The tremendous world of chaos crumbled away as the massive body swiftly shrank smaller. It continued exuding golden light since it retained its strength!

Just as everyone's attention was on the world around them, a streak of red light flashed from the body and shot outward, heading for Li Hao!

The young man brightened with joy and summoned a mirror in front of him. It sparkled with a dense light, as if lying in wait for the shadow. The treasure cracked open, releasing the world of mirrors and entrapping the hurtling red light.

"Come suppress it!" Li Hao roared when he shut the crack.

The crowd paused, even the Black Armor was at a loss. So their opponent wasn't dead? Fucking hell, he'd read the situation incorrectly! How did Li Hao know in advance?

The mirror shook violently, as if it would explode. Heavyweights rushed over and brought their immense strength to bear to pacify it.

"Hells yeah! Caught me a big one!" Li Hao roared with laughter. "I was wondering why he didn't scream one last time and complain about this unjust world!"

"..... The group blinked. Was this... the basis of your judgment?

The young man laughed with abandon, tremendously excited. He'd really reeled in a huge fish! As for why he'd determined that their target was still alive, what he said really was the basis of his judgment. These ancient existences always had a few words to say when killed by a weakling like him. It didn't matter if they only existed as a wraith, yet this one hadn't made a single peep.

Do you take me for a fool? Of course you'd rage for a bit!

A scarlet shadow rammed itself against the mirror and bellowed with rage. It was driven into a fury when it heard Li Hao's voice. So that had been the basis of Li Hao's diagnosis?? Damn it!! Who would've thought that he should give a speech at his moment of death?

He was indeed in poor shape and unable to support the body of an Empyrean King. It was why he'd thought of turning on Li Hao instead and seizing Stellaris. Perhaps he would have a chance then... but who would've thought that he'd fall right into a copy of the Mirror of Wind and Cloud!

This was a treasure personally crafted by an exalted emperor. He was in such poor condition that it was impossible for him to break free of it.

“Release me, or I’ll...”

Boom!

Endless energy erupted in the mirror; a little sword darted in as well to hunt down the shadow! It rushed to and fro, madly destroying everything in its path like it was alive. It demonstrated such ferocity that one didn’t know if it was taking revenge for previously being sealed in the mirror, or to hunt down its master’s enemy.

Already battered from the earlier battle, the scarlet shadow was quickly cut down into an even more sorrowful condition.

All was quiet inside the mirror after a while. Li Hao and the rest panted heavily outside. Was it dead?

No.

Some lingering hints of red floated up to the mirror surface.

“It won’t be getting away. This son of a bitch is quite energetic!” Li Hao heaved for breath, still delighted that he’d caught a big one. The scarlet shadow had only fallen silent due to the hefty beating it’d received. The fact that it hadn’t died yet was a sign that it was a super big fish!

.....

“Whew!” The group focused their gazes on Li Hao, each of them confused and doubtful. What the young man had used to determine that the scarlet shadow hadn’t died was so... farfetched. It was a trap simply because their target hadn’t issued any threats?

What kind of theory was that? Who said that someone had to call out a few words before dying?

It was such a ridiculous reason that no one was persuaded of it.

In present times, the scarlet shadow might be the strongest existence in the world that'd revived. It was even stronger than the pagoda tree and plainly stronger than the Black Armor.

And yet, this was how it'd gone down.

Most of the credit went to the Black Armor, of that there was no doubt. But Li Hao's last move in securing their opponent's mental strength, even when the Black Armor was convinced that it was dead, was still incredible.

Still panting heavily, Li Hao didn't care about any of this. He grinned with sheer delight and stared at the mirror, then at the golden body lying in a heap on the ground. Finally, he took a look at the lake. What was that golden lake?

And last of all, he scanned the massive hole around them. The sight instantly struck him dumb. There were countless mysterious power stones here! They glittered on the ground, overhead, and all around them!

No, they should be called energy stones. Mysterious power stones were defective products, trash that people didn't want. In the ancient civilization, they cultivated with energy stones. Here they all were, in the core of the great mine!

"Will those outside the mine know of what's happened?" Li Hao suddenly asked.

"He gathered a mental domain just now." The Black Armor shook his head in denial. "It was similar to an Initial Martial world."

“An Initial Martial world?” Li Hao repeated blankly. What was that?

“Something akin to your domain,” the Black Armor gave a brief overview. “Initial Martial denotes the period of time at the start of the world, when martial dao first appeared. In that era, there was no core origin dao. The core origin universe had not been discovered yet, which was why there was Initial Martial.

“The powerhouses of that age created the core origin era—which was the age of the Heavenly Emperor, nine sovereigns, and four emperors. The Human King later ended that era and established the New Martial era.

“The mental world of Initial Martial is similar to your domain of the world’s auras. They’re comparable, except Initial Martial’s isolated a patch of the world to return to chaos.”

Li Hao blinked with understanding.

Chapter 934: The Martial World is Everywhere (I)

“This is the heart of the mine,” the Black Armor explained as he looked around. “There are some pre-existing arrangements here, as well as formations, which makes it impossible for the outside world to sense this clearing.

“An exception would be if the disturbance was so great that it overrode the arrangements, or if our enemy hadn’t set up a mental world—our battle would’ve been detected then. We were not holding back in the fight and our moves exuded quite the energy ripples.”

Li Hao bobbed his head up and down, like a blank sheet of paper being written for the first time. In reality, that was what he was. He didn’t understand most of this as his tenure in martial dao was too short. He also focused on studying modern martial dao. When it came to New Martial martial dao, he was somewhat interested in only the ultimate art of Tranquil Star and the analysis of The Accounts of Evenround.

“Who was our opponent?”

“I don’t know.”

Li Hao blinked. The Black Armor didn’t know who the scarlet shadow was? How was that possible?

“This person is a premier heavyweight, aren’t they?”

“Saint level, and crafting an Empyrean King body. That makes them a definite powerhouse,” nodded the Black Armor. “The Saint level defined one as a powerhouse in New Martial. Empyrean Kings were premier existences and exalted emperors were invincible.”

“Then how come you don’t know this person?” Li Hao was immensely surprised. This was a heavyweight of New Martial!

The Black Armor was speechless and answered after a moment, “It’s normal for me not to. The world is large and I can’t possibly know everyone. It’s even harder for me to know someone if they purposefully conceal themselves. I know all of the Empyrean Kings and exalted emperors, but Saints... There were many Saints in the later days of New Martial. I couldn’t possibly have known them all.”

Alright then. It was a bit of a pity that the Black Armor didn’t recognize their opponent. If he did, they might be able to learn which main city the scarlet shadow was from.

“This guy must’ve hidden itself early on.” Director General Wang spat out a mouthful of blood with a cough. “This means that the rebellion wasn’t a spur of the moment impulse, but a premeditated plot! I find that very strange, though, and wonder who had so much courage?”

“I would find it easier to believe that they suddenly thought of this when the Star Gate suddenly closed. To have planned this in advance... who possessed so much daring and resolution?”

The Star Gate had been open then and the Sword Sovereign personally held down the fort in Silver Moon! It was incredible that anyone would harbor thoughts of mutiny under such conditions.

Of course, this was Silver Moon territory. They probably wouldn't dare do so in the main world. There were also exalted emperors in Silver Moon. The Sword Sovereign was one, as was the principal of Evenround Martial. But these two... weren't the most reliable.

The Sword Sovereign focused on cultivation and didn't really care about anything else. As for the principal, she was mostly there for show. She popped up here and there when she had nothing else to do and didn't really think about any issues that needed resolving. It was the Black Armor that was more in charge of Evenround Martial. The principal came back when she had time and vanished without a trace when she didn't.

Li Hao didn't seek to stick his nose in too many things. To be honest, he didn't really care which of the eight main cities had turned traitor. Even if it was Battle Heaven... he wouldn't mind too much.

That was a chasm that New Martial citizens were unable to cross. Li Hao didn't find himself in a position to say much, but he would not tolerate being provoked. No one could seize his homeland either. As for the ancestors whose titles and lands came from New Martial... He let them do whatever they would, so long as they didn't run afoul of him.

Double standards were his way of life. Hence, he set everything aside and looked down at the golden body. It was already starting to recover.

"Is this body... really strong?"

"Of course!" nodded the Black Armor. "Incredibly strong and fashioned out of the purest of energy, vast quantities of indestructible matter, Water of Life, and numerous treasures of heaven and earth..."

"So it's not a weapon?"

"No, but you could also call it that." The Black Armor shook his head. "This is indeed a physical body, one that is no different from real physical bodies."

“So it’s possible to build another physical body apart from oneself?” Li Hao grew more confused. “Can everyone do that, or is this ability limited to that scarlet shadow?”

