

Constellation Door - Chapter 33 - 40

Chapter 33: The Crazy Liu Long (3)

This was the first time Li Hao had heard someone talk so seriously and freely about the Night Patrollers.

Li Hao couldn't help his curiosity. "Aren't there a lot of them?" he asked.

"Not really," said Liu Long. "Their numbers have been declining. Besides, they are governed by the Inspection Division and are used only as a last resort. They don't even have many Supers among them."

Li Hao asked what he had wanted to know all along. "Captain... are Supers naturally trained or do they acquire their power?"

"Both," said Liu Long. "You wish to be one too?"

"Of course not!"

"Lies, again!" Liu Long snorted. "Anyone who has had a taste of the mystical will yearn for it. They usually are ignorant about the dangers and secrets that come with it. All they see is the flashy momentary power they enjoy. When you go deep, you understand the dangers associated with it. Everyone yearns for something like that in the beginning, regrets follow only later."

Li Hao could only nod in agreement. He was also enticed by the possibility of the mysterious power and yearned for it.

"But you know nothing about it for now. So, do not dabble in it rashly. It is always dangerous to barge in on something without any knowledge," warned the captain.

"I know a lot about Night Patrollers. If you join my team, I can tell you more," said the captain and laughed heartily.

Li Hao hesitated. "Captain, if I may ask, why is it that you want to persuade me so strongly to join the law enforcement team? I am just a Level 3 Patrol Officer without any significant talent or experience who had only served in the Inspection Office for a year at most. I don't understand what I can even offer to the team of extraordinary people. I don't understand why you would be so willing to take me in, even going to the extent of giving me so much information about the Night Patrollers and the Supers and the field of superpowers, which are all forbidden topics."

“Don’t underestimate yourself,” said the captain sagely. “It’s not that simple. Ordinary doesn’t mean powerless. Look at your professor. Yuan Shuo is the most ordinary man I know. And yet, he is able to bend the Silver City, the Night Patrollers and even the law enforcement team to his will. They rely on him to solve their problems!”

“But I have my own reasons. The law enforcement team is looking for new recruits. You are a good choice. You know what to prioritize even if it means dropping out of a prestigious school. What I value most is loyalty, which I see is abundant in you. You are loyal to your friend to an extent that you are willing to risk your own life. With that kind of loyalty, I can trust you with my back.”

“You are meticulous and clever. With some training, you could even be my assistant!”

Li Hao looked at the captain. “So, what do you think?” asked Liu Long with a smile. “Is that enough to convince you or do I need to go on?”

Li Hao felt that everything the captain had said made sense. It was sufficient if he was someone looking for a job. But it wasn’t enough for Li Hao. He wanted the truth. He looked at Liu Long carefully.

But Liu Long was gazing at the sky. Perhaps sensing Li Hao’s eyes on him, he turned to him and laughed again. “Li Hao, it is not always a good thing to know too much. Think of it this way, I help you solve the case and you help me in return. Why do you need to get to the bottom of it?”

Li Hao was silent for a moment. “I do want to avenge my friend,” he said. “But I also want to know what I am getting myself into. I can understand and accept whatever you have told me but without actually knowing why you need me; I might just be heading into everything as a sacrificial lamb.”

Liu Long chuckled. “You really analyze everything to death. Okay then, truth for a truth. Tell me, did you take anything from the Zhang family residence?”

“I didn’t,” said Li Hao.

“Ha! Lies again,” Liu Long smirked. “The chimney was tampered with. I have been on the law enforcement team for ten years. Do you know where I was before that? I worked as a Patrol Officer for twenty years. You can think me incompetent, but you can’t assume I am blind. The traces are fresh and you were the only one at the scene before we got there.”

Li Hao froze on the spot. “I don’t understand... I didn’t do anything.”

“It doesn’t matter,” said Liu Long. “Don’t worry. It doesn’t matter even if you found a magical item. I don’t care about that.”

Li Hao was surprised. He couldn't understand Captain Liu at all. 'Did he really not care or is he testing me again?'

Liu Long sighed. "I can't force you to join us. Not when you have a backer as eminent as Yuan Shuo." Liu Long looked at Li Hao indifferently, back to his domineering self. "Your professor still has some status so I can't really force you to do anything. I have already said too much. It might put you in danger. You might end up being the next victim of the self-immolation case."

Li Hao's heart pounded. He was all shades of shocked and terrified. 'Did he know about the red shadow?' wondered Li Hao.

"Don't think too much about it. Just a speculation. It could happen to anybody," said Liu Long, turning grave. "But the self-immolation case is far from over, especially if Supers are involved. If the cases are to be taken into account, they have been in Silver City for ten years, even more! These are targeted murders."

