

Star Gate 951

Chapter 951: Cleaning Up (IV)

“Dismissed, all of you, and do as I say!”

“Understood!” Red Moon members streamed out of the room. Once they were gone, the scarlet cloak appeared.

“Why have you sounded the retreat? What’s happened?”

“The central region is a mess and the Skystar Commander Office is sweeping through everything,” Ying Hongyue responded faintly. “It’s no longer safe. We need to change to a new locale!”

The scarlet cloak hesitated for a moment before quickly asking, “And where would you like to go?”

“The north!”

The north? The scarlet cloak jerked with surprise. “Silver Moon?”

“No, the three northern provinces! Also, it’s best to have Yama and Celestial convene with me. The three of us need to act as one. If not, true trouble might be upon us later.”

“Celestial and Yama... then...”

Ying Hongyue cut the scarlet cloak off. “Do whatever you wish! I understand your desire to not put all of your eggs in the same basket. However, I also know that you’re behind Celestial and Yama as well. If we continue to fight alone in the present circumstances and keep each other in check, we might be creating more trouble for ourselves instead.”

“Do you think... that Li Hao might have claimed some first-mover advantages?” asked the scarlet cloak after a while of silence.

“Perhaps.”

“I need to make a report of this before we can come to a decision,” replied the scarlet cloak.

“Try to give me a response as soon as possible!”

“Alright!” The scarlet cloak disappeared.

Ying Hongyue watched aloofly in the direction it'd gone. He rose to his feet. Waiting for the situation to develop further was not a viable course of action. Whether Li Hao's side won or not, Li Hao's group might enter a period of explosive development next. If Ying Hongyue continued in the same vein, he might truly lose to the young man one day.

His backers didn't trust him. He had to do something, or else, just wait for death.

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At the same time.

Silver Moon, Battle Heaven.

General Pagoda suddenly awoke. Not only that, but the old turtle's form showed itself as well. The Ninth Division leader also appeared before long.

General Pagoda took human form and looked at the firmament. “Have you two... sensed something?” he asked ponderously.

“Has there been a shift near the Star Gate, or is it something else?” intoned the old turtle. “I somehow felt a faint change percolate through the world just now.”

It seemed to be localized near the Star Gate.

“I don’t know if a small problem has occurred by the Star Gate,” nodded General Pagoda. “According to what Li Hao told us before, a diagram of the eight trigrams has appeared. It should be the one of the Eight Trigrams Suppression. Perhaps it’s sealing something. What has Li Hao done now? Why does it feel like... the seal has loosened?”

“What has he done?” The group exchanged glances. What could the young man do? If it wasn’t killing Ying Hongyue, then... it was breaking more heritage weapons.

Who knew?

There was a ninety-nine percent chance that the lad had broken another heritage weapon.

“It’s fine so long as Stellaris remains,” the Ninth Division leader said calmly after a while. “My only concern would be... that this reckless young man will one day break even Stellaris. That would be most troublesome.”

The trio shook their heads. Surely not. The Human King had crafted Stellaris. It was near impossible for Li Hao to break it at his current stage of development.

“This isn’t anything to be concerned about,” continued the Ninth Division leader. “Have you two sensed the changes in the world? The change in core origin...”

Change in core origin?

The two old creatures looked at each other. “We have not sensed anything. What have you perceived?”

There truly wasn’t much change to core origin dao—it continued to be sealed away.

“There seems to be another type of core origin in the world,” the Ninth Division leader mused. “Can it be from the supernatural characters that Li Hao used last time? Have they produced a new great dao universe?”

“They can’t have developed to that level, can they?” The other two found the notion incredulous. But if their comrade had sensed it, then perhaps there really had been some special changes. It was possible he could sense it because he was also from the Li family.

“Based on what we’ve detected lately, Apexes may be able to emerge in the outside world after a few days,” reminded the Ninth Division leader. “The world seems to be revitalizing at an increasing pace. Even though the mine remains as it was, the world is awakening on its own.”

The other two both nodded; they’d sensed such developments as well.

“Over the next period of time, Immortals from the main cities or other places might be able to walk around outside if they’re weak enough,” the Ninth Division leader quickly added. “General Pagoda should make haste to absorb more energy and revive as much of the Battle Heaven barracks as soon as possible. We need to be able to mobilize the other units deeper in the city...”

General Pagoda nodded. This was the most urgent task at present.

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On this day, not only were there unusual disturbances in Battle Heaven, but the same for many other Silver Moon locales. The same occurred in the main city of the Zhaos.

Director General Zhao walked out of the ruins with a slight frown on his face. Would Apexes be tolerated in the world so quickly? How had the world recovered so swiftly?

A headache brewed at his temples. What had Li Hao gotten up to in Skystar City? Enormous mayhem may soon be upon the province if no one came to Silver Moon or redirected more attention to it. There were too many ruins here, ones of main cities, minor cities, martial universities, family heritage zones, sects of wandering cultivators, and all sorts of other places.

The province was very weak at present!

That blasted kid took away even Huang Yu. Those in the main cities are starting to want to head outside...

Various thoughts entered Director General Zhao's mind as he grappled with what to do next. Main city heavyweights could not freely walk around before, but now the world was starting to revitalize. The weaker Immortals that were still alive might be able to venture outside in a few more days. That... would truly be the start of pandemonium.

It'd be fine if they're normal people, my concern is that... they've lost their minds.

Who wouldn't find it unbearable to be essentially locked away in a prison for one hundred thousand years? Some had probably long gone crazy.

Director General Zhao walked toward the provincial government building when someone darted out of it.

"Director general," he said urgently. "We've received word from Silver City. Its energy levels have suddenly risen and show signs of spreading outward."

“Eh?” The man blinked. How was that possible! There was so little energy in Silver Moon that any that appeared was swiftly absorbed. How could there be any left over to spread elsewhere?

This was nothing to be joyous about—it was a horrifying development. There was surely something sinister behind unusual changes!

“Send someone to investigate,” frowned the director general. “And notify Li Hao. In addition... make sure we’re battle ready.”

“Understood!” The figure sprinted away, leaving Director General Zhao to rub his forehead.

There was never a dull moment, and now he needed to do everything himself. He was just one person and couldn’t clone himself. What was the use of Li Hao and the rest going off to Skystar City? They had to come back in the end!

Anything was possible in Silver Moon at present; they could possibly cross over to seven elements if they made good use of it! Those guys would regret running off sooner or later!

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Skystar City, the Skystar Commander Office.

Li Hao had just finished scratching at the surface of various trivial tasks when he summoned a few people into the office. Silver Moon martial masters all had their missions—he called for another group of people.

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The great hall of the Skystar Commander Office.

The group shifted uneasily. Some of them came from the nine ministries, some from the Night Watchers. They were all geniuses. Hu Qingfeng, Dao Sword, and the others numbered among the Night Watcher delegation.

Dao Sword was calm, whereas Big Eyes and the other two were apprehensive. Qi Gang from Administration stood not far from them. They'd all been part of the Divine Masters Ranking back in the day, or were famous in their respective headquarters. They were all Novas or even Arcanus at a young age.

Some of them didn't even know what'd happened. They'd simply received word from the Skystar Commander Office summoning them for registration.

Li Hao had not returned yet; there were some who worked for the Skystar Commander Office among the crowd. Hu Qingfeng couldn't help himself and sidled up to Hao Lianchuan.

"Director Hao." His face was wreathed with smiles. "Does Commander Li have a special mission for us? I see many here who are not of the Skystar Commander Office..."

Hao Lianchuan didn't know what Li Hao wanted either. The man had worked with the Demon Hunter Army ever since arriving at Skystar City. Although his strength had improved at a decent clip—he'd even set foot into mid Nova thanks to the aid of tremendous resources—this level of strength wasn't that useful in his current place of employment.

He'd participated in the battle at the royal palace, but nothing else. Hence, he didn't know what Li Hao had planned. Hao Lianchuan wouldn't speak of it either even if he knew.

Hu Qingfeng was also rather irritating to the eye. This fellow had thrown his weight around like no other when they were in White Moon City and still lived a happy life these days. Hao Lianchuan was kept busy silently cursing the man.

How is he still alive?

Another group of people entered the hall just as he wanted to fob Hu Qingfeng off with some excuses. Hao Lianchuan was surprised by the new additions—Wang Ming, Hu Hao, Li Meng, Yun Yao...

These were familiar faces, but also slightly different. They were all supernaturals.

Indeed, there were no martial masters present.

Chapter 952: Without Striking a Blow (I)

There weren't many supernaturals in the Demon Hunter Army; they were almost all martial masters. The few supernaturals were special personnel—they were either Li Hao's old acquaintances, or junior brothers and sisters that Yuan Shuo had selected for him.

And now, they were all gathered here.

The geniuses present were almost all supernaturals—there were no martial masters in the crowd. The strongest of them, Dao Sword, was already an Arcanus. He hadn't done so from a martial master background, but from a supernatural one.

Hao Lianchuan knew how busy Li Hao was at present. Did he gather everyone now because they were all supernaturals? The crowd wasn't familiar with each other as there were plenty of representatives from different factions.

Not much conversation occurred; everyone was uneasy. Some had reported to their ministry before coming. After all, the Skystar Commander Office was a different system from theirs and there was some bad blood between the two sides. However, no ministers were forthcoming from any of the ministries. At most, a vice minister showed themselves with a distracted response of, "Go then."

There was nothing else after that. Tension ratcheted in quite a few people.

They were geniuses of their ministries and some held official positions. Some had even seen Li Hao arrive with a group of people in their ministry, then quickly depart. After he was gone, certain senior executives were called away on business and seemed different when they returned.

The blockade of the nine ministries had been lifted, but those as quick-witted as Qi Gang noticed certain different details. Although the nine ministries were no longer sealed off by the Night Watchers and Demon Hunters, there was the new addition of some Silver Moon martial masters in their midst.

The martial masters stayed out of sight. Whenever they were discovered, they gave the excuse of covertly investigating members of the three great organizations. Hence, their presence could not be revealed.

Another person joined the crowd as everyone turned over various thoughts in their mind. It was a woman, her face was pale and she seemed to be in a daze.

“Miss Mu?” someone muttered with a start. Wasn’t that Mu Xiaorong?

It was then that the crowd recalled that she’d been held in custody for a prolonged period of time. There’d been so little word of her all this time that they thought she’d been executed. It looked like Li Hao hadn’t killed her, but why was he releasing her now?

Someone had stepped forward to exchange a few words with her when a hush draped over the crowd.

Li Hao strode into the hall, flanked by two Arcanus guards. His guards were Yang Shan and Qin Lian. They were also Arcanus that’d ascended from a purely supernatural background.

The young man’s expression was composed and he inclined his head at Hao Lianchuan and a few others when he entered the hall. He walked forward and took a seat in front of the group.

“Greetings to Commander Li!” The group offered a variety of bows and cupped fist salutes.

Li Hao waved them off and scanned the crowd. It was sizable at almost fifty people and representatives from all nine ministries. They were all supernaturals.

“Are you guys confused why I’ve summoned you?”

No one responded. When the silence dragged on, Hao Lianchuan quickly offered, “The commander naturally has his purposes.”

Li Hao didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. Hao Lianchuan was such a flatterer.

“I’ll be direct with you since you’re all here. First, the nine ministries are no more,” Li Hao began calmly. “The royal family is no more too!”

Boom!

Many people lost their composure while a select few stayed in control, as if they’d expected these results. Li Hao looked at Qi Gang from Administration. He’d met this person before; they’d explored Battle Heaven together.

