

Star Gate 961

Chapter 961: The Last Rainy Season (II)

Chen Zhongtian, the previous inspector general of the Inspectorate, was famed for his thick face and shamelessness. Could it be... that Commander Li really did like this kind of person?

The South Peak director general cursed to himself as his thoughts ran wildly. The tone is set at the top! When those above behave unworthily, so will those below do the same! That will spell doom for the nation sooner or later! What a pity that the Minister Zhao who trusted me is no longer of this world...

He sighed heavily. Power struggles of the upper echelon were harrowing and life-threatening. As a Skystar vassal, South Peak neither possessed the qualification nor the right to reign supreme. The director general was not of a mind to vie for authority.

Now that Zhao Huaimin was dead and had ensured the director general's survival with his last breath... the director general could not disappoint the minister's trust. Therefore... he would oversee South Peak well!

After He Yong left, the director general transmitted a few commands. A few startled yelps sounded from the group around him that'd just relaxed. A dozen people were taken into custody by their comrades!

The South Peak director general ignored their wails for mercy, feeling rather gratified that Li Hao saw clearly with his eyes. He'd wanted to eliminate these people a long time ago as they'd committed acts that were unfit to be mentioned. But the province's internal struggles had been too fierce before and each person had their backers. They couldn't be touched!

Today, Li Hao gave him a list of notorious evildoers. They were finally all removed in one fell swoop!

"Take them away and cripple them of their abilities. Escort them to Skystar City. Kill them if they try to escape!"

“Understood!” The soldiers of the director general office hastened to carry out their orders.

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On this day, this scene repeated itself in many parts of the central region.

Li Hao knew that with the three great organizations learning of the truth, the current situation of the world was fully exposed. Thus, he immediately mobilized the Silver Moon martial masters and advanced on all of the provinces. Apart from the South Shore province that the Prince of Southern Conciliation was stationed at, and the West River province that the Prince of Western Conciliation was present at, heavyweights showed up at all of the other provinces in the central region.

They took command of what provinces they could and swiftly killed the leaders of the ones they couldn't.

The central region was stable enough because Skystar City was situated in this region. It exerted enough authority over the four cardinal directions to ensure that the central region wasn't as disorderly as the four continents. Those had outright slipped out of the dynasty's control.

With two royal princes remaining at large and commanding armies of their own, Li Hao didn't dare make further moves.

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The second half of December.

The days were cold. It would be the year 1731 in a few more days. This new year, however, was a bit quiet and sparse within Skystar City. There were much fewer passersby on the streets.

The various projection screens in the city suddenly lit up one day and caught everyone's attention. No matter if they were busy about their day or walking on the streets, all lifted their heads to look at the sky canopies.

They were the product of Yuming—the boy with the intermixed mental strength. The sky canopy system was complete within the capital city, but the boy continued to urge Li Hao to access the Lu Zhen Research Center. There were many things inside that he needed.

Li Hao had been too busy to pay attention to his request, but had agreed to visit the ruins after he was done with the matters at hand. At present, his figure appeared on all of the screens. He could finally address the entire city without having to yell his head off.

A young man dressed in armor smiled faintly from the screen. "Allow me to introduce myself. I am Li Hao, commander of the Skystar Commander Office.

"This is a sky canopy. All matters will be announced through this in the future. The citizens of the city will receive firsthand knowledge of any public notices!

"Skystar City counts thirty million residents within its walls and is the most prosperous and populated city of the dynasty. Yet, such a royal city possesses very few people who can read. We have a census of the literacy rate in the dynasty—it is only 15%. This is the result of a concerted effort to raise it a few years ago. The rate is a bit higher in the capital at 20%."

This meant that only one in five could recognize characters.

Many on the streets listened intently to the young man. Rumors had started circulating a few days ago that the king was dead, the ministers of the nine ministries were dead, and that this one was responsible for it all. Li Hao had apparently conquered Skystar City.

No one knew if these rumors were false or not, but since he was openly making announcements today... Perhaps they were true?

“In order for the dynasty and the people to have a better future, being able to read and write is a must!” Li Hao continued. “From today forth, Skystar City will be establishing three thousand schools. Two thousand of them will be dedicated to raising the literacy rate. All those who are illiterate between six and forty years of age must attend school...”

Many cursed to themselves. Was he crazy? Did they not need to work or eat? Attending school was the work of scholars, it had nothing to do with them!

They’d thought that the commander was different from the rest, that he was a good man. Now... It seemed that he was a simpleton! What went on in the mind of a northern savage!

“You won’t be attending school for the entire day,” Li Hao explained at a measured pace. “You simply need to free up two hours of your evenings. All learning materials are free. Rewards will be in order once you complete this basic education and its examination!

“One person studying will lead to riches for the entire family! Those who pass the examination will be awarded one hundred pieces of sacred grain...”

He took out a sparkling grain of golden rice. “One grain of rice like this will keep one full for three days. It will fortify the body and strengthen you against all illnesses! One hundred grains will feed you for a year. You will not know sickness or cold in that year. This is a legendary treasure mentioned only in myths and nurtured by powerhouses! Those who learn fast might complete their examination in one year...”

Jaws dropped and sharp gasps abounded through the city. They swallowed hard as they looked at the golden rice. One grain was sufficient for three days of hunger and prevented one from falling ill?

Really??

All that was required was two hours a day? This... was just giving them money!

“The basic core curriculum will span elementary school, middle school, and university. Those who complete elementary school will be rewarded one thousand grains. Middle school will be rewarded with ten thousand grains. All tuition is free, materials are free, and room and board are free!

“In addition, we hereby recruit teachers from the entire population. Compensation will be rich and we are in dire need of knowledgeable talent...” Li Hao advertised from the screen.

In the slums, an elderly man selling old books abruptly lifted his head and looked at the screen, some light in his eyes.

Five years!

It'd been five years since the Skystar Academy closed its doors, a portion of teachers and students killed, and another portion exiled. Today, the newly come Li Hao wanted to spontaneously establish thousands of schools.

Tears streamed down the old man's face. Was a new era of civilization about to commence?

“In addition, all roads within the city are to be rebuilt starting from today. We are to enter a period of infrastructure development and supernaturals are to be involved. Those without current business at hand can sign up to build Skystar City together!

“Those with damaged houses can put in a request for repairs. There are enough supernaturals to attend to the task!

“All repairs will be made for free! Those who can put forth labor shall do so, those who can offer strategies can do so. We will develop Skystar City together and bring forth new prosperity! When the new year dawns, it will also herald a new age!

“The people of the world will be able to walk out of this world, even if they do not possess supernatural abilities. They will be able to explore the unknown and walk toward the future...” Li

Hao's speech rose with high emotion. "Additionally, the Skystar Martial Academy will open for classes on January 1. The first class of students will number ten thousand strong. We also welcome all learned applicants to enroll.

"Students will learn supernatural abilities, martial dao, trade and crafts, technology and civilization. It will not simply be a school for martial dao. Martial dao is not omnipotent and neither is the supernatural domain. We will tailor teaching for the occasion and make the best use of everything!"

Cheers erupted from the city at his last words, not just because the academy was about to open for business, but because there was hope in Li Hao's words. The young man hadn't said that much, but he spoke of education, food, income... A grain of rice would feed someone for three days!

There would be repairs to homes and roads. Their lives would be so much better!

None of it meant much to the rich, but it would make life so much better to those who were badly off! They stood a chance of surviving the winter!

They would not starve to death so long as they signed up and were willing to learn. Rewards were in store if they completed their schooling and there would be food to eat if they just took part...

These were lifesaving measures to many! It even demonstrated numerous different opportunities to the rich. Many, many opportunities!

Many of the rich were literate and Li Hao was in urgent need of talent. He proposed a high compensation and all sorts of benefits, as well as vast sums of cultivation resources. This was a chance to soar to the heavens with one step for them!

As the announcements were posted, some titled nobility and apprehensive officials lit up at what they read. There were quite a few empty posts in the central region. Those who were so inclined could sign up. Once they passed the examination, whether they were nobility or of the nine ministries, they could report to work so long as they did not have any crimes in their background. They could begin immediately!

What did Skystar City have in spades?

Officials!

This was a place that everyone tried to jockey for a spot in. Any position would do, even a watchman at the door for nobility.

There were many officials in the capital city—those learned, cultured, or trained to be sold to the royal family. With the dismantling of the nine ministries and royal family, Li Hao was the future king. The people simply wanted full bellies and warm clothes; serving as an official was too far away for them. But once they succeeded and bore merits and accomplishments to their name, they would serve under a dragon!

Those with sufficient foresight could tell that Li Hao wanted to gradually replace the old guard and train his own people to take their place. This was their chance! As of current, the northern lacked sufficient foundations and was in dire need of talent.

Chapter 962: The Last Rainy Season (III)

All of Skystar City was in an uproar on this day. Large numbers of citizens first signed up for school, then put their names down to repair houses. Various refugee centers opened throughout the city to provide food for those who did not have enough to eat.

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The Skystar Commander Office.

Hou Xiaochen was a bit jealous. Indeed, jealous!

“The situation in the north is much worse than here. Skystar City is a prosperous locale to begin with and not that many die of starvation within its boundaries. And yet, starvation is a common

plight in the north. You give a vast quantity of grain, benefits, and preferential treatment to the capital. All of this withheld from Silver Moon..." He wanted to ask if the little bastard still viewed himself as a Silver Moon citizen!

"We have to proceed one step at a time," Li Hao laughed. "Skystar City is more at peace compared to other locations, so we can experiment here first. We can consult the ancient records if we accidentally make a mistake. Otherwise, brashly rolling out policy across the land can be very troublesome!"

"We should fortify the dynasty capital, train a batch of people, then send them to other places. This isn't something that can be accomplished overnight. The sky canopy system isn't complete yet and neither is the road system finished. Our infrastructure is still under construction, so let's just take it one step at a time!"

Quite a few heads nodded in agreement in the great hall. The young man made sense, even though they all felt that Silver Moon needed all of these reforms as well.

"We have a lot to do." Li Hao rubbed his temples. "We need to ensure greater peace through the central region—that's one of the easier tasks at hand. The north... might have to be low on the priority list."

Frowns crossed faces.

"There's too many old fossils in the ruins," Li Hao explained. "It's not a good time to clash against them! We should consolidate the other three continents first to ensure that we have sufficient vigor to handle the north!"