“This physical body has not been fully crafted yet,” replied the Black Armor. “It should finish at the Empyrean King level. There’s no mental brand on it. Once there is, it will have a master. Without that mental brand, it is a treasure without a master.”

“Then... why didn’t the scarlet shadow do that?” Li Hao asked with utmost curiosity. If it was him, only something firmly grasped in his hand would count as his. Wasn’t the scarlet shadow afraid of the treasure being seized by another without that mental brand?

The Black Armor was quite resigned by the fact that Li Hao knew nothing, but liked to ask questions about everything. Seeing that the group still needed to take some time to recover, he had to explain, “Because the body hadn’t been fully crafted yet, do you understand? If it delivered the mental brand now, that would fix the body in its current state! It would be a semi-finished product.

“If the mental brand is imprinted after the body enters the Empyrean King level, it would be a finished product and the brand wouldn’t fix it in place. The body would be a good match for mental strength and the two could grow together without harming its potential.

“Branding it now will destroy the body’s potential, it would be halted halfway toward completion. That level would be the highest it can ever attain in this life. It would have to be reforged for it to take a step forward!”

Li Hao nodded. So that was the case!

“A semi-finished product...” He looked at the body with regret. “So if this body is refined by someone, it would be a faux Empyrean King at most and stand no chance of advancement, is that so?”

“Correct.”

That was indeed an immense pity. The scarlet shadow had been a Saint to begin with, surely it didn't want to expend thousands of years and countless treasures to become only a little stronger than it already was. It would've worked so hard for nothing!

Indeed, it took a great deal of decisiveness to mentally brand the treasure now. The scarlet shadow plainly did not possess such willpower. If it had, it would've been able to fully control the body.

Li Hao looked at the Black Armor. The dean possessed great mental power. He would be able to bring the strength of an Empyrean King to bear if he had the body of one that was almost at that level, wouldn't he?

That was incredible to consider! Even if his cultivation level was then fixed in place and unable to progress, a powerhouse on par with an Empyrean King would reign supreme in modern society, wouldn't it?

"How much longer will it need to be finished?"

"It's almost done," estimated the Black Armor with a glance at the lake. "It's been here all along and the second awakening would've taken place as soon as it was finished. Therefore, the second awakening was under their control all along! They anticipated everything from a very long time ago and made their preparations. Whether it is the first awakening or second awakening, all was in their grasp.

"It is said that the first awakening took place because a ruin in Silver Moon was destroyed. If my conjecture is correct, that ruin must have held someone like the scarlet shadow. I don't know if there was a physical body there or not, but there must have been some lingering mental strength. It might've left with the people who broke the ruins, or it might not and stayed within the ruins all this time!"

Li Hao's eyes widened. The first awakening had resulted from Ying Hongyue's actions. There was a scarlet shadow by the man's side—he'd seen it once through the mirror. Was it... a mental strength replica? A core origin replica?

That was very possible!

So that meant to say that the site of the first awakening was very similar to this place. Hence, the so-called revitalization of energy in the world was all in their enemy's grasp.

Li Hao frowned. Extracting so much energy and making all of the world's powerhouses fall into silence, then revitalizing the flow of energy but obtaining control of it beforehand... Perhaps the enemy had long been prepared and left a great sum of treasures in advance. They were recovering while others slept.

If that was the case... the implications were terrifying. Had they dragged the process out for so many years just to deplete the other powerhouses in the world? Though the rest were revitalizing now, they were empty husks and far behind the very well prepared enemy.

Li Hao was starting to wrap his mind around the massive conspiracy. This also indicated that the enemy was less than the eight main cities at their peak. They weren't even confident of taking down those left behind to defend the main cities, so they could only opt for attrition through the passage of time.

But hadn't the powerhouses of the eight main cities all withdrawn? Only Saints at best were left. Did the enemy not even have a few Saints? Now this was perplexing.

Li Hao was also certain of one fact—there must be another powerhouse left in the ruin that caused the first awakening. At the very least Ying Hongyue, the Celestial Sword Immortal, the mountain lord of Yonder, and Yama had been present for the first awakening. They would know where those ruins were.

No, wait!

Li Hao suddenly recalled what Deputy Zhou had once said to him. Quite a few people had been involved in the first awakening, including the commander of the Skystar Guards!

And who was that?

Director General Zhao!

Indeed, Director General Zhao was Laughter, the commander of the Skystar Guards. He would know!

The young man's expression shifted slightly. In that case, would the director general have met that powerhouse? This was a matter from a very long time ago, something mentioned in passing when he first met the director general. Li Hao had almost forgotten about it.

He suddenly remembered it when the Black Armor mentioned that the awakenings were premeditated. Director General Zhao knew where the ruins were and had participated in the first awakening!

"Li Hao!" Yuan Shuo called out when he saw his student sink into deep thought again. "What were you thinking? Are you alright? How come you've detonated all of your supernatural characters?"

"It's fine," the young man shook his head with a laugh. "I've just suddenly had some cultivation reflections and wanted to cleanse them of impurities. I'll re-coalesce them when I have a moment and organize my new system. This saves me some trouble."

Chapter 935: The Martial World is Everywhere (II)

Just listen to the young man!

Strange looks spread over everyone's face. How was there someone like this in the world? He was blithely unconcerned after blowing up his strongest trump cards and said that it was a perfect opportunity to reorganize his new cultivation system.

Were these words that anyone would voice?

“It’s fine, really,” Li Hao repeated seriously when he saw everyone look at him. “I had no threads of a clue before and randomly cultivated all over the place. It’s only been five months since I’ve touched martial dao and my practice has been a bit haphazard.

“I lacked experience in my first attempt and didn’t have enough resources. Now that I’m starting over, I’ll be able to put it all in order in a month at most. Taking another step forward will be a guarantee then.”

No one made a sound. Even Yuan Shuo, the one with the shortest martial dao tenure among them, had cultivated for decades. Five months... Screw you, buddy!

"Not to mention, we’ve had great gains this time..." Li Hao chuckled.

“Don’t forget, there’s two more Saints outside!” Director General Wang couldn’t help but speak up. “This giant mine is not yours yet!”

What was the kid thinking!

“How many times will I be able to rely on the senior if I give this body to you?” Li Hao looked at the Black Armor.

The dean didn’t respond.

“Does the senior not want it?” Li Hao smiled. “Do you find it too weak?”

“It would be more valuable if it was already at the Empyrean King level. At present, it would be a waste to let me imprint my mental brand on it. I may not want this body later on.”

A body at almost the Empyrean King level was a similar level of strength to his physical body back in the day. The key was that this body would lack further potential... which he wouldn't mind either, if it wasn't for the many more years it'd take to finish the body. The second awakening might occur only after this process was complete. This was why those at the mine had continuously prevented the bramble rose and other plant spirits from breaking the mine.

"Why does it require so many more years for the body to be complete?" Li Hao frowned.

"It can't draw too fiercely on the mine because the mine is tied to the second awakening as the catalyst. With energy in the outside world being extracted by other parties, the body can only be slowly nurtured one step at a time. Hence, speed is slow.

"Additionally, the scarlet shadow might have awakened only after the first awakening. It was probably improved via natural processes before that."

The Black Armor had more or less fully explained the situation; Li Hao sank into deep thought as he looked at the body. Since the Black Armor found the body mediocre, would it be a waste to give it to the dean? But what else could he use it for?

Make it into soup? Or give it to the Ninth Division leader?

That was the first possibility that popped into Li Hao's mind, but upon further thought, perhaps that one wouldn't want it either. Additionally, this body was so strong that it may not be able to be transported. So if he had to bring the division leader here... would he be willing?

And there were two more Saints outside...

The Ninth Division leader wasn't that strong. Based on their last conversation, ten trunks of Immortal plant spirits were sufficient to recover his physical body. That would put him at less than initial Immortal—what if he was revived with the body of a Saint instead?

Would he be able to outright recover his own body and not need someone else's body?

"I think the senior should still take this body," Li Hao said when his thoughts traveled here. "Use it as a temporary bridge if you'd like. Just imprint it with your mental brand so there won't be any trouble in the future. We can at least prevent a repeat of what happened earlier, the one in which the enemy almost beat our mental strength into the ground."

"You're giving it to me?" murmured a surprised Black Armor. "Truth be told, that will be a huge waste. I don't really like using someone else's body either. Any Immortal would view this body as their greatest treasure."

"At present, there's only mental strength left of a lot of people. An Immortal being in charge of this body would put them on par with any Saint. There should be plenty willing to pay any price if you offer this to them..."

As for him, he would at most treat it as temporary accommodations. He wouldn't be that grateful to the young man.