“Qi Gang, you don’t seem surprised by this.”

A handsome young man with very masculine features, Qi Gang sighed softly and bent at the waist. “The minister did not reemerge after the commander visited the Ministry of Administration yesterday. Fearful looks could be seen on the faces of the vice ministers today and Deputy Zhou Chuan took up residence to peruse material available only to our own personnel.

“From these details... Qi Gang understands that a new master is in place at Administration!”

“You have keen powers of observation.” Li Hao smiled.

“The commander praises me too highly. It’s just that the commander hasn’t bothered to conceal his actions from the rest of the ministry.” Qi Gang fell silent. It was a complicated notion for him that there was a new master in place at Administration, so he didn’t say much after receiving Li Hao’s summons. He simply answered it.

As for going down with the Zhao family ship, that didn’t occur to him.

There weren’t that many supernaturals loyal to a fault in this day and age. Supernaturals improved too quickly and some were Heaven Favored. They were born to be heavyweights and merely tempted by the promises and benefits that the various ministries had made. There wasn’t much loyalty to be found there.

Someone in the crowd swayed with horror—Mu Xiaorong.

She’d been delighted at being released, thinking that a beacon of hope shone upon her. Li Hao must have bowed to pressure from Internal Affairs and the rest of the nine ministries! But now... she learned... that the Ministry of Internal Affairs... was no more!

The nine ministries and royal family were done!

Mu Xiaorong tragically looked around. In that case, why had Li Hao summoned so many geniuses from the various ministries? Did he want to kill everyone?

“I’ve called you here not to punish you,” Li Hao explained as thoughts ran wild. “There’s no need for that. It would be an easy task if I wanted to kill you. You are geniuses of your various ministries. I have some understanding of martial dao, but don’t know much about the supernatural domain.

“Most of you have reached your current heights because you are Heaven Favored. I’ve met even fewer of you. Whether it is the nine ministries or the three great organizations, most of their supernaturals have crossed over from previous identities of being martial masters. True Arcanus from a pure supernatural background are few and far in between.”

Modern day powerhouses such as Qi Pingjiang and the rest were martial masters who’d fully saturated their supernatural locks, then broken through to Arcanus. There were almost none who’d started off as Starlight among the opponents that Li Hao had taken down.

“I have some matters coming up that require your participation. Of course, I need you to do a few things with me before that. Skystar City is mine, but Silver Moon martial masters have important missions to complete in the capital. They cannot leave for the moment.

“There is another important locale in the central region that must be conquered, and that is the City of Supernaturals!” Li Hao smiled. “According to their announced schedule, their cabinet meeting should end in two days. In order to eliminate this great source of disaster, I will lead everyone to campaign against the city...”

Hearts skipped a beat at his words.

“Congratulations to the commander for conquering the world!” Hu Qingfeng beamed unctuously. “But... if this subordinate may be so bold. When the commander speaks of campaigning against the City of Supernaturals... do you intend to do so... with just us?”

“Correct.” Li Hao smiled.

Hu Qingfeng’s heart pounded. Holy fucking shit, really?? You’re crazy! Everyone found it incredulous that the young man had taken down the nine ministries and royal family. But when he said he wanted to lead this group against the City of Supernaturals, wasn’t he completely mad?

“Commander.” Hu Qingfeng swallowed hard and said carefully, “The City of Supernaturals possesses nearly one hundred Arcanus and it’s said that Lin Hongyu is a peak six elements or seven elements...”

Stop joking! Even if they were to fight, they needed to bring those Silver Moon martial masters with them! There were another million supernaturals in that city! If it came down to a pitched melee, just one mouthful of spit from each of them could drown this attacking force!

“This is a test for you guys,” laughed Li Hao. “If you do not die in this operation, you will naturally be placed in important positions afterward. But you will accomplish nothing if you die!”

Everyone remained as unmoving as a mountain; no one said a word. A general air of despair and helplessness spread throughout the crowd.

You’re sending us to our deaths! There’s only a couple dozen of us and not that many Arcanus. Even if you’re at seven elements, even if you can fight one hundred Arcanus by yourself, the other Novas and supernaturals will be able to overrun us all!

This was a farce!

“Of course, it’s not like I’m leaving you without a choice. You have another path ahead of you. Those unwilling to go to the City of Supernaturals can do service for three years. You will be free after that.”

“Does the commander mean... prison when you say service?” someone muttered.

“No,” Li Hao explained. “Service is to help people with affairs they cannot accomplish. For example, earth supernaturals will help with building houses and paving roads or other architectural tasks. It will be matters that you are up to the task for. It’s not exactly prison, but you won’t be able to leave at will. Once you are, you can treat it as a job.”

Some were tempted by the notion. Three years was not a long period of time for some hard labor that could be converted to a job...

That was nice as well. They might actually die if they fought the City of Supernaturals.

“Commander, then... if everyone goes into service...” Hu Qingfeng couldn’t help but ask. “Then the City of Supernaturals...”

“No worries, I’ll gather a team of volunteers!” laughed Li Hao. “It’s just as good to try. No matter how strong Lin Hongyu is, she won’t be able to keep me there.”

Yes, she won’t be able to keep you, but she’ll be able to keep everyone else there!

Some worried about the outcome of battle wanted to choose three years of service, but were also worried about Li Hao holding a grudge for their actions.

“I repeat, this decision is up to you,” Li Hao emphasized. “It’s easy enough to kill you. There’s no point in tricking you into service first, then killing you. It’d be less trouble to outright kill you!”

His worst made sense. The crowd also understood that being willing to march on the City of Supernaturals might be a massive opportunity for them, but the caveat was that they stayed alive to enjoy whatever gains might come after.

Therefore, someone set their jaw and was the first to step forward. “Commander, I choose to serve for three years!”

“Sounds good.” Li Hao nodded, “Yang Shan, those who want to serve will go with you in a bit. They have one mission—complete the construction of Skystar Martial Academy as soon as possible. These guys are all strong, so they’ll build a school very quickly.”

“Understood, sir!” Yang Shan assented.

With one came two, and then more. Soon enough, eight people had stepped forward. Those remaining, however, didn’t move—including Hu Qingfeng!

Chapter 953: Without Striking a Blow (II)

Li Hao was rather surprised at the low turnout for service volunteers and glanced at Hu Qingfeng. The man looked awkwardly back at the young man and hastily said, “I go where the commander goes. I serve the commander! Even my death would be a worthy death!”

“.....” The crowd looked at him, despising him for being shameless. Who didn’t know that Hu Qingfeng of the Night Watchers cravenly clung to life instead of braving death?

He was exceedingly unrepentant and well known as a typical coward. How was he talking about a worthy death??

It was one thing if people like Hao Lianchuan voiced such words since they were Li Hao’s direct troops, but Hu Qingfeng came from the Night Watcher system. How was this guy not going into service?

It was... incredible.

Li Hao looked at Hu Qingfeng again and smiled. “Whatever you like. If you do die in battle, the office will take care of your family.” He turned to the rest. “Does this mean that all of you are willing to go to the City of Supernaturals since you haven’t chosen to go into service? And for those who have chosen to serve, you don’t need to think that I’m targeting you.

“I will raise some requests of all supernaturals within Skystar Dynasty in the days to come. They will either serve with labor or in the military. As superhumans, it is not good to continuously absorb energy from the world and not give anything back. There is a natural cycle to our world. Since you have been bestowed strength by the heavenly dao, there will be only benefits if you pay it back to society.

“I will also make similar requests of the Silver Moon martial masters.” Li Hao smiled. “Therefore, service does not equal going to jail. There is no need to worry.”

With these words, supernaturals that were ill at ease or still unwilling to accept their situation relaxed. This was good! Otherwise, how unfair would it be if they were the only ones who needed to serve? Why were they the only ones who had to choose between going to certain death or three years of labor?

Hearing Li Hao’s explanation made the situation much more palatable. Since it was only a matter of time before everyone had to serve... then going earlier might be better. At the very least, they would be the first supporters of Li Hao’s new policy.

“Is there anyone else who wishes to go into service?” Li Hao looked at the assembly, particularly Mu Xiaorong.

She clenched her teeth and stared at the young man, quickly ducking her head when he looked over.

“There’s no need to look at me like that, your father and family are not dead. The Mus and Chens are the only ones among the nine ministries who haven’t suffered heavy losses. You’re damned lucky—someone suggested that I spare your family and keep you around as an example of my mercy. It might compel the surrender of some supernaturals who haven’t committed any crimes.”

Hearts quailed at these new revelations. There was a certain connotation to these words that didn’t bear deeper introspection—if only the Chens and Mus weren’t dead, then... were all the other families dead?

Heads drooped as everyone was deathly afraid of Li Hao reading something inappropriate in their expressions.

Mu Xiaorong was both surprised and delighted. “Really?” she quickly asked.

“I’ll say this one last time.” Li Hao ignored her and looked at the time. “Those who are willing to serve should step forward now. I’m going to the City of Supernaturals in a moment, time is of the essence. Once you go and fall in battle, there will be no return!”

None of those remaining moved, including Mu Xiaorong. Li Hao raised an eyebrow and didn’t say anything further.

“Very well. Yang Shan, head out with your group and hand them over to Headmaster Hong. The rest, follow me!”

No one made a sound as they quickly fell in step behind Li Hao. Yang Shan swiftly departed with the few who wanted to serve. Hu Qingfeng quickly drew near with a face wreathed in smiles. Not even Hao Lianchuan could push past him.

“Commander, are we going to convene with the Silver Moon seniors now?” Hu Qingfeng beamed radiantly.

“.....” Li Hao looked back at him and smiled after a beat. “Nope!”

What, so that was what you guys are thinking? Did you think that was a test?

Hu Qingfeng started. Nope? You’re joking, right? How are we going to fight the City of Supernaturals without them?

He’d thought that Li Hao was just scaring them, that the young man would ultimately summon a few powerhouses. There was no way to go against the city otherwise. Surely he wasn’t just leading everyone to their deaths? Hao Lianchuan and some others from Silver Moon were part of this group!

He’d felt that Li Hao certainly wouldn’t send everyone to their deaths. That was the basis for Hu Qingfeng’s resolve in staying. The young man must be testing them!

And yet, reality showed that... he wasn't.

Li Hao ignored whatever sentiments might be percolating through the crowd and summoned a flying vessel. "Board the ship!"

The group quickly filed onto the ship. It took off and shot toward the City of Supernaturals. Inside the hold, Hu Qingfeng swallowed hard—he was too nervous for words. He'd thought that Li Hao was joking, that he wouldn't really march on the City of Supernaturals even without gathering various powerhouses by his side.

That had to be the case! The young man was just scaring them!

He shuffled over to Hao Lianchuan and struck up a hearty tone. "Director Hao, you're close to the commander. Are we... really going to the City of Supernaturals?"

"Probably."

"Then... Director Hao..." Hu Qingfeng wanted to say more, but Dao Sword beside them suddenly broke his silence.

"Shut it. This is the direction to the City of Supernaturals and we'll be there soon at this speed."

Hu Qingfeng jerked with astonishment. Hot damn! Are we really going to our deaths? Stop messing around!

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Time passed bit by bit. Li Hao's voice soon traveled into the hold. "We're almost there, you guys can come out for a look."

The group filed onto the deck, watching as a large city came into view from their vantage point in the sky. Li Hao flew right past the city gates and headed toward the inner city located in the city center. "The ship will land near the city lord manor in a bit, they are still holding the cabinet meeting there. We'll fight as soon as we charge in!"

