

Star Gate 981

Chapter 981: The Curtains Rise (III)

“When Senior Sky Sword melded his aura with the world and spontaneously erupted, that was a strength of the dao heart! Sometimes, we should judge someone on their actions and not their intentions. When you do what you should do and let the people know that you are their support and teacher, they will pay you back in return.”

“Pay you back with what?” murmured Lin Hongyu. “The title of Human King?”

“You could say that!” Li Hao smiled. “That is a strength of the aura and faith that is similar to the birth of some divine spirits. After visiting the Hao Cosmos, I’ve learned that the people’s faith is also a type of dao.”

“The Hao Cosmos?”

“A great dao universe.”

Lin Hongyu only partially understood his words. She suddenly found the young man particularly mysterious and unique. Although she wasn’t too clear on what was being discussed, she caught the general drift. “So this means that if the people live good lives, we will grow stronger in return?”

“No,” Li Hao answered after some thought.

“.....” Lin Hongyu wanted to curse out loud! No? Then what was this blather of the strength of faith?

“It will strengthen your inner heart!” chuckled the young man.

“Um, commander...”

“I’m not joking,” the young man kept laughing. “I used to say that martial masters train the heart, now I will say that the strong train the heart! You will grow strong only when your inner heart is strong enough. Otherwise, there will always be certain things that cast a shadow over you.

“We’ve come up with a new cultivation style lately, do you want to try it?”

“Huh?”

“It’s very interesting and turns cultivation into a fun way of stress relief...”

“The dao of supernatural characters?”

“Kind of, but at the same time, not really.”

Lin Hongyu was utterly confused. What did Li Hao mean?

The group had reached the royal palace by now—Demon Hunters patrolled it. Li Hao and his people strolled into the main hall.

“Folks, take a seat anywhere you’d like. Lin Hongyu, you’re the city lord, so you should sit up there,” Li Hao said casually.

“It should be the commander in the seat of honor!”

“That’s just the stereotypical image of things,” the young man smiled. “Of course we need to follow the rules, but we don’t need to be huge sticklers. We’re very tolerant when it comes to great talent.”

Alright then, Lin Hongyu elected to follow instructions in order to grow more familiar with these mystifying fellows.

“Unrest has crept into the four continents,” Li Hao finally began discussing what Lin Hongyu deemed as the important matters. “Some villains of the New Martial era can’t contain themselves anymore and wish to come out of the ruins. The world is much more stabilized these days and the three great organizations have apparently moved to the northern continent.

“The four nations bordering us seem to be stirring to action as well. Neither war nor peace is a matter limited to personal effort or impact! We need to utilize the power of the people to defeat our enemies! Martial dao needs to be swiftly dissembled throughout the land. Even if there are drawbacks, we must quickly teach it to everyone!

“We’ve killed plant spirits of five City of Supernaturals aristocratic families. Apart from the redwood tree, six others survive. I’d wanted to kill them all and be done with the matter, but feel that it’s too much of a waste now. Let’s cooperate with them!

“They can raise grain—and not just them, but all eleven plant spirits within Skystar Town’s ruins. Additionally, the five plant spirits from Battle Heaven need to do the same...” Li Hao ran some quick calculations. “That’s twenty-one plant spirits. One can produce sufficient grain to feed one hundred million for a year. This means we can only feed a little over two billion people. While we do have some reserves at the moment, that’s far from enough. I’d like to capture some other plant spirits in the central region!

“There must be far more plant spirits in the region. I’d like to centralize them—Skystar Town is a very good site...

“We have a lot of things to do next! We can let the three great organizations develop as they will. No matter how fast they grow, they won’t grow as fast as us!

“Once our preparations are complete throughout the world, the second awakening will be delayed yet again. If the hand within the shadow wishes to revitalize ahead of time, they’ll have to release a large amount of energy to do so. This will weaken them while the rest of us can train the new martial dao in the process!

“City Lord Lin, there are a few important tasks to attend to next.” Li Hao looked at Lin Hongyu.

“Firstly, collect all intelligence regarding the various central region ruins. Second, the matter of the people’s basic necessities. Third, training administrative personnel. Fourth, propaganda. Of course, these are just my thoughts. It is up to the city lord how you’d like to execute on these ideas.”

The woman nodded thoughtfully.

“Alright then, the serious business is over.” Li Hao grinned. “Let’s talk about something else.”

“.....” Lin Hongyu was at a complete loss. Over? What did you even discuss?

“Allow me to display the new cultivation system to the city lord. You can also help me take a look if there are serious issues or not...”

Lin Hongyu’s interest was immediately piqued. Yuan Shuo and Hong Yitang looked at the young man as well. Thirty-six locks manifested over his body as he directly showed them to the group.

“Most people can’t accomplish this. They need to excavate their locks one at a time. I’ve left out that step because it’s too much of a waste of time.”

Lin Hongyu swallowed hard. What was that?? Supernatural locks?? There were so many of them! Oh my heavens!

Li Hao started operating his cultivation method according to previous theory and the Breakthrough Incantation.

Light quickly sparkled in each of the thirty-six locks; motes of radiance floated out of one in particular. Lin Hongyu stared at it, entranced, seeing a tiny hole open on the lock and a faint energy being extracted out of it.

More holes appeared on the lock in quick succession, as if a bamboo flute. Li Hao continued to operate the method and focused on only one hole, eventually burrowing through it and causing a release of energy.

“The acupoint has been successfully cleared, this is the first one,” he explained. “The first acupoint of the first dao meridian... which means it’s now time for the others!”

He repeated his actions and soon cleared nine acupoints. “I am now peak Initial Slayer!”

More acupoints were cleared until thirty-six were complete. “I am now peak Slayer,” Li Hao grinned. “All I need to do now is connect the band and complete the circulation to become a Sunderer. Internal force will erupt with great momentum!”

The thirty-six acupoints shone with light and instantly completed one circulation of energy.

Boom!

Internal force roared to life within the body; Li Hongyu’s jaw dropped. What kind of martial dao cultivation method was this?? That was not how traditional martial dao was cultivated! Yet its results were no different!

Li Hao continued with the demonstration, embarking on the second circulation. Another thirty-six acupoints were cleared in the blink of an eye.

“Completely seventy-two makes me a peak Sunderer! The second circulation is complete!” With that, the young man continued with a third circulation.

Boom!

His presence grew explosively. “108 acupoints are open, which means I’ve set foot into mid Dominator!” His cultivation speed grew faster and faster. “144 acupoints is late Dominator...”

Another round of circulation began. “180 acupoints marks the halfway point. I am now a peak Dominator.”

Li Hao’s presence built as he continued to cultivate. A loud explosion rang out as he cleared the remaining five acupoints on one dao meridian. This undertaking was more difficult than the previous thirty-six.

“This is the first level of Mountain and Sea.” The young man’s presence had soared again. “It is the result of the complete exploration of one dao meridian. Separating them with acupoints is to facilitate an easier opening of the dao meridians and to prevent the circulation from being disrupted!”

Li Hao continued in the same vein, fully opening the second, third, and fourth dao meridians... He frowned after completing the seventh—a great deal of energy and Water of Life had been absorbed.

“The further we go, the more difficult it is! There are seven dao meridians that have been fully opened along with half of the others. I rival seven element Arcanus. I can open more, but the difficulty is immense. I’ll take a break for now!” The young man looked at Lin Hongyu. “I’d like to use this strength alone and none of my abilities to punch you once. What do you say?”

“Let’s do it!” nodded a dazed Lin Hongyu.

Bam!

The fist broke through the void! She didn’t even have time to react before seeing the void crack open, Li Hao’s fist appear, and her body flying through the void!

She crashed into a wall and stared dumbly at Li Hao. Yuan Shuo and Hong Yitang sighed to themselves. The boy... really didn't know how to treat members of the fairer sex! He was unworthy of being human!

"City Lord Lin has great defenses!" Li Hao laughed. "I'm seventh level of Mountain and Sea now, and can even face the Apexes without core origin. And yet, I only sent you flying with that punch, I didn't punch a hole through you... This is the new martial dao, isn't it easy?"

Blood seeped out of Lin Hongyu's mouth. It took her a while to recollect her senses. "This is... a new martial dao?"

It was a cultivation process so easy that any fool could follow it. Li Hao's speed had been so astonishing that he completed opening seven dao meridians within an hour. He reached the seventh level of Mountain and Sea that he spoke of and defeated her with one punch!

So this was... the new martial dao?

"Can all thirty-six dao meridians be opened?" she murmured.

"Of course!" Li Hao nodded. "But this is just unattributed energy—strength of the body, without any supernatural ability. Its ferocity is a bit less, but it'll pass muster! Of course, just because I cultivate so quickly doesn't mean that everyone else can. I manifested thirty-six locks a long time ago. Everyone else will have to cultivate them bit by bit, so their speed is bound to be slow!

"It should take almost a year to complete the first round of thirty-six without the help of external resources. Given how dense energy is now... perhaps half a year will do. They will be peak Slayer then."

Lin Hongyu was so flabbergasted that it took her a while to struggle to her feet. "Is this what the commander has been busy with lately?"

“Yes!”

“This will... revolutionize the superhuman domain!” It was only her first time witnessing it, but her conclusion was already that this was an easy system to master. As unique as Li Hao was, it also meant that a deep comprehension wouldn’t be required of others.

This seemed easier than supernatural cultivation!

Chapter 982: The Curtains Rise (IV)

“So what... level of strength is the commander at now?”

Li Hao had the addition of supernatural abilities at his command!

“There’s only the five elements and wind and thunder that are truly useful out of the ones that I know,” Li Hao grinned. “Seven of those elements plus seventh level Mountain and Sea means I’m only fourteen elements. Strictly speaking, those seven and these seven haven’t formed a major circulation, so they’re less than one circulation of fourteen dao meridians!

“Nine meridians makes one a Mountain and Sea cultivator, and Sun and Moon is above that. Each level requires three dao meridians, so fourteen meridians is second level Sun and Moon!

“I’m a little weaker than that, but not that far off since the other seven are attributed meridians. Second level Sun and Moon can only count as a regular Apex. True peak Apexes should command the strength of ninth level Sun and Moon...” the young man spoke with regret. “I can handle weak Apexes by myself, but will struggle against the undying Immortals even though they haven’t fully recovered their strength.”

Lin Hongyu wasn’t listening toward the end. Second level Sun and Moon? That was a new level! Of course, that wasn’t key. The key was that Li Hao could handle Apexes by himself now. That was incredible!

Although the young man had taken the field against the fragile Immortals before, he hadn't done so alone.

"And the commander wishes to share this with the rest of the world?" Lin Hongyu took a deep breath.

"That is correct!"

"That... is not appropriate!" she hastily objected. "Enemies will also obtain it that way."

"Let them practice it!" Li Hao smiled. "That's even better, that will consume more energy in the world. How nice!"

Lin Hongyu didn't know what else she could say. "'Commander, if you must, then I suggest... rolling it out slowly. Use the new system to secure some advantages from your opponents first, then publicize it. Deal a grave blow to them, but make them suffer in silence."

"Some advantages?"

"Yes!" Lin Hongyu nodded. "You can do so with the local representatives of all of the dynasty's territories! Have someone secretly contact them and sell this system for ten million or even one million mysterious power stones. If you're fast enough, you can contact multiple people at once.

"Then send some Silver Moon martial masters to teach them on the spot, just as the commander has displayed to me. It will overawe them! You can charge as much as you want for it, more than ten million stones if you wish! Of course, we can also adjust it accordingly to each buyer!

"When all parties that we wish to target have purchased it, we'll spontaneously announce it to the public. We'll have earned our money and the gratitude of the people, while weakening the enemy and strengthening ourselves.