"Then think of it as a puppet-shaped weapon," laughed Li Hao. "It's not a majorly significant treasure..."

Not a majorly significant treasure?

"Li Hao, this is a real treasure." Director General Wang couldn't help himself. "If you were to trade this for Water of Life, let me calculate... It'd be worth a small lake of Water of Life. So... one million drops wouldn't be a high price!"

Li Hao blinked. One million drops? If each drop cost three thousand mysterious power stones, then this was worth three billion stones??

The young man swallowed hard. That was a lot!

“And I’m erring on the side of caution and underestimating the value!” Director General Wang almost rolled his eyes. “There are some treasures inside this body that are extinct now. The vast quantities of indestructible matter, for example, as well as Beguilement Grass and Captivation Perfume. If one successfully grows or creates them, the end product would be too priceless for Water of Life!

“Do you know what is entailed by Empyrean King??” he gesticulated wildly. “When it comes to the city lord of Battle Heaven, the invincible existence of my Wang family—and I’m not talking about the exalted emperor who visited, but our city lord. The greatest heights our city lord reached was peak Saint, not Empyrean King!

“Well, I don’t know if he later managed to advance further, but even if he did and even if he became Empyrean King... Apart from the Sword Sovereign of your family, an Empyrean King was invincible throughout Silver Moon!”

Did Li Hao not understand the significance of this cultivation level? It seemed that he didn’t think much of this body! Director General Wang wanted to smack him!

“I know that, and I’m not thinking any less of Empyrean King. I don’t have the right to,” Li Hao demurred. “I mean to say that this thing isn’t our own body and it doesn’t have much potential. The human body’s potential does not come from an external body or how many treasures we possess. For us, at least, the treasure of the human body comes from ourselves. There is limited value even in an exalted emperor’s body because it is not our own.”

Director General Wang started at his response.

“In that case, if you like this one so much, I will agree to you destroying your own body and changing for this one!” Li Hao continued.

The director general looked down at the physical body that he’d recovered not too long ago, then at the golden body on the ground. His mental strength of an Immortal and a body almost at Empyrean King should enable him to bring Saint-level power to bear.

He would be a Saint in the blink of an eye!

As for not having future potential... Was being a Saint not the pinnacle of life itself? There hadn't been many Saints in all of Silver Moon Territory back in the day. The major families didn't think much of Saints because they'd met exalted emperors. To the Wang family, the greatest they had among their number was the Saint level.

Director General Wang looked around in a daze. He would be a Saint if he put the body on!

But he quickly shook his head. "No no no, I like my own body the best. I don't like someone else's body..."

"You don't like it?" laughed the Black Armor. "You must know that you're no spring chicken anymore. Although you were a genius of your family, you only made it into initial Immortal after so many years. Even if we were still in the age of core origin, it'd take you almost one thousand years to become a Saint!

"You stand almost no chance in this age, but you'll be one if you put the body in! Once you do, only your General Pagoda will be able to rival you in Battle Heaven, right?"

The director general silently looked upon the body, ultimately clenching his jaw with a shake of his head. "No, I don't want it! I have recovered my physical body and am no longer in the state I was before. I would've taken an Immortal's body if you gave one to me then, but now... I don't want it!"

If none of you guys want it, give it to me! wailed the redwood off to the side. I want it!

A body in human form and one that was almost at the Empyrean King level, one that would fully reach that cultivation level in a few more years... It was a treasure of one's dreams and all of these guys treated it as trash! If you don't want it, I want it!

What a pity that it didn't dare speak up. It couldn't afford to offend either the Black Armor or Director General Wang. As for Li Hao... the young man also seemed out of its reach. It wasn't that Li Hao was stronger than the plant spirit, but that he gave off an increasingly mysterious aura.

Take this fight, for example. The young man had quickly defeated the scarlet shadow after emerging from a special zone. The abilities of his nine elements had exploded at the same time and he'd dismantled several heritage weapons... Li Hao's various actions shook the plant spirit.

The last time it was so fearfully reverent had been a very, very long time ago, when it glimpsed the Sword Sovereign from afar. This time, it felt the same toward a young man. Therefore, the redwood didn't dare brashly open its mouth at the moment.

Li Hao said nothing further as well and swiftly looked at the Black Armor. "Take it for now, senior. Not to mention, its components such as the indestructible matter will still remain even if it breaks, right? We can break it when we need to and revive one hundred students, can't we? We might not be able to handle Immortals, but we can do Apexes, right?"

The Black Armor blinked and said after a beat, "One hundred may be too many even when supplementing with a few other ingredients, but a few dozen should be fine..."

Li Hao was going to use the body of an Empyrean King to resurrect those weak Apexes? Even he was surprised by this decision.

"Then that's perfect," grinned the young man. "We can even recycle it for further use, that's great! The senior said that the price for helping me once is reviving ten students. If I revive one hundred, that will be ten instances of helping me. Is my logic correct?"

The Black Armor was speechless.

"Although the senior helped me earlier, I hired you. Therefore, this spoil of battle is mine. Which means to say that the senior has to help me nine more times after this, right?"

The Black Armor was quiet and then... nodded.

“Then perfect, please make do with this for now, senior!” The young man grinned broadly.

“You do realize that I am nearly on par with an Empyrean King once I put on this body?” the Black Armor couldn’t help but elaborate. “If I have this level of strength in this age... You’ll be hard pressed to stand against me no matter how many powerhouses you call to your side...”

Aren’t you afraid?

“Can I stand against the senior now?” Li Hao took a deep breath. “We’ve got to take a chance at some point, don’t we? I’m also betting that, given how prosperous the senior’s era was, you won’t find anything of desire in this world. Aren’t I right? So let’s take a gamble! Isn’t that what we’re doing in this day and age? What if the Star Gate opens one day and we locate the main world? Won’t it be a happy ending all around after I send off the senior?”

The Black Armor turned over his words and nodded. He reached with his hand to claim the physical body.

“So I have to come back to life in the end...” he sighed emotionally.

“Why is the senior so insistent on dying?” Li Hao chuckled. The Black Armor didn’t respond. It wasn’t that he wanted to die, just that... the future seemed so bleak.

Chapter 936: The Martial World is Everywhere (III)

Director General Wang was rather envious that the golden body had gone to his martial uncle. Although he didn’t want it, he still drooled over it.

“There is further use left in this pool of treasure.” The Black Armor suddenly looked at Li Hao. “This was used to nurture the Empyrean King body and with ninety percent of its energy depleted,

it's perfect for you modern humans. A quick soak will strengthen your physical body by thirty percent! Spending a day and night will double your physical body's strength! Three days will place you on par with a ninth rank of my time..."

"It's that good?" Li Hao brightened. "That makes a highly valuable treasure! Are the effects that apparent?"

"Of course, this is so much better than Water of Life and other similar resources. Water of Life is coalesced by plant spirits, after all. This pool contains a lot of other ingredients and it might be the only one of its kind in the world."

"Can it hold a lot of people?" Li Hao vastly asked.

"Mmhmm. Granting them one-tenth of the strength of an Empyrean King would be astounding enough already. The pool can accommodate eighty to one hundred people of your level."

"Teacher." Li Hao enthusiastically turned to Yuan Shuo. "Will we quickly see a lot of seventh element Arcanus if we shove all of the Silver Moon martial masters inside?"

"....." The group was extraordinarily surprised by his reaction.

"What about yourself?" the Black Armor couldn't help but ask. The young man had given him the body and wanted to give the pool to Silver Moon martial masters. What about himself?

Li Hao... was an interesting person.

"I have my ways," grinned the young man. "And right now, I don't like forcing myself to improve. Wouldn't you say so, teacher?"

"You're referring to the secondary dimension," Yuan Shuo responded with some bafflement. "But... it's not fast enough. You're better off just jumping in for a bath."

“Now that’s not the way to look at it, teacher,” Li Hao chuckled. “You only have five auras, whereas I’ll have nine soon. I’m totally different! Not to mention, I’ve found another way that I can make better use of. By the way, that place isn’t called the secondary dimension anymore, but the Hao Cosmos!”

“What?”

“The ‘hao’ of a bright moon and cosmos as that’s an entire realm of stars. The Hao Cosmos!”

Yuan Shuo blinked, stupefied, then smacked himself on the forehead with great regret. “I completely forgot about this! I should’ve called it the Shuo Cosmos!”

The crowd was completely turned around by these two. Aren’t we discussing business here?? You guys ignore the ground littered with treasure and loftily converse of matters far beyond your reach. Even Director General Wang drooled over what they’d found, but master and disciple didn’t seem to think much of them.

It was like a beggar treating one million star coins as trash! Did they not know the inherent value of what was around them, or did they really think that they could surpass this treasure?

