

Star Gate 16

Chapter 16: The Law Enforcement Teams of Silver City (II)

Meanwhile, Li Hao's thoughts raced rapidly. What did they mean? Were they speaking of those with preternatural powers? Had Silver City's law enforcers previously killed those supernatural people wielding mysterious energy?

Liu Long turned to Li Hao while the young man was still grappling with what he'd heard.

"Little fellow, you need to trust the enforcement team sometimes! I know you had your own concerns when you sought out your teacher. You're not dumb either. You found these six self-immolation cases out of a sea of files and identified that they were connected. This shows you are a patient, intelligent person! The Inspectorate needs people like you!

"You have certain thoughts in not coming to the law enforcers, I understand that," Liu Long continued coolly. "But you must remember that a dragon cannot suppress a snake in its element. You might have realized by now that an ordinary person could not have committed all six cases and that the culprit goes beyond our level one. But so what?"

The man's aura abruptly turned baleful. Shot through with frosty intent, his arctic coat fluttered in the wind.

"Even dragons must remain quietly coiled in Silver City! We are not helpless without the Night Watchers! I've even beaten up some of their weaklings before!"

A loud snort indicated his displeasure while Li Hao's jaw dropped. Does he mean that? The direct mention of the Night Watchers cut straight through the young man's thoughts.

Clearly, the deputy chief could tell that Li Hao suspected this case was connected to factors beyond normal society. Liu Long looked like he shared the same conjecture, but he still hadn't brought in the Night Watchers. It looked like he wanted to handle it with his own team.

Where does he get his confidence from?

Li Hao thought through all of this in a split second and looked down with an awkward expression. “I’m afraid I don’t understand the chief’s meaning...”

“Hypocrite!” Liu Long sniffed. “What don’t you understand? If you, someone who paged through countless cases to find these six, don’t understand, then who does? Don’t tell me you don’t know about the Night Watchers! There’s nothing to be concerned about! What others are afraid to voice doesn’t mean that the Inspectorate is afraid too! As strong as the Night Watchers are, they still answer to a boss!

“Remember this, Li Hao! The Night Watchers and Inspectorate are shadow and light. We’re overseen by the same superiors! Technically speaking, we’re colleagues. So what if we talk about them, what can they do about it? Their greatest taboo is hurting one of their own. They don’t dare and won’t ever do it! So all you have to do is make sure your actions are aboveboard. What are you afraid of the Night Watchers for? You can openly curse their name!”

Poleaxed, Li Hao felt like he was getting to know Liu Long for the first time.

Seriously? The Night Watchers that everyone’s wary of, the mysterious organization that people don’t even dare discuss, seems worthless to this one.

A mature woman behind Liu Long tittered and interjected with amusement, “Little fella, the chief may be talking a bit big. But just like he says, there’s nothing to be worried about! We don’t bring those guys up only because they’re bad omens. A big case always happens when they appear—they’re inauspicious.”

“And what are you talking about!” Liu Long blustered. How dare his team members say he was talking big!

The female inspector giggled coquettishly and ignored her superior. She focused on Li Hao. “The chief and us are inclined to spend so much time chatting with you because we want to tell you that Classified Affairs is boring. Why don’t you join the enforcement team, little Li Hao?”

Li Hao was truly stunned this time.

Wut.

Liu Long looked just as severe, but his tone was slightly more mollified. “You look like you keep your wits about you and you’re patient and loyal. You pass muster! Come join the team. I’ll make you a second rank inspector and have you focus on analyzing cases—”

The woman interrupted again, this time with a beguiling smile. “To put it simply, the enforcement team needs elite talent. A cultured person like yourself, one who discovered a connection and strung six cases together out of thousands, is a particularly good fit! We have a lot of crude brutes on the team who rely on pure experience and skill. Their analysis is weak and they often fail to deduce more from clues. We’ve had to give up a lot of cases because of it—Zhang Yuan’s case is one of them!

“We did find some hints that something was amiss, but didn’t think too hard on it. Add to that overlooking the five other cases... that means we completely failed to connect the dots. Otherwise, we would’ve handled it as a combined case long ago! We’d naturally know that this isn’t an ordinary case.”

They’re here... on a recruitment drive?? Li Hao found himself equal parts speechless and surprised. The enforcement team wanted him? Their chief had been so cold toward him from the beginning that he’d thought Liu Long was highly dissatisfied with him.

“You’ll solve the self-immolation cases faster if you join us!” Liu Long resumed his usual frosty tone. “We can always bring in the Night Watchers if we can’t handle it. It’s right and proper for us to seek them out. But if you have your teacher ask, you’ll make him owe plenty of favors!”

Now that hit Li Hao where it hurt. The chief was not to be underestimated! Just one line was sufficient to dissuade Li Hao from asking Yuan Shuo for help. Just as Liu Long said, his teacher would owe massive favors if he relied on the professor!

“That’s enough for now, think about it!” Liu Long concluded aloofly. “It’s no big deal, come if you want! We don’t lack for elites and our task at hand is to capture this guy. Have everyone keep an eye out that the target is an expert and very possibly supernatural!”