Chapter 34: The Crazy Liu Long (4)

"Their little murder spree isn't over yet. They have a target. And I think it's you," said Liu Long.

Li Hao's head throbbed. "Why do you think it's me?"

Liu Long smiled. "Of course, there are a lot of people with the surname of Li, but you seem to be the only one at the moment who is singing the Silver City song."

Li Hao wasn't even sure why he was so surprised anymore. Liu Long seemed to know everything there is to know.

"Those people who were monitoring the Zhang family residence? They are after the Zhang family saber, aren't they?"

Those words almost made Li Hao lose his composure and fall to the ground. Almost.

"And if I may go as far, I might also say that the Zhang family's saber and the Li family's sword are both in your hands at the moment." Liu Long chuckled.

But Li Hao was not in a state to laugh. He was bitterly disappointed in himself. He thought he had done everything in his power to not appear suspicious. He had underestimated Captain Liu severely.

He seemed to know everything. Of course, he might have guessed because Li Hao's name had come up while reporting the cases. But still, the captain had connected all the dots in such a short period of time.

"Is it a superpower item?" asked Liu Long. He seemed to think better and shook his head. "It doesn't matter even if it is. Super items are useless to ordinary people. It doesn't matter if you take it. In fact, it might be better if you take it away from prying eyes."

Liu Long chuckled again. "You are definitely their next target, aren't you? Even after all these years, they haven't given up. Well, by joining my team, you will not only be helping me but also helping yourself because you can't fight the Supers by yourself."

Li Hao was still confused. Why would Liu Long need him? "Captain, the law enforcement team seems to have the enemy's mole among them. Could it be that you...," Li Hao trailed off.

Liu Long laughed. "Ha! Are you suspecting me?" he asked. "Of course, I understand. But no, I am not the mole. You might not understand what I have done but maybe in the future..."

"Captain, just tell me clearly," said Li Hao.

Liu Long was silent for a moment. He then sighed softly. What he said next made Li Hao tremble.

"I know you want to be a superhuman, Supers, as we call them. I... do, too. I wanted to be an extraordinary person with power. I almost stepped into that realm but was forced back at the last minute!"

"I am not satisfied," continued Liu Long. "After seeing that domain, how can I be satisfied when made to retreat and live life as if I had never seen it? The chaos in the law enforcement team is partly my fault. I worked in it and led it very meticulously until a few years ago. I am no longer able to live an ordinary life after seeing that domain and the possibility! I got distracted and paid less attention to my team, which is why moles have been able to infiltrate the law enforcement team!"

It would be an understatement to say Li Hao was stunned. But nothing that the captain had said had shocked him as much as what he said after that.

"I am not willing to fall into oblivion like this," said the captain. "I do not want to forget about the mystical realm. I found out a way to become a Super even if I wasn't allowed to step into the realm. It is by killing other Supers!"

Liu Long's eyes flashed. He sounded like a madman. "If you kill a Super who matches your attributes and abilities, you can strip them off their supernatural power and absorb

it into your body. If once is not enough to trigger the power in your own body, you do it again! In the past three years, we have killed several Supers but... we never succeeded.”

Li Hao felt like a mess. He could not believe that the law enforcement team would be so brutal and brazen. Cold sweat broke out on his forehead.

He could guess why Liu Long wanted him to join his team so desperately. Li Hao swallowed nervously. He thought he had been reckless today but here he was, on the rooftop, with a madman.

Liu Long seemed to notice Li Hao’s nervousness. “What are you afraid of?” said Liu Long, laughing like a creep. “You see why I don’t want the Night Patrollers to get involved? There is danger but there is reward there too!”

“Li Hao, you too, can become a superhuman. Even if you join the Night Patrollers, they won’t let you try again. They will give you only one chance to draw in the power. If you can’t do it then, you will never ever get a second chance. After witnessing the mystical realm, do you really think you can go back to being ordinary and normal?”

“Has no one been able to succeed in one try?” asked Li Hao shakily. He remembered drinking the water. He also remembered how it had seeped out of his body. Was that the mystical energy?

He had drunk a whole bowl of it, still he wasn’t a Super. What Liu Long said seemed to be true. He had not been able to retain that energy in his body.

“Some did it,” said Liu Long. “Every year, the Night Patrollers select ten thousand people from major cities for the experiment. The success rate is always 1%. That is, only about a hundred people or less who succeed. I was among the rest who failed! Do you think you would be in the lucky hundred even if you were selected?”

Li Hao remained silent.

“I can only rely on myself.” Liu Long laughed wildly. “I have to kill them myself! Kill them and strip them off their mysterious energy! As long as you match them to your aptitude, it should work. Even if it doesn’t, you can do it again! If you keep trying, it will definitely work!”