"Additionally, our army is looking a bit too sparse—I mean of soldiers loyal to us. Everyone should have discovered by now that no matter how strong one person is, that singular person cannot suppress a province by themselves. We require supplemental coordination from the military!"

"We don't have that many powerhouses either. It's very dangerous when we're scattered, but we can't get anything done when we're gathered together..." the young man sighed. It wasn't until now

that he understood how inconvenient it was to administer a dynasty—no, just a central region. No, just Skystar City!

If it wasn't for the fact that the nine ministries had completed a peaceful transition of power and that order had not fully collapsed, Li Hao felt that he might want to run away. Was it not nice being a traveling hero who dispensed justice? He was completely trapped here!

The young man couldn't understand why anyone would want to be emperor.

"I'll be able to make my time available for other matters only after Lin Hongyu arrives in a few days." Li Hao looked at the group. "Everyone must commit to memory that strength is still most important at present! You will rotate in shifts starting the first of the new year and enter the ruins to cultivate with me. We will restrain ourselves as much as possible in our spars..."

Heads nodded. Li Hao took out an item that looked like a ruler. Yao Si's eyes widened at it and he glanced sharply at the young man.

"Is that... Heavens Dictate?" Yao Si frowned. Dao Sword and the others disappeared after following Li Hao to the City of Supernaturals. Where had they gone? What was Heavens Dictate doing in the young man's hand?

Had Li Hao killed Dao Sword?

"Yes, this is Heavens Dictate," Li Hao smiled. "The infamous treasure of the central region! I've studied it and asked around—this was an origin weapon used to judge geniuses during New Martial. Only premier martial universities possessed one.

"I want to use it in the central region to recruit new troops. I'd like to disband the old armies and kill whoever needs to be killed, exile whoever deserves it, and settle down the rest. There are millions of soldiers in the dynasty, but less than one tenth of them can actually serve!

“We can defeat strong opponents on our own, but large-scale war against those such as the four surrounding nations will require armies. The advantage of this treasure is that it can determine everyone’s constitution, whether you are suited to be a supernatural or a martial master...

“We will see twice the results with half the effort if we use this! The dynasty is overflowing with people at present and geniuses are hidden within the population, awaiting discovery. If we can quickly build an army of deep potential and train them well, they’ll swiftly become an elite troop!”

The group nodded. New recruits shaped up after a few months of training. In times of war, if recruits could be accurately identified for their proper path of cultivation, the time required before they could be sent to the battlefield would be further shortened with targeted training.

“In addition, I wish for the new army to be literate. I will also educate them when it comes to certain concepts of the world. I hope they become soldiers of the new era and not resemble the wily old foxes currently in service!

“Why do I wish to disband our current armies? It is precisely because they lack honor, responsibility, and an ability to determine right from wrong. Keeping these people around will only destroy military discipline.

“Of course, we’re not disbanding all of them on the spot. The sudden removal of millions of soldiers will affect the world. We can slowly undertake this conversion. No matter how readily the various armies take orders, they are to engage in basic infrastructure maintenance for now. They will repair roads, build bridges, and construct new cities. Whatever it is they do, they will not sit idle!”

The group was starting to look at the young man with curiosity. Li Hao was saying a lot today. How did he suddenly understand so much?

Some things were difficult to comprehend without personally experiencing it for themselves.

Li Hao smiled at their quizzical looks. “You don’t need to look at me, I learned a lot of this from other people. I’ve gathered new knowledge from the puppets at Evenround Martial and Director General Wang. There’s still much about New Martial that’s worthy of reference!

“We don’t need to copy them entirely, but their advanced theories and technologies are worth learning. There’s not much we can be proud of compared to New Martial, but we do have our advantages.”

“What are they?” asked the straightforward Sky Sword. What... advantages did they have? He really couldn’t put his finger on anything.

“Our advantage is that... we’re young! That’s enough!” Li Hao laughed. “In our young era and at our young age, the oldest of us is at most one hundred years old. And yet, we’ve encountered New Martial powerhouses with sophisticated technology. We just need to empty out their knowledge banks to save ourselves at least one hundred years of hard work!

“Therefore, be polite toward these seniors. They know a lot and are esteemed elders for us to learn from so long as they don’t interfere with our lives!

“Director General Wang and the others cannot easily walk around in the world yet. However, the students of Evenround Martial have seen and know a lot. Not only does their knowledge of martial dao run deep, but even more crucial is that some of them are descendants of key personnel at various New Martial institutions. They’re familiar with that advanced management system, so I need to help as many of them emerge from the ruins as possible. They’ve been influenced by a lifetime of knowledge and experience—we can develop Silver Moon Territory together!”

The group nodded again, but Hong Yitang furrowed his brows. “Have they agreed to do that? And... has that one agreed?”

“Why would they not?” Li Hao grinned. “I can give them energy and resources. While I may not be able to revive them, I can help them regain freedom of movement. Is that not enough?”

“But they’re very strong, if a lot of them appear at the same time..”

“I know, but our strength will have improved after the new year and the gap between us and them will be smaller,” Li Hao countered. “Since we’ve taken the mine, we should utilize it well. There are a lot of places that require energy! However, we don’t need to miserly hoard our gains. Not using our resources will only serve to benefit the enemy.

“Our first priority is to finish conquering the central region. Once winter has passed, we’ll take down the Prince of Southern Conciliation and Prince of Western Conciliation. Everything can wait until after we forge the central region into one whole and settle the internal issues here.

“There’s no rush, we will proceed methodically and aim to complete the unification of the central region in three months!

“We can then consider attacking the four continents in the middle of next year and finish the unification of Skystar Dynasty in one year.”

“I’m afraid we won’t have enough time to do so!” Hou Xiaochen remarked. “Although the second awakening seems to have been stopped because we’ve seized the mine, based on what I know, energy is starting to percolate through Silver Moon province. Reviving more powerhouses might automatically set the second awakening in motion!”

“It’s fine.” Li Hao knew about this as well. “We can drag it out a bit longer because there are too many ancients in Silver Moon. There might be an abundance of energy, but they’ll absorb it very quickly as well. All I can say is that there will be more powerhouses awakening in the near future. No matter how much energy bubbles up in Silver Moon, the newcomers will take it all!

“There’s also starving plant spirits in the central region. These plant and beast spirits are helping to delay the awakening as well. A strong enemy has taken two-thirds of the mine, but they need to revitalize as well and maintain their battle strength.

“Apart from this, the enemy will also need endless energy to start the second awakening ahead of time. Not only will it deplete countless resources, but it might interfere with their own timeline.”

The young man made a great deal of sense. Leaving one-third of the mine behind was already a significant concession to the enemy. Although they left with two-thirds, they’d likely consumed a lot of it. If their reserves were invested into the second awakening... they would need to consider if this was a wise course of action.

Of course, there was nothing anyone could do if they decided it was fine.

“I’ve said and done everything I should,” Li Hao said. “I will have to lean on everyone for a bit as I am going to enter closed door cultivation. Teacher, Sky Sword, Tyrant Blade, Northern Fist, and a few other seniors will come with me!”

“Now is when we need people out in the field...” Sky Sword raised, echoing the surprise of those whose names were called.

“It’s fine, the seniors can focus on martial dao. Being one person less will not affect everyone’s respective assignments,” Li Hao smiled. He was essentially saying that they weren’t useful even if they stayed, they weren’t assigned to anything critical!

Since they were all martial fanatics, they should follow him into seclusion and study the martial dao system. He had immediate, other use for Hou Xiaochen, Yao Si, Deputy Zhou and the like. Even Hong Yitang needed to stay in the outside world to execute his education policies. Otherwise, it would be nice to have everyone join the young man in seclusion.

Yuan Shuo didn’t know if Sky Sword had understood, but he did. The old man looked at his disciple and wanted to poke the lad. I am your teacher, I can do everything and anything! I can run a country perfectly well if you place it in my hands! But you think we’re useless, eh?

Granted, it was nice to just go off and study martial dao.

Chapter 963: The Last Rainy Season (IV)

“The three great organizations might have business to take care of lately, so have Director General Zhao keep a sharp eye out,” Li Hao continued issuing orders. “They want to kill some heavyweights, but I don’t know who. It’s probably not me. I’m not sure if it’s the director general—it might not be. It could be the other person. It’s just as well that the three great organizations are up to no good. That’s better than them not doing anything!

“Additionally, send some people to the three other continents, Deputy Zhou. They have their own factions or local armies and chafe at the dukes’ rule. Give them something to do so it eases up the pressure on us.

“The eastern continent, in particular, is a good candidate for this. The Xu family has declined, so the guys who used my name before can continue dogging their footsteps...”

Having voiced all of his instructions, the young man rose to his feet. “Let’s go cultivate in the ruins, teacher.”

A merry Yuan Shuo glanced at Hong Yitang and the others when he stood. You see that? We’re the real master and disciple!

The subjects of his scrutiny ignored him. Li Hao’s words had been very clear—you martial blockheads are too useless for anything but studying martial dao. Go on, then!

Yuan Shuo didn’t mind at first and chuckled merrily until he saw a dog follow them. “Li Hao, is this... dog coming too?” he asked morosely.

Panther looked innocently at him. What? I have the same things to do as you—eat and sleep, sleep and eat. I don’t know how to do anything but fight, so if you guys are going off to train, so am I!

“Mmhhh, Panth will be cultivating with us...” Li Hao coughed gently.

Sky Sword looked around the surroundings after the response; no one knew what he was looking at. Northern Fist and Tyrant Blade looked at each other, feeling like they'd been discriminated against.

Their martial potential was high, if one put it nicely. Or, they had nothing to do, if put bluntly. Training with the young man was a good endeavor, but why did they feel so bad about it?

"Is Southern Fist... not going?" Sky Sword asked in a low voice. Are we not stronger than Southern Fist? That guy's really trash!

"Southern Fist is the southern commander, Light Sword is the eastern commander, Hou Xiaochen is the northern commander, and Yang Shan is the western commander," Hong Yitang said quietly. "They all have important affairs to attend to.

"Southern Fist is suppressing the unrest in the south. He's been part of the royal family for decades and highly skilled at all manner of deceit. He says whatever he needs to say to get the job done.

"The Prince of Southern Conciliation is in the south—he'll be able to gain an audience with the prince. Not to mention, Southern Fist saved the ninth prince. He might be able to convince the Prince of Southern Conciliation to sail across the South Sea and head to the southern continent. This is a very important matter that will keep Southern Fist very busy!