“Where are the self-destruct mechanisms set up?” Li Hao looked around after a while of conversation.

The Black Armor materialized a clear dome of light in the air with a wave of his hand. It extended in all directions like tree roots; there was a black hole in it.

“Infuse this hole with energy,” explained the Black Armor. “Give it roughly the same amount of energy as a peak Immortal and it will detonate the entire mine. But there are also countermeasures. That guy didn’t use this mechanism—I would’ve been able to reverse the self-destruct sequence had he set it in motion!”

“How would you have reversed it?”

The Black Armor looked at Li Hao. This was classified knowledge back in the day. But now... Forget it, it didn't matter anymore.

“It's very simple. It's just the method wouldn't occur to the enemy and non-executives wouldn't be aware of it...” the Black Armor chattered for a bit, but didn't give a direct answer.

Li Hao started to grow impatient and even Director General Wang raised an eyebrow. C'mon, out with it, I'm curious too!

The Black Armor eventually coughed with awkwardness and muttered, “There's a... unique safety in this mechanism. If the enemy wants to activate the self-destruct, all you have to do is yell at it ‘the Human King is benevolent and kind, he loves his people like his own children. Glory to peace and may humanity reign ever prosperous!’. These words will stop the mechanism from following through.”

“.....” People exchanged glances with each other, shocked by the reveal.

Seriously?? How is this the safety mechanism?

The Black Armor coughed again—it was a difficult task to simulate coughing through mental strength. He lowered his voice, “This was the reversal personally set up by the Human King himself. He said that in a crucial moment, the enemy might be surprised by these words. That will give us the chance to strike back.”

The plant spirits furiously waved their treetops; there was nothing wrong with this line of thinking. Their own side was shocked out of their wits upon hearing this. The enemy would only be more dumbfounded. They would probably think we were raving mad and delusional after all that. I suppose... that would give us an opening to counterattack?

“Now you know, very few did back in the day,” the Black Armor coughed once more. “Our main concern was that a counterattack would be futile if our forces were too weak anyway. And if a powerhouse was on the scene, they could outright prevent the mine from exploding.”

Li Hao sighed with appreciation. At least, he thought it was appreciation. This method was so sophisticated that even the enemy would be completely confounded. Ah, the Human King!

The young man’s thoughts once more traveled back to the figure with explosive killing intent, slaying one enemy after another with his sword. He even faulted the enemy for not killing themselves after he slaughtered them all. Was such a person benevolent and kind?

Did he praise glory and love the people like his own?

Alright, perhaps the last detail was true. Li Hao wouldn’t think too hard on it for now, but the first two claims were horseshit!

He shook his head, not knowing whether to laugh or cry. The young man didn’t say anything. This place might be the only big mine in all of Silver Moon Territory. Although he knew the countermeasure, slim were the chances that he actually used it.

“Does this mean to say that the vice commander outside is in cahoots with this one?” Li Hao looked outward, despite not being able to see the mine entrance or sense any major disturbance. “What about the others? The troop leaders and soldiers? Have they all betrayed New Martial?”

“I don’t know.” The Black Armor shook his head at the outside world. “But this Vice Commander Sun probably knows the situation. The bramble rose might as well. He’s left these plant spirits alive on purpose so they can prevent certain people from entering this place after the first awakening.”

There was a plant spirit at every entrance, but the humans were all dead! It now appeared that the enemy had purposefully let the plant spirits survive so they could prevent other unexpected developments from happening. They knew that though the plant spirits survived, they would be

very weak. Despite that trade-off, the plant spirits still prevented anyone from disturbing the scarlet shadow from nurturing the physical body.

It was rather surprising that the other side hadn't been able to set foot into this place either after the first awakening. If they'd awakened then and desperately needed energy, they might have sent people to remove some ore.

But they hadn't!

Had the unexpected happened after all?

The Black Armor found it difficult to trace what had happened in the past, but he could guess at a bit given present circumstances. Since the bramble rose had broken through in the face of such conditions, perhaps... something interesting had indeed taken place.

Otherwise, it didn't make sense for it to be stronger when everyone else had become weaker.

"Then take the body for now, martial uncle," Director General Wang quickly raised. "You've consumed a lot of energy and should quickly recover before the enemy comes marching in. It'll be much easier to take care of them when you have the body! I... hope to capture Sun Xin alive!"

He truly hoped to get some information out of the vice commander. Li Hao might not care who it was that'd turned traitor, but he did.

He really did! It was very important! If the Black Armor didn't take the body, he might not be a match for their upcoming opponents after everything he'd expended in that fight.

"Please take the body first, senior," Li Hao quickly said as well. "Ah, this scarlet shadow hasn't fully died. It's just been scattered and its core is held within the mirror. Can we get any information out of it?"

“It’ll be hard!” the Black Armor quickly replied. “Very hard! An existence of that level rarely speaks the truth.”

“I see...” Li Hao nodded. “If its ponderous mental strength is dissipating, does that contain a lot of core origin power?”

The Black Armor blinked, then nodded. “Its great dao is still present and hasn’t been broken, but I suspect that it’s from Initial Martial. It might not have a core origin dao then, which is why I pronounced their death. What would you like to do?”

“My thoughts are, since its mental strength is mostly preserved in the mirror, can someone grow stronger after they absorb it?”

“Ah... you need to be careful with that. When it comes to strong mental entities, the slightest bit of mental strength might lead to full resurrection. Be careful during the absorption, they might take over your consciousness instead!”

“That’s fine, I’d have a powerful plant spirit or ancient human absorb it if I gave it to anyone,” Li Hao said joyfully. “I’ll explain all of this ahead of time so they’re not surprised.”

The redwood and others shifted with anticipation, but Li Hao didn’t turn to them. You guys... have had enough. They’d already absorbed several plant spirits worth of core origin and indestructible matter. It wouldn’t do to be greedy. He needed to think carefully about this resource and decide how to use it.

This was quite the harvest, and there were a few more plant spirits outside to be taken care of. In addition, there was this massive mine... Li Hao couldn’t tell how many ores there were. There was probably enough for the rest of his life!

He was rich!

The Black Armor quickly became one with the golden body; Li Hao looked around with anticipation. He rather hoped that those outside would fight for a while longer. None of them would be getting away when the Black Armor was finished!

The young man himself was a bit weak at the moment. His supernatural characters had broken and he'd yet to trace new ones. His physical body was neither weak nor strong, and it didn't possess that much battle strength by itself. It could withstand some six elements, but not seven elements.

However, he didn't care.

He kept caressing the stones around him with great excitement. The lake also brought a joyful curve to his lips!

Chapter 937: The Martial World is Everywhere (IV)

"That Black Armor is very strong!" Yuan Shuo transmitted as he drew closer to his student. "He was terrifying before you made it out of the secondary dimension. He flung around a lot of abilities from exalted emperors and utilized a book that contained all sorts of core origin great daos. I've read about these methods from ancient books, it might've been the method of that supreme powerhouse second to only the Human King. The Black Armor might have something to do with that one!"

Li Hao inclined his head thoughtfully.

"There's pros and cons to you giving the formidable body to him," Yuan Shuo continued. "The good thing is that he might not move against us later on because we've given our most precious item to him. The bad thing is that he's very strong, strong to the point of being uncontrollable!"

"We're a bit weak at the moment and need to be more careful from now on. We can extend a suitable amount of trust, but we can't blindly trust the ancients without putting any of our own boundaries in place! You need to keep a good balance in mind. It's never a good thing for the liege to be weak and the subjects strong!"

Li Hao nodded again, he knew that.

“Also, whether it’s this pool or the secondary dimension, don’t tell others about everything you know or be in a rush to share everything!” Yuan Shuo continued when he saw that the kid was indeed listening to him. “You haven’t reached that step yet and can’t keep everything under control. Be careful of working hard to benefit others! I’m all too familiar with those guys of Silver Moon...

“They probably won’t bite the hand that fed them when they grow strong enough, but it’s very likely that they’ll ignore you and just run off! Southern Fist, for example, is a prime candidate...”

Li Hao coughed. Teacher, why are you always targeting Southern Fist? He works so hard! He does whatever he’s told when he’s given money!

“Don’t cough, coughing won’t do you any good. Anyway, you better keep a low profile for a while after taking down this mine. Don’t make any moves before you reach the equivalent of a Saint! Have you not noticed that the more you act, the more powerhouses that awaken? This will easily get out of control. You need to go slow and steady, and stay out of ancient conflicts for now. Even if they confirm who turned traitor, you shouldn’t be in a hurry to pick sides.”

Li Hao’s head bobbed up and down. His teacher was plainly worried and truth be told, he was worried as well. Even near Empyrean Kings had appeared. He was just a seven element Arcanus, he was far too weak.