“The only difficulty is whether or not they’ll believe that we wish to sell them a powerful cultivation method. The best way to dispel doubts is an on-site demonstration!

“There are local tyrants in the four continents and plenty of ruins to be found. They still have mysterious power stones to spare. Apart from the north and central region, there are dozens of targets we can call upon among the ninety-nine provinces. We can price the system at three million stones for a baseline. That’s not a lot and will net us hundreds of millions in mysterious power stones!

“If the commander will send people to the City of Supernaturals to transact with me, I will publicly denounce you at first. But once the commander’s people start your demonstration, I will turn skeptical and be willing to pay a few million stones for research purposes.”

Yuan Shuo and Hong Yitang stared at her. She... has a black heart!

“Ah... this is a great idea!” Li Hao burst out laughing. “Although I’m not short on mysterious power stones, strengthening myself at the enemy’s cost is a great idea. We’ll have plenty of uses for mysterious power stones in the days to come, so this is excellent planning!”

Lin Hongyu was delighted to see her suggestion accepted. “It’s fine if there are some factions without money. We need all sorts of resources and can assign those prices of mysterious power stones. They won’t care. Cultivation resources are more important to them.

“We can trade with them for whatever the commander wants! Paper mills, local specialities, machines, supernatural cannons... There’s also the armor they’ve excavated that they have no use for! We can take as much as we want! I remember that the commander said that you can convert them?”

Li Hao hastily nodded with wide eyes. What an enormous talent City Lord Lin was! I hadn’t thought of any of this before. He’d simply thought of building everything himself or transporting it from Battle Heaven.

“We can also trade for special attribute supernaturals,” an overjoyed Lin Hongyu continued. It was so wonderful to have her opinions acknowledged and approved! “Our targets won’t mind because special attribute supernaturals aren’t that strong. Hasn’t the commander wished to obtain more of them?”

“We can even have them arrest supernaturals within their borders and send them to the central region. Whether it’s to press them into labor or to maintain peace in various locales... these are all good options! We can use someone else’s hand to complete some of the commander’s goals for the dynasty!”

Li Hao inhaled sharply and looked at her. “Continue!”

“This cultivation system will bring far more benefits than that.” Lin Hongyu was on a roll upon seeing that the young man didn’t disapprove of any of her ideas. “The commander can even use other methods to disseminate martial dao to the world, such as having them construct one hundred schools. They’ll receive the system for free if they accomplish that task!

“It doesn’t even have to be martial dao academies, it can be schools that teach purely academic subjects. Those people won’t mind. One hundred schools for a new cultivation method? What a bargain!

“It would save so much time for us and we’d be able to immediately recruit students when we take down the four continents. We can even have them arrest their scholars and technicians to exchange for the method! That will fill out the faculty ranks then!

“Their friends and family can also be sent to the central region. Who cares about mundanes? There’s only twenty-two provinces in the central region and far more people on the four continents. If everyone we want is gathered in the central region, we’ll complete our reforms in a smoother and faster fashion!’

Li Hao swallowed hard. Everything made sense. The city lord had turned a simple cultivation method into something magical!

“Also, doesn’t the commander need plant spirits to grow grain for you?” Lin Hongyu wasn’t done yet. “You can also transact with them for the location of other ruins. They know where some that can’t be excavated are. All of that can be bought with money!”

“That is logical. We can concentrate all of our strength beneath the heavens to complete my reforms ahead of schedule!”

“That’s right!” Lin Hongyu grinned. “We can even use it to have the Prince of Southern Conciliation and Prince of Western Conciliation march on the western and southern continents. A mixture of threats and bribes can be offered alike. If they’re smart, they’ll leave with the cultivation method.”

Lin Hongyu listed her ideas one by one to a rapt audience. Li Hao never imagined that a cultivation method he was preparing to simply share with people could accomplish so many things. He felt that they could give it a try!

According to what Lin Hongyu said, it wouldn’t take too long, just ten days or so. That even included travel time. Once they arrived, the negotiations and transaction would be quickly concluded. If their targets were wise, they would agree to the trade. It would be more difficult to convince a fool. The smarter one was, the more easily they would take the bait.

As for the three great organizations, Lin Hongyu would try even them. She proposed skipping Red Moon since their feud with Li Hao ran too deep. But Yama and Celestial were possibilities, they might trade for it.

A merry Li Hao kept bobbing his head up and down. “Very good! We’ll proceed as you say. This is perfect, I was thinking of bringing the Silver Moon martial masters along to demonstrate how quickly they can make the switch. This way, we can have our targets provide mysterious power stones for even that! This is so very nice!”

Lin Hongyu chuckled. It wouldn’t be a small amount of stones, but their targets would likely provide it if they wished to see the might of the new system.

Li Hao grinned broadly. He would save a lot more money this way!

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On this day, large sums of Silver Moon martial masters began traveling in all directions. It was only the start of the new year, but they were already up to their eyebrows in assigned missions. And yet, no one found it a bad development. Instead, they were all highly excited as representatives were sent to all four continents.

It took only a few days for these people to reach some local tyrants and even those feuding with Li Hao. They were stunned that the Skystar Commander Office had sent envoys to them! Even more astonishing was that these Silver Moon martial masters wanted to offer up a new method for trade—the Breakthrough Incantation contained even the Five Styles!

Although many found the proposal unbelievable and suspected Li Hao's true intentions, the Silver Moon martial masters were willing to engage in a display. It only required some mysterious power stones and Water of Life from their hosts. While the amount required was sizable, it was worth it to these overlords to see this new cultivation style and peek into Li Hao's goal.

Surely the young man hadn't sent these envoys just because he wanted some mysterious power stones and Water of Life.

Once the demonstration began, skepticism turned to awe and horror. This was earth-shattering! It was a method that led one directly to thirty-six element Arcanus! It was mind-boggling and impossible, even madness-inducing. Had someone on Li Hao's side already cultivated to thirty-six elements? Why else would he be willing to relinquish this method?

It meant that Li Hao had even more advanced methods at his command!

But even so, this cultivation method was undeniably tempting. It was one most suited for those of this world. The various liege lords were shocked and terrified. How many thirty-six elements did Li Hao possess??

Based on what the young man said, that was ninth level Sun and Moon. But to those that his men visited, this was thirty-six element Arcanus! How unbelievable was it that he was willing to share this invincible method, and for such a small price! He was basically giving it away for free!

In return, he demanded a variety of strange requests—building schools, arresting supernaturals, buying scholars and technicians, the site locations of ruins...

None of this was particularly valuable to these local tyrants. This invincible cultivation method was the most important! They were perfectly happy to save a few mysterious power stones, even if they knew that Li Hao had future use for his demands. Anything he wanted would be used in his conquest of the world, but since the world was just about pacified, who cared?

A large quantity of resources and personnel started flowing to the central region. Many of the scholars and technicians arrived with a tragic outlook on life. This trip to the central region was likely to be their last! They were here to be slaves or even outright eaten!

Wails and sobs sounded all over the four continents. Those not in the know would think that Li Hao had suddenly decided to be a cannibal.

It was under these circumstances that a great deal of schools began to pop up throughout the central region. Sky canopies were also swiftly disseminated throughout the central region. They were an essential part of Li Hao's plans.

In light of this, the young man had decided to visit the Lu Zhen Research Center and increase the pace in which the sky canopies were being rolled out. It was the first month of the year 1731 in the Star Era. There were yet to be major movements from the highest caliber of battle strength in the central region, but undercurrents surged madly beneath the surface.

The curtains were rising on a new age.

Chapter 983: Divine Spirits (I)

Silver Moon martial masters busily taught the new cultivation method to various parts of the dynasty. Meanwhile, Li Hao chose to embark on a new journey—exploring the Lu Zhen Research Center ruin.

The Yun family had always hoped for the young man to open its doors, but he'd been neither convinced about the safety aspect nor was satisfied with the center's focus on mental strength resurrection. Hence, he'd dragged his heels on the matter.

One result of mental strength resurrection was already available in front of his eyes—Yun Yuming of the Yun family. The boy's mind was mixed with that of an ancient's and might have even been fully taken over.

That kind of situation was a development that Li Hao absolutely did not wish for. Although Zhang An had explained that New Martial citizens would not want the bodies of modern humans, the young man still wasn't fully convinced.

But today, Li Hao decided to open the ruins. There weren't enough sky canopies for his use. While Skystar City was constructing them, its speed was too slow to set up screens all over the central region. Additionally, their quality was mediocre and the images they projected were run-of-the-mill. Apparently, the screens of the ancients could even reflect one's freckles. The ones crafted in modern times could not accomplish that.

The difference in technological skill made it difficult for people to overcome this hurdle.

The sky canopy was one reason why Li Hao wished to access the research center, a second was for New Martial's blood qi pill. This was also one of his pain points.

Pills were not popular in modern times. They were at best pure energy mixed into pills and their level of categorization was quite ambiguous. Li Hao needed more support if he was to develop this area. Hence, the Lu Zhen Research Center became a very important place.

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Outside of Skystar City, near a small mountain.

Li Hao, Yun Yuming, Yun Yao, and Yun Yuqi were all present. Yuan Shuo was also attending in his capacity as an expert of ancient affairs. In addition, Li Hao had brought Director General Wang with him.

The director general was preparing to cast off his old body, but was in the preparatory stage. The dao meridians were not so easily sorted out, not unless he seized someone else's body. Since he wasn't willing to do that, he'd come to the research center in search of inspiration.

Meanwhile, Li Hao had also brought Director General Wang along as a failsafe. Although the Yuns told him that there were no strong existences inside, that the complex was just a pure research center, he still wished to guarantee everyone's safety.

Director General Wang was the best assurance. For the moment, he was stronger than Li Hao since he was an Immortal. The young man would have to progress to ninth level Sun and Moon if he wished to possess the director general's battle strength. That would take progressing past thirty dao meridians, and this was in the present age.

If times were as they were in the ancient civilization and core origin still present, Li Hao might not match the other even if he opened thirty-six dao meridians.

Yuming looked around with a complicated gaze. Yun Yao was as quiet as usual. She'd quietly carried out her regular missions or cultivated with the Demon Hunter Army after personally killing the seventh princess. She'd set foot into Solar level, which put her far behind Li Hao and the rest. However, she'd always been indifferent to favors or humiliation and regarded the world with a noncommittal air.

Li Hao quite admired this kind of mentality. After all, not everyone could be a premier heavyweight. They had to foster the right mentality about it. He couldn't help everyone. If one's martial dao could not keep up, then they should look upon that result with a mild manner.

Few were those who could accomplish that; emotional instability often resulted. When that happened, it was up to oneself to regulate their mental state.

"Is this the place, Yuming?" Yuqi chattered, every bit her regular self. "How do you know it's here? Don't lead Commander Li to the wrong spot..."

Yuming glanced at his older sister. She'd been in high spirits ever since learning that the blood debt owed to the Yun family had been paid in full. However, there was one matter he didn't dare bring up, and that was whether he was Yuming or the one from New Martial.

His sister was very good to him. Five years ago, a young Yuqi had brought him along her daily gigs to eke out a living. No matter how poor they were, she always utilized a variety of tricks to ensure that Yuming had enough to eat and wear. She would even sometimes give him money to buy books so he could help others.

When they lived in the slums, it was Yuming who brought back the other children that lived with them, but Yuqi who kept them alive. Even though the other kids were more useful in that they would eventually find a way to survive, Yuming felt that his sister pampered him the most over these five years. Hence, he didn't dare say that he had some memories from the ancient times.

"This is it, sis. I wouldn't point out the wrong direction!" Yuming smiled.