"....." Jaws dropped.

Oh my heavens!

Some people's thoughts had mirrored Hu Qingfeng's, that Li Hao was doing this to scare them. The young man was just going through the motions to test them or to exchange threats with the city from very far away.

But here he was, charging into the city lord manor, the cabinet meeting grounds! He really was going to his death! The city might not have wanted to fight him before, but now they wouldn't be able to contain themselves!

Some were shaking like leaves; color drained from Hu Qingfeng's face. They were doomed, doomed!

Even Hao Lianchuan—ignorant that the City of Supernaturals had sworn fealty to Li Hao—couldn't control himself. He swallowed repeatedly. "Um... are there a lot of Arcanus there?"

"Roughly one hundred."

Hao Lianchuan joined the ranks of trembling supernaturals. He wanted to cry—that many? Could Li Hao have brought some ancient plant spirit replicas with him? But even if he did, their opponents would have them too.

Li Hao laughed, amused by his mischief. Let's scare the shit out of you guys first! He was due for a trip to the City of Supernaturals. It so happened to be perfect timing to bring these guys along for a good fright.

He had his reasons for recruiting these people. As for Hao Lianchuan and those he was familiar with... they were truly just long for the ride.

The young man wanted Heaven Favored—supernatural heavyweights who'd become Novas or Arcanus at a young age. He didn't want any who'd crossed over from martial dao. Those such as Hao Lianchuan were present out of convenience and a chance to see if there were opportunities to be had.

The massive ship soared through the outer city. While residents took note of it, no one dared to make a sound upon seeing such a large flying ship. When the inner city guards saw it, they moved to stop it.

"Let it pass!" came a voice from the core of the inner city. That stayed the guards' hands—they simply regarded it with curiosity. Who was that?

The cabinet meeting was still ongoing. Who was so bold that they'd flown right into the city? Was it the master of a major faction?

In the air over the city lord manor.

A crack parted a curtain of light, permitting Li Hao's ship to land. Everyone on board was incredibly nervous. A grueling battle was about to begin!

However, they saw a woman dressed in red appear next. She smiled at Li Hao. "My apologies for the lack of hospitality, commander!"

“No worries.” Li Hao nodded and turned back to his people. “Alight. This is City Lord Lin of the City of Supernaturals.”

Sharp gasps abounded through the crowd. What was going on here? Didn’t they say that the city was holding a cabinet meeting? That large numbers of powerhouses had gathered? Where were they? There wasn’t even a shadow to be found!

There seemed to be only Lin Hongyu present. Where was everyone else?

“Commander, these are...” Lin Hongyu was also curious.

“I brought them along to show them more of the world. We have further business to conduct later.”

“Understood.” Lin Hongyu ignored the visitors. “Please have a seat inside, commander. Shall I send for Commander Yu?”

“Notify him.”

“Understood.” Lin Hongyu sent word to her family. Huang Yu was still inside the ruins. The redwood tree hadn’t returned, so it was through the Lins that he could receive any message.

The group that’d come with Li Hao were still very perplexed. Some that were catching on were starting to look around with wide eyes.

Dao Sword’s group held a flurry of transmitted messages among themselves.

“Has... the City of Supernaturals pledged their allegiance?” Big Eyes asked incredulously. “The cabinet meeting... is a trap, isn’t it? Dao Sword, where have all those Arcanus gone?”

“They’re dead.” Dao Sword was very calm. “Judging by City Lord Lin’s attitude, this isn’t the first time they’ve come in contact with each other. They likely reached an understanding a long time ago. The heavyweights that we all think are in a meeting probably... died a long time ago! They might’ve all died the first day they came.”

It was impossible to believe! After the fall of the nine ministries and royal family, the City of Supernaturals might be the only obstacle to Li Hao conquering the central region. They possessed one million supernaturals, but they’d surrendered early on?

This was unfathomable!

“Stay here and don’t go anywhere!” Li Hao told the group before he left.

“The commander is truly valiant!” grinned Hu Qingfeng as soon as the young man disappeared. “He took down the City of Supernaturals a long time ago! Doesn’t that mean it’s only a matter of time before he conquers the world?”

No one responded; everyone was still grappling with this new state of affairs.

Chapter 954: Without Striking a Blow (III)

Up ahead.

“Commander... those people...” Lin Hongyu hadn’t posed the question when she saw the young man, but she was indeed curious.

“They’re for use in pacifying the City of Supernaturals,” Li Hao explained as they walked. “There’s a large number of supernaturals inside the city. I also brought them along to conduct some experiments with.”

“Experiments?”

“Mmhmm,” the young man answered frankly. “I would like to conduct a few experiments on those who do not listen to orders or commit all kinds of evils and crimes. After we kill them, can we use their supernatural locks to enhance the locks of other supernaturals?”

“This... can’t be... can it be... commander?” Lin Hongyu trembled despite the lack of a breeze. If they could, that would be a terrifying discovery.

There was only one known advantage to killing supernaturals, and that was to collect their mysterious power. However, that resource was useless to those of higher cultivation levels. No one lacked energy there.

But if killing supernaturals could lead to strengthening one’s own supernatural locks, then that would lead to horrific outcomes. So even if this was true, Lin Hongyu felt that Li Hao should not conduct these sorts of experiments.

“It’s not that complicated, nor should it be that scary!” Li Hao laughed. “We can also take a peek into the supernatural path. Supernaturals are born from the revitalization of energy and are deeply tied to supernatural locks. They’re also related to the auras of heaven and earth. In fact, they give me the feeling of a naturally forming aura...”

He spoke of some concepts that Lin Hongyu didn’t quite understand. Li Hao just wanted to express that the abilities of supernaturals... seemed to be a kind of connate aura.

Take the various element-bending techniques—that was a result of the aura melding into the world and comprehending the auras of the world. But supernaturals grasped these abilities from birth. On the other hand, once they grew stronger and their own consciousness developed, they lost such abilities when they learned to wield energy with a deft hand.

Therefore, perhaps these supernaturals put to use a kind of natural aura that was bestowed by the world. If that was the case... this would be very interesting indeed. It also represented that Li Hao would encounter different conditions when consolidating his new cultivation system.

It was very difficult for martial masters to comprehend the aura. But if supernaturals were naturally equipped with the aura, that put them on an entirely different playing field.

Countless supernaturals were born in the twenty years since the supernatural had awoken. A variety of abilities abounded. Since comprehending the aura was a laborious process, Li Hao hoped to identify some key connections between martial masters and supernaturals through these Heaven Favored.

Lin Hongyu, however, was very apprehensive. Li Hao's casual chitchat was a source of great consternation. There might be a horrific ending in store for the City of Supernaturals!

They'd reached the city lord manor by now. Li Hao found a random seat. There were no servants around, so he poured a cup of tea for himself and indicated for Lin Hongyu to sit as well.

"I've eliminated the nine ministries and royal family."

Lin Hongyu jerked with surprise. She knew that the young man had sealed them off from the world, but only for a short period of time. The blockade was already undone on this day.

They're gone?

Although she'd guessed that Li Hao had great plans in mind when he took the redwood, she hadn't anticipated that he would triumph so quickly.

"Congratulations to the commander!"

"There's nothing to congratulate or be happy about," laughed Li Hao. "I came to the City of Supernaturals to resolve the issues that the city faces. In addition, I'm here to undo the restrictions that Commander Yu and City Lord Lin are operating under."

“There’s no need to continue hiding like this. The cabinet meeting ends tomorrow—it can’t continue indefinitely, can it? We’ll discuss more when Huang Yu arrives.”

Lin Hongyu nodded, not daring to say anything else. So fast! Everything is changing so fast that it’s hard to believe!

.....

Huang Yu quietly arrived ten minutes later. He was momentarily lost in a daze when Li Hao said that the nine ministries were no more. It took a moment to digest this news.

Since Skystar City had been conquered and the City of Supernaturals sworn fealty, then that left only the three great organizations that were of concern.

“Does the commander mean to... fully take over the City of Supernaturals now?”

“There are too many supernaturals here.” Li Hao nodded. “What’s happened at Skystar City will soon be common knowledge. It will be even more the case here. The aristocracies that have lost all of their heavyweights will quickly realize that something’s wrong. We can’t keep them in the dark forever.”

“But... there are too many supernaturals in the city.” Huang Yu frowned. “I have ten thousand soldiers with me. Although they are equipped with Battle Heaven armor, their strength is limited with the departure of Senior Redwood. If general unrest rises, it will be difficult for me to rapidly stamp it out.”

“Will the supernaturals in the city dare rebel?” laughed the young man.

“Logically speaking, they shouldn’t. But once the first person does or tries to run, it will quickly lead to a chain reaction,” Huang Yu said solemnly. “Some supernaturals are afraid of nothing. If they know that their death is assured upon being arrested, they will resist with every last bit of

strength! Even if they're just one out of every hundred people, that will still be ten thousand mutineers in the City of Supernaturals!"

Although that might not sound like a lot in the grand scheme of things, it could drag in the entire city if the situation grew out of hand.

Li Hao looked at Lin Hongyu.

"Those who lead an insurrection are always the troublemakers," she said softly when she noted the young man's attention. "There won't be much of a disturbance in the city once we eliminate these people, even if there's a new face as the city lord.

"Those who remain will be weaklings, one and all. They're not here to pursue quests of domination and supremacy. They don't care who oversees them. Once we eradicate the troublemakers and swiftly dispel any other uproar, everything should proceed in a smooth and quiet fashion."

"But these people don't normally congregate together..." Huang Yu nodded at the city lord's words.

"Let's give them a reason to." Lin Hongyu smiled. Commander Yu looked at her quizzically.

"The cabinet meeting will officially end tomorrow," the woman's smile deepened. "Therefore, I'd like to select one hundred generals from the city within the next three hours. Those who can recruit one hundred supernaturals within the next three hours will be promoted as centurions, and those who can recruit one thousand supernaturals will be further promoted as a ranking officer of the army.

"Whoever can accomplish that in such a short amount of time will be those with some skill or certain ambition in their hearts. They are prime candidates for an insurrection," Lin Hongyu concluded with a laugh. "Whoever can complete the mission will be easily hailed as the leader of that group of troublemakers. I'll welcome them into the city lord manor and bestow them military titles and personal wealth. Those who are tempted by them are also a bunch of people of a similar vein.

“We’ll capture them all in one fell swoop! After they’re gone, I wouldn’t say that the city would be completely empty of undesirable elements, but at least ninety percent of the troublemakers will be gone. The remaining ten will be solitary characters that do not draw concern!”

Li Hao couldn’t help but look at Lin Hongyu with appreciation. Damn!

“Three hours is too short,” he said. “We’re not in that much of a rush. Let’s wait one night and give them more time to consider. We can make the announcement now and have them assemble in the inner city tomorrow. How about it?”

“The commander is wise!” smiled Lin Hongyu.

Li Hao started, then realized something after a beat. Did she purposefully leave a problem for me to solve? So my smarts would be showcased? This woman... Straight-shooter Sky Sword suggested her as a candidate to take over operations at Skystar City—he obviously thinks highly of her. I wasn’t sure about the idea before, but I think it bears real merit now.

This woman had many tricks up her sleeves.

Anyone who could gather at least one hundred people in a night should be detained for further observation or killed, no matter if they were good or bad. Once these people were gone, there would be no significant sources of potential unrest left in the city.

