

Star Gate 19

Chapter 19: Decision (I)

“Has no one... ever succeeded?” Li Hao asked, thinking of the water from his sword. Was that starry energy what they meant by mysterious power? He’d drunk quite a few mouthfuls earlier tonight, but remained as ordinary as ever. Or had he been inducting the occult into himself and failing over and over again?

“There have been successes!” Liu Long nodded, then laughed at himself. “Each year, the Night Watchers recruit at least ten thousand people from the various major cities to participate in experiments. Only one percent of them succeed, which means everyone else other than the roughly one hundred finalists fail! Setting aside how few Silver City’s spots are, do you think you’ll be part of the one percent if you’re selected, Li Hao?”

The boy remained silent.

“Therefore, we can only rely on ourselves!” Liu Long rumbled. “We kill them ourselves! We use mortal techniques to kill supernaturals! Kill them, strip them of their powers, and find which ones are a match for us. If one isn’t enough, then two, or three! Success will eventually be at hand!”

Li Hao took a deep breath, looking not at Deputy Chief Liu Long, but a lunatic called Liu Long. Here was a mortal who wandered the boundary of death in a bid to become extraordinary. He killed supernaturals to set foot in their domain!

This is so insane I don’t know what to think.

It was crazy enough that the young man had these thoughts. The person in front of him, however, not only nursed these thoughts, but acted on them.

“Chief... you think I’ll catch their eye?”

“For sure!” By now, Liu Long kept nothing close to his heart. “Don’t deny it—I sensed a bit of mysterious power the first time I saw you. You must have encountered supernaturals or their treasures recently. People like you definitely have something to do with their world!”

Li Hao didn’t know if that was due to the jade sword’s influence or him drinking the sword’s water. Regardless, this team captain had seen something in him.

What a scary guy!

Killing the superhuman when he himself was mundane in order to gain magical powers... Li Hao didn’t know how strong they were, but they must be quite fearsome as the scarlet shadow killed people in terrifying ways. This man was mad!

“Think about it, you’re welcome anytime!” Liu Long suddenly jumped down from the tower. His voice traveled back up. “Don’t count on your teacher, he won’t be able to help you make the crossover. He can’t do it himself and the Night Watchers don’t wish for him or his students to do so. That won’t play into their interests!”

Teacher can’t either?

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Up on the water tower.

Liu Long landed on the ground, leaving Li Hao behind.

“Bait...” Li Hao murmured to himself, fully understanding what Liu Long meant. The deputy chief may look like a dumb brute, but he was quite shrewd and meticulous. His speech was frank and on the level, the absolute height of sincerity.

There was also a certain connotation to his words apart from what he said. He, Liu Long, was also loyal! He would not burn a bridge after crossing it!

Indeed, this was readily apparent from Liu Long's insistence that he was unwilling to investigate who the moles were. He wasn't willing to hurt those who'd betrayed him, and he would never forget the favor if Li Hao helped him.

This was the mark of a true expert!

It was a soundless permeation of meaning that was evident as soon as one spent a little time thinking about it. Not even traitors were enough for Liu Long to set aside their relationship.

Does he really care about brotherhood that much?

Li Hao didn't think so; all of these guys were too crafty. There'd been so many tricks in that conversation—bravado, feints, threats, coercion, and persuasion. Who knew how many brain cells the man had exhausted in just a few minutes?

"Killing those who command preternatural arts and stealing their powers... If one time isn't a match, then a second, a third time... Is that really the way to become supernatural myself?" Li Hao was suddenly quite disappointed. The world of the mystic didn't seem all that peaceful. If an ordinary person like Liu Long sought to kill them for their power, then what of the supernaturals themselves?

They were probably more brutal toward their own kind! No wonder they kept such a low profile and refused to show themselves. That likely forestalled a lot of unnecessary trouble.

"While it looked like Liu Long told me a lot, he always stopped after mentioning things and didn't go into detail. He probably can't tell me much unless I join the enforcement team."

The deputy chief spoke nothing of how exactly supernaturals trained, how they conducted mysterious power into themselves, how strong they were, what kind of abilities they wielded...

“And is it true that I have mysterious power on me? Or did he throw that out there to nudge me off balance, so that I would admit I took something from the Zhangs?” It seemed highly probable to Li Hao. Additionally, Liu Long didn’t know that the young man could see mysterious power. That was a talent out of reach for ordinary people. The starry energy was most probably mysterious power.