Even nine elements likely wouldn’t put up a fight to an Immortal. At this level, increasing his strength by one or two elements was likely less than the addition of one entire cultivation level. But there were thousands of supernatural abilities to explore and endless supernatural locks. Li Hao did not think that there was no future ahead of him.

“Also, are you certain that you want to kill the existences outside?” Yuan Shuo continued. “Do you not want to subdue a few of them to balance out the forces under your command?”

Li Hao blinked with astonishment.

“Do the plant spirits outside have death feuds with you?” transmitted his teacher.

Li Hao furrowed his brows and refuted his teacher for the first time in his life. “They have not offended me, but... teacher, these plant spirits manipulated the nine ministries and royal into creating chaos in the world!” he responded out loud. “We of the martial world bear the mantle of chivalry and justice. I have neither the benevolence of a king nor the kindness of an emperor.

“But we are heroes of the martial world and must trace these issues to their core. These plant spirits must share the responsibility for the world being in such straits these days! They fought over power and seized profits, beguiling the nine ministries and manipulating the royal family. Great upheaval has shaken our world and the people suffer in misery...

“The redwood tree sought to take control of the Lin family and vie for supremacy in this fight.” He turned to the plant spirits waiting in the distance. “If it wasn’t for Lin Hongyu choosing to surrender early on, none of the plant spirits behind these factions would survive!”

The redwood trembled and quickly smiled fawningly. “The commander is merciful, this minor spirit did not intend to manipulate the Lin family and neither do I have a desire to fight for supremacy. Please don’t misunderstand, commander!”

Li Hao ignored it, whereas Yuan Shuo blinked with surprise. He looked at his disciple. Li Hao rarely, very rarely contradicted him. He usually nodded in approval to whatever Yuan Shuo said. This was the first time that the young man had negated him from a fundamental basis.

Yuan Shuo was lost in thought for a while and smiled moments later, clapping Li Hao’s shoulder. “You’ve grown up!”

His child had grown up and had his own thoughts now! Yuan Shuo’s emotions were complicated, but he was also inexplicably gratified. Li Hao hadn’t retorted for no cause or reason, but posited a rational argument. Yuan Shuo was of the martial world and only considered the profits at hand before, but saw the issues in a new light after his student responded.

Li Hao said that he did not have the heart of a king or an emperor. But having chivalry and justice run through his veins and unsheathing his sword when he saw villainy take place, was that not the mark of a king?

A hero!

In this moment, Yuan Shuo felt that Li Hao was a hero of the martial world and he himself was just a tyrant. There was a difference between a tyrant and hero!

“You’ve grown up!” He emotionally patted Li Hao once more and grinned. “The Five Styles discipline has been labeled a demonic sect in the past. Who dares say that now?! I’ll punch his lights out with one fist! Little Hao, this world, the martial world, the future, and this martial dao is all yours!”

Yuan Shuo suddenly felt that he was old and his vision too narrow! My world has ever been the Silver Moon martial world, the Skystar martial world! My disciple’s world is that of all living beings!

“Teacher...”

Yuan Shuo roared with laughter when Li Hao sought to speak. “Don’t say anything, I said before that we need to walk our own paths! I can protect you for a stretch, but I can’t protect you for your entire life! Trust yourself and go down that road with conviction! We of the martial world care about only one word—pursuing our goals with pure thoughts!”

“.....” The group looked at Yuan Shuo. Do you know how to count?

Yuan Shuo threw his head back with laughter and ignored them. If I say that’s one word, then that’s one word. A whole sentence is one word, what you guys gonna do about it?

We pursue our goals with pure thoughts!

Damn straight!

The old demon was in an exceedingly good mood today. All of his previous apprehension and unease was swept clean away. Who had Old Demon Five Styles ever been afraid of?

I'll sweep through all the lands if I have enough time. Who cares about Empyrean Kings or exalted emperors, who cares about how strong exalted emperors are? I call the shots in my martial world!

Li Hao beamed broadly. Pursue my goal with pure thoughts? His teacher was right, but also wrong. That wasn't the only consideration. Martial masters cultivate the heart. Following one's heart and will is also a type of pursuing our goals with pure thoughts. However, not seeking or committing evil is the dao of the heart.

If others act for villainous intent, tenfold the consequences will be upon them if I can stand in their way! Teachers, the martial world is not just the martial world. Everywhere I stand is the martial world!

Both Li Hao and Yuan Shuo were smiling. The ancients looked at them, suddenly lost in a daze. This master and disciple duo were certainly interesting!

.....

Cultivation trained the heart. Each battle was a journey of the heart and each battle resulted in unique gains and reflections. To Li Hao, the base nature of battle wasn't to kill for the sake of killing. Neither did he kill people for some villainous pursuit.

Combating violence with violence was the hallmark of this age and the defining characteristic of any superhuman era. Only then could one follow the heart. It ultimately still came down to strength if one wanted to leap beyond superhuman strength.

Li Hao's conversation with his master imparted new insights regarding martial dao and life. The group spent some time cultivating and recovering; everyone was waiting on the Black Armor. Though they might not want to admit it, the Black Armor was their only hope of victory and Li Hao's greatest support. Saints would be hard to manage without the Evenround dean.

The white tree at the Wind and Cloud Pavilion had been a Saint nearly exhausted of all strength and resources, yet Director General Wang still required special methods to kill it.

The two Saints outside were in peak condition. Apart from a lack of additional fortification from core origin dao, they were essentially peak Saints.

It was also due to a lack of this enhancement that core origin cultivations were weaker in this age compared to their capabilities in the New Martial age. All powerhouses could be considered one cultivation level lower than they truly were.

Saints were bonafide Saints in a time when there was core origin dao to be found in the world. But now... they were on par with the Immortals of their time.

Li Hao sifted through a variety of thoughts. Moments later, the golden body next to the Black Armor had disappeared, but the dean remained under the cover of his armor. He seemed too shy to show his true nature to others.

Director General Wang showed his true form to everyone ever since recovering his body. He didn't cover it up with armor if he could help it.

"I'm about ready." The Black Armor was very calm despite having recovered most of his strength. He'd mostly returned to the level of strength he commanded with his own body, but he remained as composed as ever, as if this was nothing to celebrate.

It was the group that reacted with joy at his recovery.

“Then I’ll have to rely on the senior in the battle to come,” chuckled Li Hao.

“This is just a transaction of equal value.” The Black Armor ignored the pleasantries and rose to walk toward the mine entrance. The rest were hot on his heels.

The three plant spirits were highly anticipatory, whereas Panther couldn’t bear to leave. It kept looking back at the pool. The dog really wanted to take a nap in it, eat its fill, and enormously enjoy its time with the treasure.

What a pity that Li Hao didn’t give it a chance to do that.

Chapter 938: Curtains Fall on Skystar (I)

Outside the mine.

The battle raged on.

No one sensed what took place in the center of the mine because it’d all happened in a mental domain. Not even the two Saints had detected anything.

The fighting had continued for a while. Some Black Armaturas laid lifelessly on the ground. Some of the Skystar soldiers had been defeated as well, their life mark dissipating when their armor was smashed.

In the sky, some of the plant spirits struggled with injuries. Of the six Silver Armors, one laid prone on the ground, its status unknown. Overall, the plant spirits occupied the upper hand as they had more Immortals.

In the air.

The woman that the bramble rose had taken shape as wielded spikes in both hands. She sneered at Sun Xin. “Your side will only grow weaker the longer this drags on. I said that I only want energy. I will retreat if you give me one third of the energy stones in the mine! There is no benefit to either you or I if we continue this standoff, no?”

The Gold Armor didn’t say a word; he simply swung his blade with ferocious momentum. The bramble rose answered in kind as its spikes were cuttngly sharp since they were a part of it.

Sun Xin had not secured any advantage after repeated clashes. The remaining plant spirits on the ground abruptly launched a fierce offensive at the Silver Armors!

These plant spirits were of the Immortal level. Although they were slightly weaker than human peers, they beat the Silver Armors back through superior cultivation.

Only when it came to the fight between the Black Armaturas and Skystar Army was the latter the winning side. They firmly routed the Black Armaturas, but a skirmish of that level was insignificant when it came to turning the tide of battle!

A Silver Armor suddenly erupted with scintillating light. Startled plant spirits rapidly backed away. This was a sign of impending self-detonation!

When human experts faced their end, many were those who chose to go out in a final blaze of glory. This decision often caused no end of headache for the enemy. Although they knew that the humans would choose to self-detonate, it was sometimes impossible to interrupt the process.

“Halt!” a grunt echoed through the battlefield.