"Mmhmm, that's good." Yuqi didn't mind any of the matters that were running through Yuming's mind. All she felt was that life was good these days. Her aunt was alive and her little brother was naturally intelligent and entrusted with important matters by the commander. He was apparently part of the sky canopy team in the Skystar Commander Office! He traveled around, installing sky canopies with some of the elders from the academy.

Those elders were once her grandfather's colleagues. They treated her younger brother well and looked after him.

Life was very satisfying. Yuqi didn't have grand ambitions and was assigned small tasks within the Skystar Commander Office that were within her abilities. She was content, despite the lack of an exact job title. Upon hearing that Li Hao was going to visit her family's ruins, she elected to join the expedition team.

It was why she'd come to Li Hao in the first place, so that he would take revenge for her family. In exchange, the Yuns had traded the ruins for him taking action. Yuqi knew that she must keep her word and deliver what she'd agreed to. Otherwise, the Yun reputation would be destroyed.

Now that the nine ministries and royal family were gone, most of the nobles that'd massacred the family had been executed. A small portion that were relevant to other matters were either exiled to hard labor on the border or imprisoned. Yuqi was immensely satisfied.

As for recovering the family's good name, that wasn't necessary. The Yuns hadn't committed any egregious acts even when threatened. Hence, the three great organizations bore the blame for their extermination. The government hadn't been able to come up with the excuse that the family had colluded with the three great organizations, so there was no need to clear the Yun family's name.

"Commander, what I promised you is complete after the ruins are open!" Yuqi was delighted and her eyes sparkled with a bit of mischief.

It's nothing to do with me if you come back empty-handed. I only said that I'll give you the ruins, but didn't say that there's treasure inside. In her eyes, the family had been so weak back in the day. With the commander being in control of the world now, he may not be interested in any of the treasure that could be found within.

It wasn't her fault if they didn't reap a rich harvest from this expedition.

“Mmhhh, our agreement is complete once we enter the ruins!” Li Hao smiled with a nod. He turned to Yuming. “Will you guys wait outside or go in with us?”

“Let’s go in together,” Yuqi responded before her brother had a chance to. “People will think our family plotted against the commander if anything unexpected happens. I remember that grandfather said there’s no danger inside the ruins.”

“Sis...” Yuming wanted to say something, but Yun Yao interrupted him.

“Let’s go in together. Yuming, you know a bit about these ruins. There shouldn’t be any danger, right?” She glanced at her nephew, knowing a bit of the inside story. Yuming might have inherited some of the ancient figure’s memories. If that one wanted to scheme against Li Hao, this was the best time to.

And if that took place, the Yuns would no longer have the face to show themselves in public. If there really was danger, she and Yuqi could at least go down together in the ruins. It would at least show the young man that the family really didn’t have designs against him.

Li Hao didn’t care about any of that. His only considerations were that Yuqi and Yun Yao were very weak. They might encounter danger if they entered.

“You two should stay behind,” he said when his thoughts travelled here. “Yuming is enough since he knows a bit about the situation inside.”

“Commander...” Yun Yao wanted to speak on, but the young man smiled.

“It’s fine. You can let the others know if we don’t emerge after a day. For now, you can just take up guard outside.”

Yun Yao let the matter drop, whereas Yuming listened dejectedly to the exchange. It was clear that no one fully trusted him.

Li Hao said nothing further; the earth split open as he utilized his supernatural abilities. A passageway appeared, one that led to a door. That required a key to open and Yun Yao had long given it to Li Hao.

The four walked inside. Panther wasn't coming along for this expedition since it was searching for its dao meridians.

"The Yuns created this passageway themselves," Yuan Shuo identified with his technical expertise. "The ancient ruins start at its end. That door should be a blast door from an ancient military security area."

Li Hao nodded while Director General Wang flicked a glance at Yuan Shuo. The old man knew quite a bit! He'd definitely dug into a lot of their tombs.

The young man took out a key and inserted it into a hole on the door. The metal door opened automatically when he twisted it, giving way to searing light.

"It's the automated sensor system!" Yuming immediately explained. "The research center has an automated sensor system and it was broken before. It's reactivated since the world has awakened and there is more energy flowing through the environment."

A long hallway stretched into view behind the door. Lights provided bright illumination!

"Stop!" the other three shouted at the same time when they saw that Li Hao was about to walk in. The young man froze.

"It was safe to walk through this place when everything was quiet," Yuming immediately explained. "Now that it's recovered somewhat, there's tiny energy cannons embedded on all sides of the hallway. They're used against invaders, so there's still a bit of danger."

Director General Wang nodded, he plainly knew about these defensive measures as well. On the other hand, Yuan Shuo had reacted strictly from experience. Only Li Hao was almost completely inexperienced as he hadn't explored many ruins before. Most of them were under the care of plant spirits and not this motley array of contraptions.

"Use the city lord seal!" Yuming looked at Director General Wang. The director general nodded and displayed the Black Tortoise Seal at the entrance to the hallway.

"Detected: the arrival of Battle Heaven's city lord." A robotic voice emitted from the screen at the entrance. "Commencing facial recognition... Facial recognition error. Visitor is Director General Wang Ye of Security at Battle Heaven..."

"Commencing core origin scan... Scan error, visitor is not the Battle Heaven city lord!"

"Connecting to the network... Network error. Inspecting seal transfer... Seal transfer complete. Wang Ye is acting city lord and possesses a level two clearance. Entry permitted!"

Li Hao blinked in rapid succession at what he'd heard.

Chapter 984: Divine Spirits (II)

"There used to be a network system across the entire civilization," Director General Wang explained. "Information could be exchanged simultaneously. The nine base stations were in charge of relaying information—where the redwood tree sat in residence—but we later lost contact with them. Now that the network has been reconnected, we have no other place to communicate with."

"Is communication possible if we recover the nine base stations?" Li Hao asked curiously.

"It should be," nodded the director general. "I asked the redwood last time and learned where the other eight base stations are. Their plant spirits are most likely alive. If we can capture those sites and reactivate the base stations, we should be able to restore full network coverage."

“That will further perfect the sky canopy system. Otherwise, problems can still easily develop. The base stations that Yuming have set up for the moment are simple and crude. Others can easily sabotage them.”

“Everything is more troublesome without the nine base stations.” Yuming nodded in agreement.

Something seemed to be retreated throughout the hallway as they chatted. The lurking sense of danger looming over the group vanished. Just as they prepared to set foot inside, Li Hao suddenly walked up to the screen and displayed Stellaris.

A surge of energy reached out probingly and the robotic voice quickly sounded, “Stellaris ripples detected... the Sword Sovereign has not arrived... His heir has arrived as a visitor... and is hereby bestowed with level one clearance...”

“Seriously...?” Director General Wang muttered helplessly. The damned ruins changed their response based on who they detected! It wasn’t even the Sword Sovereign standing here, just a few ripples from his weapon!

“There are three levels of clearance at the research center,” Yuming explained. “Regular researchers have level three clearance and can come and go at will. Some executives have level two, which permits them to activate some unique devices. The research head has level one clearance, giving him control over most of the machines and warehouse. The Sword Sovereign possesses a special clearance, handing over the entire research center to him.”

The special clearance level was plainly outside of the hierarchy of authorization.

Li Hao nodded, he’d been struck by a stroke of inspiration just now since he remembered Red Moon once disseminated certain rumors that Stellaris could control a lot of ruins. He’d never verified it, and today it seemed that while control would be difficult to achieve, he would walk through the ruins with a lot of face.

Stellaris stirred in his grasp. Li Hao smiled at it—the weapon seemed to have awakened by quite a bit after he traveled to the Hao Cosmos. It responded to his commands much more readily. Previously, he'd only been able to prompt a response out of the sword through the Breathing Method of the Five Styles.

It looked like those days were over.

With Li Hao and Director General Wang both bearing clearances, the two walked ahead of Yuming and Yuan Shuo. As they passed through the hallway, Yuming began giving a tour.

“This is the entrance hallway of the research center. There are eight experimental divisions in the center, each in charge of different subjects. Here, we research mental reincarnation, divine spirits, the differences between a main and minor world, the range of core origin dao, the construction of passageways through the universe, classified research into the Star Gate, signal transmission through the void, and the effects of a minor world becoming independent.”

Li Hao blinked. This place studied very grand topics! Wasn't this just a small branch center?

“Is this what branch centers focus on?” Director General Wang also seemed surprised. “I thought they would look more into new generation armor and the like.”

“That's the mission of armament research centers. We are not in charge of that.”

The other three snapped their glances to Yuming.

“Don't look at me like that,” the boy said with resignation. “More of the ancient's memories are coming to me in this place. They exert a greater influence over me, which is why I said we. I'm putting myself in the shoes of that ancient senior.”

“That's not good!” Li Hao frowned.

Yuming sighed and didn't say anything. It was to be expected that Li Hao was opposed to his condition. For an ancient to take possession of a modern human's body... While it hadn't really possessed Yuming, the more that ancient memories revitalized, the more they would occupy the boy's mind. That would direct him down the path the ancient had taken.

There was nothing that could be done about this.

"Do your actions fall under the umbrella of mental reincarnation?"

Yuming nodded. "The main world is divided into the yin and yang world. The Human King accomplished this later in his rule, after he established and assumed mastery over the main world. Mental reincarnation is possible within the Human King's inner world, but Silver Moon does not possess the requisite requirements. Hence, we wanted to experiment here."

"I know one person who did something similar—Hong Tu of the Wind and Cloud Pavilion."

"What he did... was probably in line with the yin yang conversion method from the main world." Yuming cocked his head in thought. "There are many drawbacks to that method and the old memories will be quarantined. They can't really be considered the same person. We can only describe them as having watched someone's memories, such as watching a movie. That doesn't mean the new person will fully commit to the memories!

"Hence, the drawbacks are huge. They should actually be viewed as a completely new person. What the research center was studying was to fully combine the memories. I would be you and you would be me. There would be no difference between the two.

"However, the research center had its fair share of difficulties and disadvantages. This world was not complete and the dao of life and death yet to be perfected. Such a conversion of mental strength was hard to achieve.

“In order to overcome these failings, one had to borrow the mental strength of the main world like I did. In other words, the possession that the commander speaks of. The true reincarnation method does not entail these actions. Reversing life and death, yin and yang consumes only energy, a special energy. It is not a low level body possession like what I’ve done.”

“So you finally admit to it?” Li Hao snorted.

“What else can I say since that is what the commander thinks?” Yuming responded wearily. “Not to mention, I don’t want to do anything like that either. My mental strength was quite free when stored in the research center. But Yun Haoran—that is, my grandfather—insisted on guiding my mental strength into a physical body. He triggered an irreversible reincarnation process. I’m quite resigned about it too.”

Li Hao didn’t respond and continued walking forward, passing through the hallway. Buildings loomed into view. The area was so brightly lit that it was as if day. This was a stark contrast to the dimness of other ruins.

“Are there other powerhouses residing here in mental form?”

“I don’t know.” Yuming shook his head. “There was a research head, three vice heads, eight department heads, three hundred researchers, and one thousand guards back in the day. The research head, two vice heads, some of the department heads, and two-thirds of the guard followed the Sword Sovereign when he set out on his campaign. The rest were in charge of maintaining the research center’s functions. I was in charge of the department of mental reincarnation...”

“You were one of the department heads?”

“Ah... yes,” Yuming nodded after some thought. “But I was so weak that my mental strength had long scattered! If anyone’s still alive, they should be one of the executives. If any of the guards are still around, they’ll be like the guards of the other city—only bits of their obsession will be lingering.”

“One of the eight department heads... why don’t I know you?” Director General Wang suddenly remarked.

“Does the director general know anyone other than our research head?” Yuming asked drolly.

“I... do,” Wang Ye responded sheepishly. “I knew one of your vice heads—Liu Pinghao!”