"When it comes to Light Sword, she will perform a similar function since she served the Xu family for twenty years. The same goes for Yang Shan and his former masters..." Hong Yitang concluded with a look at the cultivation squad. "Therefore... it's really only you guys who have more time on your hands!"

Stop thinking of getting Southern Fist to go along with you! He's a busy man now, having to keep the south in check and corral Night Watchers of various areas. He also needs to negotiate with the Prince of Southern Conciliation. The guy's much busier than before and his status has risen dramatically.

Do you guys think everything is still as in the past? He's been very diligent ever since Li Hao agreed to spare the ninth prince. He's busy from morning to night now and constantly traveling. Do you guys think everyone is as carefree as you guys? You don't even know what he's gone off to do!

Sky Sword blinked and Northern Fist was even more astonished.

“He’s... gone to suppress the south?” Is he capable of doing that? That ornery little brother of mine can do something other than swagger around fearlessly?

“He should be able to,” Li Hao coughed with a smile. “Senior Southern Fist is exceedingly shrewd and has a wide-ranging network. Other than not paying for his meals a couple decades ago... he’s alright. Maybe we can stop targeting him like this...”

The group was quite resigned. Who’s targeting him? They were just surprised that he was standing up for something now!

Sorrow crept in moments later—so they were even less than He Yong in the end! Their lives... were a waste!

Li Hao snickered to himself. This shock is to keep you guys on your toes. Time to work hard now! All you guys know how to do is fight, nothing else! Why else would I have so many things to worry about?

How nice would it be if everyone was like Deputy Zhou and Lin Hongyu? They can fight, kill, and run a government. Would I need to be concerned about so many things if everything was handled for me?

I’d be able to toss a province to anyone with peace of mind. Only ninety-nine people would be required to run the entire dynasty. How easy would life be then!

Li Hao walked off with a tragic group of seniors. Energy was densest in the ruins and any disturbance kept strictly inside. It was a good place for closed door cultivation.

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As Li Hao entered seclusion, great change took place through Skystar City and the entire central region. Thousands of supernaturals went to work, repairing roads and setting up sky canopies.

Countless civilians saw their actions; news flowed through the dynasty. The northern savage had conquered Skystar City, City of Supernaturals, suppressed the supernaturals of the world, and put them to work after enslaving them!

The central region belonged to Li Hao and the transition of power was completed so quietly!

Although some disturbance stirred in the central region, no one dared to stick their necks out in the absence of leaders. Some waited for the three great organizations to kick up a fuss, but nothing was forthcoming.

There was no word from the supernatural organizations. It was like they'd completely disappeared!

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A flying ship passed through the clouds, carrying tens of thousands of supernaturals. There were Red Moon members with masks on their faces, Celestial members in cloaks, and heavily tattooed Yama members. They were crowded together on the massive ship and flew quietly through the darkness toward the north.

There were more ships behind it, as well as a floating mountain traveling with them. They forded the North Sea to enter the northern territory.

As for the central region, whoever wanted to lay their life on the line against Li Hao could do so!

A small ship led the pack; multiple powerhouses were gathered on it. Ying Hongyue looked into the distance from the deck.

“It’s been decades since we left... Everyone, do you miss home?”

No one responded. Silver Moon province lay in that direction!

The ethereal Celestial Sword Immortal watched quietly, her long skirt billowing in the end. “Ying Hongyue, this world belongs to Silver Moon in the end! However, it’s difficult to say who is the master at the helm. Is his surname Li? I’m also curious... What is your surname?”

“What do you mean?” Ying Hongyue smiled.

“Is your surname Li?” chuckled the Celestial Sword Immortal. “There are too many Lis to be counted in this world, but there might only be one Li family in Silver Moon. It would be so fun if this turned out to be a family spat in the end.”

“How did you even think of this?” Ying Hongyue burst out laughing. “Why would my surname be Li?”

“That’s hard to say,” grumped the sullen Yama. “Outsiders know you have combined seven bloodlines. But what if it’s eight? That would be very interesting.”

“Stop joking.” Ying Hongyue was eerily handsome in the light and smiled radiantly. “Would there be a place for Li Hao if my surname was Li?”

The others sneered and didn’t respond. Who knows? They were wondering about this because Ying Hongyue didn’t seem to care that much about the Li family bloodline. At the very least, he hadn’t seemed urgent to obtain it.

So... maybe he had it himself!

Ying... Ying Hongyue. Ying was a homophone for the 'silver' character, and 'hongyue' meant red moon. Silver Red Moon... Silver Moon...

Wild speculation ran rampant through their minds. Was this return to the north a good or bad thing? After so many years, they still could not read Ying Hongyue.

The nine ministries and royal family were supposed to be the bulwarks of the central region, but they fell in the blink of an eye. The three great organizations were equally despondent at that. They only hoped that they could rise again after their return to the north and fend off Li Hao.

Massive flying ships crossed the North Sea. They were in northern territory again. The three great organizations that had risen from the north had returned home.

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At the same time, in a residence in the depths of the North Sea.

A massive golden cow opened its eyes and murmured, "The Forbidden Sea has started to froth. The kid didn't say that the Forbidden Sea runs through Silver Moon! It's been so many days without a single word. That bastard!"

It fully opened its eyes and looked at a hidden current, following it into a farther locale. "The Forbidden Sea boils, the main cities emerge, this world is changing! Enormous trouble will develop without the eight main cities keeping it in check!"

The formation assembled by the eight main cities had been broken; the minor world reflected the major world. They'd spent countless years to fully seal away the Forbidden Sea of the main world. Corpses of countless powerhouses rested on its seabed. And yet, why had the Forbidden Sea of the minor world started to churn as well?

The golden cow didn't understand. It was just a reflection of the main world, so this shouldn't be happening.

Unless...

It didn't dare think too deeply. The situation was becoming more complicated. It could sense that the outside world was stabilizing more with each passing day. Perhaps they wouldn't even need the Skystar mine to explode before the world awakened.

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A faint drizzle came down over Silver City on the last couple days of the year 1730 in the Star Era calendar. It'd been five months since the last time Li Hao endured such rainwater, and a year and a half before that. The misty rains of Silver City were coming with increasing frequency.

Silver City denizens were used to the weather, but somehow found the tang of blood in the air for this year's final rainfall.

Chapter 964: A New Era, A New World (I)

The ruins of Skystar Town.

There was ample energy here. A dozen plant spirits sat in residence, as well as Director General Wang, the Black Armor, and a few other powerhouses. Li Hao had not returned to Battle Heaven to revive anyone else. He was very busy these days and did not have time to visit.

There were still thousands of soldiers and five Silver Armors in Skystar Town at present. They spent their days repairing the town and activating it.

There was also a small crowd cultivating here. Liu Long and the rest of the first batch of Demon Hunters were in residence. The dense energy concentration in the environment was suitable for their

training. Li Hao had always been biased towards his own and could not conduct himself with full impartiality.

However, no one mounted an objection as they were used to his style.

In the ruins.

The imperial guard swayed in the air. It was much stronger than before, but hadn't set foot into the Immortal cultivation level. It was right on the precipice. Li Hao had some trunks of Immortal plant spirits that he was planning on giving to the imperial guard to facilitate a breakthrough.

When the group entered the ruins, they sped directly for the mine. Along the way, they glimpsed the vanished supernaturals such as Dao Sword and the others.

The latter was also training here. Pure supernaturals needed a vast sum of energy for cultivation. This was a sacred land for supernaturals.

Sky Sword scanned the premises—there were a lot of people that he could see. There even seemed to be some prisoners; he knew that these people had been hauled back from the City of Supernaturals.

The new arrivals watched silently. They might've been unsatisfied if they'd been sticklers for custom or old stick-in-the-muds, but Silver Moon martial masters were regular people. In their eyes, enemies should be killed. Taking them prisoner was just as well, it didn't matter.

Sometimes, these martial masters were even more merciless than Li Hao.

.....

The entrance to the mine.

Director General Wang was cultivating here. He nodded when he saw the young man approach and left, seeming to not want to have too much to do with them.

Yuan Shuo didn't mind, but Northern Fist grumbled, "Rude."

"....." Li Hao looked at him. This old man was a fake proponent of manners. If something was useful to him, it was proper manners. If not, then it was nothing. He just couldn't stand the sight of the director general, could he?

"He didn't even greet us. You brought him here from Silver Moon, after all..."

"We just have our own needs for each other," Li Hao laughed. "He is an illustrious senior. Senior Northern Fist, we should be more polite."

Northern Fist turned over his words before understanding. Li Hao didn't say too much—Ole Wang was in a poor mood lately, so not saying much was to be expected. He'd been very depressed ever since he learned of a few secrets. The young man understood.

The Black Armor was acclimating to his new body, so Li Hao didn't disturb him. The young man himself was yet to redraw his supernatural characters. It'd been quite the regret to be unable to do anything when Ying Hongyue escaped from their last encounter. That guy might not have been able to do so if he was at peak strength.

"I've summoned the seniors to cultivate with me because I'd like to reorganize the martial dao system..." Li Hao waved everyone to a seat. Their session began in earnest. "Martial dao starts from Slayer of Tens before moving onto Sunderer of Hundreds and Dominator of Thousands. Dominators form the aura and officially possess enormous killing potential.

"This is the level in which hot weapons begin losing effectiveness. Dominators were hailed as walking gods before the supernatural domain awoke. The appearance of the aura upended the cultivation system before it—it is the greatest difference between us and the ancient civilization.

“Slayer of Tens is simply an eruption of internal force. The presence of internal force makes one a Slayer. Sunderer is when we are able to outwardly project internal force. This is just a basic process of nurturing internal force and strengthening the body...”

The heavyweights nodded in agreement. This was general knowledge that Li Hao repeated.

“When we step beyond Dominator, we enter what my teacher has deemed Summoner of Spirit. The aura is summoned into the five organs. However, teacher’s Summoner level is too limited in scope...”

Yuan Shuo raised a brow and didn’t say a word. He looked at his student, wanting to hear what great opinions the young man held.

“There are a myriad of permutations when it comes to the aura. In reality, supernaturals are martial masters and martial masters are also supernaturals...”

Yuan Shuo wouldn’t stand for this. “Are you equating supernaturals and martial masters?” He fronted.

“Supernaturals are blessed by the heavens and born with aura!” Li Hao nodded. “I once said that there are many types of aura. Comprehending the aura through cultivation is the self aura! Comprehending it through heaven and earth is a heaven aura. But when the heavens themselves bestow a natural aura upon us, that is a heaven aura as well!