Li Hao took a deep breath to steady himself. He looked at Liu Long. An ordinary person who wanted to become a Super. He had gone completely bonkers and walked the edge while killing Supers. It all sounded crazy to him but to the person in front of him, it was his reality.

“Captain ... You think I can attract Supers?”

“Yes,” said Liu Long. “The first time I saw you, I could definitely feel some mysterious energy. You must have been in contact with Supers or some super item recently. A person like you... must have something to do with the supernatural realm!”

Li Hao wasn't sure if it was because of his jade pendant or the water he had drunk. But the captain had definitely noticed something. 'He is terrifying!' thought Li Hao.

An existence where you kill Supers to become one. Li Hao didn't know how strong Supers were. The red shadow that he had seen tonight was terrifying enough for him but... this was even more horrifying!

“Consider my offer,” said Liu Long, as he walked to the stairs and went back down. “Don't count on your teacher.” His voice became fainter as he left. “He can't help you. The Night Patrollers don't want your professor or any of his students to break through the barrier and step into the mystical realm because it doesn't serve their interest!”

Li Hao didn't know what to think of that. Even Professor Yuan couldn't succeed?

Liu Long left. Only Li Hao remained at the top of the tower.

“Bait ...,” Li Hao murmured softly. He understood Liu Long's intention

He looked and spoke like a madman but he was an expert. He was open and frank about what he wanted. He had made it clear in his words that he was a person who valued friendship. He had emphasized that multiple times.

He wasn't willing to investigate the mole in the law enforcement team because he didn't want to doubt those he worked with.

Yes!

On this point, Liu Long had said several times that he was not willing to investigate the mole in the law enforcement team. In fact, this sentence was Liu Long's statement.

I can't bear to hurt those who betrayed me.

“I help you solve the case and you help me in return,” Liu Long had said.

'Do you really value your feelings that much?' Li Hao thought to himself. 'Did anyone care for their emotions and feelings about others so much that they were willing to overlook their treachery?'

Li Hao couldn't not really believe everything the captain had said. He didn't know if he could even trust the captain. Li Kao knew that every word of Liu Long's had been calculated.

"Kill Supers, strip them off their mysterious power, and absorb it.... If it doesn't work the first time..."

Li Hao felt a chill in his heart. The world of Supers seemed brutal. If an ordinary person wanted to kill Supers to become one themselves...

'No wonder the Supers keep a low-profile when they are being hunted like this,' Li Hao realized. 'Liu Long told me some things, but didn't go into detail. He probably expects me to be tempted to join the law enforcement team to know more.'

Liu Long hadn't mentioned what kind of training methods the Supers used to draw energy into their bodies, the strength of their abilities, the type of abilities, etc.

'He even sensed the mysterious energy on me... was he bluffing to make me lose my composure or was he for real?' wondered Li Hao. 'Perhaps he had intended to make me flustered and admit to taking the stone from the Zhang family residence.' That was entirely possible.

What Liu Long didn't know was that not every ordinary person could see the mysterious energy like Li Hao. He didn't see any starlight energy remnant around his body. So how did Liu Long sense the mysterious energy on him? If there were any remnant of the supernatural energy, the person who controlled the red shadow would have definitely attacked him.

Liu Long was trying to trick him!

As for Liu Long, Li Hao had seen a faint starlight energy on the surface of his body. It was very faint but it was there.

Liu Long probably had killed Supers and absorbed their energy. Some of it was still left. 'At this rate, Liu Long might really become a Super,' thought Li Hao.

Ordinary people couldn't see it but Li Hao could. He had noticed it among the other members of the team too. They seemed to have mysterious abilities as well. Perhaps the 'we' Liu Long meant were those few members including Wu Chao and the charming female Patrol Officer. A total of five people. Not everyone in the law enforcement team.

It seemed like there was a small team within the law enforcement team, the Hunter Alliance, formed by Liu Long and the others who hunted the Supers.

Supers definitely didn't sound weak. So, what did Liu Long and his team of hunters use to kill them? This small team was scarier than anything Li Hao had encountered so far.

They had access to everything within the Inspection Division. It was not really difficult for the law enforcement team to find the Supers and kill them since Liu Long was the head and he could get any information and weapon he wanted.

This man was in charge of Silver City's Violence Department. Li Hao Vortex Mk III was useless. The Inspector General was rarely seen at the front lines. So, Liu Long was the boss and could do anything he pleased.

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Li Hao walked down the stairs of the tower.

He was deep in thought.

If he rejected the offer, what consequences would he have to face? 'Will Liu Long cause me trouble?'