“We don’t have a vice head by this name,” Yuming answered with resignation after some thought. “Director General Wang... truly is a police officer! You set traps everywhere! Liu Pinghao... Liu Pinghao... he should’ve been one of the vice commanders of the local guard.”

Li Hao looked at Director General Wang; the man grinned back at him. “Ahem, then I must be remembering incorrectly. My apologies!”

Yuming’s resignation deepened. “The sky canopies and blood qi pills that the commander wants are basic items that can be found in the first warehouse. That one usually holds bits and ends of lower level research, they should still be there. We sometimes upgraded our basic research in our free time...”

Well, fine! It was Li Hao’s turn to be resigned. What they valued immensely was nothing to the ancients.

“So there was a divine spirit department out of the eight?” The young man was rather curious about their research material.

“Correct,” Yuming nodded. “Some local divine spirits were born when the minor world first came to be. We killed some and some outright dispersed, but left their corpses behind. There’s one such body here, which provided the basis of our research.”

“Which god?”

“The earth god! He held sway over the earth and possessed a formidable body, which is why his body remained after his death. He was a peak Saint when he died! Recall that the core origin dao still shone upon this world back then, so he was a turn peak Saint...”

“He won’t have come back to life, will he?” Li Hao suddenly asked. “The revitalization of the world might revive some of these dead spirits.”

The old gods were dead, but they could be resurrected. If the world was awake, that gave them ample conditions to come back to life. It would be very troublesome then, even if Saints now were a far cry from Saints then.

Director General Wang now was not the Director General Wang of the past either. Even if he was, he was still much weaker than a peak Saint.

“He can’t have.” Yuming shook his head. “The Sword Sovereign killed the earth god himself. He will not revive unless the Sword Sovereign’s sword intent is extinguished. Even if a new god is born, it won’t be that one.

“Do not underestimate the strength of a New Martial exalted emperor. If someone wishes to resurrect powerhouses that the exalted emperors have killed... Silver Moon needs to be stronger than the main world for that to be possible!”

Alright, I guess.

The group had entered the research center proper. Eight buildings were scattered throughout, each independent of the others.

“This place teemed with activity back then,” Yuming sighed. “The research center was sealed off when disaster arrived and eventually, all of us died in here.”

“You knew that death was in store for you.” Li Hao frowned. “Did no one run outside to search for a chance of survival?”

“We couldn’t,” Yumign explained. “After the research center was sealed, it would take the research head to open it again. We’re not like the main cities that can send out some of their people. We couldn’t even leave.”

Li Hao nodded and looked at Director General Wang. “You guys knew you were going to die, so did none of you take the risk to venture outside?”

“Since we’d chosen to stay behind and defend, we couldn’t run around haphazardly,” Director General Wang smiled. “What if danger occurred when we weren’t in residence?”

Bah, inflexible!

Li Hao was of the mind that he certainly would’ve chosen to leave. Though the outside world was perilous, that didn’t mean there was no chance at all. Yet Director General Wang and the others had chosen to remain at their posts. One could say that they were fulfilling their duties—those not of New Martial would probably not understand.

Chapter 985: Divine Spirits (III)

All of the lights were on at the eight buildings, but the scene was very quiet as there was no one home.

“Why don’t you give a yell and see if there are more old friends present?” Li Hao looked at Yuming. “We don’t want to cause a misunderstanding, after all. We... won’t hold back if we encounter anyone who tries to seize our bodies.”

Yuming felt that these words made sense. Although he hadn’t discovered other survivors when he was here, he called out, “Are there any colleagues still alive? I’m Hu Xiao from the mental reincarnation department! Come on out if you’re in there!”

No response was forthcoming. It remained as quiet as ever.

“There weren’t many powerhouses in the research center.” Director General Wang looked around. “They might’ve all completely died. Let’s take a look at warehouse one for the moment and retrieve anything we need. We can slowly explore the premises later!”

The group nodded and followed Yuming toward the short buildings. One in particular loomed in front of them and a massive door blocked their way.

“Commander Li can open the door with your clearance!”

Li Hao unsheathed Stellaris without second thought and showed it to the screen at the door. The door automatically opened in a display of sophisticated technology.

The warehouse wasn’t the typical messy and disorganized storeroom that one might expect. Its contents were neatly labelled in a clear and straightforward manner. Labels were affixed above all manner of small storage spaces.

Li Hao quickly ran his eyes over the labels, stopping in front of a small room. “Sky canopies. Remaining: 13,260 pieces.”

“This is it!” Yuming declared joyously. “I didn’t think there would be more than ten thousand left! I thought there would be a few thousand at most...”

“More than ten thousand pieces...” Li Hao grinned as well. “There’s roughly three thousand cities across Skystar Dynasty. This is sufficient for a few pieces in each city! We won’t have to devote too much effort and resources into producing them anymore...”

“These things are too easily broken.” Yuming shook his head. “It’s best to have more of them, and it’s too few for each city to have only three pieces! It’s best for there to be a piece in every town and

village—that's the basic level of coverage! If we want full coverage, then each household needs to have one and treat it as a television. Only then is that full coverage!"

Li Hao clucked his tongue. That was out of reach! They would need several billion pieces to achieve that goal. Just the households alone would require more than three billion pieces. That in itself was out of reach for the dynasty.

Of course, they could treat this as a goal to attain in the future. At present, it would be good enough to have coverage in every city.

Li Hao turned his attention to the rest of the small rooms, captivated by what he found.

"Blood qi pills, bone tempering pills, bone strengthening pills, organ forging pills... Remaining: 127 recipes." The young man clucked his tongue again. That was a lot of pills! Did the ancients like to take pills that much?

Yuming scrounged up a small screen from a random corner and brought it over with a smile. "I can't believe this still works! This is a record of the warehouse reserves. The commander can look through it for whatever you're searching for..."

Li Hao craned his neck with curiosity, but many of the items were beyond his comprehension. Despite knowing their names, he didn't know what they were used for.

Yuan Shuo looked with him and suddenly exclaimed, "This is nice!" The old man pointed at a line item. "Schematics for a first rank energy train! I've read about this incredible invention in an ancient tome. Its speed can reach five hundred kilometers an hour! If we can utilize it throughout the dynasty, it will only take twenty-two hours to travel the eleven thousand kilometers from White Moon City to Skystar City!

"There are thirty carriages to each of these trains and each carriage easily holds fifty people. One trip can transport two thousand people from the north to Skystar City in a single day!"

“That fast?” Li Hao’s eyes widened.

Yuming hadn’t paid attention to this item before, but elaborated when he saw Li Hao’s interest, “It can travel up to five hundred kilometers per hour. That is actually not fast when taking into account the fact that it is powered by energy. It’s very fast for ordinary people, but not of much use for powerhouses.

“If it takes twenty-two hours to get to a battlefield when fighting erupts, then the battle is over by the time we get there! Of course, this infrastructure is useful for transporting ordinary people. If the construction schematics are here... let me think... They must’ve been preparing to build train tracks across Silver Moon back in the day, but didn’t have enough time to get to it.”

“This I know about,” nodded Director General Wang. “A lot of people later recommended that we directly build transportation gates instead, so the energy trains were set aside.”

“This is a great invention!” Li Hao was highly inspired. “We have a lot of supernaturals to draw from and can absolutely build tracks that run through the continents and seas. If we can build this kind of transportation tool, it will only take one day to travel from the four continents to the central region! That will fully facilitate the flow of people between the dynasty...”

Just one day was an astounding speed. Li Hao wouldn’t travel much faster if he flew, not unless he purposefully accelerated his pace. And before one could fly, it would take anyone at least a week to traverse the distance.

If one walked... that might be the end of them. Ten thousand kilometers could take a year of solid walking. Regular people wouldn’t make it in even a year.

“Let’s locate the schematics and see if we can build it with our current level of technology.” Li Hao was in a great mood. “Even if we can’t, there ought to be a hope of doing so if we use mysterious power to substitute for certain machines or technologies.”

This was when the benefits of the supernatural domain came to the fore. If various metals weren't hard enough, metal supernaturals could step forward to harden them. Anything that was subpar or didn't exist could be modified or created, so long as the supernatural was strong enough to do so.

What they lacked in technology, they could supplement with mysterious power.

New Martial hadn't possessed as many tricks as modern supernaturals did. In that age, the physical body, mental strength, and blood qi were mainstream. No one commanded the motley array of supernatural abilities.

Yuan Shuo nodded in agreement and identified some other points of interest. "This place is a treasure trove!" He beamed broadly. "We should've come here earlier! A lot of our technological problems will be resolved if we empty out this place..."

Many of Li Hao's ideas would be quickly turned into reality with the support of what was in the research center. Hence, Yuan Shuo was jubilant, but also slightly regretful. "Too bad that New Martial didn't invest too much in Silver Moon back in the day. A lot of things exist only on paper and weren't officially undertaken."

"It wasn't that they didn't execute their plans," Director General Wang shook his head. "But that there wasn't enough time to do so. It'd only been a few years since we took up residence in Silver Moon. Another important point was that this place was technically the Sword Sovereign's fiefdom.

"The Sword Sovereign's approach was a more natural one that blended with the world. Anyone who moved from the main world wouldn't be a weakling, even regular citizens were strong enough. Hence, there was no need to build these extraneous constructs."

"These items are rotting away in the warehouse," Li Hao laughed after he looked around. "We'll take them all back with us! These are great treasures!"

Yuming didn't say anything, despite the young man acting like a bandit. They could take whatever they wanted!

“Then we’ll come back for all of this later. Does the commander wish to visit the mental reincarnation department?” asked the boy. “There is some special equipment there that can help mental strength be reborn.”

Li Hao thought it over, then nodded. Since they were already here, it would be nice to take a look around.

The group quickly left the warehouse and headed for one of the buildings. Its doors were tightly shut; Li Hao waved Stellaris at it to open the door. Yuming swept inside, looking around with nostalgia.

“This is the mental strength reincarnation department. There were thirty-four members back in the day. They’re probably all dead now. The most important floor was the reincarnation floor at the top. I’ll take everyone up there for a look.”

The group wasn’t familiar with the subject, but interested nonetheless—particularly Director General Wang. They filed into the elevator and headed upstairs.

.....

The top floor.

The elevator doors opened. Yuming’s expression shifted as soon as they did so, Li Hao frowned. Director General Wang’s eyes widened and he grabbed at Yuming next to them!

“This has nothing to do with me!” the boy quickly protested.

However, the director general ignored him and immediately took Yuming into custody!

In the empty foyer, a figure sat up on a machine. Its presence was formidable and dense. Golden light sparkled in its eyes like it was a divine spirit. As it regarded the visitors, it spoke in an aloof, commanding tone. “Is it not inappropriate to enter another’s domain without invitation?”

Yuming’s face shifted through a variety of expressions; he didn’t struggle in Director General Wang’s grasp. Instead, he simply looked at the figure and demanded, “Who... who are you? Damn it, you’ve occupied the divine spirit’s body and taken possession through the mental reincarnation method! You’re not of my department!”

Li Hao was frowning as well. Someone had taken possession of a divine spirit’s body? So this body belonged to the divine spirit that those of New Martial killed, but another person’s mind occupied it?

The powerhouse was brown all over with golden sparks erupting from its eyes. He looked at Yuming and asked after a long moment, “Who... are you?”

Yuming had been able to keep his temper in check before, but now erupted, “I’m Hu Xiao, damn it! Who the hell are you?! Who granted you entrance to my department?! This place was sealed off when I left five years ago, how did you get inside??”

Li Hao didn’t say a word; he simply operated the supernatural characters within his body and summoned all of his supernatural locks. Yuming had been very confident earlier that there was no one here. And yet, a divine spirit had popped up.