As strong as lone rangers might be, they were just one person. So long as they weren’t able to lead the rest of the supernaturals into rebelling, that would be fine. Not to mention, there wasn’t a single Arcanus left in the city at the moment. The strongest there might be was an Arcanus.

“City Lord Lin is proposing a wonderful plan!” Huang Yu nodded. “Except... people might not be willing to step forward without any rewards. Then for the rewards offered...”

“Mysterious power stones, origin weapons, Water of Life... The last would be the key!” Lin Hongyu chuckled. “It’s what most people need these days and the key resource limiting their development. Having Water of Life in hand is the key to becoming a powerhouse.

“Being able to recruit one hundred people and joining the supernatural army will result in one drop of Water of Life. One thousand people will result in ten drops. Ten thousand, one hundred drops!

“Of course, we’ll tell them that payment will be made in installments. Those who gather one hundred people will receive theirs on the spot. One thousand will receive theirs in half a year. Ten thousand in three years. That will allay their suspicions. Receiving one hundred drops of Water of Life after working for three years is a worthwhile proposal to them!”

Huang Yu nodded and looked at Lin Hongyu again. She was... truly a very shrewd woman. He was suddenly reminded of Ole Zhao. He was a shrewd man, but he was very old. Lin Hongyu was young—had she been born with her stratagems?

“This is a great idea.” Li Hao nodded with a smile. “Those with the ability to gather ten thousand people in one night... are good candidates to be army commanders if they’re good people. If they’re not up to the task, they will be useful in directing public sentiment!

“If they’re bad people, then they’re potential sources of rebellion. We can make use of the good and outright kill the bad. it’s two birds with one stone, so the city lord’s suggestion is quite in line with my wishes!”

“The commander is far too kind,” Lin Hongyu said softly. “It’s just a few tricks. If you approve, I’ll have the third elder issue the order immediately.”

“You can!”

Lin Hongyu quickly sent out a message via transmission pendant. The Lin third elder had remained inside the city all this time, so it was convenient to have him carry out additional instructions.

Chapter 955: Without Striking a Blow (IV)

“Then I will lead the army to seal off the City of Supernaturals tomorrow at noon!” Huang Yu took a deep breath. “We will have a much easier time of things after removing the troublemakers from the streets. The remaining people won’t amount to much by themselves. If they can’t gather together. They won’t be able to raise any sort of fuss!”

“I’ll have to trouble the two of you then!” Li Hao nodded.

“Not at all, this is as we should do,” Lin Hongyu chuckled.

“If we can successfully resolve everything at the City of Supernaturals... City Lord Lin, are you interested in moving to Skystar City?” asked Li Hao.

“Eh?” Lin Hongyu blinked. Move to Skystar City? What for?

“How would you like to be the Skystar governor general?”

“.....” Lin Hongyu was incredibly surprised. The governor general?

“Although we’ve eliminated the nine ministries and royal family, there are too many minor details to take care of after that. Silver Moon martial masters are mostly martial brutes—I am no exception! It would be ideal if the city lord is willing to take up residence in our stead.

“Sky Sword and some other seniors put you forward as the best candidate to oversee Skystar City...”

Lin Hongyu was quite astounded. Me? “Um...”

“Think about it. Your decision can wait until after we finish with the City of Supernaturals.”

“Alright then,” Lin Hongyu responded in a daze. There was a possibility for her to administer Skystar City? What an utter surprise!

.....

Disturbances soon rippled through the City of Supernaturals.

“Oh my heavens... Water of Life??”

“Anyone who can gather one hundred new army recruits before 9am tomorrow will be bestowed the rank of centurion and awarded with one drop of Water of Life. This... is too simple, isn’t it?”

“Is the City of Supernaturals expanding its army?”

“It looks like the city really wants to take over the world! There’s only the city defenders in the army as of now, and not that many of them. I think there’s only five thousand...”

“Let’s go give it a try! There’s no requirements placed on the one hundred! That’s one entire drop of Water of Life! There wouldn’t have been a chance to touch this our whole lives if not for this opportunity! The various factions have a death grip on this resource. It costs fifty or sixty thousand mysterious power stones for one drop! We wouldn’t be able to afford a single drop even if we sold ourselves into slavery...”

The City of Supernaturals was being gripped by a maddened frenzy. Those quick to take action were already knocking on doors. One hundred people for one drop, ten thousand for one hundred drops!

There wouldn’t be any issue setting foot into Arcanus with these one hundred drops. Perhaps they would be more than a simple two element Arcanus! The one hundred drops would be theirs after three years. Where else would one gather one hundred drops of Water of Life in three years?

For these people, it was impossible to obtain so much Water of Life at their current stage no matter what faction they swore loyalty to.

And so, the City of Supernaturals erupted with hotblooded fervor.

All sorts of promises and benefits were on the table; a variety of recruitment tactics abounded. Some knew that they lacked the skill for such a venture, but the powerhouses offered generous gifts of mysterious power stones and vowed an assortment of boons.

Wandering cultivators who knew their future wasn't particularly bright and didn't have a chance of obtaining Water of Life joined the budding teams. They knew full well that their lives wouldn't be as free in the army, but... at least there would be many advantages to their new situation.

The City of Supernaturals did seem poised to become a local overlord.

The city bustled with activity and was exceedingly raucous throughout the night. Fights even broke out over potential recruits. Some tried to pry people away from other factions, resulting in conflicts between both sides.

No one played nice when Water of Life was on the line. Those who dared interfere with others' interests were outright killed.

Law and order was not reinforced on this night. To Li Hao and the others, these people were ambitious sorts and potential trouble. One dead was one less to worry about. All that mattered was that they didn't create a massive disturbance.

.....

After a very lively night, the second day.

Squawking teams streamed toward the inner city with no sign of decorum or procedure to be seen.

In the air over the city lord manor.

Li Hao and Lin Hongyu watched as teams converged from all sides. A rough count tallied fifty thousand people below. They were assembled in teams of varying sizes. The larger ones had one thousand people, the smaller had one hundred. Flags and pennants festooned the air to delineate the teams from each other.

“That’s certainly a lot of people!” Li Hao sighed. There were quite a number of people with certain tricks up their sleeve.

Even the young man wasn’t able to assemble a team of one thousand overnight if he couldn’t pull from the army. It was even harder considering a lot of those recruited were from wandering cultivators.

To be able to sift through a complete mess and corral a team of one thousand amid fierce competition overnight... No matter what methods were employed, the leaders were truly impressive. Even those with teams of one hundred had emerged from the pack of those squabbling for talent.

As expected, all sorts of characters abounded when the population was large enough.

Lin Hongyu’s proposal was easy and didn’t require any investment on their part to identify all of the troublemakers in the city. There might be more at large in the metropolis, but there was no need to be concerned about them!

Li Hao swept a sidelong glance at Lin Hongyu. Perhaps this hadn’t been a spur of the moment impulse. Maybe the city lord had wanted to do this a long time ago.

The City of Supernaturals certainly had plans to vie for supremacy all along. This might have been something she'd planned to do for a while.

“Make camp once you enter the inner city and retain discipline!” Lin Hongyu's voice echoed in the air. “The City of Supernaturals wants elites, not a mob. Generals, control your troops! The centurions and ranking officers will present themselves at the city lord manor to receive your titles! Your troops will be entered into the ranks of the supernatural army.

“You will all be comrades in battle in the future! Do not make trouble now. Those who disturb military order will be executed without exception!”

Emotions ran high in the hearts of various ambitious characters in the teams. This was the city lord! Conferment of title, creation of a supernatural army. This was a wandering cultivator's greatest opportunity to ascend to the heavens with one step!

The few with one thousand under their command blazed with pride and grinned broadly. It was only a matter of time before they set foot into Arcanus now! They wielded great power—if the City of Supernaturals eventually conquered the world, they would be a duke or a governor general, right?

The various leaders brimmed with high hopes, marching proudly at the head of a column of people as the Lin third elder and city defenders led them into the sacred city lord manor.

.....

In the courtyard.

Dao Sword and the others could scarcely believe their eyes. So the ambitious wolves of the city... had been tricked here, just like that?

It'd been the same for the cabinet meeting before; the strongest in the metropolis had been lured to the inner city with none the wiser. That meeting wasn't even over yet before another batch of troublemakers would be eliminated!

“So the sayings are right... Power and profit are unavoidable temptations that stand eternal. These guys possess both strength and brains if they're able to assemble so many people so quickly. And yet, they're still unable to avoid temptation!”

The vast City of Supernaturals would completely belong to another after today. Those left on its streets would be a motley assortment. They wouldn't amount to anything.

The leaders postured proudly at the doors to the city lord manor. They followed the Lin third elder's footsteps over the threshold with extreme excitement. However, they weren't greeted with the anticipated attention from hordes of heavyweights. After all, everyone thought that the cabinet meeting was still ongoing. Perhaps the cabinet ministers had all been selected.

Instead, there were only a dozen people in the spacious courtyard and almost all of them were unfamiliar faces. The various leaders looked at each other. Who... were these people? What about the aristocratic heavyweights? The wandering cultivator powerhouses? Where had they all gone?

“Welcome, one and all!” Lin Hongyu appeared with a smile on her face.

The city lord!

This one, they recognized. So the city lord was here, but...

Li Hao then appeared next to Lin Hongyu. Some of the leaders jerked with shock as they'd seen Li Hao's picture before. It was highly irregular to see the young man now! How was this possible?!

“You are all great talents!” Li Hao beamed radiantly. “All of you have gathered at least one hundred people after one night, with some gathering a thousand. And they’re all supernaturals! You truly have great potential! Since you’ve come... don’t think of leaving!”

“This is a trap!” someone yelled and took to the air, wanting to run.

A massive shield clapped down as chains sealed off the void. The strongest of them was but metamorphosis and the weakest just Sunflare. How could they run from Apex-level methods?

They’d daydreamed of an ostentatious conferment ceremony and bequeathment of endless favor. All of that melted away as despair. They were confined to the spot and those who could run faster had their legs broken. All of their mysterious power was beaten out of them!

Some people felt regret so deep that they had no words to describe their feelings! Who would’ve thought that the lap of luxury didn’t await them, but Li Hao!

Lin Hongyu had defected to Li Hao! Who could’ve fathomed that?? The mistress of one million supernaturals had surrendered without a fight! They wanted to ask her, “Why did you rebel, Your Majesty??”

They could conquer the world, but she threw all that away to bow to a boy wet behind the ears! No one would believe this!

We’re here to build an empire for you!!

Li Hao could not conceal his mirth. After he took down these guys and suppressed the fifty thousand randoms outside, there wouldn’t be anyone left in the city with the ability to cause trouble for him. He’d been fretting over how to handle these people, but now, it looked like Ole Hong’s dream of having one million supernaturals till the fields for him would soon come to fruition.

What would follow next was a determination of who should be executed and who could be spared. Those who died might even help him perfect his cultivation system. How wonderful was this!

Lin Hongyu was also smiling next to him. Many might find it a great pity that she'd offered up the City of Supernaturals on bended knee, that she was a fool. But once she thought of the downfall of the nine ministries and royal family, she felt that this might be the wisest decision she'd ever made.

Perhaps she would be able to do even better and fly even higher in the days to come.

Skystar City... was the heart of Skystar Dynasty.

Chapter 956: Rising With the Wind (I)

At the moment, ten thousand Silver Moon troops wearing Battle Heaven armor were quietly drawing close to the City of Supernaturals.

Some supernaturals glimpsed them from far away and jumped with shock, transporting themselves as far away as possible. At the same time, they were also confused by the sudden appearance of an army.