'Would he tip off the enemy with the red shadow and inform them that I had both the Zhang family's saber and Li family's sword?' wondered Li Hao. 'What if he kills me?'

Liu Long had talked about loyalty and friendship, so Li Hao had thought him kind, but now he realized that the captain was really a cold and ruthless man.

Liu Long did not seem reckless to Li Hao anymore. He was cold and calculating. He might have deliberately led the law enforcement team to inaction to let the enemy and the Supers to relax their vigilance! To show weakness and to pounce at the right time.

'In fact, I think that Liu Long knows who the mole is already! He is just letting the mole do whatever he wants for now.'

Chapter 36: Decision (2)

Li Hao's mind worked quickly. He had seen through many things today. Liu Long's law enforcement team topped the list among those things.

Li Hao was sure that the chaos in the law enforcement team was caused by none other than himself. He was very cunning!

Li Hao cursed inwardly. He wondered whether he should take on the offer or not. 'If I do, I will definitely have some help dealing with the whole red shadow debacle. I am not familiar with the Night Patrollers. If Liu Long and the others really wanted to be Supers then they were certainly more dedicated than the Night Patrollers, only a bit weaker.'

'However, I don't like this business of killing Supers,' thought Li Hao. Li Hao knew he was the next target of the red shadow. After today's incident, the ones who controlled it might already be planning their next move. 'I am afraid...'

Li Hao wondered what actually made him so scared. After a while, deep in thought, he realized it was Liu Long. If Liu Long was on the same side as the people who controlled the red shadow, Li Hao was in real danger!

If that was true, everything was now revealed and Li Hao needed to be even more careful. He sighed. His heart felt heavy.

Li Hao felt more lost than ever. He had found out about some things today which had added more questions than answers. If Li Hao couldn't find a way to deal with the red shadow, then he was in even more danger than before.

...

BOOM!

A large vehicle flattened the Zhang family house. A huge cloud of smoke blew from it. Li Hao silently watched the house getting demolished thinking sadly of Zhang Yuan.

'Zhang Yuan, your home is gone!' said Li Hao to himself. 'You are dead and your home is being demolished. The last trace of you will be gone from this world!'

'The only thing I can do for you is to make sure I find your murderer,' thought Li Hao sadly. 'I don't seem to be able to do anything else. Please forgive me.'

The charming female Patrol Officer approached Li Hao quietly. She smiled at him. "If you decide to join us, you can find us tomorrow! I am Liu Yan, by the way, the Vice-captain of the law enforcement team. You are welcome to contact me anytime."

Liu Yan!

Li Hao wouldn't have recognized her had she not mentioned her name. But now that she had, he knew where he had heard her name.

He had been in the Confidential Information Room for a year. There was always gossip at the Inspection Office. Liu Yan was one of the names he had heard.

Liu Long's lover. Li Hao didn't know if that was true. It was gossip and rumors, after all. The aunties in the Confidential Information Room talked about her with disdain. They always said she got to the position of the Vice-captain in the law enforcement team because of her looks and charms. Seeing her in person today, Li Hao realized that those rumors were baseless. Being the Vice-captain, she should be at least a Level 1 Patrol Officer. She did seem formidable.

Above the Chief patrol Officer was the Patrol Envoy. Liu Long was a Patrol Envoy. His title was only second to the Inspector general. Even the Deputy General might not have as much power as him.

“Of course. Thank you,” said Li Hao.

A wise man should always know when to be courteous. At this moment, he couldn't directly refuse the offer.

Liu Yan smiled. “You won't regret it.” She left.

They were very fast and efficient and didn't make much noise. Li Hao was frightened of them. They looked ordinary but they were far from it. They had a faint layer of starlight on their body. It was very weak but he could notice it when they were close.

That was the same starlight energy that had been in the water where the jade pendant was soaked.

‘A Half-super? Is there such a thing?’ thought Li Hao. These few people had probably drawn the energy into their bodies before they came here. They had not succeeded in becoming a full-fledged Super.

Liu Long's position in the law enforcement team was powerful. He must have had a lot of help.

‘Liu Long kills Supers to absorb their energy. Maybe I can just use the water. My jade sword will provide the energy. I just need to figure out if the Zhang family's saber does the same.’

The rumbling continued. Soon, flames rose from the house. Li Hao watched silently. He didn't regret his choice. He had obtained a lot of information today. Some information was even beyond his wildest imagination. Even if he had exposed himself a little, it was worth it.

He wondered if the people who controlled the red shadow knew that he was the wielder of the Li family sword. Maybe.

Perhaps they had their own reason for not making a move on him yet. If they had killed his parents like he suspected, then they probably knew that the Li family's sword was with him.

