

STAR GATE

----- Chapter 10: New Book of Five Styles (II)

The New Book of Five Styles described the instinctive nature of five animals when it came to hunting and fleeing. The ferocity of tigers, tranquility of deer, steadiness of bears, nimbleness of apes, and speed of birds.

Li Hao's teacher, Yuan Shuo, was particularly skilled in the styles of ape and bird. To put it simply, the professor desired to flee as adroitly as apes and fleet-footed as birds. His goal was to run at the first sign of danger, bypassing all obstacles and hurdles.

When Li Hao studied by the professor's side at the Veteris Institute, he'd learned only the style of the ape. He retained a cursory overview of the other four and was yet to practice them in the same way. This was a method that couldn't be mastered overnight—they required constant, persistent training.

"Let's give it a try!" Decisive by nature, Li Hao felt that there was nothing to lose by putting his thoughts into action. His brief warm up seemed easier than normal and he quickly refocused on the bowl, drinking a mouthful of sword-baptized water.

He nimbly darted around the next moment, lifting his heels and pushing off his feet. Springing into the air, he hooked his hands into a ring hanging in the center of the living room and swung like a monkey.

He'd installed the ring so he could practice the New Book of Five Styles. The ape style centered on agility and was one of Yuan Shuo's specialities. Thus, it was the first style that Li Hao learned from his teacher. It was one that utilized the surroundings to create a better, faster, and more economical escape route.

As Li Hao immersed himself in the style, he felt much more fleet-footed than usual. Swinging from the ring for a bit, he then kicked off a wall and leapt into the air. Posturing like a monkey, he flung himself forward and grabbed the back of the couch in front of him.

Using his arms for leverage, he scurried around the moderately sized living room. Being tightly packed with objects, there wasn't much space for movement. He flashed to and fro in the limited area with unmatched agility.

He didn't possess enormous physical strength and wasn't very muscular. Compared to Zhang Yuan, he was much more suited to do battle with books while Zhang Yuan was built like a bear.

Such a physique, however, happened to make Li Hao a perfect match for the ape style. Someone too stocky would find it difficult to move around tight spaces.

"Huff! Puff!" Rapid breathing echoed in the tiny living room.

What seemed like easy cavorting around was an immense drain on stamina. Only when he combined his actions with the breathing method denoted in the New Book of Five Styles could he maintain coordination with his body.

The breathing method wasn't a profound martial art, just some guidelines on when to breathe, when to exhale, how to hold one's breath, and how to adjust one's breathing. Of course, to speak of the method was much easier than executing it. Yuan Shuo had easily modified the five animals' play for the New Book of Five Styles, but then spent a great deal of effort creating an appropriate breathing method to go with it.

Thus, the New Book of Five Styles was common knowledge at the Veteris Institute, but the breathing method was not. Yuan Shuo kept the seemingly insignificant pointers for himself and taught them to a few select students. As

Li Hao's breathing sped up and hitched from his exertions, he made continuous adjustments to ensure the flow of his movements.

A complete act of the ape style didn't take long—three minutes from start to finish. Just three minutes was sufficient to exhaust an adult moving at high intensity and fast pace. Li Hao couldn't manage more than two run-throughs after three years of diligent training. He was completely drained after six minutes and couldn't get back up.

Meanwhile, his seventy-year-old teacher boasted of more stamina than him. His highest record was five times in a row, but Li Hao didn't believe that anyone could maintain such high intensity, speed, and agility for fifteen minutes straight.

If one could flee like an ape or monkey for fifteen minutes straight after encountering danger, then one's chances of survival greatly increased.

Li Hao didn't have the energy to think of other matters at the moment. He continued moving at an incredible speed while Panther watched with a dumbfounded stare. The table, chairs, couch, coffee table, and walls became his leverage points. Signs of his exertions could be seen everywhere throughout the room.

"That's two times!" His breathing was unsteady when he finished his second run-through, but he still had stamina to spare. Not only did the jade sword enhance his physical reserves, but it also seemed to make him lighter.

The ape style was generally a tad bit uncomfortable for him. His body was too heavy and every jump and push off required too much effort. It was a bit easier today.

"I think I can go again!" He finally glanced down at his stomach to find that the starlight had visibly faded. There was a faint sheen left over his skin.

Naturally, much of this starlight would quickly dissipate as well, but he could sense that he'd absorbed a lot of the energy.

He was both gratified and surprised. What was this mysterious strength? And why were the Night Watchers shrouded in secrecy?

He didn't know if they were so unknown because of physical prowess, or if they possessed special abilities like the scarlet shadow. Could they turn invisible, perhaps, or cast fire?

If it was just being immensely skilled, then he didn't need to gain a deeper understanding of the Night Watchers. Perhaps a new routine of drinking water pre-practice would see marked improvement in his own skills.

"Let's go!" An extremely excited Li Hao shoved everything out of his mind. He was very tired after running through the routine twice, but felt that he could continue. The key thing was—there was still water left.

He took another large gulp and started jumping around again.