.....

Inside the mine.

Li Hao and the others were waiting for the perfect timing when Director General Wang's mouth sagged with dismay. He suddenly rushed out, much to Li Hao's surprise.

The Black Armor waved the rest of them off, not wanting the group to follow the man.

Li Hao frowned ferociously. Did the director general still harbor delusions of changing the situation out there?

.....

Boom!

Director General Wang beat back a plant spirit with a massive punch and shouted at the Silver Armor that wanted to self-detonate. "Stop!"

The Silver Armors jerked with surprise, as did the two fighting Saints pause. How had... someone else appeared in this area?

The Gold Armor was even more astonished; he was too shocked for words! How was this possible?! Wasn't this Wang Ye?

Some of the Silver Armors wanted to attack the newcomer, but did a double-take when they saw the newcomer clearly and swept him with their mental strength. An arctic expression on his face, Director General Wang held up a seal—the Black Tortoise Seal.

Radiant rays shot out from it, bringing the Silver Armors to a standstill.

"The seventh troop leader of the Third Division of Skystar Army greets Director General Wang!" spoke the stunned and delighted Silver Armor that'd wanted to self-detonate.

How were they meeting a director general of a main city here, in this age!

They quickly backed away when another idea struck them. How had the director general arrived at the mine entrance? Could it be...

Long buried memories surfaced. Could it be that Battle Heaven had something to do with the attack on Skystar Town? How else would their director general be here?

“Vice Commander Sun Xin of the Skystar Army is guilty of colluding with enemies!” snapped Director General Wang, not giving anyone a chance to do or say anything. “He is temporarily stripped of all military authority and will be arrested for further judgment by the Battle Heaven Army! All other army personnel will undergo investigation!”

“The various guardian plant spirits of Skystar Town have betrayed humanity. With the bramble rose as the leader, they will be executed for flaunting the law!”

Up in the air, the two Saints stopped fighting each other. Agitated ripples surfaced from the Gold Armor, whereas the bramble rose laughed softly. “Wang Ye? What a... surprise!”

“Why have you suddenly appeared at the rear of the mine, Wang Ye?” the Gold Armor asked in a low voice.

The other plant spirits looked at each other, all of them reading wariness in each other’s eyes. What... was Wang Ye doing here? He was part of Battle Heaven!

Meanwhile, other possibilities struck Jiang Chen and the ministers. Battle Heaven backed Li Hao from the shadows. Why was one of their members here? Battle Heaven was thousands of kilometers away and Wang Ye just demonstrated his sizable strength through beating back an Immortal plant spirit with one punch. How could he be here??

It was inconceivable!

“It is not your place to question why I am here, Sun Xin!” Director General Wang looked coldly at the Gold Armor. “Countless powerhouses died that year when Skystar Town was ambushed. I only ask you, why are you still alive?”

“The commander sought to protect the mine...” a Silver Armor hastily responded before Sun Xin had a chance to.

“Protect the mine?” Director General Wang turned to hector the Silver Armor. “Then I ask you, have you gone to the mine’s core?”

The Silver Armors blinked and looked at each other.

“There is a self-detonation mechanism in place at the core of the mine. The commander was worried of traitors and did not permit anyone to draw near...” one of them quickly replied.

“I ask you once more, Wang Ye, how are you here?” The Gold Armor’s presence fluctuated again when Director General Wang spoke of the mine’s core. “How did you bypass everything and avoid the Lock Formation of the Four Directions? Did you and the bramble rose reach an agreement long ago? You say that I turned traitor, but I find that it is Battle Heaven that has betrayed everyone!

“Kill him!” Sun Xin roared. “Wang Ye, you will be executed for trying to mislead the soldiers!”

He gave up on his plant spirit opponent and drove his blade at Wang Ye!

A thousand questions swirled in his mind; he was most shocked of all that Wang Ye was here. If the director general was here... then... what about inside? What’d happened?? The second awakening hadn’t started yet, so what was Wang Ye doing here? Shouldn’t he be at Battle Heaven??

The bramble rose didn't stop Sun Xin. She wore a smile, a slightly mocking smile with undertones of something else. Wang Ye... had come here. The director general of Security at Battle Heaven, one of the eight main cities, was here.

He was here with the city lord seal, which meant that he conducted himself with the authorization of Battle Heaven. He wasn't here alone.

The bramble rose looked around, then at the mine opening behind them. Were there others apart from Wang Ye? There was nothing amiss with the Lock Formation of the Four Directions, so had Wang Ye been here all along or had he just arrived?

It was better if he'd been here all along. If he'd just arrived... then the implications behind that were too many.

"How dare you!" Wang Ye roared angrily as Sun Xin descended with the might of a Saint. "Soldiers of Skystar Army, you will execute this person now if you are still loyal to New Martial!"

The Silver Armors looked at each other, each one too shocked for thought. On one side was the vice commander that they'd spent countless eons with, on the other was Director General Wang from a main city...

Sun Xin was now their commander-in-chief, so they should follow his orders. But... a director general from a main city... here with the city lord seal... and Battle Heaven... That was a city under the Exalted Blood Emperor's care, even though the exalted emperor had only visited once.

After momentary struggle, the Silver Armors interposed themselves between the two.

"Commander, there might be a misunderstanding here..." one of them said lowly. How could they just kill a main city envoy! After so many years of silence, they should take Wang Ye alive no matter what was potentially wrong with him and interrogate him first.

They were still in the thick of battle. That their commander had suddenly abandoned his fight against the bramble rose to focus on a Wang Ye that'd suddenly appeared... made them agitate uneasily.

"Have you forgotten military regulations?" Sun Xin should. "There must be something amiss with his sudden appearance. As a third party, he should be killed first!"

"You said it yourself that third parties should be killed," Director General Wang retorted coldly and remained unmoving. "I am the acting city lord of Battle Heaven, a member of Skystar's superior. Which military regulation says that envoys from a main city are to be executed on the battlefield?"

"Are you trying to lie your way out of the situation with a glib tongue even now, Sun Xin?"

The Gold Armor glared frostily at him and looked at the Silver Armors. He suddenly turned to the bramble rose. "Since he is a third party... you and I should kill him first before we talk of anything else..."

The bramble rose didn't respond. Killing a third party... of course that should take priority, if the person in question was an unknown third party. But now, the person was from a main city and... the plant spirit was still debating if Wang Ye was here alone or with numerous others? How had its formation been broken?

"Stand aside, all of you!" Sun Xin commanded with a frown. "I'll take him out first. We can resume our battle later!"

He chose to give way with this compromise as he could not afford to push his Silver Armors to the newcomer. That would be very troublesome.

The troop leaders hesitated still as this was a very complicated situation. Wang Ye's appearance was a complete surprise, and it made sense to arrest him first before resuming their battle. And yet...

“It looks like you guys really are unaware of the situation,” Wang Ye sighed. “I was also thinking that even if the Skystar Army betrayed New Martial, the entire army shouldn’t have turned traitor!”

The Silver Armors blinked and one of them couldn’t help but say, “Director General Wang, we have remained faithful to our duties all this time and never harbored second thoughts. These words…”

Made them too sad!

We guarded this place for countless years in a lonely existence, but now we’re being clapped with treason? Anyone would find it disheartening

“That is because you guys were idiots,” Wang Ye replied emotionlessly. “You were Apexes back in the day, but lacked any sort of ability to judge for yourself. How do you lead troops when you are so dumb?”

The Silver Armors stirred angrily! But in this moment, another figure appeared!

Chapter 939: Curtains Fall on Skystar (II)

Sun Xin’s expression shifted drastically and the others trembled. Who was this newcomer??

The unknown figure simply brought out a medallion and calmly explained himself, “I am the dean of education at Evenround Martial University. Do you all know me?”

The Silver Armors’ hearts quailed and one of them quickly pounded their chest in a salute, “Greetings to Dean Zhang!”

Boom!

The Silver Armors snapped to attention and thrust their chest out. Their reaction was completely different from what they’d shown Director General Wang.

Up in the sky, the bramble rose stilled with astonishment. A rueful expression appeared on its face as it looked at the Black Armor. It sank to the ground with a lowered head. “Bramble of the Skystar guardian plant spirits greets Dean Zhang!”

Sun Xin also dismissed his visor and growled, “Vice Commander Sun Xin of the Skystar Army greets Dean Zhang!”

This was just the dean of education at a martial university, yet these powerhouses readily bent their heads in respect. Even the rest of the Immortal plant spirits drifted to the ground after a beat of surprise. Their movements were slow with incomprehension.

“Do you wish to flee or fight?” The Black Armor looked calmly at Sun Xin.