The young man could sense some unique aspects about the figure in front of him. It seemed to contain a domineering earth aura. His own ‘earth’ supernatural character was trembling. In fact, his earth aura shook as well!

The god of earth?

A stern look entered Li Hao's eyes. Were all divine spirits like such? Their mere presence alone greatly affected his earth supernatural abilities.

One thing to be thankful for was that the 'dao' character within his body emanated light to dispel these influences. His earth supernatural ability gradually returned to normal.

The world had bestowed the 'dao' character upon Li Hao. It was his reward for consolidating the great dao of the world and granted him immunity against these divine spirits.

Divine spirits... the Divine Nation of the west.

Chapter 986: Divine Spirits (IV)

Li Hao regarded the situation gravely. The implications were more than just a chance encounter of a divine spirit, but that an unknown number of divine spirits had revived in the distant western nation. If all of them possessed abilities such as these... then all supernaturals would be greatly affected!

If one only had supernatural abilities to call upon, then running into a divine spirit of the corresponding element would be a disaster. Meanwhile, cultivators of the thirty-six meridians wouldn't be affected, because all of those meridians were unattributed!

That was the greatest silver lining in this unfortunate development.

The earthen-colored heavyweight walked down from the machine without responding. It considered Yuming for a while before responding, "Hu Xiao? You took possession of an outsider? I'm simply occupying a corpse that's not in use, it's just laying there. How dare you point fingers at me??"

"I haven't taken possession!" Yuming retorted hotly. "This was an unfortunate accident! I was in charge of the mental reincarnation department and the corpse of the divine spirit was under the divine department's control. Who are you to unlawfully seize the research center's property?!"

Director General Wang didn't make a sound; he silently observed the unknown figure, attempting to determine its strength. Divine spirits... were the equivalent of Saints back in the day. The other was not a core origin dao cultivator, but of the unique heritage of Silver Moon Territory.

With this world now isolated from the main world, their opponent should be in peak condition. That made them a bonafide Saint! Compared to a Saint without the support of core origin dao... their opponent would crush him!

Director General Wang was starting to regret not inviting his martial uncle to come along. He hadn't done so because there hadn't been premier heavyweights in the research center back in the day. Even the research head was but peak Immortal. In the absence of core origin dao and the research head focusing on his work instead of cultivation, the director general wouldn't be afraid even in the event of a surprise encounter in the ruins.

But now, here came someone who'd taken possession of a divine spirit's body!

Li Hao had been observing the other all this time. The figure possessed exceedingly dense earth energy. There was no golden light around its body, which made it different from the powerhouses of the New Martial era. Therefore, it didn't follow the golden body cultivation method of that age.

Occupying a divine spirit's body and then utilizing the mental reincarnation method to combine its mental strength with the body... that was a good idea that would prevent the user from losing too much battle strength.

But, it was said that mental reincarnation weakened mental strength. That meant that the user might not be able to fully control this immense power of earth.

Earthen-colored armor manifested over the other person's body. It looked at the three strangers, then at Yuming.

“Very well then, Director Hu. Our orders have to adapt to changes in circumstance,” it said calmly. “Occupying the divine spirit’s body is indeed a violation of research center rules, but so many years had passed and you were gone too. I had no choice but to do so... I... am Qi Yun!”

“Vice Head Qi?” Yuming started. “You’re still alive?”

“If even you are alive, is it a surprise that I am?”

“He’s the only vice head who stayed behind, Qi Yun!” Yuming quickly explained to the others.

Director General Wang raised an eyebrow. He wasn’t familiar with this person as they weren’t of the same administrative system.

“Vice Head Qi... I’ve heard many great things about you!” Li Hao said after assessing the situation. “This is Director General Wang Ye of Security at Battle Heaven and the acting city lord! I am the heir of the Li family and wielder of Stellaris, as well as the Eleventh Division leader of the Reserve Defenders of Battle Heaven Army.

“In order to prevent unnecessary conflict, please accept military command in accordance with wartime regulations!” Here, the young man paused for a second. “Please retreat from the divine corpse and relinquish your control over it.”

“This isn’t appropriate, is it?” Qi Yun raised an eyebrow. “Your identities have not been confirmed and the research center is a very important place. We cannot easily give up resistance and allow enemies to invade...”

Li Hao laughed and sent Stellaris soaring into the air. “Does Vice Head Qi recognize Stellaris? Is that not enough to prove my identity? Or does the vice head think that New Martial has been over for so long that these rules are useless?”

Encountering a powerhouse that'd occupied a divine corpse was beyond everyone's expectations. But since the other was a New Martial heavyweight, they didn't want to turn hostile if they could help it.

"Vice Head Qi, everyone is to obey military commands in times of war!" Director General Wang boomed. "The strong all have military titles and yours should only be an academic one. The Eleventh Division leader is a general, so all you need to do is obey orders!"

"Vice Head Qi, it's understandable that you chose to occupy the divine corpse after so many years..." Yuming said as well. "But right now, it's better for the vice head to temporarily relinquish control over the body. The mental reincarnation method isn't very complete, so brashly combining your mental force with the corpse might create enormous drawbacks."

Qi Yun stayed silent; no one knew what he was thinking. After a while, he raised his head to see that Director General Wang had summoned the city lord seal. The characters beneath the seal sparkled with radiance.

"I do not intend to defy orders," he sighed. "It's just that you four were newly arrived and your identities unknown..."

A surge of mental strength wafted out of the body and coalesced into a humanoid form that was slightly intangible. The divine corpse lost some of its luster.

"I have relinquished control over the divine corpse." Qi Yun's faint image wavered. "What would you like to do with me?"

Director General Wang was in a difficult position, but Li Hao was not. He transmitted an order for the director general to lock onto the form of mental strength, whereas the young man took a step forward to the body.

Vice Head Qi ignored his motions at first, but blinked and turned back for a look.

The ‘dao’ character hovered around Li Hao; the young man was stunned by what he found. The divine corpse was exceedingly formidable and there were no supernatural locks within its body. There was only one thick dao meridian that ran through the whole body.

An earth dao meridian!

Li Hao sent his character into the dao meridian without a word. Magnificence shone from the young man as a peculiar strength appeared. As Vice Head Qi watched on incredulously, Li Hao severed the thick dao meridian’s connection to the Hao Cosmos. He blocked the entrance with the ‘dao’ character.

The divine corpse’s presence immediately began to weaken. Only then did Li Hao heave a sigh of relief and turn with a smile. Whatever this Qi Yun had been planning, there was nothing to plan with now.

Encountering the vice head was a surprise, but also a stroke of luck. This was the body of a divine spirit and the mental strength of a senior executive in the research center! A lot of questions swirled in Li Hao’s mind, perhaps the vice head could help him with a couple.

As for Yuming, not only were his memories not too clear, but he’d only been in charge of the mental reincarnation department before. He might not know as much as this vice head as the latter had temporarily overseen the entire research center.

“How did you do it?” asked an astonished Vice Head Qi. “The strength inside the divine spirit was boundless without end and impossible to seal away. It kept absorbing energy from an unknown source... why could you seal it off?”

“The vice head will know later!” Li Hao chuckled. “Is there anyone else alive here other than you?”

“No.” Vice Head Qi shook his head. “There were very few researchers at the Immortal level. Those below Immortal have long decayed. Hu Xiao survived purely by accident—his mental strength should be a bit stronger than others. I had a chance to live only because I was an Immortal.

“It wasn’t until recently that my consciousness revitalized. I found that everyone was dead, but that the divine corpse was still here and didn’t show signs of decline. On the contrary, it began to revitalize over the past couple of years, which is why I chose to occupy it.”

“Revitalize?” Li Hao’s eyes widened. “When did that start?”

“A few years ago,” Vice Head Qi answered. “As for exactly when, I’m not sure. There were already signs of resurrection when I woke. Just in case, I chose mental reincarnation to prevent it from fully coming back to life.”

This meant to say that the divine spirits of the Divine Nation might really be resurrecting. This was not good news! Ancient powerhouses might not be able to appear prior to the second awakening, but what of divine spirits?

They may be able to!

They were part of the world to begin with, so they might accomplish what others could not do.

A headache brewed at Li Hao’s temples. This was a hassle! At the same time, it was also a fortuitous occurrence to obtain a divine corpse here. This would provide the perfect research opportunity and it might be very helpful for exploring dao meridians.

“Let’s leave first and return to Skystar Town!”

“We can’t...” Vice Head Qi murmured.

“I can take you guys out. Don’t worry, that’s how Director General Wang entered the research center.”

The vice head looked thoughtfully at him before nodding, "Alright."

Li Hao didn't think too much of it. He would assign this one to Zhang An first as he couldn't be bothered to determine if he was a good guy or bad. Perhaps this one had bowed his head in the moment so he could strike when everyone was off guard...

But it was fine. The young man had sealed off the Hao Cosmos from the corpse, thereby controlling its strength. Even if the vice head had ulterior motives in mind, they would prove futile.

What was extraordinarily surprising was only one dao meridian in the divine spirit's body. One dao meridian that possessed Saint level battle strength... that was big news! This divine corpse might be their greatest harvest on this trip!

Chapter 987: Kindred Spirits (I)

Inside the research center.

Li Hao and the others didn't say anything after Vice Head Qi chose to capitulate. Li Hao used supernatural characters to seal off the divine corpse and left the research center with it and the vice head.

They could come back for the items in the warehouses later. All of Skystar City was Li Hao's these days.

The two from the Yun family were still waiting outside, but Li Hao didn't say a word to them. The rest who'd gone into the ruins thought he was irritated by Yuming, that maybe he felt Yuming had deceived him.

Yuming started and stopped with a few words a few times—Li Hao ignored him. He wasn't mad about that matter. He wasn't even mad.

The young man was turning over something in his mind. Mental reincarnation required a body. Where had Hong Tu's body come from? Or had he resurrected as a baby? Was his method an unconventional kind of reincarnation, or was his a standard one like Vice Head Qi's?

Could mental strength fully meld with its new body to the point of preventing substantial loss in strength? Director General Wang wanted a body of the new age now, what should Li Hao do? Create one out of thin air?

Could he create the extraordinarily strong human body? It was so complicated with endless supernatural locks, how was he supposed to create it?

So many thoughts ran through his mind that Li Hao felt if he could create a human body, then he would be establishing a new age all by himself! A new dao, even!

Humans of this age were born with a countless number of dao meridians that made it impossible to imitate. But... if a myriad of daos was difficult to copy, what about one big one? What if only one supernatural character was needed, such as the one that he saw in the divine corpse!

Could one great dao be cultivated to an extremity of achievement?

Li Hao sank into deep contemplation. There were countless dao meridians in the human body; he considered all of them as meridians of great dao and thus, necessary for cultivation. They'd managed to select their thirty-six for current needs, but even creating a body with thirty-six meridians was very difficult.

Could a cultivator just utilize one meridian to the very end? What heights could they reach, what cultivation level? One dao meridian was too weak!

Why are divine spirits so strong? That was the body of a Saint!

Could it be... that the great dao could be cultivated in more ways than what he'd said?

Off to the side, Yuan Shuo saw his disciple's expression scrunched up in deep thought. He could tell that Li Hao wasn't angry about Yuming or Vice Head Qi. This student of his was sometimes very petty, but this was clearly not one of those occasions.

"What's wrong?" he had to ask since even Director General Wang was too embarrassed to say anything.

"Teacher." Li Hao jerked out of his reverie. "Isn't one dao meridian the strength of just one dao at its peak? It's one meridian. The cultivator shouldn't be stronger than Apex no matter how strong it gets."