‘With such a commotion, the enemy won't show themselves, obviously,’ thought Li Hao. He pulled his jacket tighter around him and patted Black Panther. “Let's go,” he said softly.

Li Hao took advantage of the commotion and left quietly

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A few people gathered around Liu Long. Liu Yan looked doubtfully at Li Hao leaving quietly in the dark. "Do you really think he will join us?"

Chapter 37: Decision (3)

Wu Chao, who was as thin as a bamboo, laughed faintly. "Boss, he does indeed have his own way of thinking and reasoning. Very critical, I must say. But he has someone backing him up. Yuan Shuo is not a Super but he has mastered the technique of the five beasts, so he isn't weak, either. I have been working with the Night Patrollers. It might not be a bad thing entirely to get Li Hao to join us."

A fat man, whose eyes weren't visible, said in a muffled voice, "Yuan Shuo is a proud man. He didn't even give a d*amn when the boss tried to have him join the hunt. He kept Li Hao with him so he wouldn't be targeted by the Night Patrollers—"

"Night Patrollers?" Liu Long interrupted coldly. "Do you think they don't know? My office had killed so many Supers. There is no way they don't know what's happening."

"I don't care," continued Liu Long, "So what if they know? All the Supers we killed were criminals after all! They were the ones who spread the information that killing the Supers and absorbing their power was possible."

Liu Long sneered. "If they didn't want us, the left-overs, to deal with the Supers, they wouldn't have let the information slip. They have a lot of work to do so they don't care about that yet. But if they begin to care, it will pose a huge problem. It is too dangerous for ordinary people to deal with Supers. They muddle along through their miserable life without offending the Supers. But now that the news of an ordinary person being able to absorb the power of Supers has spread, what do you think will happen?"

Everyone fell silent. It would be bloodshed. Those who no longer wanted to be ordinary would take a gamble even if it meant death. If they joined those who were powerful, they would have a chance. With methods, weapons, and intellect, it wasn't as difficult to beat a Super anymore.

They were the living proof of this!

"Do you think this is happening only in Silver City?" said Liu Long. "I am afraid not! The Night Patrollers spread the news to use people as cannon fodders temporarily so that they could do half their work. The Night Patrollers are indeed very smart. If we manage to become a Super, where do you think we will be taken?"

“We will be recruited to the Night Patrollers,” laughed Liu Yan.

Everyone nodded. They wondered what would happen if they refused. Will they be branded as criminals or heretics if they refuse to join the Night Patrollers?

The fat man took a deep breath. “The Night Patrollers are indeed cunning. Maybe they intend to kill some of the Supers themselves to absorb more power. They would certainly get rid of anyone who stands out and absorb them for themselves.”

The Night Patrollers let slip a little bit of information so that the criminals who were Supers would be hunted by those who wanted to become one. Since, the Night Patrollers are the only legitimate organization for any Super to join, they would have no other choice than to contribute to increasing the number in Night Patrollers, or to be absorbed. There were always a few people who refused and lived as heretics, branded as criminals and hunted.

“It’s a very cunning scheme,” said Liu Long. “I know for a fact that those people who failed in the selection would definitely do anything to become a Super. No one would be willing to give up once they have tasted the power of the mystical realm. We are the core of the law enforcement team, so we have power, weapons and enough confidence to fight for even a sliver of opportunity.”

“We don’t have to pay that price and join the Night Patrollers,” continued Liu Long. “We can choose to fight them. We can pick young talents and expand our small group. Because why not?”

The other members finally understood what Liu Long was getting at. Some nodded sagely, while others, like the fat man, appeared worried that they might be discovered by the Night Patrollers. They might be punished for killing Supers and absorbing them for the mysterious energy.

The fat man nodded anyway, willing to follow his boss anywhere. “Boss,” he said. “About Li Hao joining us... will it be beneficial?”

“Certainly!” said Liu Long but did not explain any further.

As for whether Li Hao would join them was not even a question. No one rejected Liu Long’s invitation, especially with promises of supernatural powers.

The Night Patrollers had a formal selection process but the success rate was only 1%. Li Hao might not even be chosen as a candidate among the ten thousand. Many people knew about the Supers, most were very high-level executives. So, what change did Li Hao have?

Many higher-ups hoped that they or at least their descendants could become Supers. Even if Yuan Shuo stepped in to get Li Hao a chance, there was a high chance he

wouldn't be selected. There were just too many powerful and influential people on the line.

As long as Li Hao knew that he had no chance of even trying unless he joined the law enforcement team, everything would work as Liu Long wanted.

...

The night was quiet as Li Hao walked back silently.