“I do not know what wrong I have committed.” Sun Xin set his jaw. “Even Dean Zhang cannot treat the military thus. I have safeguarded Skystar’s mine for one hundred thousand years. Countless eons have passed in utter solitude. Does the dean wish to execute me just because of one word from Wang Ye?”

The Black Armor laughed as he looked at him; everyone heard his laughter. He reached forward, prompting Sun Xin to let loose with a surge of mental strength and vanish on the spot.

“Bramble, we need to act together!” he roared.

The bramble rose didn’t make a move. It snorted and remained in a gesture of respect.

Sun Xin reappeared in the void and ran for the mine entrance. A massive palm descended from the sky.

BAM!

Sun Xin's armor shattered from the impact, revealing a heavily injured body. "Zhang An, by what right do you have to kill me?!"

Zhang An!

Li Hao's group raised their eyebrows. This was their first time hearing the Black Armor's name.

"By the right of executing a New Martial traitor!" The Black Armor was as calm as always.

"Have I become a traitor just because you say I have?"

"Yes, if I say so, you are so!" The Black Armor slammed his palm down again; there was only the palm that existed between heaven and earth.

Sun Xin paled with horror and erupted with endless blood qi, bringing tremendous strength to bear. A great dao manifested in the air as blade light criss-crossed through heaven and earth.

"You are not of the military and not one of my commanding officers... by what right do you..." he continued roaring, hoping to distract his opponent. However, the Black Armor responded with palm strikes that caused the sky to darken!

"I am not of the military, but neither is that relevant. I am the instructor of the Reserve Corps of the Demonic Guards, is that sufficient?" He stepped forward and delivered a punch that sent Sun Xin flying backward, his body cracking in all aspects.

"If that identity is not enough, I am the commander of Principal Fang's personal guards, is that sufficient?"

Boom!

Another punch! Sun Xin roared with demented fury.

“If that identity is not enough, I am an instructor at Demonic Capital, is that sufficient?”

Rumble!

Sun Xin was tossed into the air with each collision, his blood spraying in all directions. The Silver Armors were shellshocked at the sight! The bramble rose sighed as well; the other four plant spirits didn't know what to do with themselves. Jiang Chen and the rest were completely at a loss.

Who... was this person? And Evenround Martial had something to do with Li Hao as well! They, too, were too stunned for words. This person was too strong! The Saint that the bramble rose had fought to a standstill could offer no resistance against this one. How was that possible?

Was this the legendary Empyrean King cultivation level?

Rumble!

Sun Xin struggled to his feet again and again, unwilling to go quietly into the night. He knew that once he was arrested, death would be the only outcome for him. No matter what he did or said, or if he offered to redeem himself through other meritorious acts, he was dead.

Blood qi raced through the air as a bloody blade coalesced—the Incantation of the Blade of Blood!

He wanted to resist, he would split the world with this blade!

“Are traitors qualified to use the incantation?!” The sight sent the Black Armor into a fury and he yelled in a manner far different from before. A book appeared in his hand, one that created a person with their hands behind their back. It solidified into a particularly peaceful being.

“No...” Sun Xin garbled with horror. “Director...”

“Oh, so you are one of my grandfather’s old troops,” the Black Armor laughed. “But you chose to betray New Martial! Sun Xin, you were entirely too bold!”

The shadow didn’t do anything after it appeared. It simply waved an arm.

Boom!

Sun Xin’s Incantation of the Blade of Blood promptly disintegrated. The man slumped, having lost all of his battle spirit. “No no no... I didn’t betray anyone...” he repeated brokenly as he crashed to the ground.

The Black Armor waved a restriction into the air and enclosed it around the vice commander. “I’ll take care of you later!” He turned to the bramble rose. “And what’s with you?”

The woman that was the bramble rose no longer carried itself coquettishly. She inclined her body wryly. “Nothing at all. When those people came and spontaneously overturned Skystar Town, I was afraid and chose to surrender.

“I then promised to secure the town for them until their people came again to complete the awakening of the world...”

“But after one hundred thousand years, I am no longer willing or find it right to slave away on humanity’s behalf! They sent people to transport energy stones away, but I defeated them all and seized their cargo for myself. That is how I have not weakened over the years and grown stronger instead.

“And today... I find that in this isolated world, I have become a Saint and have even more of a right to pursue my freedom...” The bramble rose was very calm. “New Martial is no more. Am I to continue working on your behalf? Even you wouldn’t have that right to command my fealty, Dean Zhang.”

The Black Armor looked at it and nodded after a period of silence. “That makes sense. So you broke with Sun Xin?”

“Not entirely as we were never partners in the first place.” The bramble rose smiled faintly. “I was just a timid, cowardly plant spirit afraid of death. Hence I chose to surrender in battle, but this person surrendered a long time ago. Please don’t compare me to him, Dean Zhang!”

The various plant spirits listened to the conversation with terror. The Black Armor looked more deeply at the bramble rose and pondered for a while again. “You speak truly. It is damnable, ludicrous, and deserving of death to surrender in war. But compared to Sun Xin, you are indeed a bit better.”

“Thank you for your approval, Dean Zhang,” chuckled the bramble rose. “I do not wish to bow my head to fate like this! When the Earth Dwellers were defeated, the plant and monster spirits surrendered and swore loyalty to humanity and the Human King! I was part of them and gave my allegiance to the human race! There was nothing wrong with our fealty then since the Human King and the supreme were too terrifying.

“But now... today, I wish to try and see if the surviving powerhouses of the human race truly are invincible!”

“Then give it a try!” gently sighed the Black Armor.

The earth and sky shifted as the bramble rose reverted back to its true form. Great Dao appeared as the world crumbled!

“How can the human remnants of this age win my fealty?” the bramble rose roared with laughter that entranced. Endless core origin emanated as its great do materialized. The bramble rose walked over slowly, as if thousands of young women, swaying and sashaying with beautiful charm!

“I invite the dean to stay for a while in my core origin!”

The Black Armor disappeared and reappeared on top of the avenue of great dao in the void.

“The dao of beguilement is just a minor dao in the end!” he laughed.

“You are wrong! There is no difference of major or minor when it comes to dao. The dean’s range of experience is great and you are very self-assured. What a pity that you’re a third generation and not one of the first generation pioneers. There is too big a gap between you, your father, and your grandfather!”

Boom!

The great dao shook and the world quaked! In this moment, a Saint plant spirit was immensely conceited and its cockiness knew no bounds. Countless figures appeared in the sky and wanted to come close to the Black Armor. They exploded without forewarning, but still they kept coming.

The remaining plant spirits

The plant spirits on the ground were horrified at the turn of events and wanted to run. Some gingerly picked up their roots and attempted to flee.

This was too horrifying! They couldn’t believe that such a powerhouse would appear in this day and age. And... they knew who it was!

In the background, Jiang Chen swiftly took down the formation. He didn't dare make a sound and wanted to open a hole so he could slip away. The vice commander had been captured and although the plant spirits on their side were strong, they could tell that this was a fight to the death. It was more than likely that the bramble rose couldn't overcome their enemy.

Just as they were about to slip away, Director General Wang grunted. "You want to leave? Come with me, Skystar Army! We execute these traitors!"

"Understood, sir!" The Silver Armors didn't dare say anything else. As surreal as the scene in front of the scene, they quickly made their moves. There was one Immortal among the five Silver Armors, as well as Director General Wang. Although they faced four Immortals, the group didn't shy away from a difficult challenge.

A redwood tree manifested at this time, quickly followed by a little jujube tree.

The Silver Armors started; Director General Wang quickly bellowed, "They're on our side!"

The startled plant spirits with the bramble rose immediately erupted with their greatest strength. "Break the formation and run!" shouted a big tree.

Boom!

The two sides were locked in combat and a formidable presence spread in all directions. Jiang Chen and the rest from the ministries weren't interested in participating. They moved delicately, deathly afraid of disturbing anyone. The plant spirits they'd come with were likely done for, and even if they won the fight, they wouldn't be able to leave the ruins.

The humans, however, could!

At the moment, the old Skystar King and ministers were thinking this might have something to do with Li Hao.

“And where are you going, gentlemen?” A chuckle drifted through the air.

Li Hao!

Chapter 940: Curtains Fall on Skystar (III)

Qi Pingjiang furrowed his brows and halted in his tracks. As he expected, Li Hao was here. And there was also Yuan Shuo! And a dog and a tree—the imperial guard.

“Who would’ve thought!” Zhao Tianyang sighed. Li Hao truly had brought all of these powerhouses here. They weren’t interested in how the young man had done it. At the moment, they were just very resigned by the situation.

“There’s nothing to think about.” Li Hao smiled and looked at the old man in yellow robes. “Are you the previous Skystar King?”