Yuan Shuo blinked and looked at his student. He didn't probe the divine corpse. "Not necessarily! There are differences in strength when it comes to dao meridians. The one we just discovered, for example. Is it the same level of strength compared to a dao meridian that has been fully saturated?"

"Dao meridians are certain to be strong at the end. If they keep growing, they will eventually be so strong that the body can't bear it!"

Li Hao blinked.

"Also, dao meridians proudly soar through the Hao Cosmos and void universe to devour the force of dao," Yuan Shuo continued. "They most certainly can keep growing or even devour other dao meridians! You know the Breathing Method of the Five Styles as well. Isn't it five meridians as one in the end?"

Li Hao blinked again.

"Do you want to ask if just one meridian can lead one to the Saint or Empyrean King levels at its peak? I don't know, but it's not out of the question! It's just that it's too difficult to rely on one dao meridian to reach those heights!"

“The excavation of one dao meridian is a problem. That easily leads to the body’s collapse. And another is the concept of ultimate strength. What is the ultimate? With that, the problems are apparent...”

“No no no, teacher.” Li Hao shook his head. “Did you just say that dao meridians can swallow other dao meridians?”

“Of course!” Yuan Shuo blinked. “Or we can also say that they can fuse together. Is there a problem with that?”

Li Hao looked around blankly. No, there wasn’t. He knew that was a possibility. Therefore... problems might arise from the supernatural domain having a different kind of cultivation system.

“Teacher, everyone has their preferred aura and supernatural ability,” Li Hao murmured. “Not everyone is like me and able to utilize everything. Based off our simulations, everyone will be able to do everything in the end!

“But... this disregards everyone’s strong suits. Some are skilled at the sword, others are skilled at the fist. If people cultivate everything like we do, everyone will learn everything. That also means a loss of personal advantage!”

“It will indeed homogenize cultivators, but everyone will be strong.”

“No no no, how can we lose what makes us special?” A light flickered in Li Hao’s eyes. “Teacher, all daos are the same path! We can walk the path that suits us the most, excavate all of the dao meridians, then choose one that is best for us as the main dao meridian. That one can devour the others to accomplish the state of all paths leading to the same end!

“Yes, that’s right!” The young man’s glance snapped to the divine corpse. “He might not only have this one dao meridian, but that his others have been integrated into this one! He’s skilled at the earth

attribute, but that doesn't mean he only has this attribute to call upon! Using his other meridians to strengthen one dao meridian... is also a kind of ability!

"Yeah, that's absolutely right!" he suddenly burst into joy. "Supernatural abilities should not be cultivated in the way that I've mentioned. Or rather, I should say that not everyone is suited for that kind of cultivation style. It's the exclusive domain of premier geniuses and powerhouses!

"Otherwise, everyone would practice countless auras and supernatural abilities. Cultivators can't proceed down that path indefinitely. Only combining all paths into one and walking the one most suited for oneself can we bring our dao to the utmost peak!

"At the end, we can even devour the unattributed dao meridians and combine all of the attributed meridians into one. It will be a fused dao!" Li Hao repeated the last to himself. "Yes, a fused dao!

He looked at his teacher with bright eyes. "Teacher, if those of the Sun and Moon level continue in this vein, will they be able to fuse their dao together?"

Yuan Shuo blinked. Fuse their dao?

"I'm referring to what you said about the Five Styles fusing their dao together! Even if it's fusing spirits together... only then can people continue to walk the path of dao. Otherwise, it will be very difficult to continue!" Li Hao exclaimed. "What does teacher think?"

"You... can do it this way..." Yuan Shuo nodded after some thought. "Not just for supernatural abilities, but for the path of the physical body as well. Both can proceed to fused daos, but... that means everyone will lose all of their other abilities..."

"But they won't care, teacher!" Li Hao laughed. "Even someone as strong as teacher is only skilled in five elements. Can you cultivate light and dark, wind and thunder, life, ice and snow, and the countless other variants?"

“There is a limit to one’s vigor and lifespan. If we are to explore a path, we should go down the one that we’re most adept at!” The young man grew more excited the more he spoke. “Except... when it comes to fusing dao... There’s not much of a problem for unattributed meridians, but will there be a conflict between attributed meridians? The Breathing Method of the Five Styles can prevent the five elements from clashing with each other, so it’s possible. At present, however, it’s difficult to ensure that there is no conflict between other elements...”

Director General Wang’s jaw had sagged long ago. The kid didn’t care about what’d happened in the ruins at all! He was already considering the next step in cultivation!

“Teacher, can an artificially created body travel through the Hao Cosmos?” Li Hao suddenly asked. “Only those who can do that are true bodies. They would be puppets otherwise, right? But how do we create dao meridians out of nothing and send them through the Hao Cosmos?”

Yuan Shuo struggled with a growing migraine. His student was considering subjects that were far too profound! This was creation of life! It truly wasn’t part of his zone of comprehension.

“The Hao Cosmos?” uttered the quiet Vice Head Qi. “Is that another dao universe?”

“Yes!” Li Hao brightened.

“The divine corpse has been pulling strength from a particular place,” Vice Head Qi continued. “Is that the Hao Cosmos you speak of?”

“Yes!”

“Therefore, you wish to create a true physical body that can travel the Hao Cosmos and utilize its energy for cultivation?”

“Yes!”

The vice head seemed to heave a small sigh of relief. “I may be able to offer a word or two on this topic. Of course, I don’t know how correct my thoughts are, but you can give it a try...”

“What do you have in mind?”

“It’s the same theory as core origin creation!” explained the vice head. “And the same as the yin yang resurrection of the main world. In the main world, the primary dao universe is that of core origin. We create a core origin in the dao universe to welcome the core origin of those who have died, then resurrect them to occupy a star in the core origin universe. One can come back to life in this regard, but the caveat is that their core origin must still exist!

“Resurrection is not creating life out of nothing, it requires the collection of the original core origin!” The man looked at Li Hao. “It’s not hard to create the physical body you speak of, but also not as easy as one may think. Can you enter the Hao Cosmos?”

“I can!” The look in Li Hao’s eyes sharpened.

“You can enter the dao universe...” Vice Head Qi exclaimed with astonishment. “Then it’s even easier! The great emperors of old could roam the dao universe—if you can do the same, then the matter is simple. First, you need to find an entrance to the dao universe and create something that can be a medium for the Hao Cosmos. Then, utilize the dao meridians you speak of to provide a path to the one you wish to resurrect...

“A physical body is easy as flesh and blood, life force, and bone structure is easily crafted. The key is mental strength and mental reincarnation. And yet, who doesn’t have a bit of mental strength?

“With that, it only leaves the dao meridians as the problem! These dao meridians you speak of... they should be similar to what we use in core origin dao as a vehicle for the dao, correct?”

Li Hao nodded.

“Then it’s quite straightforward. It’s difficult to create numerous dao meridians, but effortless if you create only one. Use the core origin dao as a substitute—which is to say, shift core origin dao into the Hao Cosmos. That can be done!

“Since core origin dao can endure the infusion of core origin power, then it can endure the infusion of energy from the Hao Cosmos. Only then will you truly complete the conversion of dao meridians!”

Chapter 988: Kindred Spirits (II)

Li Hao’s jaw dropped! He looked at the slightly wispy man with shock. “Do you mean... no, does the senior mean... that core origin dao and Hao Cosmos dao meridians can be used with each other?”

“I’m uncertain of the specifics.” Vice Head Qi shook his head. “But it should be possible, based on what you’ve said. They’re both vehicles for great dao, so why not? Not only is core origin dao a possibility, but I feel that many options are a possibility. Strong treasures, weapons, or other items can all be vehicles for dao!”

“Vehicles?” Li Hao blinked. “Vehicles... to hold great dao?”

“Exactly!” Vice Head Qi nodded. “This is possible so long as your weapon is strong enough. If you worry about the Hao Cosmos destroying the body when the dao meridians are opened, why not find a container for it to decrease the pressure levied?”

Li Hao froze, stunned by the new line of thinking. Using another item to bear the strain... someone else had mentioned that before and that was what Lin Hongyu and the others did. It was just that their dao meridians were closed before, so Li Hao did not think of this point. Now that the vice head mentioned it, he was immediately reminded of it.

“The dao fusion that you just mentioned...” continued the vice head. “That might exceed the capacity of the physical body. If there is a mighty weapon that can be refined as a weapon of life instead, then not only will it shoulder part of the pressure, but it will be strengthened in the process. That will bestow the weapon the formidable power to outright sever dao!

“Of course, the Sword Sovereign should be well aware of this. His weapon, Stellaris, once served as such a vehicle for a period of time. It endured the Sword Sovereign’s might and facilitated his consolidation of a myriad of daos into one dao...”

“Senior.” Li Hao abruptly lifted the divine corpse with an earnest look. “Please enter the body to continue our conversation. Everything that happened before was a misunderstanding!”

“.....” Director General Wang and Yuming cursed quietly to themselves! The fuck, this little bastard!

Director General Wang, in particular, wanted to leap into action. It would be hard to keep the vice head under control once he took possession of the divine body, not to mention they were in the outside world now. The corpse of a divine spirit might be more readily accepted by the world. However, since the vice head might not be able to deploy its full strength, the director general elected to keep his mouth shut for now.

“There’s no rush,” Vice Head Qi responded noncommittally. “I’m not familiar with this body either. I was interrupted before I could fully assimilate it.” He wasn’t in a hurry to return to it. Rather, he was more interested in the topic at hand. “Can you talk to me more about the dao meridians?”

“Ahem!” Yuan Shuo was suddenly seized by a coughing fit. They couldn’t say too much about it!

Li Hao paused to gather his thoughts, not minding this sharing of information. He gave a brief overview of the topic. However, that didn’t mean he fully trusted the vice head. The young man simply felt that since they’d mentioned the dao meridians, this personage might be able to shed some light given his subject matter expertise.

Seeing as this was a brand new field to the vice head, perhaps this conversation would result in some answers that Li Hao was looking for without having to fully educate the stranger.

“I see!” Vice Head Qi sighed with appreciation after the explanation. “We studied the divine corpse for many years. Let me put it this way. The divine spirits of this world may have had dao meridians a long time ago. They had access to the Hao Cosmos, but did not realize their source of power. Hence, they did not discover the Hao Cosmos!”

“They defined their powers to be granted by the heavens, but they were wrong. This was the strength of the new dao. What a pity—we also killed divine spirits back in the day, but did not happen upon the Hao Cosmos in our research either.”

“The Hao Cosmos was probably not as noticeable then,” Li Hao shook his head. “And our employment of the aura then was not as adept as it is now. Therefore, we probably wouldn’t have discovered it either! Things like these need to be studied in great detail before the dao universe can be discovered.”

“So long as you guys didn’t fully research the aura, you wouldn’t have been able to enter or probe the Hao Cosmos even if you discovered it. You’d only be able to conduct surface level observation.”

“That makes sense!” Vice Head Qi nodded. “So this means your people have developed the aura to its peak capabilities, which in turn made the Hao Cosmos more active. The aura is the core of the dao meridians, which means that the more auras there are, the more activity the dao universe sees! It might’ve been quiet before!”

“Yes, that’s precisely it!” Li Hao brightened and quickly pivoted to another question. “Is it feasible to use a weapon as the vehicle?”

“It is!” nodded the man. “A weapon that is refined with one’s life and cultivation will eventually be strong, even if it’s not strong at first. All the cultivator has to do is follow your dao meridian method to train, temper, and hone the weapon bit by bit.”

“Once they complete the basic thirty-six meridians and choose to fuse their dao, the weapon that they’ve refined all along will be the best vehicle for their purposes! The weapon will also no longer be crucial once the physical body continues to strengthen after that...”

Li Hao nodded rapidly! A weapon! There was something to this old fart! Those who worked at the research center... had good brains in their heads!