The Zhang family residence wasn't very far from his own community. But the walk felt much longer than usual because Li Hao had a lot to think about. He finally decided to give Professor Yuan another call.

"Beep, beep, beep ..."

Professor Yuan accepted the call very quickly. He must have been worried.

"Professor!"

"Is it settled?"

"Yes, Captain Liu Long is here with his men. I'm already on my way back." He hesitated. "Professor, Captain Liu said that I might be in danger. He said that the people who killed Zhang Yuan might want to kill me, too. I am fine for now but..."

Professor Yuan seemed to have guessed as much. "Tomorrow, you will move back to the academy," he said calmly. "You don't have to stay in the dormitory or attend classes if you don't want to. Just stay at my place and don't go out. It won't be difficult to avoid them for at least another year or two."

Chapter 38: Decision (4)

Professor Yuan didn't say it directly, but Li Hao knew what he meant. His professor was betting on himself that the Night Patrollers would act on this and not ignore his safety.

But Li Hao doubted it. Unless the red shadow was very powerful and intended to kill a lot more, the Night Patrollers might not really care.

Li Hao knew the people who controlled the red shadow would not give up so easily. Besides, Li Hao didn't want to spend his life in hiding.

"Teacher, I still want to stay in the Inspection Office," said Li Hao.

“You’re so stubborn!” said Professor Yuan, annoyed. “You know it’s dangerous and you still want to stay there! This is not courage; this is plain stupidity!”

“Professor... I might join the law enforcement team. Captain Liu extended an invitation for me to join. He said that the law enforcement team can protect me.”

“The law enforcement team?”

“Yes, and...,” Li Hao hesitated. “He said I might be able to enter... another field.”

Professor Yuan laughed. “Liu Long, that shrewd bloke, he still hasn’t given up. How could it be as simple as he expects? If it was that simple everyone would be a Super! I know everything he has done. It has never worked. That man simply doesn’t know how to give up.”

“But there are some things that you don’t understand, Li Hao,” continued Professor Yuan. “Obviously, Liu Long hasn’t told you. Killing Supers in itself is a suicide mission. If you succeed in that, there is the thing about drawing the energy into your body. The Night Patrollers have a 90% safety rate. Even if you fail to draw the energy into your body, you won’t die. But Liu Long’s method has less than 50% safety rate. If you are unable to draw the energy into your body. Then you might end up dead anyway.”

Liu Long had never mentioned this to him.

“I am sure, Liu Long made it sound very tempting and easy. But Li Hao, why do you think he has only a few people who are bold enough to follow him in his team? Liu Long had gathered dozens of people before. How many do you see now with him? Many have died fighting the Supers, many died in the process of absorbing the energy.”

Professor Yuan sighed. “If you want to really go down this path, I can help you apply for it.”

Li Hao sensed that he had put his teacher in a difficult position. The matter probably wasn’t that simple. Li Hao had a plan in mind. “Thank you, professor. But there is really no need for that.”

Yuan Shuo didn’t want to insist. He knew that the process wasn’t so easy. There was still a 10% chance of death. He didn’t want Li Hao to be in that 10%. He himself had tried and failed. He did not want his student to fail and then spend the rest of his life yearning for the mystical power. It would ruin his life.

Li Hao was relieved to find out that his professor knew about Liu Long and his actions. That made it easier to talk to him about his problems.

“Professor, I have decided to join the law enforcement team, I don’t think I will try their... methods but I do want revenge!”

“Your temper!” Professor Yuan sighed. “Fine. Do as you please. There is no use arguing with you. You are too stubborn. But, if you have the time, come meet me. Even if I can’t be of much help, I can certainly explain things to you. This path is not easy.”

Professor Yuan suddenly laughed. “You are really very persistent. Maybe it will be a good thing if you succeed. If I succeed in taking another path too, then maybe we can work together in the future without being under anyone’s control. Some people can’t wait to see me fail all the time. I am going to throw them aside sooner or later!”

Li Hao vaguely understood what he meant, but he didn’t ask. If Professor Yuan wanted to tell him, he would tell him outright. If he was holding things back, then he must have some reservations about it.

Li Hao made up his mind. He was going to join the law enforcement team.

The fact that his professor hadn’t tried to stop him meant that he understood Li Hao’s situation. Liu Long might have a lot of schemes up his sleeves but he might not mean any direct harm to Li Hao.

‘Red shadow ... superpower ... Here I come!’ thought Li Hao.

Chapter 39: Demon-hunting Team (1)

That night, Li Hao went to bed very late.

Even when asleep, he wanted to be careful. He placed Black Panther at the door to guard it. He then kept the Vortex Mk III by his side at all times. He didn’t even care if the gun went off. But he worried that the dog might do something desperate.