The deputy chief strode into the Zhang family home. Li Hao trotted in his wake, trying to think of how to nudge Liu Long into leveling the complex. True, it was Little Yuan’s house, but he wasn’t in this world anymore. Surely his friend wouldn’t mind if it was done to avenge him.

“Team, search the house!” Liu Long roared before Li Hao could say anything. “Tear it down if you don’t find any useful clues, raze it to the ground and dig three feet down! If you still find nothing, burn it all! I’d like to see what the suspect was watching this house so long for?! Even supernatural objects have to show themselves if we burn it all!

Li Hao:

I... haven’t said anything yet. This guy looks brash and... he really is very brash!

This was also a perfect plan of action. No wonder what the enemy was looking for, they would show themselves if the entire house went up in flames.

His style is seriously to my taste!

“The enforcement team...” Li Hao was acquainted with them since he was an inspector, but today, he was getting to know his so-called colleagues all over again. Was Chief Liu Long’s team really that inept?

But it was true that the enforcement team was a sieve. His report had been leaked in the blink of an eye, which indicated that they were an internal mess.

As Li Hao sank deep in thought, the coy team member from earlier suddenly drew close to him with a radiant smile. “Little Li, that’s how the chief is, don’t mind him! You’re an inspector too, so you know how things work sometimes. The chief really does want you to join, despite appearing like he doesn’t care. He quite wishes to be team members with you.”

“Um...” Li Hao was getting turned around. Was there a need for that? He’d simply made a report to his supervisor.

“The chief said before that the enforcement team lacks nothing,” she giggled and lowered her voice. “Not battle strength, not weapons, not authority. What we lack is a smart, attentive guy who doesn’t have many ties with the team!”

Li Hao turned over her words in his mind, but before he could process them, she sighed and whispered next to his ear, “There are numerous moles in the enforcement team! Chief wants to clean house, but lacks the ability to do so. He’s extremely talented, but he can’t ferret them out and doesn’t want to damage morale with a blatant investigation.

“That may be what he wants with you. He’s hoping you can use the smarts and attention to detail from the self-immolation cases and peel back the layers to find the worms in the team!”

Li Hao paused, so Liu Long knew! Not only did he know about the moles, but he wanted to get rid of them. Was he juggling a lot of concerns to not have been able to do so yet?

Liu Long recruiting him to be the blade in his hand was the last possibility on Li Hao’s mind.

The female inspector giggled at Li Hao’s hesitation. “Think about it! Your friend’s case may be very tricky and we’re just putting on a show tonight. We might have to appeal to the Night Watchers still. If you join us, that greatly increases your chances of working with them. Otherwise, the Department of Classified Affairs doesn’t have the right to participate in this case!

“You withdrew from school for your friend and spent a year looking through old files in Classified Affairs. That’s long enough, isn’t it? Do you want to stay there until you retire?”

Li Hao grew lost in thought again—a common occurrence tonight. His image of the inept enforcement team was once more being rewritten. None of the members he’d met so far were simple characters. Every word they said spoke to his heart, even their recruitment pitch.

He was suddenly concerned about the stone blade that he’d retrieved before everyone arrived. The team wouldn’t find anything, would they? He had been worried about the scarlet shadow and hadn’t entertained the notion that the enforcers might discover what he’d done. Li Hao had even been at ease when Liu Long proposed tearing down and burning the house. Would they notice something wrong with the chimney? Could the substitute stone sufficiently distract them?

Whatever, I’ll just blame it on the scarlet shadow. I don’t know anything at all.

People really thought too highly of themselves sometimes. He thought that everything was proceeding smoothly, but the enforcement team had caught him off guard. He’d truly underestimated the law enforcers after spending a year at Classified Affairs.

“Joining the enforcement team...” A newly wary Li Hao followed the group’s footsteps, but he was solidly lost in thought.

There was the aloof and domineering leader, a coy woman whose words stabbed straight at the heart, and a Wu Chao who could identify countless clues with a single glance... It rather seemed that crouching tigers and hidden dragons abounded in the law enforcers!

If a group he’d dismissed was like this, then what about the Night Watchers?

And he wanted to join the Night Watchers, pfft! If he did, he probably wouldn’t even know how he ended up dead! These people were too sharp and experienced. None of his secrets would remain secrets if he spent enough time with them.

He suddenly felt a cold wind at the back of his neck.

“The world outside is so scary that Classified Affairs is like a playground! Classified Affairs is much more comfortable!” Li Hao shook his head and looked again at Liu Long.

Had it been a test when he proposed burning the house down? He hadn't asked if Li Hao had found anything, like there was no need to ask. This abnormality further raised Li Hao's guard.

I didn't smile just now, did I? I don't think so! Li Hao was thankful when he thought back to moments ago. Thank goodness he was steady enough that he could maintain his expression when Liu Long spoke of what the young man wanted to do. Mmhmm, he deserved to be praised for that!