“Earth bending, wind bending, flying, seeing through falsehood, teleportation, spontaneous eruption of energy, and massive strength... Are these not a kind of aura?”

The group exchanged looks with each other and was silent before Tyrant Blade spoke up sternly, “I think so, it’s just that the supernaturals don’t know how to utilize them properly. They know the hows, but not the whys. And yet, this is indeed a type of aura!

“When it comes to the aura, that is simply the ability to manipulate part of the world. These people can become part of the world and all living things. That makes it an innate aura that they are born with!”

Everyone turned over his words.

“Therefore, supernaturals and martial masters are the same,” Li Hao continued the line of thought. “Their only difference is that supernaturals do not understand much about the aura. They have a connate aura that they do not know how to use.

“Modern humans are equipped with supernatural locks. These locks already seal away auras of their own—auras that we are all born with.”

Yuan Shuo and the rest listened to him, not interrupting.

“Therefore, these two paths are ultimately interlinked,” Li Hao concluded. “They are related to each other, it’s just that their starting points are different. After martial masters exceed Dominator, they become Summoners. The supernatural equivalent is Solar. There aren’t many commonalities between Solars and Summoners, but if we further extend this to Refiners and Novas...”

“There aren’t many commonalities between these two either.” Yuan Shuo raised an eyebrow.

“No!” Li Hao refuted. “There’s a lot in common between them! Novas have shattered the supernatural locks of the limbs, whereas Refiners are saturating their locks of the limbs. It looks to be diametrically opposite, but both actions fully develop and utilize the supernatural locks of the limbs!

“The two paths are starting to come together at this stage. If we take another step forward, martial masters focus on the locks of the five organs and can unseal themselves. The supernaturals have also started developing their organs at this stage.”

The group continued to listen intently.

“Therefore, I have a thought. What if we stimulated the supernatural’s understanding of their natural aura. Would that make them a pure martial master? Of course, martial masters train the heart, so supernaturals may not be martial masters simply because they grasp the aura. But that’s not important. Today, we discuss accessing power and its usage...”

“Tell us straight,” Yuan Shuo frowned. “What kind of outcome and discussion do you want from us?”

“The outcome I’m looking for is that the two paths are the same, that this is still an excavation of supernatural locks at the end of the day. By the way, who says the term should be supernatural locks? In my view, they should be called dao meridians!”

Dao meridians?

Eyebrows raised in the group.

“Indeed, dao meridians! The powerhouses of New Martial find us modern humans to be very weak. But actually, they’re wrong. We are the favored children of the world! I suspect that has something to do with the origins of this world and how it’s developed its own consciousness. Strictly speaking, we might be the first humans born of this world. Everyone is a natural dao entity!”

The others couldn’t believe what they were hearing. Modern humans were incredibly weak. The difference between their bodies and that of New Martial humans was... stark. But Li Hao said that the humans of this age were more favored than humans of any other age!

“That’s how I would look at it,” Li Hao continued. “We can more accurately compare ourselves to the Initial Martial age before New Martial. Everyone possesses the great dao and stands a chance of taking one step further!”

“The birth of the world placed dao meridians inside all of our bodies, locking our potential within. The heavens have bestowed upon us a different kind of capital and deep foundations...”

“Dao meridians...” murmured Yuan Shuo. “Everyone has these dao meridians and you mean that they contain aura and energy. These are the fundamentals of martial dao...”

Li Hao nodded.

“Therefore, the martial dao of this age should be called initial martial dao. If it wasn’t for the time period before New Martial already being called Initial Martial, then that’s probably what we should call ourselves!” the young man chuckled. “New Martial denotes the period of time long after Initial Martial was established. It wasn’t founded by the first batch of humans with dao meridians, but the accumulated foundations of later generations.

“New Martial was grand and marvelous. In my eyes, Initial Martial should have been equipped with greater advantages.”

The group at hand listened quietly, as did others further away. Director General Wang listened in on the conversation, as did Zhang An even further away.

Dao meridians, Initial Martial. The newly born world and the human race growing with it. The world had its own consciousness now, so it bequeathed the human of this age with greater advantages. The weaknesses in the ancients’ eyes was their greatest innate strength to Li Hao. Was this the case?

Even the plant spirits listened quietly. The young man’s voice drifted along the wind and landed in their ears. Even Panther opened its eyes and paused from devouring energy to take in Li Hao’s analysis.

The young man didn’t voice deeply profound words; he’d simply changed the name of the supernatural lock. And yet, that made it radically different!

.....

“Martial masters and supernaturals have different ways of utilizing dao meridians. Martial masters extract a tiny bit of energy from them to nurture and strengthen the meridians. Supernaturals use a more violent way to directly withdraw energy from the meridians. They do not nurture or rebuild the meridians.”

“Based on the cultivation method of the supernatural characters, they can eventually contain everything,” Sky Sword rumbled. “So what does that make them?”

“Supernatural characters... are a medium through which dao meridians can manifest in this world,” Li Hao smiled. “Dao meridians naturally exist, but cannot be seen. The aura is another manifestation of them. Martial masters leverage the aura and supernaturals employ them via special abilities. And now, we use supernatural characters. What is the advantage in that?”

Chapter 965: A New Era, A New World (II)

“The advantage of supernatural characters can be found in their tangible aspect,” Li Hao continued. “The aura cannot be seen and neither can supernatural abilities. They’re a subconscious kind of comprehension and utilization. Meanwhile, supernatural characters manifest the abstract!

“There’s an enormous advantage to this in that it’s difficult to bring about anything that exists only as theory. When there is a physical example, however, that makes even the simplest of imitation possible. It means that we’ll be able to directly utilize dao meridians in martial dao!”

Yuan Shuo nodded. Li Hao had grouped auras, supernatural characters, and supernatural abilities as the same kind of existence. Dao meridians encompassed all of them.

Li Hao suddenly laughed; all of the fire energy within his body abruptly disappeared amid the crowd’s disbelieving eyes.

“You can probe me with your aura, everyone. You don’t need to rely on your eyes!”

Auras shimmered over people's bodies as everyone closed their eyes. A stunning scene developed in front of them. They could see that Li Hao's heart beat fiercely. Each beat compressed all of the fire energy within his body until finally, a ferocious tiger melded into the energy.

A chain appeared over the organ.

The broken supernatural lock had been reformed, but then vanished in the heart. It traveled through the void to arrive at the Hao Cosmos.

"Did all of you see that?"

"A supernatural has become a martial master!" gasped Yuan Shuo.

"Correct," Li Hao nodded. "This is why some of the previous supernaturals could convert back to being martial masters. Since the two paths are interlinked, of course cultivators can transform between the two."

"No no no, this is not how one can switch between the two," frowned Yuan Shuo. "How do you do it so easily?"

"The Hao Cosmos!" Li Hao smiled. "In my eyes, the Hao Cosmos is a relative universe and the ultimate resting place of every supernatural lock. It is the universe of dao. Supernatural locks and auras can freely make their way there. Energy is also easily converted there. It is the intersection of auras and supernatural locks.

"That is because both of them are dao!"

Tyrant Blade blinked dazedly. He seemed to think through something—the universe of dao, aura, and supernaturals...

A surge of mysterious power shimmered over him—it appeared to be mental strength that quickly turned into an aura. The surge of strength constantly transformed between the aura and mysterious power without becoming a supernatural character.

After a while, a character appeared in his hand—a blade! Both mysterious power and aura were gone at this stage.

“Therefore, I want to take myself back to my initial state as an ordinary person!” Li Hao concluded. The rest of the group, stunned as his previously broken supernatural looks returned, whole and complete. They melded into the five organs and four limbs, then vanished without a trace.

Li Hao’s presence abruptly disappeared; he seemed to be a mundane. Even the ancient powerhouses observing from the shadows were astonished. The young man really could fully conceal his powers! Or should it be said that he was truly a mundane in this moment?

Yuan Shuo watched silently and said after a long while, “What other benefits are there to returning to your original state, other than fully concealing yourself?”

“A humongous one!” smiled Li Hao. “Teacher, I can cultivate all over again!”

Yuan Shuo frowned. Was there a point to that?

“Teacher, I’ll run through a demonstration for you guys. Watch this!” The young man rose to his feet and started jumping up and down like a monkey. He absorbed ambient energy in the surroundings and nourished his body until rays of internal force rippled from his being and also fortified his body. He quickly became a Slayer of Tens since he was producing internal force.

Yuan Shuo still couldn’t identify what was different about this process. It was then that a supernatural lock manifested in Li Hao’s heart and abruptly broke apart. A supernatural character formed and a ferocious tiger gradually gathered together.

The old man frowned, a reaction echoed by others. No one understood. What did this mean?

Li Hao suddenly wished he could dig his heart out for everyone to look at. They were just focused on the aura!

“Everyone, don’t look at the aura, but at the changes in my heart!” he said with resignation. “I shattered a supernatural lock when I became a Slayer. Have you not discovered that the lock I broke was transformed into a supernatural character, which then melded all of the energy into my heart? My heart has been strengthened!”

The group blinked, then changed the direction of their focus. Indeed, Li Hao’s heart was beating very quickly. It was absorbing both of the energy within the lock and internal force.

“Internal force... supernaturals...” Yuan Shuo muttered after observing for a while. “Do you mean that if we are mundanes, we should cultivate martial dao first to strengthen our internal force so that it manifests our supernatural locks. When we shatter them, we can train as both a martial master and a supernatural at the same time, using the supernatural characters as our foundation. So... we can strengthen our organs and bodies when we’re still so fragile?”

“Correct, it’s this cross-training that I’m getting at!” Li Hao nodded. “Internal force can fortify the body. I’ve discovered that internal force isn’t just naturally produced in the human body, but also contains energy of the secondary universe. We can use internal force to break the supernatural locks when they appear.

“In the past, the resulting release of mysterious power would devour internal force. But if we use supernatural characters to envelop the mysterious power and slowly release it bit by bit, we’ll avoid that consequence! Both types of strength can coexist at the same time! Breaking the supernatural lock opens the secondary dimension, which means internal force can absorb more energy to strengthen our bodies!”

“It’s a brand new way of cultivation!” Yuan Shuo murmured. “Cultivating mysterious power and internal force at the same time... but that will result in a new problem of a more difficult cultivation process.”

