

Constellation Door

Chapter 12: Black Panther (1)

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'I am being watched!' Li Hao stopped his bicycle in front of the gate of the neighborhood and slowly pushed it forward.

"Little Hao, you're back!" greeted one of his neighbors.

"Patrol Officer Li, do you have time to come over for a drink tonight?" asked another.

The residents of the area who were outside enjoying the cool evening air always greeted him so enthusiastically.

A Level 3 Patrol Officer might be the lowest rank in the Inspection Office, but in the community, they were a symbol of security. They were thought of highly. Even though Li Hao didn't look as strong as the other Patrol Officers, he was always treated respectfully because of his job.

"Hello," he smiled at them.

Qiming District was an old district that had been around for many years. The district was a little dilapidated now but as far as Li Hao could remember, the Li family had always lived in the Qiming District

The neighborhood wasn't very big, with a total of only six buildings. Li Hao lived in the innermost building, Block 6, in Room 302.

Li Hao did not ride his bicycle all the way to his block, instead he pushed it along the rundown road. The roads in Qiming District had not been repaired for a long time, so they were in ruins. It was very bumpy and his bicycle occasionally bounced as he pushed it.

Behind him, he could still hear the faint whispers of his neighbors.

"Little Hao is good and polite but without an elder to look after him, he worries me. I heard it is very difficult to get into the Silver City Ancient Academy, and he managed it! But it's a pity he dropped out of school to be a Patrol Officer!"

“You can’t say that. The Inspection Office is good.”

“It’s true that the Inspection Office will provide him with a secure job but if he had graduated from the academy, he would have had a brighter future and would have been paid more.”

Li Hao was used to the discussion. Over the past year, he had heard it so many times. He ignored it. He did not explain his standing, nor did he care. There was no need. He was still processing the thing that had just come to pass. And wondering what he should do to deal with it. Although the gun provided him with a certain sense of security, he was not completely safe.

‘I still lack knowledge of the mysterious power. My combat ability is also limited. Without a gun, I’m just an ordinary person,’ thought Li Hao.

Li Hao had learnt some close-range combat techniques. This was taught not only in the training but also in his two years in the Silver City Ancient Academy.

His professor, Yuan Shuo, was not only a scholar but also a master of combat skills. Yuan Shuo did not intend to fight anybody for that matter. But he liked to keep in shape and maintain flexibility.

According to Professor Yuan, one could at least run faster in the face of danger, if nothing else. Every time a professor from the academy went out, danger followed.

Therefore, Li Hao had trained too. He wasn’t very proficient in it. But if he was to fight the ordinary gangsters in the area, he could do it. He wasn’t as good as the old Patrol Officers though.

‘The Chief Patrol Officer’s identity might not really seem very intimidating but he was always prepared for a fight, if need be,’ thought Li Hao as he walked to his block. Suddenly a black shadow flashed by his feet but was gone the next instant.

Li Hao’s mind and body was on high alert so much so that he wanted to act. But he restrained himself.

The black puppy in front of him stopped. It didn’t bark but looked at Li Hao with eager eyes, as if expecting something.

Li Hao let out a laugh. He parked his bicycle and beckoned to the puppy. “Black Panther! You certainly live up to your name.”

The puppy looked small and adorable, but Li Hao had still given him a formidable name. Black Panther didn’t belong to Li Hao. It was a stray that had appeared in the neighborhood one day.

Li Hao lived alone but it was a pity when he had to throw the leftover food. So, he fed the dog occasionally. After a few months, the dog had chosen to stay with Li Hao and stopped wandering around. In the day, it would always lie down at the entrance of Block 6 and wait for Li Hao to come home.

There were others in Block 6 who didn't like the dog. But they knew Li Hao fed it, so they never chased it away. No one wanted to go against a Level 3 Patrol Officer.

Black Panther wasn't noisy, and the neighbors had gotten used to it. Li Hao squatted down and patted its head.

Living alone could sometimes get very lonely especially when he had things weighing down on his heart constantly. Having a dog by his side was comforting.

Unfortunately, Li Hao was too busy to take care of it constantly. At most, Li Hao fed Black Panther at night only. Sometimes in the day, he left some dog food out in a container. But Black Panther usually found its own food during the day.

"Woof!" The little dog wagged its tail eagerly.

Li Hao smiled. "Come along then. I will give you some food."

His smile was genuine and gentle with the dog than at the Inspection Office. He got up and started up the stairs.

The building was old and the stairs were worn. The rails were also rusty with the paint that had peeled off a long time ago. Half of the people in the six-storied building had already moved away.

There were only a few elderly who lived here now. Li Hao didn't move out. He didn't have enough money to buy a house in the new neighborhood. He didn't want to part from here. This was the place he had always lived in.

Black Panther ran upstairs with Li Hao.

Room 302 read the number on the door. Li Hao opened the door and entered. The room was dark because the curtains were closed. The house wasn't very big.

Li Hao opened the door all the way through but Black Panther did not enter. It just lay at the threshold waiting for Li Hao to feed it. Li Hao wasn't in the mood to cook today.

He found the dog food that was going to expire soon. He pulled out Black Panther's container and poured a lot of dog food. He then placed it just outside his door.

“Woof!” Black Panther wagged its tail again and looked at Li Hao expectantly.

“I didn’t buy any groceries today. So that will have to do,” said Li Hao. He didn’t understand why Black Panther didn’t eat the food. Perhaps it was disgusted because the food was going to expire in a few days.