Did these guys have a death wish? What were they doing at the City of Supernaturals?

However, some glimpsed the banners that the troops were waving—the Lins! So this was a regiment from the Lin family? But where were they coming from?

Despite profound confusion, the supernaturals remained completely unaware of the situation even after Huang Yu led troops to change out the guard at several city gates. Once the Silver Moon troops completed their preparations, Huang Yu couldn't help but look to the north.

Do you see this, Ole Zhao? I didn't spill a drop of blood to conquer the City of Supernaturals! You're so useless compared to Li Hao. I should've run off with the kid a long time ago! Only here can my talents as a great general be showcased. I was almost nurtured to be just as useless as you in Silver Moon!

.....

The Silver Moon troops were in charge of the city perimeter. Meanwhile, laughter and conversation rose from the inner city. They were waiting for their newly minted generals to reemerge so that everyone could get rich together!

Inside the city lord manor.

Li Hao made a quick count—316 people. With all of them gathering one hundred people at least, these were all highly useful talents. He really did think so of them!

Whether it was good people or bad, these were all characters with great skill up their sleeves. Perhaps their strength wasn't the greatest, but they surely had their draw in other areas.

.....

Just as Li Hao rounded them all up, one of these great talents demonstrated their worth.

"I surrender, Commander Li! I am willing to serve the Skystar Commander Office," said an earnest young man who looked like a scholar. "I gathered more than one thousand people and wanted to resolve disorder and restore order at critical moments.

"I've always aspired to lay down rules for the supernatural world so that the people can settle down with families and focus on their business. Peace throughout the world was my fondest wish! To think that City Lord Lin was faster than me. She indeed sees the present and future clearly..."

He continued before Li Hao had a chance to respond. "Please look closely, commander, my supernatural ability is different from the usual. I am of a special attribute and can determine people's emotions. Joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness are readily observable to me. Different colors represent different emotions and I can judge their needs at any moment, given their emotions.

“I can see clearly so long as their cultivation level isn’t too far above mine,” he spoke rapidly, trying to increase his chances of survival. “This is why I was able to recruit one thousand. I exercise firm control over them because I can observe the changes in their emotions...”

Li Hao’s eyes widened. Everything was possible in the universe, but this kind of supernatural ability was truly a surprise! Observation of emotion?

“Then tell me, what mood am I in right now?”

“I wouldn’t dare!” the scholar hastily said. “This humble one would never dare observe such a great one. The commander’s great strength protects your being...”

“Cut the bullshit!” Li Hao said faintly. “If I tire of fake words, your head will hit the ground in the next second.”

The scholar threw caution to the wind in a bid to live. He quickly raised his head for a look and said slowly, “The commander is in good spirits at the moment, but killing intent weaves through your mood. There is black killing intent to be found...”

“Are you blindly guessing at this, or have you truly seen it?” Li Hao laughed. He didn’t feel anything particular in his emotions.

“I really have observed it.” The scholar decided on an impromptu display of his skills since Li Hao had started a conversation with him. He swept the crowd and pointed at a particular person.

“Commander, this person is covered by black killing intent and doesn’t feel much fear. He just wants to commit violence. I’m sure he is unwilling to accept the situation and is very possibly a lurking member of the three great organizations...”

Li Hao started and looked at the person in question. The man’s jaw slacked with dismay and he grunted, “How dare you say this fake bullshit, fucking scholar!”

“Milord, this person is furious and resentful,” the scholar quickly said. “His emotions are fluctuating wildly and his killing intent remains. I must have revealed his inner thoughts!”

Li Hao reached out without a word. Although the Nova roared and struggled, he hung in Li Hao’s hand like a chicken.

“He’s falsely accusing me!” the man snarled.

“Commander, he lies,” the scholar quickly added. “Those who lie show green light in their emotions...”

The man in Li Hao’s hand panicked. The young man was equally surprised and looked at the scholar, “What is your name?”

“Gan Wuliang.”

Gan... the same character as the curse word. So that hadn’t been a random insult earlier. How interesting that such an ability existed! It was Li Hao’s first time encountering it and he was immensely curious. So one could detect lies?

That was an incredible talent! It might not be useful in the battlefield, but what he lacked least were powerhouses in the field.

“Have you ever committed wrongdoing?” Li Hao raised an eyebrow.

“Never, never!” the scholar responded joyfully. “Please seek a thorough understanding of my background, commander. Although I am a Nova, I have followed the prescribed order of the world and gradually made my way through the cultivation ranks. I was born a Sunflare and come from a family of scholars...”

“He does not have major crimes to his name, but runs a fair number of scams,” Lin Hongyu said faintly. “Many have fallen for his tricks and whenever they go to demand an explanation from him, he’s able to fob them off again. He used to say that he possessed eyes of fire, but it turns out that that’s a lie as well.”

“Honorable city lord, this one did that for self preservation...” the scholar quickly explained. “This humble one has never lied, just... explained a few concepts to people.”

Li Hao understood the undertones behind these words. The scholar was a massive fraud and swindler of the supernatural domain. He utilized his ability to observe emotions so he could say whatever was most effective for his target. It was a terrifying prospect once someone’s emotions were in the grip of another. All joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness were at another’s mercy.

Li Hao waved the scholar out of line and bequeathed him a suit of armor.

“There are fifty thousand supernaturals inside the inner city. I don’t ask much of you, just to convince ten thousand people to change into the uniforms of the city defenders and administer the law. If you succeed, you will be spared from death! You can also try to run, of course, or encourage those outside to mutiny!”

“This humble one would never dare!” the scholar hastily said. “I immensely cherish the opportunity that the commander has given me. However, this humble one is but one person and my strength is insufficient. I would request that the commander send a heavyweight with me...”

“Qin Lian, you go with him!”

“Understood, sir!” Qin Lian appeared in the darkness, prompting a hard gulp from the scholar. This was an Arcanus of the dark attribute! He hadn’t detected a single sign of her before!

Qin Lian stared coldly at him while the scholar took in her pitch-black armor. “Then this humble one will be off! Please await my return, commander!”

Tense with nerves, he marched out of the courtyard.

Lin Hongyu looked at Li Hao, who smiled back at her. “The supernatural domain is certainly very interesting. There are a myriad of abilities, but most of them are of an offensive nature. These special attributes are overlooked.”

“Special attributes are weak in a chaotic era.” Lin Hongyu inclined her head. “This person’s craft is scamming and defrauding others, which has only helped him to a Nova level. He is even a Heaven Favored and started off as a Sunflare! It is too hard for special attribute supernaturals to improve.”

Li Hao nodded as well. He had some supernaturals with special abilities, such as Li Meng and her third eye that could see through falsehood. It was similar to his sword eye. She’d only barely managed to set foot into Solar even after Li Hao’s clear bias toward her and providing her with many resources.

Wang Ming was the same cultivation level as her before, but was almost a Nova now. He just didn’t want to break his supernatural locks so quickly and temporarily remained at peak Solar. Otherwise, he’d be a Nova if he wished to.

Li Meng had fallen one major cultivation level behind in a very short period of time. Hence, it was clear to see that the scholar must have swindled a lot of people to make it to Nova.

Knowing that Li Hao had likely set his eyes on the man’s ability, Lin Hongyu said nothing more. Observing emotion was a situation-dependent ability. It was useful, but also not as there was nothing to observe about a powerhouse slapping one to death.

There was nothing to observe when the other wouldn’t listen to one speak. The scholar wouldn’t have been captured otherwise. The drawbacks to his abilities were readily apparent.

Seeing that one of their number had been spared, more people were in a rush to speak up from the crowd.

“One at a time, I’ll hear you all out,” smiled Li Hao. “We’ve got time today, so those of you with interesting abilities can feel free to fully demonstrate them. Only then will you have a chance to live. You might even have a bright career ahead of you. If you keep it all to yourself... you’ll likely become a dead soul beneath the sword!”

Tension percolated through the crowd. The person that Li Hao held in his hand wanted to speak, but the young man quieted him with a surge of word intent and threw him aside. The sight sent fear through those assembled and they hastily explained their abilities.

There truly was a variety of talents gathered in the courtyard. Some people’s abilities were so unique that they rivaled the scholar’s. There was a woman who could teleport—true teleportation. However, her range was a bit limited at a thirty meter radius. That was too confining for modern day powerhouses. If that wasn’t the case, she would’ve made her escape long ago.

Even so, Li Hao’s eyes widened with appreciation. Teleportation should be a space attribute skill! This may be the first spatial supernatural that he’d discovered. Chen Zhongtian had guessed before that Zhao Tianyang might be a spatial supernatural, but there was no way of confirming since Zhao Tianyang hadn’t displayed his abilities even at the end. Perhaps the man had snapped his supernatural locks too late to acclimate himself to his new abilities.

Teleportation was slightly different from traditional spatial abilities, but it was tangentially related. Li Hao made a note to keep the woman behind. She might be of use after her background was investigated.

There was another person with an ability to hear everything within a five hundred kilometer radius. However, Li Hao was quite skeptical of what he claimed to be able to do.

“If you can hear from such a far distance away, how did you not know that this place was a trap?”
Who you trying to fool!

Chapter 957: Rising With the Wind (II)

“Although this humble old man can hear from five hundred kilometers away, this place has a powerful energy shield in place,” the scrawny old man responded carefully. “There are many powerhouses gathered as well, so I didn’t dare eavesdrop too much. I didn’t have the courage to!”

“Then let’s give it a try,” Li Hao laughed. “A range of five hundred kilometers, is it?”

Even he couldn’t extend his abilities five hundred kilometers. No one could accomplish that in this day and age. After thinking it over, the young man proposed, “According to what you say, you can also sense a bit of energy when you listen for sounds. Look for the strongest person, the one with the densest energy within five hundred kilometers and listen in on his conversation...”

“Commander,” Old Scrawny paled. “This humble old man has limited abilities. Great disaster will be upon me if someone senses my actions and strikes back...”

“Disaster? Can any disaster be greater than me?” Li Hao roared with laughter.

“No no no, of course not.” Old Scrawny’s expression shifted with dismay and he hastily beamed fawningly. “The commander is mighty and valiant, you are the strongest in the city! Then... I shall search for the strongest person outside the City of Supernaturals. Please wait for a moment.”

His ears twitched; Li Hao extended his senses at the same time. He perceived a ripple undulating from the scrawny old man—hmm, interesting.

A red light sparkled out of Li Hao’s eyes when he opened them again. The scrawny old man in front of him was pale-faced and unable to move. His ability was rather peculiar and seemed to involve the secondary dimension.

How strange!

One did not know the depths of one’s ignorance until one came face to face with it.

The scrawny old man continuously twitched his ears until he heard something moments later. His expression shifted wildly as a massive energy ripple ricocheted back to him, ready to explode next to his ear!

Li Hao reached out with a hand and crushed the ripple with his fingers. A bloody mark appeared on them. His expression twitched as he looked into the distance, then at the old man. “What did you hear?”

“I heard...” Old Scrawny was as white as a sheet. “I heard someone say that the nine ministries might have fallen, that something might have developed at Skystar Town. They want the people to gather and kill someone. I don’t know who they want to kill, they spoke ambiguously because they soon discovered me.”

Li Hao’s eyes widened. The nine ministries might have fallen... No one here knew that. Clearly, this old man had truly heard a conversation outside of the city. The target had also followed the old man’s energy ripple back to the source to deliver a counterblow. This level of strength was not to be underestimated.

The world could at most tolerate weaker Apexes and seven element Arcanus at present. Of this, Li Hao was aware of. This person might be on the tipping point with their cultivation. Who could it be?