“No!” Li Hao shook his head. “On the contrary, it will be easier so long as the cultivator learns how to trace supernatural characters! The two forces complement each other. That makes cultivation easier overall. The aura will be naturally grasped in hand, which means everyone will know the aura!”

“Even if one doesn’t know how to use it, they’ll be able to possess it through comprehending the supernatural characters. The aura is too abstract, as are supernatural abilities. Everything can be replaced by the supernatural characters!”

“Then all we need to do is to know two methods. The first is that of producing internal force and the second is the one of tracing supernatural characters. Knowing these two will allow humans to perfectly develop themselves!”

For cultivators, learning two secret arts wasn’t too much.

“Does this mean to say that from now on, we can simply utilize the number of supernatural characters to determine a martial master’s strength?” Yuan Shuo rumbled. “Or perhaps the strength of all cultivators? Is this a path that leads directly to the most high?”

“The number of characters is one point!” explained Li Hao. “There’s also quality to consider!”

“Quality?” Everyone looked at Li Hao; none of them perceived a difference in the quality of their supernatural characters.

“The quality of supernatural characters has to do with the locks!” explained the young man. “Locks of varying degrees of strength will result in different supernatural characters. We didn’t sense a difference before because we traced our characters only after saturating our locks. There naturally won’t be a large difference between the characters then.”

“I’ve discovered countless supernatural locks in the body,” Li Hao grinned. “From this, we can see that there are differences in the strength of supernatural locks!”

The group listened silently as Li Hao detailed his thoughts. His propositions were many, but they didn't form a complete system. Yuan Shuo and the others frequently interjected, raised questions, or supplemented the current concept being discussed.

"All in all," Li Hao ultimately concluded, "The difference of my system from the previous is that we can cultivate from both paths before the Arcanus level. Once we reach Arcanus, the two paths can be combined as one!"

"Martial masters will need to complete the supplemental portion of the aura, whereas supernaturals will need to internalize their strength!"

"This kind of organization is still too much of a hassle," Northern Fist said with a brewing headache. "Cultivating two paths at the same time is not a good idea for most people. Is there a simpler way? Whether it is martial masters or supernaturals, they'll all wish for a simpler and more foolproof way of cultivation."

Li Hao blinked. Upon further thought, the man made sense. The young man sank into prolonged deep thought.

Most people could neither see the supernatural locks nor detect them. However, they led to the secondary dimension. Each lock was a passageway and that could be faintly discerned. They could be detected when they absorbed energy. Therefore, it was doable when they were connected to the secondary dimension. The Five Styles Breathing Method!

Li Hao thought back to some of the experiments he'd conducted earlier. "I have a very direct way," he suddenly said. "The secondary universe can be found behind each supernatural lock and there is an endless amount of energy in the secondary universe. Every lock is a passageway that leads back to the human body. Once we utilize a secret method to extract energy, we can create a devouring force."

“If we view this passageway as part of the human body and call it an acupoint—a similar notion to the seven orifices of the face—then each point will correspond to a meridian. One point will hold one lock. Clearing an acupoint will result in a noticeable change in one’s strength!

“Whether it is internal force or blood qi, aura or supernatural characters... all can be found within the acupoints,” Li Hao took a deep breath. “There is a benefit in viewing things this way because we can section each supernatural lock into different portions. We can find ways to cut a supernatural lock into many different parts, such as drilling nine holes in one lock and extracting part of its energy at one time.

“That will prevent an internal detonation and make cultivation easier to attempt from the very beginning! Once all nine holes are cleared, that will be the equivalent of fully shattering one supernatural lock and releasing all of its energy...” The young man grew more excited the more he spoke. “Take the Five Styles, for example. It can excavate the locks of the five organs, but opening them at the same time will result in nothing but death.

“Opening just one lock is hard to bear, but if ten holes are drilled into one lock and one hole cleared at a time... The entire lock will be fully excavated after all ten holes are cleared. But the issue is that it’s difficult to section the lock at this period of time...”

“That’s easy enough,” Yuan Shuo suddenly said. “The supernatural characters don’t necessarily need to devour all of the locks in one go. Characters can be traced one stroke at a time, which means a supernatural lock can be cracked open through one stroke. That one stroke can be used to block the hole in the supernatural lock!”

Li Hao thought it over, nodded, and gave the idea a try instead of saying anything. He attempted cracking a supernatural lock open, then wrote down half of a character. The results demonstrated that this method was feasible!

Supernatural characters could indeed be used to plug the hole and release energy in a natural manner.

With that... Li Hao grew excited. This meant that cultivation could be partitioned out in segments!

Chapter 966: A New Era, A New World (III)

“Not all supernatural locks contain the aura,” Tyrant Blade suggested. “The locks of the four limbs, for example, are another type in my view. One type of lock is of pure strength, the other type contains aura and mysterious power.”

“Right,” Li Hao nodded. “But... there’s no need to differentiate between these two, right?”

“Wrong!” Tyrant Blade shook his head. “There’s a very high need! Although they will all be one in the end, they can be separated during this process as two different systems.

“Cultivating a supernatural lock that lacks an elemental attribute and aura is much easier. Those that do have the aura and elemental attribute are slightly harder! It’s best if you can organize all of the locks into these two different types...”

Li Hao’s head nearly exploded! He stared at Tyrant Blade and grimaced after a while, “Senior Tyrant Blade must be joking. How... how is that possible? There are so many supernatural locks, am I to organize them one by one?”

“You must!” Tyrant Blade responded sternly. “No mistakes are tolerated on the path of martial dao! Since you’ve proposed this new system, you must perfect it and locate all of the locks, no matter how strong they are. You then need to organize them, determining how many correspond to an elemental attribute and how many do not.

“There needs to be a map of where each supernatural lock is, how to clear it, and how to connect to the secondary dimension. All of this needs to be completed! Of course, we’ll help as well.”

Li Hao’s head pounded with a migraine. He’d just wanted to engage in a rough categorization and somewhat sketch out his ideas. Whatever was passable was fine. And yet, Tyrant Blade said that that was unacceptable!

“Li Hao, the cultivation process can result in a life lost at any time!” Yuan Shuo nodded as well. “Tyrant Blade’s words make sense, you need to break down this new system bit by bit. Otherwise,

whatever issues you do not resolve now may be impossible by others in the future. As the discoverer and pioneer, it will be difficult for others to proceed if you do not resolve most of the questions at hand.

“Unattributed energy strengthens the body and attributed energy fortifies our abilities. In this regard, we can more or less separate this as two different cultivation paths. Those with good potential and strong abilities can walk the path of energy dao, those that lack potential or aren’t too quick-witted can walk the path of body dao.

“When it comes to the aura and supernatural characters, there will be people who won’t understand the concepts no matter how clearly you explain them. Some brutes just like to smash their fists into things!

“What should they do if they don’t understand, no matter what you say to them?” Yuan Shuo smiled. “Then they can set aside supernatural characters and just focus on their body and acupoints. They can cultivate the supernatural locks that are easy to grasp!”

Li Hao continued to gulp for air. This was a massive undertaking! He’d thought a lot about the new system over the past couple of days, but hadn’t intended to organize it so thoroughly! These Silver Moon martial masters wanted nothing more than for him to identify all of the supernatural locks, pin down each lock’s location, then organize them one by one. Holy fuck, are they crazy??

Just as Li Hao hesitated, someone spoke up from the depths of the mine. “You can focus on materializing all of your own locks first. I’ll create the model for you!”

Zhang An stepped out of the mine. “I will create a model of the human body from the void and label all of the supernatural locks on it. Of course, a sample size of one person might lead to some deviations. The others will complete it with you to see if the locations are accurate.

“We can focus on locating all of the supernatural locks first!” The Black Armor was very proactive in this endeavor. “After we complete that task, we can organize them according to attribute. Certain rules are applicable when it comes to cultivation, it’s not a random hodgepodge of attempts!

“Perhaps there may be some unique characteristics that we can use to further determine if there are other deviations to be taken into account. No matter which dao we cultivate, all of our actions follow certain rules...”

“Why has the dean come out of the mine?” Li Hao was rather surprised.

“Because I find what you speak of rather interesting!” Zhang An replied calmly. “Exploring a new dao is something that everyone wishes to do. It was my grandfather’s favorite pastime... and yours isn’t that complicated! The Exalted Blood Emperor’s past self—the War Celestial Emperor—once tried a hundred million combinations in search of the best battle method. His seclusion sessions started at thousands of years!

“You’re just gaining a preliminary overview of the location of certain supernatural locks. Are they endless and infinite? Or are they ultimately limited at ten thousand locks, or one hundred thousand locks? It’s just a matter of time.”

“Not time, but energy,” Li Hao shook his head. “I need to absorb infinite energy to manifest them all.”

“Do you lack energy?”

“My physical body isn’t strong enough...”

“Then absorb energy from your secondary universe and strengthen your body as well during this process.”

Li Hao laughed, this one was far more proactive than him!

“This is your opportunity for greatness!” Zhang An said seriously. “You said before that dao meridians were born alongside the consciousness of the world. Just this concept alone is very

interesting, and it might be true! I should not underestimate humans of this era. Perhaps you are right in saying that you are all connate dao entities!

“If that is the case, then this is an era of naturally occurring dao entities. If you can connect your Hao Cosmos to this era and break the barrier between them... You will have a great future ahead of you!”

“Hurry and thank my martial uncle, Li Hao!” A merry Director General Wang drifted in. “Martial uncle is a heavyweight of the Empyrean King level. The results will be incredible if he builds a model universe of the human body for you! This is a vital stroke of luck on your journey of perfecting this new cultivation system.

“Martial uncle is a teacher to begin with, so he’s very skilled at teaching. Now is the time to construct a model of the new human body. You can then recruit a group of strong martial masters and supernaturals, including those of special attributes. They can help you refine the model. You will be the grandmaster who established dao once this is complete!”

Li Hao possessed the necessary qualifications and opportunity now. He might not if he moved a little slower.

“Then I can give it a try,” Li Hao said after a long look at the Black Armor. “My deepest thanks to the dean. It’s just...”

“There’s no need to hedge your expectations, just do whatever you think of,” the Black Armor said faintly. “I’m also very curious what it will look like when the humans of this age reach their ultimate peak. Will you truly surpass New Martial like you say? Even Initial Martial fell to us—I don’t believe that you can surpass New Martial. This is just a minor world...”