Fortunately, nothing happened that night.

Perhaps the enemy was still waiting for a rainy day to strike.

...

13th July, 1730.

Last night’s noise was like a dream. The Qiming community was as quiet as ever, and no one even noticed the commotion on the old street in the neighborhood.

Maybe some people did notice but didn’t take it too seriously.

In the morning, Li Hao got up and showered. He then boiled water and poured it into a cup. He then placed the jade pendant in it. He waited for a while and took a sip.

He frowned. 'The starlight seems to be less this time.' Compared to yesterday, the starlight was actually less. 'Can it be recovered?' Li Hao was concerned.

Li Hao wondered if the jade sword needed time to recover its energy after being used. If the energy just needed time to recover and didn't run out, that would indeed be very useful!

As for the stone saber, Li Hao didn't use it for now. He had been worried last night that someone might have followed him. So, he didn't take out the stone.

He drank the glass of water anyway and felt a similar warmth spread through his body. He then practiced the art of the ape. He realized that even if he improved drastically, it might not be enough to deal with the red shadow. But Li Hao didn't want to let the opportunity go. Improving himself wasn't a bad thing. It would always come in handy.

While training, Li Hao pondered. 'Should he soak the jade pendant several times a day or just soak it once in a large pot of water? Would there be a difference?' he decided to experiment with this.

Li Hao's body was still as agile as before. He scurried around like an ape in his room. He did not practice a lot of times like he did yesterday.

He only practiced three times in a row. He had a little of the starlight energy still left but he chose to stop. He slowly felt the starlight completely dissipate from his body.

He was worried that the red shadow or the people who controlled it would be able to see the faint trace of starlight on his body. If that happened, he would be exposed.

Li Hao had noticed a faint trace of starlight on Liu Long and others. They couldn't hide from his eyes. Li Hao remembered seeing Liu Long way before but he had never seen the trace of starlight on his body. Li Hao wondered if he was able to see the trace of starlight yesterday only because he had drunk the water. He needed more information.

Li Hao washed up again. He felt much more refreshed. He poured the remaining jade pendant-soaked water into Black Panther's food bowl. The dog's eyes flashed eagerly as if it couldn't wait to lap the water up. After it was done, it kept looking up at Li Hao and wagging its tail.

Li Hao studied the dog. The starlight on its body was richer than before. Was it because the dog was emitting it more than it absorbed the energy? Or, was it that the more it absorbed the starlight, the more it would overflow from its body?

Li Hao didn't know! He refused to accept that the dog was able to absorb all of the starlight it drank. That would mean this mere pup was even more powerful than him!

"Woof! Woof!" barked Black Panther excitedly as if asking for another cup of water.

Li Hao smiled and patted it. "Next time, pup! You look after the house while I go for work, alright? You have to pay close attention. Take note of the smell of whoever wanders around the house so we can track their location if needed. Don't wander off."

Li Hao was worried that someone would try to sneak into his house after what happened yesterday.

'The jade pendant is with me, as always,' thought Li Hao. He wasn't too worried about the Zhang family's stone saber. It was too large to carry around so he had placed it in Black Panther's kennel downstairs. That seemed like the safest place for now. Because who in their right mind would rummage through a dog's kennel for a stone?

Nobody bothered with Black Panther. Li Hao was the only one who cleaned its kennel when he could find time. So, that was the most inconspicuous spot to hide the stone in.

If someone did look for it there and managed to find it, Black Panther would be able to track them down by their smell anyway. It was safer than keeping it with him. The jade pendant was fine. He wore it around his neck and his shirt hid it. But carrying a stone around would look odd and suspicious.

"Woof!" affirmed Black Panther understanding Li Hao's instructions. It nodded.

Li Hao was glad that the dog was getting smarter. He stood up and walked downstairs.

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Outside the neighborhood was the familiar breakfast stall. The stall-keeper handed Li Hao a few meat buns and a cup of soy milk. Li Hao didn't need to say anything, he always ate here.

Li Hao paid the stall-keeper and leisurely rode his bicycle to his office. The black car that had followed him yesterday did not appear today. He wondered if they had given up or if they were being careful after yesterday night's incident.

Li Hao observed carefully but he didn't find anyone following him even as he reached the Inspection Office.

Chapter 40: Demon-hunting Team (2)

At the Inspection Office.

Confidential Information Room.

Li Hao was the first to arrive. He did a simple sweep of the office and boiled a pot of hot water as usual.

Chen Na was a newbie like him so she arrived early as well. Just a few minutes after him.

The weather was hot and Chen Na looked sleepy early in the morning. She probably hadn't slept well last night. She kept yawning. "Li Hao!" she said when she saw him. "You are so mean. Why didn't you tell me you were investigating last night?"

