

STAR GATE

- ----- Chapter 12: Knowing How To Act Is Real Strength (II)

Li Hao quickly scanned the pile of stones, failing to locate the rock of his memories. All he remembered was that it bore some resemblance to a blade.

“I can’t search for it on a large scale if someone’s watching me from the shadows.” As he pondered over his next course of action, Panther suddenly started a low growl.

“Arrrrrr!” It wasn’t the sound of protecting food, but a guttural sound that carried a few hints of wariness. Li Hao’s scalp went numb as well!

He reflexively followed the dog’s line of sight and looked toward the main house. His heart skipped a beat before resuming a furious drumming. The front door was originally shut tight with nothing there, but now it was ajar and a smear of red could be seen through the crack.

The scarlet shadow?? Li Hao’s heart pounded furiously. *Has the scarlet shadow been released?*

He’d seen it before, but his calculations said that the shadow should only be active on rainy nights. What was it doing here at this time?!

“Can it be... that the scarlet shadow’s been searching the house for the stone blade this entire time??” Imperceptible cold sweat beaded Li Hao’s forehead.

They’d met too early! He wasn’t fully prepared yet. If it attacked him and set him on fire, he wouldn’t have any way to defend himself!

“What’s it doing here?? Damn, this is too fast. I haven’t even met the Night Watchers yet...” He turned stiff and began to tremble ever-so-slightly. He itched to spin on his heel and run.

But someone might be watching him from the outside.

Right, he couldn't run because ordinary people couldn't see the scarlet shadow! If he did, that would reveal certain things—such as his ability to see it. That would bring enormous trouble down on his head. He should have no reason to be afraid if he couldn't see it.

A myriad of thoughts flew through his mind before he shouted, "What are you yapping for? Be quiet!" Having yelled at Panther, he shouted at the main house next. "Who's there?! This is the Silver City Inspectorate, who's inside??"

Li Hao raised the third gen vortex gun and took aim. "Is anyone there? Show yourself!"

He forced himself to look anywhere but the hint of red and barked orders at the main door. When he failed to receive a response, he advanced on the house.

When he drew close, he abruptly darted forward and kicked the door open. It crashed against a wall and startled the neighbors. Rustling sounds rose from nearby houses.

Li Hao ignored them and peered into the house after kicking the door open. "Is anyone there?! I'm from the Inspectorate, come out or I'll shoot!"

Although he stared resolutely in front of him, his forehead was slick with sweat and his arms slightly trembling. Panther cowered at his feet, petrified with fear. Li Hao could see the dog's eye out of the corner of his. From the reflection in its eye, he saw a scarlet shadow standing on his left side. It was so close that it was cheek-to-cheek!

Don't react, keep it together. He remained scanning the house like he didn't see anything at all.

"No one?" His voice shook and he lowered it to curse noisily. "Fucking hell! Good thing none of my colleagues were around or I'd never hear the end of

this! Scaring me like this when it's late, I thought the murderer was hiding here!"

He breathed out explosively, keeping his eyes averted from the shadow. Wiping away a sheen of sweat, he looked down and smacked Panther on the head. "Dumb dog! What you barking for? There's nothing here! You scared the crap out of me!"

Whack!

A slightly wounded look appeared in the terrified dog's eyes. *Don't you see it? This dog sees it!* It didn't dare lift its head because the shadow was floating right over it.

Li Hao remained oblivious even as his hand passed through it to punish the dog. An undetectable chill was the only thing that grazed his arm.

It's intangible! His motions masked a bold probing of whether the scarlet shadow really was invisible and untouchable. Ostensibly to smack Panther, it gave him a very natural reason to touch the shadow.

The experiment showed him that... he couldn't touch it!

Shit, I'm in trouble. Guns are ineffective! Li Hao panicked and kept his composure only with immense concentration. To outsiders, he couldn't see the shadow, so there was nothing wrong with his gesture.

"Damned idiot dog, I'll chop you up if you keep yapping! You made me break Little Yuan's house door and almost scared me into calling teacher. I was one tap away from asking him to send people from the Inspectorate and Institute!"

Highly irate, he aimed a foot at the dog. It passed through the shadow again and didn't connect with anything!

Li Hao was much more bold than one might think of the young man. The scarlet shadow wasn't attacking on sight—it seemed to be observing

something. In that case, his act needed to continue and he needed to segue into his usual actions.

He exhaled again as he took another glance around the pitch black house. “It’s actually pretty scary when it’s late at night. How about... I still give teacher a call? The fellows at the Inspectorate don’t seem that smart or reliable. They’re the ones who closed the books on Little Yuan’s case and didn’t notice anything out of the ordinary. If worst comes to worst, I’ll ask teacher to send out those people in black.”