“It doesn’t matter how big a world is,” laughed Li Hao. “Just that it’s complete! A newly born world is even better as its great dao is more apparent. A new consciousness of the world makes it possible to grasp understanding in a more direct manner. We might not have this opportunity if this was a thousand years later.”

“Just that it’s complete?” mused Zhang An. “Is this world complete?”

“We don’t know,” answered Director General Wang. “But there’s a possibility if it is completely severed off from the main world. Has... it been?”

“The formation of the eight cities has broken and the Star Gate is closed. Therefore, there is indeed a hope of completely severing it...” The Black Armor raised a brow. “The caveat is that the world develops naturally. Silver Moon Territory is just a projection of the main world and certain things are mere imitation. They don’t truly possess their own form and mental strength!”

The director general nodded emphatically.

“What is meant by possessing their own form and mental strength?” Li Hao asked curiously.

“For example, Ash Mountain can also be found in the main world,” explained Zhang An. “The one of this world lacks qi and came to be as just a copy! This entire world is an imitation. The Forbidden Sea in this world is just a projection and not the real sea. A true Forbidden Sea would not be thus...”

Li Hao blinked, suddenly remembering that he’d forgotten something. “Um... I previously met a descendant of the Sea Pacification envoy when I was traveling through the North Sea and they told me that the Forbidden Sea has traversed the entire world. It’s showing certain aberrations...”

“When was this?” blinked Zhang An.

“Recently, I think...”

“Why didn’t you say so earlier?”

“I’m not familiar with the Forbidden Sea and didn’t see it. I only saw a pit with a Goldensky Lotus growing out of it once, so I didn’t pay that much attention...”

“A Goldensky Lotus growing out of it??” The Black Armor jerked with astonishment. “How can a projection produce something like the Goldensky Lotus??”

Li Hao blinked at the large reaction—I remember telling the director general about this!

Director General Wang blinked and said after a long pause, “That’s right. it should be fine for a Goldensky Lotus to grow in the Forbidden Sea...”

“That was then, this is now,” Zhang Ah refuted. “The Star Gate is closed now, so how do they develop? There is no more core origin or power projected from the main world. The Forbidden Sea should be a stinking sewer by now. How could the Goldensky Lotus grow under such conditions? He might not understand, but do you?”

“.....” Director General Wang’s expression shifted. “Do you mean...”

“This world... has come into its own!” sighed the Black Armor. “It’s completely separate from the main world!”

“Then... does that mean we can never go home?” Director General Wang trembled. Perhaps the minor world had entirely drifted out of the main world’s range. There would not be this kind of phenomena in the world otherwise. They’d unknowingly ignored the signs before.

“Perhaps!” Zhang A said calmly. “It’s a disaster for us, but a new opportunity for Li Hao and his people. This world really has been reborn! It is a new, complete world and everything is undergoing renewal. This is your chance, Li Hao!

“Vast sums of natural treasure might appear next,” he said ruefully. “And a great quality of energy. Due to the consciousness awakening in the world, it might actively extract energy from the

universe! This was the equivalent of creating a new world and, similar to the age of the nine emperors and four sovereigns, a batch of heavyweights will appear.”

Li Hao swallowed hard, there was nothing to say. “Will... there be any other troubles?”

“Of course! Great trouble, and it’s your trouble! The second awakening will be uncontrollable, the Forbidden Sea will crash over all of the continents, and some of the extinct divine spirits of Silver Moon Territory might take advantage of this timing to resurrect. Ancient existences will appear and countless powerhouses rise with the wind.

“Everything starts all over again when the consciousness of the world is newly born. If you don’t grasp the opportunity well, Li Hao, you will become cannon fodder for this age! A master of the world might appear with the new era. There could be a new Human King, a new Monster Spirit King, and a new sovereign of everything.

“All begins anew!” Zhang An tilted his head back at the sky. “New Martial... is completely severed from this world!”

A variety of thoughts ran through the minds of those present. The Black Armor, plant spirits, and Director General Wang were very unsettled. Their era had been isolated from New Martial. Was this an accident or inevitable?

Or was this the result of what the traitors did back in the day, the chance they were waiting for?

Silver Moon was just a vassal world if it did not break free of the main world. An independent Silver Moon was completely different. No matter how weak, a new world was a brand new world. There was a completely different meaning to it.

No wonder a secondary dao universe of the human body had appeared. So this world was breaking ground on a new dao—a true new dao that wasn’t the minor dao of his precious speculations. This was a new dao universe.

Then... where should I go? Zhang An suddenly wondered.

Chapter 967: Happy Cultivation (I)

Li Hao didn't know where the Black Armor should go, he simply knew that the world had its own consciousness and completely broken free of the main world. There might be a series of changes that took place next, but this was also a string of opportunities. As for whether or not he could grasp those opportunities in hand, the young man didn't know.

He had even less mental bandwidth to spare for the so-called revitalization of the divine spirits. He didn't have time to allot to all of the New Martial powerhouses, what did he have to spare for nebulous divine spirits?

The Black Armor awoke from his haze, as if he'd detected Li Hao's thoughts again. "Do not underestimate the divine spirits of this world! They might not have been worth mentioning before, but now with the world sealed shut and revived, so will the old gods be resurrected. If they make good use of this chance, they will be the gods of the new world and represent its dao!"

"By then, divine spirits will be found among the mountains and rivers, the grass and trees, and everything in between!"

"Doesn't that make them monster spirits?" Li Hao frowned. Was there a difference between the two?

"They're not the same." The Black Armor shook his head. "Monster spirits are monster spirits, divine spirits are divine spirits! The latter might steal the dao of the world and assume control over it. For example, a myriad of daos intersect with each other in a newly born world. The divine spirit might become master of one of them. That can take shape as a fire god, a water god, or the like. They can become the gods of the elements..."

"Were there such divine spirits in New Martial?" Li Hao's frown deepened. Or had such divine spirits been born in Initial Martial?

“There did not exist a divine spirit that fully controlled one dao in New Martial,” the Black Armor responded calmly. “Because even in the Initial Martial era, our world and the world seed possessed its own consciousness. But beyond that, no one is sure whether or not there was the rise and downfall of another civilization. It was not like our situation now, a time in which the world consciousness is newly appeared.”

The consciousness of the world had long existed in New Martial. It came to be a very, very long time ago. It might have even been present before Initial Martial. Initial Martial might not have been the first era of the world either. There could have been another civilization in a very far off age, one that eventually collapsed.

Silver Moon Territory might be the first instance of both a new world and a new consciousness. Under normal circumstances, a regular world would’ve long seen its consciousness flourish. Almost no one had ever experienced a brand new world before.

“So senior means that monster spirits need to cultivate, but divine spirits don’t need to?” Li Hao understood. “They naturally command a dao and control over the mountains, rivers, and land. That’s more or less it, correct?”

“Perhaps!” The Black Armor shook his head. “I’ve never experienced that age, so I am unfamiliar with it. I have, however, once visited another universe and lived in another world for a period of time. I had a chance to wage war there. There were similar spirits in that world—local divine spirits...”

Li Hao blinked. “Senior has gone to other worlds apart from the main world?”

“Yes.”

“Don’t you say that the universe is vast...” Li Hao was very surprised.

“That was during New Martial. In order to survive and keep hope alive, a group of youngsters followed the Sword Sovereign’s lead and took a trip through the universe. They wandered through chaos and unexpectedly entered a new world...”

“Where is that world now?” Li Hao was immensely taken aback. He’d thought that the world of New Martial was the greatest world of the known universe. The world that their enemies had come from might be number two, but to think that Zhang An had visited yet another world before!

“It disappeared.”

“Disappeared?” Li Hao was confused and didn’t understand.

“There were some dangers in that world when we visited,” the Black Armor smiled. “We resolved those dangers. The Human King came in search of us and conversed with the consciousness of the world. The consciousness let us leave. But there is also a saying that fellow masters of the world can devour each other. That one elected to give way and disappeared in the vast universe.”

“That’s it?” Li Hao scratched his head. “A new world should represent a great temptation for the Human King. He let them leave, just like that?”

“You certainly like your gossip,” smiled the Black Armor. “The Human King would not have necessarily been a match for the other. Not to mention, he preferred one matter less as to one matter more. There was no conflict between the two sides, so don’t bear so much enmity toward New Martial. Our guiding principle is that we stay away from anyone who does not offend us. The Human King wouldn’t go on the offensive if the other did not view us with hostility.”

The Human King not being a match for his opponent was the key, wasn’t it?

“Does this mean that there are many worlds in this vast universe?” Admiration and anticipation flared to life within Li Hao.

“Yes.”

“How interesting!” exclaimed the young man. “I hope I have the chance to visit them one day.”

“You will, if you become the master of this world,” smiled the Black Armor. “But it will be very hard for you if you do not! There is a subconscious command within the world’s consciousness that you cannot depart with the world’s energy...”

“What does that mean?”

“Everything you cultivate now is strength bequeathed to you by this world. You have partaken of its energy. The stronger you are, the more you have claimed. This also means that the world has lost part of its energy to you!

“Therefore, the stronger the world’s consciousness, the less willing it is to allow powerhouses to leave. That will only weaken the world! Hence, when the main world expended endless energy to give birth to Silver Moon Territory, it would’ve reclaimed this energy under normal conditions. With the Human King’s nature, it was magnanimous enough if he didn’t seize someone else’s world. His own would never be taken...”

Although it hadn’t been forcefully seized, Silver Moon had indeed been created by the loss of the main world’s energy. It would be quite logical for the main world to reclaim it. However, the Human King had chosen to give up and relinquish its claim over this minor world because he wanted to give it to the Sword Sovereign.

Li Hao was aware of this because he’d once seen it in Battle Heaven during a conversation between the Exalted Blood Emperor and the Li forefather.

“I see!” the young man nodded. “So when you guys left the main world during New Martial... does that mean you took part of its energy with you?”

“Yes,” nodded the Black Armor. “But we weren’t supreme powerhouses, so we didn’t take too much energy. The world could recover from our loss. Birthing a minor world, however, expends an

incredible amount of energy. That is very difficult to recover from and might require uncountable months.”

I see! Li Hao understood and couldn't help but take a few more glances at the Black Armor. This one had once roamed the universe with his ancestor! So he must have had a good relationship with the young man's ancestor, but wasn't too friendly with Li Hao... Man...

“Is there a need for special treatment when it comes to the Sword Sovereign's descendant of countless generations?” the Black Armor said faintly, seeming to detect Li Hao's thoughts again. “Not to mention, strictly speaking, the Sword Sovereign did not have a descendant.”