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"What's with upstairs?!" cursed an old neighbor in the unit directly downstairs. Li Hao used to train at home often, but never for long. Things were usually over after a few minutes. What was going on today, was he on something?

It'd been half an hour!

Soundproofing was subpar in an old building like this. If it wasn't for the fact that the kid was an inspector, the middle-aged woman living beneath him would've charged up and started yelling.

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"WHEW!!" Li Hao took a break from the rhythm of practicing twice, resting for a bit, taking another mouthful, and continuing. There was no more water in the

bowl, so he crashed to the floor like a sandbag and let every last bit of strength drain out of his body.

“Hoo!” Panting heavily, he closed his mouth and adjusted his breathing tempo according to the New Book of Five Styles.

It wasn't ideal to suck in large breaths of air during cooldown. The instructions said that regulating breathing was still critical during this stage or one risked wasting a large portion of the practice that'd just concluded.

“Hoo...” Li Hao looked up with delight after he calmed his breaths.

Nine times!

It wasn't nine times in a row; he'd stopped to rest a few times. The five times that his teacher was capable of were uninterrupted, so he hadn't broken his teacher's boastful record. But today, he'd managed three consecutive iterations for a duration of nine minutes!

He still had stamina to spare afterward—that was incredible to the point of frightening.

“This water... is divine water!” Li Hao took in a sharp breath. Did the Night Watchers or scarlet shadow enhance themselves through these kinds of methods? It was just his first encounter with the water. The effects were already marvelous and his energy levels were much higher than before.

If these people constantly trained like this, they would be terrifying even if they didn't set fire or possess supernatural skills!

“I... may have underestimated the Night Watchers. If they improve like this every night without using supernatural abilities, will a third gen vortex gun actually hit them?”

Almost certainly not!

A third gen vortex gun possessed an effective firing range of fifty meters. He couldn't lock on to anything beyond that. But if within fifty meters, Li Hao probably wouldn't have enough time to fire before the enemy drew close and broke his neck!

And if they wielded supernatural arts, such as casting fire through air, then he never stood a chance of harming them.

"Guns... might be useless!" More reservations were cropping up in Li Hao's mind. Guns were already potentially useless against the scarlet shadow. He looked at the jade sword in the bowl and fished it out, gazing at it with hope and desire. "Is there a limit to how many times a day you can be dunked in water? Do you always produce this mysterious energy?"

If there was no limit and he could use it however he wanted, that meant he could drink his fill everyday!

His major concern was that there was a limit to the sword, that the mysterious starlight would eventually run out. Inclined to study it further, Li Hao frowned when he glanced at the clock on the wall. This was it for today, it was 8pm.

He needed to head for Zhang Yuan's house!

If he didn't go now to see if Zhang Yuan's stone blade was still there, he might not have a chance to in the future. Someone was watching him; he should make use of their surveillance just starting to take shape.

"If Stellaris has this kind of ability, then what about the blade of the Zhangs?" Li Hao suddenly hypothesized that the scarlet shadow might be targeting these weapons.

"The sword of the Lis, blade of the Zhangs... If this is indeed their goal, then the blade might be gone. But who knows?"

It was a difficult call to make. Had the scarlet shadow discovered the blade? The item was just a rock and wouldn't seem out of place on the ground. The Zhangs certainly didn't pay much attention to it. Zhang Yuan hadn't cared about it after his parents died—he might've tossed it elsewhere himself.

If even Zhang Yuan didn't care about it, would the scarlet shadow or the faction behind it be able to find it?

“But if they haven't yet... that means someone might be keeping an eye on the Zhang family home!” Li Hao's heart quailed. It'd be safer if the shadow had already recovered the blade. If not, it'd be dangerous for him to visit the Zhang family home.

Would he go, or not?

The young man swiftly decided that yes, he would go. But after he made appropriate preparations, of course. No matter what, he must ensure his own safety. Of course, it would also be best if he did locate that blade.

There might be limited uses to the jade sword; it might prove ineffective after a few more times. If the Zhang blade granted the same effects, that meant a few more tries for Li Hao to experiment with.

He rose and entered the bathroom for a quick shower. It wasn't long before he reemerged to get dressed, put the jade sword over his head, and stowed the gun. When he was about to head out, he looked at Panther sprawled on the floor.

“You're coming with me. You can be the lookout since you've got a keen nose!”

Panther should be useful after drinking the water. It was a dog, so it might discover someone following him if he didn't.

“Arf!” Panther wagged its tail and scrambled up with excitement.

Li Hao smiled and scratched its head. "Don't bark, a dog that bites doesn't bark! You seem to be smarter now and can understand me. Don't make a sound if you sniff someone following me, just bite my pant leg, alright? I'll understand if you do that, do you understand me?"

The little black dog nodded!

It bobbed its head up and down a few times and clamped onto Li Hao's pant leg. He burst out chuckling.

Good dog!

It was smarter than the dogs trained at the Inspectorate. Nice, perhaps Panth really could help him.

Patting the dog's head, Li Hao thought over how he might dispel certain dangers that might be lurking. He stepped out for Zhang Yuan's house after he settled on various courses of action.