Those people in black were the Night Watchers. Li Hao was familiar with their uniform because he’d once caught a glimpse of them from far away. This muttering was just to threaten those watching him. If the shadow was sentient, it would know who he spoke of—the Night Watchers!

Maintaining absolute calm in this crucial moment, he also wanted to confirm if the two sides were colluding with each other. Not only did he stand his ground, but he continuously tested various theories.

Running would be the dumbest thing he could do. It would instantly reveal that he could see the shadow, which would cement his doom. Based on Li Hao’s analysis, he would only die on a rainy day. It wouldn’t be right now. There had to be certain reasons for that. In that case, he might as well go all out!

“Those people in black look very scary,” he mumbled hesitantly. “I don’t know if teacher is able to send them if he goes to them. Whatever, I can only turn to them since the Inspectorate doesn’t have any clues.

“I’m not that brave or strong and I have no idea what to do. Look at me being a big baby just because I’m here late at night. I probably can’t continue to do this alone.” Looking dejected, he took out the communicator. “I have to ask teacher for help!”

His heart shook when he began dialing Yuan Shuo's number. The scarlet shadow was vibrating! A faint strand of red beyond the house walls extended toward it and connected to the shadow. It promptly floated away the next second—like it'd received a command—and vanished from the yard. Moments later, Panther crawled back up and wagged its tail, restored to its usual exuberance. It looked more easily at Li Hao.

“Arf arf!” It seemed to be saying that all was well. The person had left and that ghostly shadow was gone.

Li Hao, however, regarded the development quite solemnly. So the scarlet shadow was with the person outside the house! That wasn't important since he'd long surmised that the shadow wasn't an independent entity, that it belonged to an organization.

The key thing was that the person outside could see the scarlet shadow and even communicate or control it, commanding it to leave. They grew concerned when Li Hao spoke of reaching out to his teacher and asking the Night Watchers for help. Hence, they chose to retreat.

His intimidation tactics worked!

Yet, Li Hao wasn't the least bit happy. The thread of red that stretched into the house seemed like the starlight from his sword water. It was a type of mysterious power!

“The person outside wields supernatural power! Are they working with the shadow or its master? Did they send it out to test me?”

“I can't kill the shadow with a gun so... what if it's a human being outside? What happens to the scarlet shadow if I kill the person?” He suddenly felt like he'd grasped something critical. The scarlet shadow was horrifying, but if it was a person... Even those who possessed arcane powers weren't invincible if they were made of flesh and blood.

Scarlet shadow... unknown person...scarlet shadow... unknown person... The dormant jade sword had seemed to stir when he touched the shadow. Could Stellaris harm it?

“This trip was worth it even if I don’t find the stone blade!” Agitation suddenly seized Li Hao. *Perhaps I can handle this guy, but the caveat is that he can’t be on guard against me. If he is, just that scarlet shadow alone can easily kill me!*

“If I catch him unawares and shoot him, and if Stellaris can harm the shadow... I might be able to take both of them out if I plan this properly!”

The look in his eyes grew bright. Only the unknown induced fear! He was much less afraid when he began plumbing the depths of the preternatural manifestation and the organization behind it. Only the desire for revenge drove him.

“But is this scarlet shadow the one I saw before? How many are there? Is the person keeping an eye on things from the shadows one of their head honchos?” Li Hao fretted over how many people, shadows, and powers this organization might contain. It felt like there was more than one of them!

“This is tough... I’m just an ordinary person!” he sighed and resolved to make full use of the other’s retreat. They might not come back for a while because they didn’t wish to run into the Night Watchers. Hence, he needed to make good use of time to see if he could find the Zhang stone blade.

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At the end of the street.

A pair of vivid blue eyes beneath a snarling ghost mask paused with uncertainty. Should they leave, just like this?

But... it would be very troublesome if Li Hao really did bring in the Night Watchers. Bigger issues would arise if they were exposed.

“Forget it, let’s leave for now just in case. The boy might not be able to get the Night Watchers to come since they don’t mobilize at Yuan Shuo’s beck and call. But better safe than sorry.” The masked person still elected to leave.

A scarlet shadow followed soundlessly behind the person. The masked person didn’t know if Li Hao would find anything since they’d already scoured the house numerous times for what they wanted. They failed to locate it even after digging up the foundations. It was probably lost and it’d be the greatest joke of all time if Li Hao found it.

But of one thing they could be certain, and that was Li Hao hadn’t withdrawn from the Veteris Institute because he saw something. He just couldn’t accept his good friend’s accidental death. If he’d seen something, he would’ve wet himself with fright tonight.

It was good that they could eliminate this possibility and have an explanation for his actions.