Jiang Chen nodded with a smile, demonstrating a gracious bearing despite the circumstances. Apart from the two ministers of Examinations and Foreign Relations showing some timidity, the rest of the group was very calm.

“To the victor go the spoils,” Qi Pingjiang said solemnly. “It looks like we still lost in the end! Except... Li Hao, the ancient powerhouses are yet present in the world. Though you’ve taken our place, you will ultimately follow our footsteps!”

We cherished certain dreams in the past as well, but the ancient civilization is powerful and the nine ministries changed after the plant spirits seized control of our institutions. The world was plunged into chaos. Your blood may run hot now, Li Hao, but how long will it be before it’s doused and you’re like us?

“Then let’s wait and see!” laughed the young man. “Of course, those of you present will likely not have a chance to see.”

The ministers erupted with presence and summoned a weapon into their hands. All of them were extremely formidable!

Zhao Tianyang kept his composure. He was the foremost minister among the nine and leveled an even stare at Li Hao. “Defiance is given, you can save yourself the talk of having us give ourselves up. However, whether we win or lose, can Commander Li enlighten me regarding a matter or two?”

“What questions do you have, Minister Zhao?” smiled Li Hao.

The old minister smiled in response. “After taking down the nine ministries and royal family, the world will be in disarray and ancient powerhouses running rampant through our lands. The Silver Moon that you hail from possesses the most number of ancient powerhouses. Even Battle Heaven has thrown their full support behind the commander. What does the commander intend to do next?”

“I don’t know, I’ll take it one day at a time!” Li Hao looked at the other with surprise. “We’ll clear out the tumors first, then ensure that everyone has a full stomach. After that, we’ll stop the wars, then focus on education and technology. Martial dao and the supernatural domain will not be toppled, but their development will be restricted by the government. Other than that, I don’t have any good strategies yet when it comes to the ancient powerhouses.”

“This is what the nine ministries once sought to do,” sighed Zhao Tianyang. “But we soon found ourselves hobbled at every turn! The plant spirits have a massive appetite and either want energy, resurrection, or even to open the Star Gate so they can leave this place. Some wish to reign supreme through the land. Won’t you be repeating our actions with your plan?”

“I’ll simply do my best. Not everything can go according to my preferences, after all!” Li Hao smiled.

“True enough, the ancient civilization is a hard threshold to pass,” Zhao Tianyang said with some regret. “But the commander is young, so you might stand a chance... Then show us the strength of Old Demon Five Styles and Demonic Sword, the two Silver Moon heavyweights of the demonic Five Styles discipline!”

He slashed forward with his sword!

Yuan Shuo had been shifting with impatience for a while. He snorted and answered with a punch. A ferocious tiger howled its outrage at the sky!

The two clashed in battle with a thunderous rumble.

Jiang Chen chuckled as he summoned a spear. "I am Jiang Chen of Skystar royalty... please demonstrate your skill, Skystar Duke!"

He jabbed with his spear!

Li Hao laughed and disappeared on the spot. Jiang Chen was very strong, a seven element Arcanus. The young man was much weaker than before with the destruction of his supernatural characters. But what of it?

Seven elements was strong, but Li Hao wasn't the slightest bit afraid. He was itching for some action after watching all of these premier heavyweights do battle.

"Qi Pingjiang, come at us with the rest of you!" Li Hao shouted, brandishing a longsword. It wasn't Stellaris, just a more powerful ordinary weapon.

A longsword swept through the air, crossing with a spear. Sparks sprayed in all directions.

The other three ministers, Qi Pingjiang included, frowned and ignored the young man. They turned to attack Yuan Shuo instead.

"Yuan Shuo, I will avenge my wife today!" Qi Pingjiang snarled.

“Come at me!” Yuan Shuo sneered.

Bam!

The other two ministers erupted as well, instantly suppressing Yuan Shuo and forcing him back with every move.

Panther and little tree merely ensured that the perimeter was clear so that combatants would be undisturbed; they didn't participate in the battle proper. These martial masters insisted on fighting each other in solo combat, so they didn't want to be involved either. That would draw human ire instead.

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Li Hao set everything out of his mind. They were all martial masters here, so the fight took place in a straightforward fashion. Jiang Chen was stronger than him at the moment, but the young man had seen much of the world. He'd once fought a premier seven element Hong Tu, so he was quite at ease in battle.

Every single one of his sword strokes were executed perfectly and his weapon flowed through various sword methods. The Nine Forged Force exploded with domineering fashion.

Jiang Chen regarded his opponent gravely. At a time like this, everyone forgot about any other enemies on the field. As the most premier personages of this era, laser focus was an integral component in one's arsenal.

A spear jabbed forward like a dragon or a rainbow! It was wielded by the old Skystar King; he fought with an overwhelming merciless style. Hints of a saintly dao exuded when he swept his spear through the void. Li Hao fractured the earth when he was forced to the ground.

Seeing this development, the other two six element ministers rushed the young man!

Jiang Chen wanted to speak, but didn't have a chance to before Li Hao's longsword disappeared like a wreath, then reappeared after severing the old Examination minister's neck. The old man's head slid off with a wide-eyed look of incredulity on his face!

How was this possible?!

The young man... had demonstrated the strength of only peak six elements! That was all there was to him, so why was he... like this?

"He wasn't worthy of a single blow!" Li Hao frowned. These two ministers were much weaker than those of Armed Forces and Administration. His sword was very fast.

The minister of Foreign Relations backed up in horror; his weapon erupted with force. However, Panther opened its mouth and the projection of the imperial palace appeared as well, suppressing the weapon. The dog then swallowed the weapon.

Li Hao didn't say anything as he would find it difficult to go against a Saint-level weapon at this point in time. Even though it's fair combat, don't you guys see that I'm not using Stellaris? How come you're using your ministry's ultimate weapon, the one that was once used by a Saint?

The Foreign Relations minister floundered around, lost after his weapon was no more. Li Hao evaded a spear jab and brandished his sword with a whirl. The Foreign Relations minister was sent to join his Examinations counterpart.

"We've gotten old," Jiang Chen sighed and took a few steps back. "A young'un was able to kill two Arcanus of six elements right in front of me..."

He shook his head and suddenly smiled, snapping all of his supernatural locks!

“I can maintain this for three minutes, Skystar Duke, care to try it out now?”

Li Hao could tell from his forbidding presence that the old king had snapped all of his locks. “With the methods of a martial master? Now that’s interesting, let’s do it!”

He slashed out with his sword and an eruption of supernatural abilities! Although he no longer had his supernatural characters, his supernatural abilities still remained and light illuminated the world!

Battle commenced on all sides; fierce action was underway!

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Jiang Chen grunted two minutes later as Li Hao stabbed his sword through the old man’s heart. However, he laughed as he was able to jab his spear through Li Hao’s stomach and run it straight through!

“Skystar Duke, my organs were broken to begin with. Trading injury for injury... is not a good deal!” The old king smiled. He was going to die regardless, so it didn’t matter if his heart shattered. Li Hao was fully aware of this, so trading an eye for an eye was a very unwise decision.

“Martial masters naturally need to bring our full strength to bear before the enemy is dead!” Li Hao swiftly backed away the moment he yanked his sword out.

“How interesting!” Jiang Chen roared with laughter. “It has been many years since young heroes have appeared in the dynasty. The so-called younger generation... used to refer to your master’s generation. An abnormality has appeared in yours!”

His spear danced through the air as a stalwart mountain! Ripples reverberated through the air when it swung forth.

“I have long lost my ambitions and lofty aspirations after being trapped for eighty years. The ancient civilization has its advantages and drawbacks. They were a critical part of establishing Skystar Dynasty, but the dynasty has grown corrupt and cannot leave them.

“I thought I was cautious and conscientious, but I became a servant in the end as well! People of our generation... wish more to see you overthrow these guys!”

The spear illuminated the void and pierced through the firmament!

“I have brought dishonor upon my ancestors. My ancestors died in battle and did not betray the dynasty. I would request the ancient powerhouses to right my ancestor’s name!” Jiang Chen’s physical body fell apart when he was finished. He threw the spear forward, to which Li Hao quickly brought up his sword in defense. However, the sword was completely shattered this time.

The young man rapidly backed away and deployed the Five Styles, buffeting the spear however he could. Ultimately, the spear pierced through him again and nailed him to the ground.

Li Hao coughed up blood, but saw that a broken, ragged Jiang Chen had toppled over in front of him.

He was dead!

Li Hao coughed up more blood and pulled out the spear with a shake of his head. Jiang Chen was very strong, but it wouldn’t be that easy to kill the young man. His last move had been the last vestiges of splendor. He would still be dead without a doubt if the battle continued.