Ying Hongyue?

Li Hao couldn’t think of any other possibility. Or was it the scarlet cloak behind Ying Hongyue?

“How far away was this person?”

“About one hundred and fifty kilometers...”

Li Hao didn’t respond. The earth driller appeared instead. “There?” He pointed in a direction.

“Yes!”

“City Lord Lin, keep an eye here. I’ll be right back!”

“Understood!” Lin Hongyu was also surprised that they’d discovered a secret in an impromptu assessment. Accidents could be found everywhere, it seemed.

“Be careful, commander!” she reminded. Their opponent must be strong if they could strike back. Could Li Hao handle them?

She didn’t know, but wasn’t at liberty to say anything else.

.....

At the same time.

Someone tilted their head in a certain direction and sighed softly after a moment. “How... audacious! A supernatural of a special attribute peeked in on us from the direction of the City of Supernaturals. We must withdraw from this place as soon as possible!”

“Now that’s interesting,” someone else chuckled from the void. “The City of Supernaturals isn’t close to this place. That they could peer into our meeting... shall we look for this person?”

“There’s no need, they instantly dispelled my counterattack. Although we’re very far from each other and I simply followed their energy ripple, my blow was immediately dispersed. There is a heavyweight by their side, let’s go! We need to be careful of creating an undesirable tangent from our goals!”

“What are you afraid of? With the current state of the world...” This person didn’t have a chance to finish before the first speaker jerked with shock.

“We need to go! There’s someone fast approaching us via a great treasure!”

Too fast!

The figures in the void started and spontaneously vanished. The first speaker wanted to leave as well, but chose to stay with a slight furrow of his brows. He... seemed to know who was coming.

.....

Li Hao popped out of the ground less than ten seconds later. He looked at the person in front of him and smiled. “So it is you, Ying Hongyue. We meet again!”

“You’re at the City of Supernaturals?” Ying Hongyue responded calmly. “So you’ve secretly made the city yours. That’s certainly surprising.”

“Ying Hongyue, you killed my parents and my best friend. How about... we have some fun today?” Li Hao suddenly vanished on the spot; a longsword stabbed from the void without forewarning!

A folding fan appeared in Ying Hongyue’s hand. He snapped it open, manifesting a painting of mountains and rivers in the air. A massive mountain bore down on Stellaris as rivers thundered through the world, churning straight at Li Hao!

Ying Hongyue frowned at their exchange. Li Hao’s sword intent was growing ever stronger! The young man’s supernatural abilities seemed the same as before, but his sword intent was significantly stronger than previous.

Bam!

The void shattered as Li Hao transformed into a ferocious tier. It disappeared, then reappeared as a tiger breaking out of its cage and ripped through the void.

Ying Hongyue grunted, sending blood streaming out of his body. His blood turned into a sea of blood! The strength of bloodlines flared from his being. It was seven streams of blood at first, those then turned into six, five, four...

Li Hao's blood frothed as well! Stellaris erupted with scintillating light. He thrust the sword forward, to which Ying Hongyue answered with a reverberation of bloodline. The man abruptly threw down the fan, transforming it into a world that enclosed Li Hao within.

"I'll play with you next time, I have business to attend to now..." He disappeared, leaving the treasure behind.

It was a very powerful fan—the former weapon of a Saint, if not an Empyrean King. Li Hao materialized from the void and stared coldly in the direction that the other had disappeared in. Stellaris fell into his hand and the shadow of a mallet collected over it.

Li Hao roared and spat out a mouthful of blood, shaping it into a sword of blood. He stabbed it into the mallet's shadow, breaking it with a crunch.

Far away in the distance, Ying Hongyue grunted with pain as blood qi exploded from his body. He spat out a mouthful of blood and turned back to look at Li Hao. "The shadow of the divine mallet... you have some ability to your name, Li Hao!"

He disappeared again. Li Hao didn't answer with a taunt since he was lacking in some of his usual methods. He'd encountered Ying Hongyue by accident before his supernatural characters were redrawn. There was nothing he could do if the man wanted to leave.

Ying Hongyue was much stronger than imagined. He could already gather the seven bloodlines. Encountering Li Hao hadn't required him to draw on them too much. However, wouldn't Li Hao be letting the man think less of him if he could just walk off like that?

Two more items formed over Stellaris—a pair of boots and a stone blade. They were just shadows. Li Hao pounded his heart and forced out a drop of golden blood. Sword intent flared after it oozed out of his body.

“Break!” snarled the young man.

BOOM!

The two shadows shattered, shaking the void. Ying Hongyue once more spat blood in the distance. His bloodlines shook violently and he looked at Li Hao with incredulous shock.

“The seven bloodlines have become one... I underestimated you!” A cold light glinted in the young man's eyes. “But Ying Hongyue, you can escape once, you won't escape a second time. If you do not kill me today, I will kill you tomorrow. I will only become stronger and stronger. And you? What can you count on?”

Ying Hongyue no longer looked backward. He soared through the air, a grave bearing marking his footsteps.

Li Hao pummeled the world created by the fan with stroke after stroke, taking a dozen seconds to defeat it. The fan struggled to get away, but he ran it through!

The premises were finally quiet. Li Hao frowned and looked around. There had been more than Ying Hongyue present just now. They'd physically gathered here as opposed to transmitting messages. Ying Hongyue had also emerged from his headquarters to meet... who?

The scarlet shadow hadn't been present—was he avoiding it? The scrawny old man had said that Ying Hongyue pointed to something being amiss at the nine ministries. Therefore, he wanted to kill someone. Who? Li Hao?

No, that's not right! There's no need to come so far if they want to kill me. Is there a need to conceal their intent to execute me? Is there a need to hide anything at all?

Absolutely not! They'd be able to summon a ton of helpers if they simply announced that they wanted to kill me.

"So they weren't here to kill me, then... who?"

They demonstrated such a need for secrecy, and to purposefully avoid the scarlet shadow...

A thought struck Li Hao—did they want to target the shadow? That wasn't out of the question.

It was completely unexpected that the two sides had encountered each other in the wilderness. The young man once more wondered who Ying Hongyue had been meeting. Yama? Celestial? Or someone else?

The three great organizations had dominated the world ever since he set foot on the path of martial dao. Even now, they roamed freely throughout the world. They were... highly unusual. The Celestial Sword Immortal, Yama, Ying Hongyue, and the lord of Yonder Mountain might have an agreement in place between them.

No, there's one more. Director General Zhao. He'd also been part of the first batch of explorers to find the ruins and facilitate the first awakening.

Li Hao had thought that Ying Hongyue and the rest didn't dare be too brazen in Silver Moon because of the ancient fossils that existed in the province. But since the ancients could not leave the

ruins, were the three great organizations so cautious of the ancient civilization or Director General Zhao?

There must be something between them, there must!

Li Hao snorted. He shattered the shadows of three heritage weapons in such close proximity to Ying Hongyue that the action was sure to deliver a heavy blow. These weapons were tied to the bloodlines of their families. Ying Hongyue was in for it now!

This move was useless against others, but perfectly targeted against Ying Hongyue.

That guy can combine his seven bloodlines... Li Hao glared coldly into the distance before vanishing.

Chapter 958: Rising With the Wind (III)

In the distance.

The void trembled when Ying Hongyue reappeared. The man's face was stark white while the bloodline power within his body agitated violently. He frowned deeply and summoned a few weapon shadows of his own to suppress the bloodlines.

Although the bloodlines quieted down, Ying Hongyue remained frowning.

"Stellaris... is too targeted at me!" he muttered after a long moment of silence. The sword might be a regular weapon to anyone else, but to him, it was one aimed at his throat!

When it came to strength, he didn't fear Li Hao in the slightest due to the successful combination of the seven bloodlines. Not to mention, the young man wasn't in prime condition at the moment. He was just slightly stronger than six elements and less than seven. And yet, Ying Hongyue could do nothing but flee when the two encountered each other.

That outcome had very much to do with Stellaris!

Three heritage weapons had broken and their weapon souls devoured. Stellaris had captured them and could coalesce them at any time, then break them to disturb Ying Hongyue's bloodlines. While the affliction would not be as severe as when the actual weapons broke, this would crop up each time the two met.

"This... cannot be permitted to continue," Ying Hongyue took a deep breath and soared through the air once more.

Li Hao had the City of Supernaturals in his grasp; the three great organizations needed to withdraw from the central region. If not, it was only a matter of time before they were exterminated by the young man.

He made swift time, slowing his pace only when he arrived at a massive mountain in a mountain range. Moments later, he had returned to the Red Moon headquarters.

The scarlet cloak appeared as usual. "Has the leader gone out?" it said affably.

"I made a trip out to investigate the situation." Ying Hongyue's expression was as usual. "Things are not looking good outside. Li Hao may have the City of Supernaturals in his grasp. I met him near the city and nearly lost."

The scarlet cloak had long sensed the agitation of his blood qi, but was astonished by the recounting. "Can he defeat even you now?"

"Stellaris poses too great a threat to me!" Ying Hongyue shook his head with a sigh. "Who would've thought that the sword would once more recognize a master countless years later? Who else apart from the Sword Sovereign could entice it to take a master from the Lis? It's very strange!"

“I agree,” the scarlet cloak said with hesitation. “The other seven weapons are another matter, but logically speaking, Stellaris should not have been able to be activated. It should remain sealed even with the bloodline of the Lis present.”

“Did they have other plans in mind in leaving Stellaris behind?” asked Ying Hongyue. “Why did the Sword City not take it with them in the retreat?”

“We’re not certain why the heritage weapons circulated either.” The scarlet cloak shook its head. “Let’s set that aside. It is indeed inadvisable for Stellaris to remain in Li Hao’s hand. We need to think of a way to seize it.”

It’d be easier to just kill Li Hao! Ying Hongyue couldn’t be bothered with a response.

“Upstairs has agreed that the three great organizations can convene,” continued the scarlet cloak. “A retreat is permitted and a new headquarters must be established...”

“I understand.” Ying Hongyue walked off.

“Red Moon leader,” the scarlet cloak couldn’t help but say. “Upstairs wishes for you to make a trip back. The seven bloodlines are almost one. Additionally, it is a grave loss that the mallet of the Hong’s has been lost and destroyed...”

“It was an accident, what can I do about it?”

“.....” The scarlet cloak fell silent and watched Ying Hongyue leave. This person was an ingrate that did not act in their best interests!

.....

The City of Supernaturals.

Lin Hongyu looked Li Hao over when the young man returned. She relaxed to see the young man unharmed. He didn't say anything and simply looked at the still pale-faced scrawny old man.

"I have use for you. Do your job well, there will be plenty of benefits in it for you!"

"Thank you, commander!" Old Scrawny was overjoyed.

"How many people did you sense?"

"Four!"

Li Hao raised a brow. Ying Hongyue was one, the other three could be Yama, the Celestial Flying Immortal, and the lord of Yonder Mountain. If it was them, then the whole crew was present.

Interesting!

These guys were a mysterious bunch. When it came down to it, they were part of the strongest cohort in the ancient civilization. That made them more or less connected to Silver Moon. They had to have their own unique personality characteristics since they were able to establish the three great organizations in modern times.

Now it rather seemed that they were related to those traitors. Not only that, but Ying Hongyue might have other thoughts in mind as well.

Who should Li Hao kill?

If all four were strong, they might be able to kill a dilapidated Immortal if they combined their efforts.