“In addition, it seems from your words that there are New Martial citizens who wish to cultivate the modern dao, is it?” asked Vice Head Qi.

“Yes!”

“You don’t wish for them to take possession of another body, so you want to create a body for them. And yet, it is a great hassle because there are too many dao meridians in the physical body, is that right?”

“Correct!”

“Then forget about creating countless dao meridians,” smiled Vice Head Qi. “Just create thirty-six or 360. That’s enough to keep them busy for a lifetime, whether they use their weapon or core origin as their main meridian! It will be very difficult to bring the silent core origin dao into the Hao Cosmos. But in that case, they’ll save a lot of time. You’ll also obtain stronger strength from it. As for limited potential... once they reach 360 locks, can they really not supplement their potential themselves? Do they not know how to forge a path for themselves if there is not one ahead?”

Li Hao’s eyes lit up! That was right, cultivators would’ve long pierced through the Hao Cosmos at that point, they could repair their flaws themselves. What did he need to worry about?

It was just... there was still an inherent level of difficulty within.

“How about establishing a stable opening in the Hao Cosmos?” Li Hao frowned. “I can create a stabilizer to guide their core origin dao into taking root within.”

“The modern human body is innately connected to the dao universe,” responded the vice head after some thought. “But there won’t always be connate dao entities. After that, people will have to brainstorm ways of connecting by themselves. The aura is the key...”

“I hear that you’ve created supernatural characters. Can I take a look?”

A character hovered over Li Hao’s finger tip without a second word. Vice Head Qi took it in hand for close observation.

“Supernatural characters, aura... breathing methods!” he suddenly said. “What if you conduct the guiding process through the ripples emitted by the breathing method? You can create an artificial supernatural character inside the Hao Cosmos and operate the breathing method with it. Anyone who practices the same breathing method will be able to sense the ripples and hone in on its location. When their cultivation reaches a peak, they’ll naturally be able to follow the ripples...”

“That’s very hard!” Li Hao started with a frown. “Placing a supernatural character inside the Hao Cosmos... Well, what if I train my characters to the point in which they can replace the artificial characters? Will they register to the same breathing method while inside the Hao Cosmos?”

The vice head paused and mulled over the suggestion. “It might be possible if you relinquish the restrictions and permit the character to roam through the void!”

“Then we can save even this step, right?” Li Hao brightened.

“But what if you die?” Vice Head Qi asked bluntly.

That stopped the young man in his tracks. “Can... the supernatural characters not remain after my death?”

The notion completely halted the vice head’s theorizing. He looked at Li Hao, not saying anything for a very long while.

“Then I can cultivate all sorts of supernatural characters and meld them into the Hao Cosmos!” Li Hao exclaimed. “In that case, even when there are no more connate dao entities, so long as everyone is willing to cultivate the secret arts or breathing methods that I’ve passed on, they’ll sense the Hao Cosmos when they reach a certain level of strength.

“That will mean that Silver Moon denizens will always be able to perceive the Hao Cosmos so long as the dao universe and martial heritage remains, isn’t that right??” The young man was overjoyed. “Therefore, I’m going to cultivate all sorts of supernatural characters and turn them all into coordinates. I’ll put one breathing method in each of the characters for people to sense and locate. They’ll break through the barriers and connect with the Hao Cosmos when their cultivation reaches the appropriate level, is that right?”

“That should be right.” Vice Head Qi nodded after a long moment of silence. It was his first day of knowing Li Hao and he didn’t even know the young man’s name.

Alright, well, Li Hao had introduced himself, but the vice head didn’t remember at this point. Hence, when the young man proposed those ideas, Vice Head Qi couldn’t help but look at Director General Wang and Yuming.

This kid... is a lunatic, isn’t he? A martial fanatic! It wasn’t a type of mental lunacy, but a crazed devotion to the great dao.

How could anyone think of such an idea? Using his own supernatural characters as locations in space, as coordinates for cultivation, meant that his legacy and the great dao would not die out after he passed on from this world!

Even if the dao meridians disappeared countless years later or lost their connection to the Hao Cosmos, that would be of no concern. One only needed to keep cultivating and take their path to the extreme. They would sense the Hao Cosmos sooner or later, and it would make the dao universe exclusive to Silver Moon denizens.

The young man had seized a dao universe and secured it for generations of Silver Moon citizens!

Emotion swelled in Vice Head Qi's heart as he suddenly thought of someone. "You're an interesting fellow!" he laughed. "If this really comes to be one day, if thousands of supernatural characters gather together... I think you can write a book about it."

"Write a book?" Li Hao blinked.

"The number of characters that humans discover, create, and use in their lifetimes is about ten thousand!" laughed the vice head. "Once you gather ten thousand characters, wouldn't it be marvelous to write a book with the characters of great dao? It would be similar to the education records left by Supreme Zhang."

Indeed, he was reminded of the great supreme, despite the person in front of him being much weaker.

"The book of great dao was Supreme Zhang's hallmark. But even the great supreme didn't collect ten thousand daos. He only gathered the ones often utilized in battle. If you can successfully cultivate ten thousand supernatural characters and put them into a book, the book can then be stored in the Hao Cosmos. It will... be passed down for generations!

"Future descendants that reach the appropriate step in their cultivation or one day set foot into the Hao Cosmos will see your Book of Myriad Daos. Your name will be known ten thousand, one hundred thousand, one million, even ten million years later!

"Those who come later will know that the Hao Cosmos once possessed an invincible being. He left behind the coordinates of dao to pinpoint a path of cultivation for those to come. You will be the master of all daos then, the Dao Master!"

Chapter 989: Kindred Spirits (III)

Li Hao blinked. He'd once jokingly told others that he would one day conquer Skystar and hail himself Dao Master. He had not discussed this with their latest addition, but the vice head spoke of the title that Li Hao had mentioned!

Dao Master! The master of a myriad daos!

With a book of great dao in the Hao Cosmos, future descendants whose cultivation reached the level of traveling through the dao universe would discover it. They would see everything about that'd taken place with their predecessor...

Excitement brewed in Li Hao as he thought of it!

Meanwhile, Yuan Shuo and the others off to the side were long astonished! Of the duo in front of them, one person dared reach for the stars, the other dared speak of it. One dared treat such thoughts as real and the other dared push him to greater heights!

Cultivating ten thousand daos, drawing supernatural characters out of all of them, writing a book of great dao, and placing it in the dao universe so that future descendants could read it!

Oh my heavens!

Was flattery Qi Yun's bread and butter? Look at the level of praise that he was bringing forth! How long had the two known each other for? Was it an hour? And Li Hao, you just met the guy, what was the point of discussing so much with him for?

"That's all too far away from me." Li Hao shook his head after some daydreaming. "I can treat it as a goal, but it's too far removed for the moment! But now I know how to create bodies for Director General Wang and the others!

"Core origin dao is the best vehicle, but... there's an area of difficulty. Although core origin dao has lost connection with its dao universe, that great dao has not collapsed. That means its dao universe still exists. There might be great danger in the moment of severing that connection. If it fully collapses, the person who I'm helping is done for as well. This is a thorny problem!"

Vice Head Qi frowned. That was indeed hard to handle. He thought for a moment and murmured, “It’s... actually better to disconnect core origin dao from its universe—this is also the best time to do so. Without the link to the dao universe, if there was a core origin powerhouse present or any methods we can employ to stabilize the dao...”

“Can a projection of the imperial palace stabilize it?” Li Hao suddenly asked.

“Of course!” answered a surprised vice head.

“How about the body of a faux Empyrean King?”

“That... will do as well!”

“Then... can Stellaris do so?” the young man asked excitedly.

“It’ll be good enough if it doesn’t sever the dao in two,” the vice head coughed dryly. “Stabilize the dao? It’s... best not to proceed down that path of thinking. Stellaris is a weapon of slaughter and violence, it’s nothing good. My recommendation would be to not use it.”

The sword stirred in Li Hao’s grasp, seemingly dissatisfied. However, Li Hao already had some thoughts in mind and didn’t mind. “So... we can switch to a different path now?”

“How much will my strength be affected by if I switch to the Hao Cosmos?” asked a slightly agitated Director General Wang.

“I don’t know.” Vice Head Qi shook his head. “It depends on the strength of the dao universe and its tolerance of core origin dao. If It can fully accept your battle strength... then your strength will not be affected at all.”

Director General Wang beamed with joy! How can a grandiose dao universe not be able to tolerate a mere Immortal's strength? Doesn't that mean I'll crossover as an Immortal?

"It's best to cut yourself down some and start from a weaker footing," Li Hao immediately interjected. "That will make it easier for you to approach the new dao. If you start too high, I worry that your comprehension of the new dao will be too poor and shallow to take another step forward!"

"We can just seal off part of the self!" Vice Head Qi elaborated. "Didn't you seal off part of the divine corpse's strength? Using the same method will help one better assimilate with this world. You won't have to raise your personal domain to protect those of core origin dao and he'll be able to seal himself away. Of course, the world won't accept him when he unseals himself, but the current world seems able to tolerate initial Apex..."

Li Hao nodded and Director General Wang grew increasingly delighted. "So this means that I can move about freely?"

Heavens above! Not only can I join the new dao, but I can move around at will! Damn this is nice!

"Ole Qi, using the weapon as a vehicle..." the director general quickly said politely. "What kind of dao is that again? Can you explain in more detail?"

"That was just a suggestion, I'm not too familiar with this idea," smiled the vice head. "It would be up to this young fellow daoist how you should proceed. I see that he is exceedingly familiar with the great dao and knows the new dao like the back of his hand. If he can seal away the divine spirit, that means his understanding is great and thorough!"

"Not at all, you praise me too highly!" Li Hao said humbly. "The road ahead is long, I simply endeavor to do my best. I've only just probed into the truth of things and set foot onto the path of great dao. There is no understanding to speak of!"

"As is how cultivators should be!" Vice Head Qi sighed emotionally. "If you were in New Martial and met Supreme Zhang or the Exalted Blood Emperor, you would surely have an enthralling

conversation. But if you met the Human King... forget him. He is unparalleled when it comes to fighting and killing and does not like to listen to discussions like these.”

“How can we outright mention the exalted emperors’ titles outside the ruins?” Director General Wang couldn’t help but ask. Setting aside Supreme Zhang, that was the Exalted Blood Emperor’s true title.

“You fool!” Vice Head Qi could barely contain the urge to roll his eyes. “The Exalted Blood Emperor is not the type to kill innocents! It would be better if he sensed the usage of his name, he could come save us! The same goes for Supreme Zhang...”

“But we should indeed refrain from using the Human King’s real name, and the Imperial Majesty’s as well! They have too many enemies and like to outright kill their opponents. If we mention them and they’re still alive, then we would truly be in danger. But the others? What does it matter?”

Li Hao raised a brow, surprised by the response. It was also amusing. Based off this one’s meaning, the Human King and the Imperial Majesty—the one that the imperial guard protected—were difficult characters who should not be provoked. They had so many enemies that any mention of their name might lead to a fatal blow.

But the others might not do so, and they might mount a rescue mission if they sensed someone using their name?

Director General Wang blinked. That was true!

“You are from the Exalted Blood Emperor’s side branch...” sighed the vice head. “Your ancestor in Battle Heaven comes from Sun City, the same hometown as the Human King and Exalted Blood Emperor. How can you doubt the Exalted Blood Emperor’s benevolence?”

“The Exalted Blood Emperor is benevolent?” Li Hao blinked.

“Compared to other exalted emperors, the Exalted Blood Emperor can be reasoned with,” Vice Head Qi nodded. “His past self was the Battle Heaven Emperor, someone even more fond of logic and rationality! He would not kill without reason.

