

Chapter 14: Black Panther (3)

He had a sudden impulse to check it carefully today. So, he had taken it off. He hadn't known Black Panther would react this way.

If he hadn't heard the Silver City song, Li Hao would have worn the jade pendant for the rest of his life without ever thinking about it. He would have never examined it.

And Black Panther wouldn't have snatched it. "Black Panther really wants this. What's so special about the Starry Sky Sword?"

Li Hao's thoughts started to wander again. While he was distracted, Black Panther didn't snatch the sword again but licked it. Li Hao's hand was covered in saliva. He reached out and wiped his hand on Black Panther's fur.

"If you ever snatch it away again, I will never give you food!"

"Woof! Woof! Woof!" Black Panther shook its head vigorously and wagged its tail as if to say he didn't mean to snatch it away.

Li Hao felt that something was really wrong. He looked at the dog and then at the pendant. The pendant was so slimy now that he might have to wash it thoroughly later.

"You want to lick it again?" asked Li Hao.

Black Panther nodded! Li Hao was stunned. How was the dog able to understand everything he said?

Li Hao cautiously held the pendant out. Black Panther glanced at Li Hao and stuck out its tongue and licked the jade pendant. Its eyes filled with satisfaction.

"Is it that delicious?" asked Li Hao. That would be weird.

Li Hao remembered when he was young, he had licked the pendant too. He also recalled that he had never washed it! He had actually put this pendant in his mouth many times when he was a child. The heirloom was supposedly very old. Had it been licked by a dog before?

Even if it hadn't, the pendant might be so very dirty now when he thought about it. Who knew how many people had worn it?

"I can't think about it! It's too disgusting!" Li Hao shook his head. 'Just pretend not to know,' said Li Hao to himself.

'Black Panther is acting strange today. But it does show that the jade pendant is indeed special,' speculated Li Hao.

Li Hao stood up. His hand and the pendant were covered in Black Panther's saliva. He went to wash it.

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Li washed his hand and the pendant. Then he poured a bowl of scalding hot water and placed the jade pendant in it to disinfect it. He had to take the pendant with him when he went to Zhang Yuan's house.

He was afraid that if he left it anywhere else, it would be stolen. He wondered if the pendant was some kind of protective talisman. Perhaps it would be of some use if he had to face the red shadow. Li Hao didn't dare leave it at home when he knew its significance from the Silver City song.

When Zhang Yuan died last year, the red shadow didn't attack him. Li Hao wondered if it was because of the jade pendant. After a while, Li Hao took the pendant from the bowl and washed it under cold water.

Just when he was about to throw the water in the bowl, he felt something nudge at his feet.

"Woof woof!"

Black Panther had never entered his home before. Usually, Li Hao left food outside because he didn't want it to shed fur in the house. But this time, Black Panther had followed him in!

Li Hao looked down at the dog to see it very eagerly watching the bowl in his hand. He had soaked the jade sword in it.

Li Hao's heart skipped a beat. He put the bowl on the floor. Black Panther didn't care about the temperature of the water. It stuck out its tongue and gave it a lick. It must be scalding hot and yet the dog kept lapping it up.

Li Hao didn't know what to think about this. He had licked the pendant when he was a child but had never found anything special about it. Li Hao watched the dog in

amazement. Black Panther's usually messy and scruffy coat turned smooth and soft right before his eyes.

Black Panther's tail wagged happily. 'Could it be that the water soaked in the jade pendant had some kind of mysterious power?' wondered Li Hao. 'Strange... was that the use of the pendant? Soak it in water and then drink it?'

Li Hao leaned down and touched Black Panther. The dog indeed felt different to the touch. It was softer and shinier than before!

Li Hao looked at the jade pendant in his hand, feeling excited. If the jade pendant had some magical power, it had taken a dog to find out about it.

Li Hao had disinfected it in scalding hot water but he still felt queasy. He wasn't planning to lick the pendant! Li Hao thought about it. Black Panther's fur had turned smooth and soft. That was extraordinary.

It must have a mysterious power, after all. Li Hao didn't know whether to laugh or cry. He was at a loss for words. The dog might have actually found a way to activate the Starry Sky Sword's power.

He looked at the Black Panther. The dog was lying down on the ground, satisfied. When it saw Li Hao glancing at it, it wagged its tail even more eagerly. Li Hao thought he saw a hint of intelligence in the dog's eyes that he had never seen before.

'This dog... it really seems to understand humans... even more than normal.' Li Hao was shocked.

Li Hao glanced at the jade pendant and felt curious. 'Black Panther had drunk the water where the pendant was soaked and had benefited. What if I drink it? Would I be able to master the mysterious power that no one else had?'

If that was true, it would literally be life-saving for Li Hao. 'What if I die? But that's impossible! I licked it so many times when I was young. It didn't kill Black Panther either.'

Li Hao couldn't suppress his excitement anymore. He desired power. He wanted to avenge his family and Zhang Yuan. Many things flashed through his mind: Zhang Yuan Night Patrollers, the red shadow, being followed today by that car...

Everything seemed to crowd his mind. He had tried everything he could to get into the Inspection Office and to contact the Night Patrollers. He now wanted to tap into the mysterious power of his pendant. It was worth a shot.

'I have to try. If I don't, I might die without ever knowing. The red shadow will come after me anyway. The Night Patrollers might not be reliable. The internal affairs of the Inspection Office leaked. There is no one I can trust.'

Li Hao made up his mind. He patted Black Panther's head. 'If this is really effective, you are in for many treats in the future, Black Panther! You will live a good life with me.'

"Woof!"

Black Panther barked in anticipation. It seemed to understand him even more. He almost looked as if he couldn't wait for the 'good life' that Li Hao had promised him.