The young man didn't venture any other opinions. The impromptu assessment of ability was over. Lin Hongyu had files on most of these people. Some brimmed with so much evil that their backgrounds could not be hidden. Others kept such a low profile that not even Lin Hongyu had gathered much information on them.

Gan Wuliang came running back, apprehension writ large on his face. "Commander, I've convinced a few people, it's just that..."

Qin Lian punctuated the scholar's explanation with a transmitted explanation. The fellow who could read emotions had lied to those outside that Lin Hongyu had decreed him the vice commander of the new army. She would be the commander and had given him the task of reorganizing the random teams outside.

After a persuasive speech and modifying his responses based on people's reactions, he was able to consolidate the smaller groups of supernaturals. Those who agreed to follow him were changing into their new uniforms.

"Commander, I told them to make camp in the barracks outside the city for now," Gan Wuliang said softly. "I said that the rest of those who entered the inner city are undergoing more assessments, but I need some people to back me up or everything I said will seem especially fake. What do you think..."

Li Hao nodded and looked at the people around him. There were approximately seventy that he'd selected from the impromptu talent show. "You guys will coordinate with Gan Wuliang. It's best if you can convince all of them to obey and make up camp outside of the city!"

He then looked at Hu Qingfeng and the rest close by. "You guys put on armor as well and blend in with the teams. Help these guys lead all of the recruits outside and set up camp. Complete your integration of the City of Supernaturals as quickly as possible!"

“Understood, sir!” The excited group didn’t dare speak too much.

Gan Wuliang also heaved an inward sigh of relief.

“You can give fleeing a try if you want to make a run for it once you exit the city gates!” Li Hao said to those who were given permission to leave.

“We wouldn’t dare...” The group shook their heads, hearts in their throats.

“Milord, those guys are mouthing lies.” Gan Wuliang suddenly pointed at three people. “They’re definitely making a run for it once they get outside!”

The people he pointed at blanched with fear and cursed up a storm to themselves. That damned animal! He’d betrayed them at the drop of a hat and was being such an earnest dog!

“Commander, we’re innocent...”

“Arrest them!” Li Hao commanded. Those around the three leapt into action. It wasn’t their own lives on the line and they had to do everything possible to ensure that the situation stayed that way!

“Milord, I’m afraid that some people are hiding their intentions deep, it’s hard for me to pick up their emotions that way.” Gan Wuliang looked carefully at Li Hao. “How about we test them a few more times...”

“No need for that!” Li Hao laughed. “Do your job well, I have high hopes for you!”

He clapped the scholar’s shoulder, sending a peculiar surge of energy into Gan Wuliang’s brain. The latter swallowed audibly and beamed as brightly as he could. Not only was he not afraid, but he felt much safer. This was good, this was very good!

He'd been highly afraid that Li Hao would want to execute all of the troublemakers! It looked like that probably wouldn't happen.

"The Lin third elder will go with them. Also, arrange for some city defenders to accompany and manage them for now!"

Standing off in the distance, the third elder had long been completely won over by the young man a long time ago. He quickly bowed with respect, "Understood!"

"Go on!"

The group marched out, leaving roughly two hundred behind. Those remaining looked nervously at each other.

"Don't worry, most of you will be fine," Li Hao laughed. "Only some of you have to die for your crimes. Small transgressions are a simple matter. But if you riot, that will pan out differently for your future!"

"We wouldn't dare!" chorused the remainders. Each of them was the very picture of docility. These were all quick-witted folks, they wouldn't dare rebel.

They'd heard it just as well. The nine ministries were no more, the royal family was no more. The City of Supernaturals was now Li Hao's, which meant that the central region hailed the young man as its sovereign. Wouldn't they be pursuing death if they chose to cause trouble now?

.....

The motley array of soldiers within the inner city soon marched out of the metropolis, led by their new leaders. Some of them were unwilling, but they heard that other arrangements were in store for the other leaders. The new recruits were to be assembled into a new army.

Seeing that a dozen of the original leaders were among them, these people didn't dare say anything. They left with Gan Wuliang and the others, heading toward the military barracks outside the city.

The barracks had lain unused until this day; they would be put into use now.

.....

With the departure of these people, that defused the last potential threat from the City of Supernaturals. Li Hao no longer kept a low profile. Lin Hongyu knew he was here, so there was no point in concealing his movements anymore.

"The City of Supernaturals has ever wished to become a place of long-term development for Skystar supernaturals and create a land of peace." As the new supernatural army convened outside the city, the city lord's voice rang through the metropolis. "However, we have strayed from our original intentions.

"Some supernaturals do not respect law and order. In the interest of prolonged prosperity for Skystar's supernatural domain, the city hereby joins the banner of the Skystar Commander Office today and follows Commander Li Hao's orders.

"We will fight for supernatural success and create a thriving age that eclipses the ancient civilization! Only Commander Li is able to do so!"

Chapter 959: Rising With the Wind (IV)

A hush stole over the City of Supernaturals after the city lord's announcement rang through the streets. Utter mayhem erupted one beat later. Hearts quailed with terror!

What was going on here??

Li Hao appeared, emanating a commandeering presence. His voice rumbled through the city, “Do not fret, everyone. I am Li Hao! I greatly welcome City Lord Lin’s desire to join the Skystar Commander Office. From this moment on, all residents are to wait in their homes for further arrangements. Be at peace and do not run around or commit wrongdoing! There are plans in place for all City of Supernaturals citizens. Those who desert or stir up trouble will be executed with no exception!”

The mayhem deepened to complete pandemonium. Figures darted for the city gates while others looked around wildly, terror-stricken! Some of them had just fled back from Skystar City, but Li Hao was to be found everywhere! He’d taken the City of Supernaturals! What were they waiting for if they didn’t make a run for it?

However, blades, spears, and swords bristled as soon as they reached the city walls. Wails of agony rang through the air. Ten thousand soldiers appeared over the ramparts. They weren’t gathered too densely, but were intimidating nonetheless.

“No one is permitted to leave!” Huang Yu shouted with a brandish of his spear. “Return to your homes and await further arrangement. This place is under Demon Hunter Army jurisdiction! You have fifteen minutes before the army cleanses the city streets. Any who are still loitering outside of their homes will be shown no mercy!”

“Brothers, we’re supernaturals!” someone roared with immense reluctance to accept the situation. “How can we take orders from others? Let’s charge together! They’re just a few thousand...”

The area around him was empty before he finished speaking. The man paled with dismay; he’d forgotten that the troublemakers had all been summoned last night. Those who dared to rebel were all gone. All that was left in the city now were those happy to keep their heads down. They would never dare revolt.

Indeed, people ran back to their homes and shut the door and windows tight. Terrified out of their minds, they wanted nothing more than to stay inside forever. Rising up was the last thing on their mind.

There were also some who knew that death was undoubtedly in store for them if they were caught. They charged in all directions, trying to flee.

However, the soldiers quickly stamped out the various scuffles that occurred. The soldiers weren't strong individually, yet they were indomitable when gathered together. Supernaturals that wished to start a disturbance were killed on the spot.

The vast City of Supernaturals was abruptly much quieter after a few minutes. Commotion could be found at only a few places. The city defenders didn't dare say a word—they quickly coordinated their actions with these soldiers to maintain order inside the city. The bustling City of Supernaturals resembled a dead city in the blink of an eye.

Many people wanted to send messages about their situation, but they found that their transmission pendants no longer sparkled with light. They couldn't even communicate with anyone! Dark despair stole through their minds.

The ten thousand soldiers split into two. Half entered the city to pacify unrest. Apart from scattered shouts and clangs, the city that was lauded to have the most supernaturals in the world, the strongest city in the world, was as quiet as a grave.

Li Hao remained hovering in the air, not doing anything. He simply sent a ray of sword light to wherever there were heavyweights causing trouble and blew up the strongest of the group.

Lin Hongyu also rushed through the city with various Lin experts, soothing any citizens she came across. The troublemakers that had entered the inner city were being held in the earth driller.

Three hours later, the city was as quiet as could be.

The agitating supernaturals were all executed on the spot. Almost one thousand supernaturals had died, but that hadn't caused significant ripples. They'd engaged in separate, disjointed action and fallen one by one. There wasn't a single large-scale riot.

.....

Inside Skystar City.

People busy at their posts quickly received word from Li Hao. Hong Yitang, in particular, received a line that said, “Come swiftly to collect your supernaturals. Take them all back to plant the fields, the City of Supernaturals has fallen!”

Complex looks appeared on everyone’s faces. There were one million supernaturals in that city. Li Hao had taken only a few weaklings with him to quell unrest. Although their supernaturals had been killed before, it was still very difficult to claim the entire city.

It’d been just a day since Li Hao left, but he’d already seized the City of Supernaturals!

Incredible!

“Although I knew it was just a matter of time, it’s still astonishing that he was able to do so without any fuss from the City of Supernaturals,” Chen Zhongtian sighed with emotion. “They were all easily suppressed! So many powerhouses on our side died in previous skirmishes that I was thinking it would become a problem when we took over the city. But now, it would seem that the anticipated troubles did not occur.”

“Lin Hongyu’s got shit for brains...” Chen Yao said with a complicated look on his face.

“Are you talking about your old man, or yourself?”

Chen Yao sheepishly looked back at his dad. That’s true! Our family had shit for brains long before she did.

“You’d already be dead if I didn’t lose my mind!” snorted Chen Zhongtian. He then smiled broadly. “Trust your father’s choice. See, after the fall of the City of Supernaturals, only the three great

organizations and Yonder Mountain have the capacity to rise up. It's only a matter of time before they're settled!"

Chen Yao didn't know what to make of the situation. Everything had happened so quickly! The nine ministries and royal family were overcome in the blink of an eye; the City of Supernaturals followed soon after. Li Hao's rise was complete.

The greatest problem facing them now was the second awakening. Li Hao's side was almost invincible if it didn't take place!

.....

At the same time.

Holding down the fort in the distant Silver Moon, Director General Zhao received a message from Hou Xiaochen.

"Stand at the ready, disorder might be upon the province soon. Be careful of the three great organizations moving their operations to Silver Moon..."

Director General Zhao could make neither heads nor tails of the message. The second awakening was yet to begin, what freaking disorder?

Or, was it about to begin?

"Stop skulking in the shadows and make bigger moves." A message from Huang Yu arrived while the director general mused over his colleague's words. "The world is about to change and we shall rise with the wind. Don't be falling behind now, Ole Zhao!"

Director General Zhao blinked at the latest communication. His transmission pendant lit up a third time; it was Kong Jie. “Oi Zhao, set up a feast for my glorious return! Who d’you think you were insulting with twenty drops of Water of Life?? Imma go back and beat the shit out of you!”

“.....” Change flickered over the director general’s expression. That all three had sent him a message at the same time... indicated that the world had changed! He looked in the direction of Skystar City with raised eyebrows. Had Li Hao taken down the nine ministries? How could the lad have done it so quickly??

Director General Zhao found it hard to believe, but intoned, “Notify all troops to be at the highest level of combat readiness! All Silver Moon powerhouses are hereby called into active duty. Legions stationed in the ruins are to emerge and begin their drills!

“Our troops are to swiftly eradicate the North Sea pirates, push the front line in Near River, raze the Near River Governor General Office, and advance on the three northern provinces!”

The group of personnel on duty outside his office was stunned. Silver Moon... was going to war!

This quickly?

Despite the plethora of thoughts swirling in their minds, the appropriate orders were swiftly carried down the chain of command.

A storm was brewing. Director General Zhao took a deep breath and looked in a certain direction. Perhaps it’s time that I have a talk with those guys!