“Some of the other exalted emperors, however, were impulsive and bloodthirsty sorts. The Sword Sovereign is included among their ranks. Therefore, it’s best not to mention them. If they sense their name being used, they might not take the time to determine friend from foe. Since we are far removed from them, they might utilize certain methods to outright kill whoever speaks their name!”

“Did the research center... study this as well?” Director General Wang asked with resignation.

“Of course! We actually wanted to study the Sword Sovereign’s physical body, but he wasn’t willing. Otherwise, we really wanted to dissect him. His myriad of daos returned to one dao, making it quite different from the usual. It would be amazing for research if we could’ve gotten a closer look at him!”

“.....” Li Hao didn’t know what to say. Hot damn, these research center guys are all looney, aren’t they? Dissect the Sword Sovereign? They’ve got more brawn than brains!

However, defending his ancestor’s honor wasn’t of primary importance. “Let’s go back and give it a try!” he said rapidly. “Director General Wang can be our test subject—ahem, the first batch of those who convert to the new dao!

“It’s not much if we fail. We can just strip out the mental strength. Vice Head Qi, can I use the divine corpse as a backup plan? If the conversion fails and the director general is on the brink of death, may I give the divine corpse to him?”

“You may!” Vice Head Qi didn’t care. “I only just assimilated it and didn’t fully integrate with it. It’s no problem to fully remove myself from it. You can use Director General Wang as the test subject—ahem, lab rat—ahem... vanguard. More preparations do indeed need to be taken for our first test subject—ahem, the pioneer!

“I’m also very curious about these dao meridians and the Hao Cosmos even more so. I would love to witness a transfer between dao universes. Will it give rise to special changes?”

“.....” Director General Wang looked wordlessly at the two of them. What are you guys talking about? What lab rat, what test subject? You guys are really speaking from the heart, huh!

He hadn’t thought that Li Hao would get along so well with this fellow from the very beginning. He’d been worried that the two of them would start fighting!

“It’s best if we take the mental strength converter with us from the ruins,” the quiet Yuming suddenly mentioned. “It will accelerate the integration so that physical body and mental strength are reforged together. There will be a feeling of separation otherwise!”

“We can do that,” nodded Vice Head Qi. “But in this case, damage to the physical body will be the same as damage to one’s own body. Repairs will be difficult and the sense of pain is the same...”

“That’s true, but if we treat the physical body as a disposable object, then he’ll never become one with the body!” Yuming shook his head.

“Fair enough, Wang Ye can give it a try. But once the physical body collapses, he’ll have to suffer through the pain of falling apart again.”

“Director General Wang is an Immortal, he doesn’t care about that,” Yuming smiled.

“That may not be true. It is our first time trying this, so a collapse of a couple dozen times is very likely...”

“A couple dozen?”

“I think that, at least!”

“Isn’t that the equivalent of killing him a couple dozen times?”

“Yes, so I feel that we don’t need to use the mental strength converter from the very beginning…”

“We can leave that out… but perhaps the problem lies with an incompatibility. Therefore, I still recommend we use it and use it for all of our attempts to better identify where the issue is.”

“That makes sense too!”

Director General Wang was ashen-faced by now. He looked at Li Hao, wanting to withdraw his willingness to convert to the new dao. I’m doing well enough right now! I have an Immortal body, and it’s one from New Martial. It’s quite nice! Just listen to these guys! They’re going to run experiments after each of my integrations and probably blow me up a couple dozen times!

Li Hao did not look at him. The lab rat—no, pioneer, was Director General Wang.

Chapter 990: Kindred Spirits (IV)

“Teacher, do you think it’s possible to replicate a complete version of the modern human?” Li Hao asked Yuan Shuo. “The kind with countless dao meridians, just like last time’s model of the human body.”

“It becomes difficult when the number of meridians increases!” Yuan Shuo frowned and transmitted the rest, “You can try something else. And since you’re going to experiment, you might as well experiment with multiple types of bodies! I recommend you keep several backups and try several different kinds.

“The first one can be one of entirely unattributed dao meridians—thirty-six of them. The second can have seventy-two, the third 108… so on and so forth!

“And then, you can have bodies with singular meridians, one of the five elements, ones of wind and thunder, and all sorts of other attributes. Also, make some bodies with a mix of attributed and unattributed meridians. You can use them for comparative experiments. He is an Immortal, so it’s not like he’ll die from one failure. We can blow him up a few dozen times and see which is more suited to him!”

Although Yuan Shuo silently transmitted his words to Li Hao, his strength was much weaker than Director General Wang’s. Hence, the latter could clearly hear every word—color drained from his face.

Hot damn! Were these people even human?! They wanted to experiment with him dozens of times!

While it made sense and was actually a demonstration of responsibility to determine which kind of body was most suited to the director general, the thought of repeatedly undergoing the process made his scalp crawl. It was potentially wasted effort on one hand versus experiencing death almost one hundred times!

“That’s right, we need to conduct comparative experiments!” Li Hao exclaimed excitedly. “Director General Wang is the first to make the attempt, so we need to be more thorough. The rest can make do with what we have at the time, but for the director general, we need firsthand and the best information possible!

“Will any mishaps occur on an Immortal’s core origin dao if it has to endure dozens of disturbances?” The young man turned to Vice Head Qi.

“It should be fine so long as we stabilize it properly.” The man shook his head. “It’ll just be that each disturbance is slightly painful. But being able to suffer through hardship is what sets the truly great apart from the rest. Wang Ye is of the Wang bloodline, tribulations are no problem for him. It will be an affront to the Exalted Blood Emperor’s face otherwise!”

Wang Ye had been deathly afraid moments ago; he set his jaw with a determined look. “Of course! The spirit of Battle Heaven fills those of the Wang family, how would we ever be afraid of death?”

“That’s good!” The rest nodded. They would experiment to the fullest with him then!

The director general regretted his words as soon as he said them and wanted to take them back.

“Director General Wang, we’ll be sure to choose the best body for you since this is the first time we’re undertaking this attempt,” Li Hao quickly said when he thought of something. “It’s also because this is the first time that we have enough resources for you to pick and choose from. Once I exhaust my stores of Water of Life and treasures, whoever wants to convert to the new dao later on will get whatever we have lying around at that time. So if you’re unwilling, I can always approach the Ninth Division leader.”

“.....don’t!” yelped the director general. “I’m your man!”

Who was he kidding??

There was no subterfuge with Li Hao’s words. Each instance of physical body creation depleted some of the treasures at hand. Where would they get better materials from once the resources were consumed?

Hence, Director General Wang grit his teeth and tragically declared himself to be in for the experiments. I have chosen you, new era. If I have to die by a thousand cuts or hundreds of explosions, so be it.

Li Hao smiled and nodded at Vice Head Qi and the rest. Although no one was familiar with each other yet, that was fine. Conducting a few experiments together would soon close that gap. As opposed to going to the trouble of picking another day, let’s just go with today. We’ll get started as soon as we head back!

Vice Head Qi smiled as well. Originally, it hadn’t felt to be a good outcome that he’d left the research center. These people, particularly Li Hao and his companions, were unknown to him. They were not of the same time period and might not get along. Not to mention, it looked like Wang Ye and the others were under the young man’s control.

But he found that the Li family of this era was different from the Li family that he knew! His impression of the Lis were damned brutes and sword fanatics. They were violent lunatics! Who would've thought that countless years later, the Li representative he met would be a research enthusiast?

Wonderful! So the Lius had changed as well!

In fact, the vice head even briefly suspected Li Hao of not being descended from the Lis. But... since he could employ Stellaris... he was, wasn't he?

Who cares!

This was countless years later. It didn't matter if he was or not.

The group traveled to the Skystar Town ruins in full enthusiasm. Li Hao had no presence of mind to spare for others. It was time to try making people!

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A group of daredevils prepared to create a human.

The ruins of Skystar Town.

Zhang An was once more summoned out of closed door cultivation. Qi Yun was familiar with the man and surprised to see him. However, they hadn't come in contact with each other much during New Martial. Other than respectfully inclining his body, the reverent Qi Yun didn't say much else.

Meanwhile, Li Hao busied himself with fashioning the body. That wasn't a difficult task, but many bodies would be created this time. The best ingredients for the body were found in the pool of treasure in the mine. These items were meant to be used on fortifying everyone's body, but now Li Hao felt that clearing dao meridians was a better method for this goal.

In the meantime, these treasures could be used to create bodies.

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"Director General Wang, do you like being a man or a woman?" asked Li Hao.

The director general sat cross-legged next to the pool and looked at the young man with resignation. "A man!" he answered after a beat.

"Of about what age?"

"...thirty or so." What kind of questions are these?

"Do you have any special requests?"

"None!" Director General Wang could barely suppress an eye roll. What special requests can I have when you ask me so blatantly?

"Then I'll begin creating the body and will start with the elementary thirty-six meridians..." Li Hao rubbed his hands together. "It's my first time creating a body, I feel like a creator of life! Please don't mind it if I happen to shape an ugly person!"

With that, he began extracting Water of Life and mixed in various sorts of power to create a human body.

This wasn't a difficult task. Creating flesh and blood was a simple matter for powerhouses. The crux of the issue were the dao meridians.

The others simply observed and weren't involved. Since Li Hao was interested in this, he could conduct everything himself. Yuan Shuo was absent because he had been assigned to moving the machines and other warehouse treasures out of the research center. The other plant spirits crowded over, as did Panther take a break from seclusion.

Creating a human body... especially one that was meant to become a real body... was a type of cultivation as well.

Li Hao began to shape his creation, but frowned after a moment and suddenly gave up. Energy wafted out as he pulverized the complete form in front of him. Director General Wang watched with painful spasms to his heart.

That body looked so much like his own that he felt Li Hao was killing him! How cruel!

The young man had his eyes closed in concentration, then started anew. Blood qi surged amid surprised glances as Li Hao disassembled the blood qi and reorganized it in a humanoid form.

Zhang An's eyes darted around—he recognized the deconstruction method from The Accounts of Evenround. So Li Hao didn't wish to construct a crude body according to conventional methods!

The young man wanted to utilize the reconstruction of blood qi to form a human body that was more compact and stronger. There wouldn't be large-scale flaws riddling it, but could he accomplish his goal?

Li Hao wasn't that strong. Could he actually create a body of blood qi?

The young man didn't know either, he just had to give it a try. It was his first time creating a body, anyhow. Success was good enough for a first-timer! What was with the high expectations?

This was a rare opportunity and a good chance for martial masters to deepen their knowledge of the human body.

A figure appeared in front of them before long, first the body, then the organs. Here, Li Hao paused and thought for a bit.

“Director General Wang, give me some of the essence blood from your organs. I'll mix that in during the creation process so it's easier for you to assimilate with your new body!”

The director general was deeply resigned, but elected to offer up his body for the sake of the undertaking at hand and his future. Drops of essence blood floated into the void. He looked at Li Hao with a hint of yearning. Don't misuse this! My body's finally recovered and might have to be discarded again.

The five organs quickly took shape after the infusion of Director General Wang's essence blood. Li Hao built all sorts of organs. As much as he joked about it, each instance of body creation was a consumption of resources. He placed a great importance on this matter and worried about failure and wastage. No matter how many treasures he had, his reserves would not withstand continual depletion.

Once everything was complete with the human body, Li Hao prepared to trace the dao meridians. They were key to connecting to the Hao Cosmos. While weapons and core origin could be the vehicle, the meridians themselves need to exist.

The young man frowned, how should he go about constructing them? Forming them out of pure energy was a thought, but that would make them incredibly fragile. Even if he formed them successfully, they wouldn't be able to siphon much energy from the Hao Cosmos. Director General Wang would then be naturally weaker than others.