"You heard about it?"

"Of course, I do!" she said. "The law enforcement team was dispatched last night."

The law enforcement team being dispatched wasn't a small matter, so naturally the news might have spread far and wide.

Chen Na shook her head to brush off the drowsiness. "Did you meet the murder last night?" she asked curiously.

"No," he said. "But I felt like I was being followed."

"Really?" she asked eagerly. Chen Na had never been involved in a major case before, so she was excited to know more. "So, the files you showed me... the people were all murdered?"

"Probably." Li Hao nodded.

"Then you have already made an important contribution to the case!" said Chen Na. "Li Hao, if you find the murderer, you will be a hero! You might even be promoted to a Level 2 rank!"

She was a little envious that Li Hao could be a part of such an investigation while she couldn't. But she was glad for him, nonetheless.

"We don't have any more clues yet," said Li Hao.

Chen Na rolled her eyes. "That's where I come in. We agreed to go to my hometown tomorrow, right? Maybe we will find clues there! Li Hao, if I help you and get involved in

the case and if we somehow find the murderer, do you think I will be recognized too? Do you think we will be followed?!"

Li Hao had almost forgotten that they had planned a trip to Chen Na's hometown. But he had been targeted so easily yesterday. It had been dangerous.

Li Hao hesitated. "Forget about it. We are not going. It's too dangerous. It's better to keep a low profile right now."

He didn't want to put Chen Na in danger. The field of superhumans and superpowers was hazardous.

As for the Silver City Song, he wasn't in a hurry to find out more. Now that he had more information about the red shadow, he felt that he could find a way to defeat it. He could always investigate the song later anyway.

"What? We aren't going?" Chen Na was disappointed. "Li Hao, let's go together! What's there to be afraid of? We can just tell the law enforcement team that we will be their bait, if they ask. We might even lead them directly to the murderer and they will be caught!" She knew the risk but she still wanted to be part of this.

"We'll see how it goes," said Li Hao.

They talked for a while till others arrived. Many people seemed to know about last night's incident.

Sister Yu made a beeline towards Li Hao the moment she reached the office. "Little Hao! How could you be so stupid!" she scolded. "Don't involve yourself in such a dangerous case! Just stay in the Confidential Information Room. It will be safer for you. Don't get involved with the law enforcement team."

"That's right, little Hao," said Brother Zhou. "Listen to Sister Yu. Don't get involved in something like this. It's very dangerous and there is no benefit."

Everyone either scolded him or urged him to be safe. They all cared for him so they tried to persuade him in their own way.

Staying in the Confidential Information Room had been safe and comfortable. Most of them had not been at the front lines for quite a while now. They were worried they would be dragged to the front lines to fight.

Li Hao didn't try to argue. He just nodded and remained polite. He made it appear as though he had no choice in this matter.

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The crowd around him only dispersed when Wang Jie arrived.

“Li Hao, come to my office,” he said and headed to his cabin.

Li Hao got up and followed.

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When they were both in the office, Wang Jie looked at Li Hao carefully. He then smiled and pressed his hand together. “Sit,” he said.

Li Hao sat down.

“You don’t have to be so quiet and reserved,” he said. “It will not be easy to be in the law enforcement team.”

Li Hao raised his head and looked at his Chief.

“They called me last night,” said Wang Jie. “They said they wanted you transferred to their team. Liu Long rarely ever takes an interest in anyone. It is very rare for him to personally ask for anyone. It seems he places great importance on you. You have really caught his eye because of the self-immolation cases. The law enforcement team wants you. What do you think?”

Wang Jie couldn’t refuse Liu Long. Of course, if Li Hao refused, Yuan Shuo was there like a pillar for him. But Liu Long was much more powerful in title and status than Wang Jie. But Wang Jie wanted to hear Li Hao’s opinion on this first.

Li Hao lowered his head and thought for a moment. “Chief, I would like to join them. I have learnt a great deal being in the Confidential Information Room. I like working here but... as you already know, I want to avenge my friend by finding the culprit.”

Wang Jie sighed. He did care for this kid. “Actually, personally I don’t want you to leave. I am even prepared to write a letter to the higher-ups and see if I can give you a promotion. But... I understand. I understand how much the self-immolation cases mean to you. So, I won’t stop you.”

Wang Jie looked at Li Hao with worry. “But you must be careful. The law enforcement team deals with dangerous cases. Especially for this self-immolation case, I suggest you stay away and maintain the paperwork and such. Don’t be eager to rush to the front lines no matter how simple a mission might sound. If this case can’t be solved by the law enforcement team, it’s likely to attract the attention of... other higher-ups.”