.....

The City of Supernaturals had been conquered, but fire could not be enwrapped by paper. Although concrete news did not circulate yet in the outside world, bits and pieces had been passed on. Only

entry was permitted to the City of Supernaturals, not egress. The thousands of supernaturals encamped outside the city walls were continuously separated until they disappeared.

This large number of supernaturals had friends and family. Those people could contact their loved ones at first, but now received no word from them.

Some supernaturals that'd held various positions in the outside world had also gone missing. Change was taking place in the central region.

.....

The end of the year was at hand. Typically a boisterous and bustling time, the regular citizens of the central region found this year that whether it was government officials or the rich and mighty, all were eerily reserved this year.

They were so quiet that it was almost deathly quiet. In the past, this was a lively time of the year no matter how chaotic the world was. This year, however, it was particularly cheerless.

The government didn't organize any events and all of the rich and powerful kept their doors shut tight. Supernaturals could usually be glimpsed flying through the air, but there was nary even a bird to be found now.

.....

As the guardian provinces of the four corners of Skystar City, the North, South, East, and West Peak provinces had always answered to the capital city.

On this day, South Peak province. The provincial government.

The South Peak director general looked at the people in front of him for a very long time. He did not know what to say.

He Yong stood in front of him, more solemn than usual. He held a golden booklet and announced, “The director general of South Peak is hereby ordered to register all supernaturals within your provincial borders and await for further deployment!

“The Night Watchers will be taking over all superhuman related issues within the province. The South Peak army is to make camp where they are stationed and forbidden from moving around. Their command tokens are hereby revoked and all troublemakers will be executed without question!”

Resignation shown out of the director general’s eyes. Back when Li Hao came and arrested a deputy director general, then eliminated the Wind and Cloud Pavilion, he’d known that the rise of the Skystar Commander Office was unstoppable.

But... he hadn’t thought that this day would come so quickly.

“Where is Director General Zhao?” he asked softly after a sigh. As another member of provincial administration, he had some questions to ask, even if he felt that he already knew the answers.

Chapter 960: The Last Rainy Season (I)

“Zhao Huaimin gave us a list of people we could use when he died. You’re on it!” He Yong said bluntly. “The director generals of the East and West Peak provinces were outright arrested and any rebels executed! Yao Si and Hou Xiaochen went to carry out orders there. You can give it a try if you think you can take me down instead!”

The South Peak director general sighed and lowered his head. The nine ministries were well and truly gone. The director generals of the North, South, East, and West Peak provinces were local overlords. East Peak marched under the royal family’s banner and West Peak had sworn fealty to the Ministry of Armed Forces. And now, their leaders were either arrested or executed on the spot.

Meanwhile, the South Peak director general had pledged his allegiance to the Ministry of Administration. His current straits demonstrated it to be a good decision. Zhao Huaimin had plainly exerted himself to protect those who depended on his family.

He did that even though he was about to die...

The director general raised a cupped fist in the direction of Skystar City. No one knew if he was thanking Li Hao or Zhao Huaimin, despite the latter being dead.

He Yong looked coldly at him. Those of the director general's command trembled like leaves in the wind. On the other hand, the local Night Watcher director was rather excited. He'd been quite regretful that he hadn't had a chance to properly fawn over Li Hao on the young man's last visit. He Yong was here now, and the man held the title of the southern commander.

"Don't worry, Commander He. I will demonstrate zero tolerance for anyone who dares make trouble! The South Peak Night Watchers will ensure your safety!"

He Yong flicked a glance at him, then tossed the golden booklet to the director general. "In addition, the province needs to be ready to stabilize market prices and possibly release food reserves to help refugees of various locations! The Skystar Commander Office will send people to coordinate this matter. That mundanes should starve to death in a world of superhumans is the greatest joke of all!"

Indeed, it would be ludicrous if superhumans were capable of everything but keeping civilians alive.

"Understood!" the director general took a deep breath.

"One last thing..." He Yong took out a list of names. "Arrest these people and kill those who resist!"

The director general took the list with a shift in expression. Although his subordinates behind him didn't see the contents, they sweated profusely. Who was on that list?

The director general quickly scanned it and sighed to himself. Li Hao, ah Li Hao. I'd thought that there wouldn't be a great disturbance this time, that you'd use gentle methods to settle the world. I... I thought wrongly.

"And one last thing..."

The director general couldn't help but look directly at He Yong. You already said that, do you not know how to count?

He Yong didn't care about the looks that people gave him. "The Sky Canopy Agency of the Skystar Commander Office will be here in a few days to install the sky canopies. Make sure you facilitate their work."

"Sky canopies?"

"Yes!" He Yong nodded with a toothy grin. "The commander is going to open up communications beneath the heavens so that information flows freely and we can converse directly with the people! It would be another ludicrous joke if superhuman commands cannot make it out of Skystar City!

"Also, schools will be established throughout the land. Their locations will be determined first, then built..."

"The ground is frozen solid right now," the director general couldn't help but say. "It would be the greatest joke if we conscript the people for labor now. A lot of them will die!"

He'd managed to hold his tongue in the previous announcements, but couldn't restrain his irritation now. "Building schools is a good thing. We all know that education opens the minds of the people. We're not fools, we know that logic. The commander may mean well with this gesture, but he needs to understand that it can't be accomplished with a clap of his hands..."

Those standing behind him shook with horror. He Yong looked like he could beat their superior officer to death with one punch!

“Who says we’re going to conscript the civilians?” He Yong snorted at the director general. “Who says they’re going to be pressed into labor? A group of supernaturals will arrive in a few days—roughly one thousand of them. The South Peak army will work with them to not only build schools, but refugee camps, repair roads, and maintain everything the province needs. Fix everything that needs to be fixed!”

“.....” Everyone was stunned into silence.

“What?” The South Peak director general finally found his tongue after a long moment of quiet.

“Supernaturals, did you not understand me?” chuckled He Yong. “There are too many supernaturals in the world now—there’s more than one hundred thousand in the nine ministries alone! There were one million in the City of Supernaturals, and now countless supernaturals have no place to go and nothing to do.

“Commander Li wishes to overhaul our waterways this winter and reconstruct all of Skystar! One thousand will be arriving in South Peak first. Set up a proper delegation of duties first—you guys should be focusing on food. Of course, the commander will send rations, but the province needs to be prepared against unrest!”

Jaws sagged in the crowd. Supernaturals were superior members of society from the moment their cultivation path appeared. And now... they were going to be put to work? Repairing roads, building schools, and fixing everything in the province?

This... this was blatant humiliation!

“You’re having supernaturals do this kind of work?” the director general needed to confirm.

“Of course!” He Yong answered matter-of-factly. “They work fast and well. So long as there isn’t sabotage, the roads they lay will last for one hundred years! The houses they build are cool in the summer and warm in the winter. Their buildings can stand against the wind and earthquakes. In fact, their structures can even reverse rain and snow to a limited degree! It’s such a waste if they’re not put to work on our infrastructure.”

...damn! The crowd couldn’t recover from their shock. Such a waste? Are you listening to yourself?

The director general took a deep breath, nearly inhaling all of the air around him. “Is the commander... not afraid of eliciting an uprising in the superhuman domain from his deacons?” he asked in a low voice.

These were good propositions, but Li Hao’s usage of supernaturals as slaves would easily incite a rebellion. Supernaturals would find this a grave humiliation and exploitation of their skills!

“What are we afraid of? It’s not like we won’t be paying them, they’re not working for free!” He Yong grinned. “Any who bring their skills to bear in the form of labor will be paid with mysterious power! They’re just shifting their attention from their previous looting and killing to paving roads and erecting bridges. It’s a huge increase in safety!

“Do you think all supernaturals are willing to commit murder for a living? Do you think they’re all serial killers? There are definitely people willing to work for a living. And for those who are unwilling... we’ve got our ways, heh!”

The director general was more at ease when he heard that the supernaturals would be paid in mysterious power. But... wasn’t that a waste of resources?

“Is this being conducted in South Peak only, or will the same go for other territories?”

“This will be rolled out in all twenty-two central region provinces. More than thirty thousand supernaturals are being put to use in this manner, this is just the first batch. They’re the more biddable ones,” He Yong explained merrily. “The ones who aren’t listening to instructions need to

be trained a bit more. We'll take it one step at a time and there will be more people as time goes on."

There weren't too many in the first batch of supernaturals, just thirty thousand or so. It was a drop in the bucket compared to more than one million supernaturals. However, these were handpicked personnel that possessed milder natures and readily accepted orders.

They had no major crimes in their background and would serve for three months. They were weaker, so they would be paid in mysterious power. This group had been chosen from the City of Supernaturals and would regain their freedom after three months.

Apparently, riots had almost broken out in the city over these spots. Everyone wanted to go to work immediately! It was just three months—more were concerned that they'd die of anxiety if they were shut in the city for another three months.

"The commander... is wise!" The director general bowed to Li Hao's wisdom.

It was the dead of winter and one thousand supernaturals were about to arrive in his province. Although that wasn't many, they might be more effective than tens of thousands or even one hundred thousand mundanes. But if one hundred thousand mundanes served in this weather, at least thirty percent of them would die!

When the labor force was supernatural... he could use them at peak capacity and not have to worry about anyone dying. These one thousand supernaturals were the equivalent of one hundred thousand civilians.

"Don't forget, the local army needs to participate in the labor efforts," He Yong emphasized. "They need to take action to the best of their abilities and not sit idle. Trouble results when one sits around with too much energy on their hands! The commander is not ready to take large-scale action at present, but if unease filters through the military, the director general should know what the consequences will be!"

The South Peak director general nodded emphatically. “This subordinate understands!”

“Very good,” He Yong grinned. “South Peak is the threshold to the capital city. I’ve said all that needs to be said! It’s up to you guys whether you can accomplish it or not. Get your reports in as soon as possible if you lack personnel after killing a group of people. We’ll find a way to get more to you!”

“Understood!”

He Yong walked off. Seeing that he was leaving, the South Peak Night Watcher director couldn’t help but say, “Are you leaving already, sir? Why don’t you stay a while longer so this subordinate can be a proper host...”

He Yong looked back and leered at the man. “You don’t seem like a Night Watcher at all. Someone said last time that you started fawning over the commander as soon as he left. Apparently you used someone’s family to threaten a high ranking South Peak official...”

“That’s a misunderstanding,” the branch director quickly explained himself. “I was just...”

“I didn’t say that you did anything wrong!” He Yong barked with laughter. “You’re small fry and aren’t qualified to be a branch director. But you look like you have some skill to your name. You will be in charge of supervision when the supernaturals arrive at South Peak.

“Commander Li is placing a lot of importance on this mission. You’ll be richly rewarded if you perform well, but might even lose your head if you don’t!”

The man’s eyes widened with alarm. Going from the director of a provincial Night Watcher branch to a head supervisor... was a massive demotion! Was this action purely from He Yong, or did Commander Li truly place great importance on what was about to come?

The provincial director had wanted to draw closer to the Skystar Commander Office. Even if his abilities weren't up to par, he didn't need to be publicly humiliated, did he?

"This is wonderful, thank you for the support!" The man was wreathed in smiles despite his thoughts.

"Very good, then work hard!" He Yong roared with laughter. "A lot of shameless people have gathered near the commander lately. He likes this type of person! You've got a good future ahead of you!"

He left, leaving behind a dumbfounded group. The commander... likes shameless people? Surely not. But... wasn't that the kind of person that He Yong was?