Li Hao blinked. “What do you mean?”

“The Sword Sovereign never married, even until New Martial's final days. He never sired children, so where would his descendants come from?”

“.....” Li Hao was completely taken aback, as well as the rest of the group! What did this mean? If the Sword Sovereign had no descendants, then where did the Li family come from?

Even Director General Wang was curious—he was unaware of this detail in the Li family history.

“The Sword Sovereign dedicated his life to New Martial,” the Black Armor further explained. “He possessed high morale as a youngster and was despondent in his middle age. He was relegated to being a warehouse manager at Demonic Martial. In the peak of life, he suffered a grave injury and wasted ten years for it.

“He then spent those ten years honing one sword stroke, giving all of his love to the sword. It was the only weapon that he practiced in his life. The Human King saved the Sword Sovereign, as did the Sword Sovereign save the Human King. They supported each other and endured an arduous time period...”

All of this was to say that the Sword Sovereign had never taken a wife and was not interested in forming a family.

Li Hao swallowed audibly, part of his world crashing down around him. This wasn't that important, just that the person who he thought was his ancestor was not...

"Of course, the Sword Sovereign didn't just fall out of the sky. He had brothers. His blood brother had a granddaughter who was the only official bloodline of the family's third generation. The Sword Sovereign's nephew died early without children to his name. He only had this grand-niece who he treated as his own granddaughter. That one... is the Li ancestor."

Li Hao's jaw dropped.

"I forgot to mention before that me, my younger sister, your ancestor, and our principal were in the same class at Demonic Martial," the Black Armor grinned.

Li Hao's jaw sagged. So there was this layer of relationship between them!

"Her husband was from our class as well, we were all classmates. Therefore, you count as the official descendant of the Sword Sovereign. It may not precisely have been what you thought, but there's not much of a difference."

"So this means... the Li family ancestor is the Sword Sovereign's grand-niece..." Li Hao finally managed to close his mouth. "We're not truly part of the Lis..."

"What makes you say that?" laughed the Black Armor. "You are. The Sword Sovereign treated you guys as his own."

Fine then! Li Hao accepted with resignation. But we weren't direct relations. I always thought that I could trace my lineage to the Sword Sovereign. So he's more like my... secondary ancestor?

“Then how come our surname is Li?” asked the young man.

“The Sword Sovereign’s grand-niece was treated as his granddaughter,” the Black Armor repeated wearily. “Isn’t it normal for her surname to be Li? Kid, men and women are equal, understand?”

“.....” Li Hao inclined his head. “Fair enough. With such a forefather present, my female ancestor’s husband wouldn’t dare make her take his name.”

“.....” The Black Armor didn’t know what to say.

“So it turns out that I’m not really the Sword Sovereign’s descendant,” Li Hao sighed with emotion. “No wonder.”

“No wonder what?”

“No wonder the senior isn’t too polite toward me...”

The Black Armor wanted to break out in curses. I would’ve slapped you into minced meat a long time ago if it wasn’t for your connection to the Sword Sovereign! Besides, even if you weren’t related to him, your ancestor was my classmate! We were good friends!

Chapter 969: Happy Cultivation (III)

“It might be an incredible notion in your eyes, but to some powerhouses that cannot break through to the heights of the Human King and the like, discovering another path in a newly born world may bring them that opportunity,” Zhang An explained. “That would give them reason enough to betray New Martial. There would be no reason to do so otherwise. New Martial is too strong and the price that needs to be paid for betrayal is too high!”

“Then who could it have been?” Inspiration struck Li Hao. “Can it have been the Sword Sovereign?”

Damn, this kid! Director General Wang and the others wanted to roll their eyes. So you immediately start insulting the man after finding out that he's not your direct ancestor, huh?

"The Sword Sovereign was so strong and the world was given to him..." Li Hao said seriously.

"You, too, know that it was given to the Sword Sovereign, so why go to all of this trouble?" remarked the Black Armor. "There's no purpose in any of this, he can have this world with one word. Do you think the Human King would refuse him if he said he wanted to use this world to manifest a second dao?"

"....." Li Hao blinked, that was true.

"And everyone would support the Sword Sovereign if he wanted to manifest a second dao universe. There is no need to make things so complicated. He'd be shutting the barn doors well after the horses got out. You've got some imagination to think of this possibility!"

"Then... can a sealed off minor world really materialize a second dao universe?" Li Hao scratched his head sheepishly.

"Not necessarily, there's no precedent. Perhaps someone just wanted to give it a try using something that wasn't theirs," Zhang An said coldly. "In my view, whoever was behind this just wanted to test the waters. They didn't necessarily want all of this to play out. No one could be certain of the outcome, or others would've tried it long ago."

They would have to have a minor world to experiment with in the first place! Well, that eliminated the Sword Sovereign from the list of possibilities. Based on what these guys were saying, the man could do all of this with one word.

Forget it, Li Hao couldn't be bothered to guess who was behind it all. He was so weak that even if he happened upon the truth, he'd just be killed for his knowledge.

As for why he'd suspected the Sword Sovereign, he simply felt that the man possessed both the strength and opportunity to accomplish the events that had happened so long ago. But upon further thought, it really would be too much of a hassle to do all of that. This world was his to begin with, to go down this path would mean his fake ancestor was a complete idiot.

"Then I'll focus on strengthening my supernatural locks first," Li Hao changed the topic. "I'll materialize however many I can, then summon a batch of special attribute supernaturals. That should help me locate even more..."

"You can try, but you have to be fast to prevent trouble from developing," nodded the Black Armor. "Since we're certain that the consciousness of the world is officially gathering and that the world has slipped out of the main world's control, every second counts now!"

Li Hao nodded and looked back at his people. "Seniors, I'll have to trouble you to help me in this matter. We need to gather a group of special attribute supernaturals as soon as possible, as well as martial masters of every aura. Each of them might represent a different kind of supernatural lock that we hadn't discovered before."

They nodded back at him, quite interested in the matter. These were the types of problems they liked to deal with!

"Arf arf arf!" The dog that'd been ignored all this time suddenly barked. Li Hao blinked, what was it saying?

"That's right too." A surprised Black Armor inclined his head. "Since new humans have dao meridians, then new monster spirits should as well! The same should go for new plant spirits, but now that we have new monster spirits... Do we have the same for plant spirits?"

"Arf arf arf!"

"You want to access your dao meridians as well?" Zhang An asked hesitantly. "I don't know how to do that, what are you telling me for?"

“Arf arf arf arf!”

“You want Li Hao to open them for you?” the Black Armor burst out laughing. “Why don’t you tell him yourself?”

“Arf!”

“You’re a beast spirit, yet cannot communicate through mental ripples.” Zhang An repressed an eye roll. “Do you really not know how to, or are you pretending? Do your own communication!”

“.....” Li Hao stared, confounded by their conversation. “You want to clear your dao meridians? Do you have any? And the senior is right. Everyone can utilize mental ripples, why can’t you? Why do you only know how to bark?”

“Arf arf!” Panther responded innocently.

“It says that it doesn’t know how to use mental strength, it only knows the aura!” murmured the Black Armor. “It cannot convert the ripples of the aura into language. The monster spirits of the new age are also different.”

“Bullshit!” Li Hao dismissed. “The mountain lord of Sky Roc Mountain is a modern monster spirit, they know how to communicate through mental ripples! This dog is trying to fool us again!”

“Arf arf arf!” Panther was immensely aggrieved.

“It says that those monster spirits are just modern monster spirits that do not cultivate modern martial dao.” The Black Armor had no choice but to translate for them again. “The dog cultivates martial dao, those guys cultivate the ancient dao. It trains the aura, those guys train their bodies and blood qi. Everyone is different.”

Li Hao looked skeptically at the Black Armor. Was there that much information in a few barks?

Zhang An couldn't be bothered to explain himself. Yes, there's that much information in those barks. Do you think I'm bored enough to say so much to you otherwise?

Li Hao stroked his chin and considered Panther. Fair enough, the dog might be the only modern monster spirit who cultivated the aura!

Whether it was the lord of Sky Roc Mountain or the snake of the Kui Mountains, none of them seemed to know the aura. They followed the ancient monster spirit dao and focused on the body and blood qi. Some of them grasped mental strength if they were stronger, but none of them seemed to know the aura!

This meant that the dog might really have supernatural locks—dao meridians!

Since humans had them, would monster spirits? There weren't only humans alive in this world, there were millions of other species. If dogs possessed dao meridians, what about pigs? If they did, how about cats? Sheep?

If all species had them... was he supposed to draw diagrams of all of them??

Li Hao gulped with fear. This was a massive undertaking that he might not complete for the rest of his life!

Also, if humans, monster spirits, and all living things had them, how about dead ones? Such as... a sword, a blade, a spear... Could these weapons cultivate on their own? Did they possess dao meridians?

The possibilities grew more frightening the more he thought about them! Cultivation was such a vast and marvelous world!

.....

On this day in the mines, Li Hao, the Black Armor, Director General Wang, Yuan Shuo, and a dog began building a model of the human body. As opposed to a regular model, it was an exceedingly special one that reflected the universe within the body.

The Black Armor even had Li Hao describe the Hao Cosmos so he could create a miniaturized version. Li Hao wondered if the ancient was tricking information out of him, but spoke of what he knew nonetheless in order to create a more perfect model.

As for cultivation, the young man temporarily set it aside. This was a kind of cultivation as well—it helped Li Hao have a more direct and deeper understanding of the human body.

.....

It was as if another world inside the mine. A giant similar to Li Hao hovered in the air. It was transparent and so accurate down to the detail that his private parts were also modeled.

“Can we uh, leave that out of the model?” Li Hao asked glumly.

“The human body must be replicated exactly, so no, unless you lack that in reality!” the Black Armor answered calmly.

“.....” Li Hao rolled his eyes.

“This is a male model, we’ll have to build a female one later on,” chuckled Yuan Shuo. “This will facilitate a comparison between males and females—there might actually be some differences. The elderly and children also need to be looked into!”

Li Hao flicked a glance at his teacher. Did his teacher really want that for research purposes, or was it his true nature as an old lecher coming to the fore?

Zhang An couldn’t be bothered with them. He had high expectations for tasks like these and laid down very strict requirements. “The human body is the most complex. I am not familiar with modern humans, and next we’ll need to use a special method to compress the Hao Cosmos within. But the dao meridians are difficult to copy...”

He’d given this deep thought—what could replace the dao meridians?

“Does it have to be something similar to the dao meridians?” asked Li Hao.

“It has to, for accuracy’s sake!”

“We can substitute them with supernatural characters,” the young man offered. “But we’ll need a lot of people to help with that. Everyone can coalesce different characters to imitate real dao meridians!”

“This works!” nodded the Black Armor! “Then we’ll stabilize a portion of space to hold the characters...”

The group outside grew busy again. Whether it was the Black Armor, Yuan Shuo, or Director General Wang, they observed him from day to night. The young man was quite dejected by the attention from a group of old men. It was so keen that they were almost counting the number of hairs on his body!

That was pretty much the level of detail they were achieving as they built a transparent human body model that looked exactly the same as Li Hao, both inside and out.

The young man continued to absorb energy and Water of Life during this time. The eleven plant spirits in the ruins supplied only him with Water of Life. He consumed an astronomical sum everyday. With how vast the mine was, it didn't matter how much energy he absorbed.

Not only that, but he continuously extracted energy from the Hao Cosmos to fortify his body so that it wouldn't collapse from the weight of all the supernatural locks he was materializing.

Li Hao unknowingly grew stronger, yet he didn't realize it since he was absorbed in building the human model and perfecting it. Additionally, he retraced his supernatural characters during this time—assembling, rebuilding, reassembling, and breaking them apart...

He tried everything that entered his mind, heedless of danger. It wasn't like he'd die from his experimentation!

.....

As Li Hao made different attempts in martial dao, the world outside shifted slightly. All sorts of energy seemed to be more active beneath the heavens. It was only energy before, but now it seemed particularly lively.

Chapter 970: Happy Cultivation (IV)

Silver Moon, Silver City.

Director General Zhao had come in person to Silver City. It was still raining; the rainwater of the extreme north should be icy cold and even solidify into ice as soon as it touched the ground. However, there was no ice to be found through all of Silver City.

The rainwater here was still rainwater when it landed. The faint arctic chill within it was replaced by a bloodthirsty taste.

Director General Zhao tilted his head back toward the sky and frowned slightly. The rain of Silver City was very peculiar as it encompassed only the city. Its range was quite small.

The director general was aware that the local rainwater was special. Red Moon had chosen to conduct their previous murders of the other eight families during the rainy season.

“Only during the rain can they make a move against descendants of the eight families and strip away their bloodline power...” Director General Zhao looked at the sky and shot into the air, rising higher and higher.

The rainwater didn’t come from the regular gathering of clouds; it wasn’t water vapor. He flew until he reached the end of the sky and a massive pressure prevented him from flying higher. Despite that, he couldn’t locate the source of the rain.

This was not regular rainwater!

He looked around the void and permitted the drizzle to drench him. The bloodline power in his body stirred to life. As a member of the Zhaos, he possessed the bloodline of the eight families too.

“What is this rain?” frowned the man. Also, was there a connection between Ying Hongyue and this rain? What did it mean for Silver City to start raining again? He could also sense that energy was fluctuating wildly in a very active fashion throughout the city.

Strange!

Was something else at Silver City apart from being the site of the Star Gate?

Where is Sword City? Further up in the void?

Director General Zhao suddenly whipped his head around. A figure stood not too far from him; the director general raised a brow. “You’ve got some nerve, Ying Hongyue!”

The latter stood with his hands behind his back and looked at the sky, ignoring the other.

“Do not come here again,” Ying Hongyue suddenly said after a moment. “None of those from the eight families should set foot here!”

“.....” Director General Zhao sneered, “and why is that?”

“There is a seal here that keeps something under control. That something could be a person or an item. Whatever it is, it’s uncanny. This rain strips away our bloodline power and melds it into the water, bringing it back to the seal so whatever it is can be freed! The Li bloodline is the most potent of all!

“Tell Li Hao to not return to Silver City if he can help it, particularly when it’s raining. Otherwise, he won’t be the only one who dies once the seal is undone!”

“Are you sure?” Director General Zhao’s expression shifted slightly.

“Why wouldn’t I be?” Ying Hongyue snickered.

“There’s another use for this rainwater!” the director general said instead. Ying Hongyue looked at him. “It erodes at the barriers between the eight families and is conducive for melding bloodlines together. Ying Hongyue, I think you’re the one who should stay away. This place is not suited for you!”

“You want to stop me?”

“What do you think?” Director General Wang vanished. Ying Hongyue didn’t say a word; he simply cracked his whip and broke the void. He didn’t want to fight this guy, but the old man had arrived before him.

Ying Hongyue did indeed need the power within the rain to help him further assimilate the bloodlines. Who knew that would further weaken the seal?

A bark of laughter rang through the air as the whip traveled through the void.

“Hahaha, I’m over here, Ying Hongyue!”

Ying Hongyue frowned and spun with a punch. Director General Zhao briefly appeared from the massive rumble, then disappeared again.

“Hahaha, I’m over here!”

Ying Hongyue frowned again, a keen light dawning in his eyes. He looked around him, but suffered countless attacks in succession. He punched back again and again, breaking the void with all of his moves. He was so strong that it made no sense!

And yet, laughter continued to echo in his ears. It was quite the irritating sensation. He abruptly shattered the void with a punch; the director general showed himself with a mischievous grin.

“Alright, I’ll stop playing with you. It won’t make much of a difference for you to keep fighting me. Why don’t you do as you did before and stay outside to conduct your nefarious business? I need to look after Silver Moon!”

“I need this rain to meld my bloodlines together!” Ying Hongyue frowned.

“You’re so smart, you’ll find other ways,” chuckled the director general. “How are you afraid of being out of ideas? You may assimilate your bloodlines here, but the rainwater will also strip part of them from you and incorporate them into the void to undo the seal you speak of. That’s not good. Be a good boy now and go elsewhere!”

“Zhao Shuguang, do you really think you have the better of me?” A dangerous light danced in Ying Hongyue’s eyes.

“Of course not!” chuckled the merry Director General Zhao. “It’s just that... do you believe me when I say I can summon almost one hundred Apexes with a single command? They’ll appear in a split second and slaughter you!”

“Trying to fool me with that?” Ying Hongyue snorted.

“Looks like you don’t believe me...” laughed the man. “In that case, come out, everyone! Kill him!”

Figures hovered into view around them, each of them with a domineering presence. Ying Hongyue’s expression shifted drastically and he immediately disappeared.

“You’re playing with fire, Zhao Shuguang!”

“Not as much as you are!” Director General Zhao continued to laugh until the reverberations of Ying Hongyue’s voice died out. He looked at the shadows that’d appeared around him and smiled. “I was just scaring him, seniors. Please go back to what you were busy with. There’s no need to stick around here or take action at present. It will easily be the death of you.”

“Director General Zhao,” one of the shadows spoke with an aged voice that whispered of the eons he’d witnessed. “We are but core origin replicas, it doesn’t matter if we die. We are just confused why you would bring us out at this time. What kind of motives and goals do you have?”

“None in particular,” smiled the man. “Don’t misunderstand, seniors. It’s just as good to have your replicas come out for a breath of fresh air if your primary bodies can’t leave. According to the agreement we reached, I just need the seniors to help me with a small matter!”

“Speak of it.”

“There is a nation on the other side of this mountain, a group of savages lives there. I would like the seniors to take a trip through that nation and come back a while later. How about it?”

“...savages? Do you mean those Initial Martial descendants?”

“Initial Martial descendants?” blinked Director General Zhao.

“Mm, a group of Initial Martial descendants once came to this land,” the wizened voice sounded again. “There weren’t many of them, so the Human King tolerated and didn’t mind them. The Sword Sovereign didn’t expel them either. Have these people built a nation?”

“Pro... bably?” Director General Zhao wasn’t sure either. “There have been some disturbances at Ash Mountain lately, these guys keep wanting to cross it to probe the lay of the land. I’ll have to trouble the seniors.”

The shadows looked at the director general for a while. “We can render this assistance, but you should give us a deadline!”

“The seniors can return before the second awakening begins!” smiled Director General Zhao. “This is a mutually beneficial arrangement. I’ll do my best for the seniors’ revitalization to come.”

There wasn’t a sound forthcoming from the figures.

“New Martial does not accept threats,” someone said after a long moment of silence. “You better not continue in this fashion, Zhao Shuguang. We can partner for joint benefits, there is no need to be so extreme. Your ancestor was an extreme person. To think that the Zhao family would still be thus thousands of years later...”

“Now now, how am I extreme?” The director general couldn’t help but laugh. “I’m doing this out of self preservation. The seniors are so strong that I cannot permit you to run around freely, can I? It’s not a threat if I’m just outlining my requests, is it?”

“This is something that we long agreed to. Everyone could’ve just stayed in the ruins if an agreement hadn’t been reached. Now that you’re out, you think of me as extreme. Is this appropriate?”

“We can coexist peacefully,” Director General Zhao sighed. “We don’t have much conflict of interest. This is a new era and a new beginning. If the seniors are unwilling... then you can go back right now and wait for the second awakening to emerge. I’m not stopping you, neither am I able to stop you!”

“Zhao Shuguang, you might pay one day for what you’re doing!” someone grunted before all of them vanished on the spot.

Director General Zhao burst out laughing when the ancients were all gone. Pay? Pay what? This was a cooperation that was mutually beneficial, why do they not understand that? Not to mention, who can I go to if you guys beat me to death after you leave the ruins? Of course I’ve got to levy some restrictions on you!

My requests are completely reasonable!

Stay inside the ruins if you don’t agree to the terms. But here you are, in the outside world, yet saying that all of this is unreasonable. You guys are so difficult to work with!

Director General Zhao chuckled and waited further. I'll leave when this rainfall is over. Did Ying Hongyue come here for no reason just to assimilate his bloodlines? Or did he have another goal in mind?

The director general sighed. Those Silver Moon bastards were having the times of their lives outside. None of them were willing to return to the province! Apparently, the nine ministries and City of Supernaturals had been captured.

So what?

They were just on one island! Silver Moon was the heart of the world, what the hell did they know?? Look at this, I can gather a few random core origin replicas to beat the crap out of you!

“The world is growing ever more stable, who the hell is behind it? The second awakening will take place before long if this continues—it's too fast!”

Director General Zhao sighed to himself, then suddenly thought of someone. Was that little bastard Li Hao behind all of this? Why else would the world stabilize so quickly?