Li Hao could see that there was no starry energy outside his body. Otherwise, whether it was the scarlet shadow or its handler, one of the two would’ve reacted.

Liu Long was lying to him!

In contrast, Li Hao had glimpsed a hint of something on the man. There was a very faint starry hue around his physique—very weak and very possibly mysterious energy.

“Liu Long has killed supernaturals and absorbed their powers before. They didn’t metamorphose into anything else, so there are remnants of that power inside his body. In that case, he might actually stand a chance of setting foot in that domain.”

Indeed, Li Hao could see the energy, just like he could the scarlet shadow when no one else could!

Apart from Liu Long, the team members next to him might also possess a bit of arcane power. The “us” he spoke of was likely the flirtatious woman, super tracker Wu Chao, and two others. Counting Liu Long, that made for five people and was far from including the entire law enforcement team.

It looked like there was a clique among the law enforcers, one that hunted down supernaturals.

“Do they use powerful weapons or other means?”

Their prey was certainly not weak or they wouldn't be a goal for Liu Long. Since they'd successfully hunted their quarry before, that meant this little team was quite formidable. The advantages of terrain and timing were all with the Inspectorate. It was the agency's prerogative to use heavy weaponry and the enforcement team could easily come up with excuses after the fact. Thus, it wasn't impossible that careless supernaturals could die to these guys.

Li Hao was bold enough to set his sights on them with just a third gen vortex gun, to say nothing of Liu Long's team. Strictly speaking, he was the head honcho of the agency of force in Silver City.

The inspector general sat in his office and never attended the front lines—that was left to the enforcers. Liu Long was the true boss.

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Li Hao rummaged through his thoughts as he walked down from the tower. What were the consequences if he declined? Would Liu Long retaliate? Would he leak information to the scarlet shadow or even tell them that the young man carried the blade of the Zhangs and sword of the Lis?

Maybe he'd just outright kill Li Hao from the shadows!

"He looks like an open and honest man... but he's actually a ruthless guy!" Li Hao would never consider him a bumbling brute anymore. The enforcement team's shabby state might even be part of his schemes, a plot to lull outsiders and supernaturals into a false sense of security.

The weak could overcome the strong if the enforcers were viewed as just for show!

"Moles... heh, don't tell me he nurtured those himself? Even if he didn't, they're the result of his lax oversight. This guy definitely knows who's a traitor and purposefully hasn't cleaned house!" Li Hao suddenly saw many things clearly as his mind spun rapidly.

Liu Long of the law enforcement team was a person of note! He'd most likely created the current confusion in the team. He's so sinister that it's no wonder his name shares the same pronunciation as oozing pus!

After a hearty round of mental curses, Li Hao turned his thoughts to what decision would be most beneficial to him.

"If I join them, I'll have help against the scarlet shadow because Liu Long's goal is the supernaturals! I'm not familiar with the Night Watchers and don't know their situation. I don't even know if they're connected to the shadow. If Liu Long and his, honestly, weak team are able to cross over, they'll be more gungho than the Night Watchers.

"Granted, they have certain confidence and knowledge because they've killed supernaturals before."

Li Hao was the shadow's next target and after tonight's uproar, they were preparing to move against him, weren't they?

"There's just one issue..." The young man's thoughts churned with conflict as he walked down the street.

One issue?

The issue that Liu Long and the scarlet shadow were possibly in cahoots, that would be real danger then!

It wasn't impossible.

If that's the case, I'm done for!

Li Hao had to consider the possibility as if it was true, then he'd already exposed nearly everything about himself.

“Hoo!”

Heart heavy, he wasn't too satisfied with how tonight had played out. Some unexpected twists and turns had come up. It was fine enough if Liu Long could handle the scarlet shadow. If not, Li Hao was in greater danger compared to before.

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Rumble!

A large tractor bulldozed the Zhang family home in a massive cloud of smoke and dust. Li Hao silently watched it go down, seeming to see Zhang Yuan in front of him.

Little Yuan, your house is gone.

You're gone and your house is gone. The final traces of you in this world are almost no more. What else can I do other than get revenge and bring your killer's head to your grave?

Nothing.

The beguiling female member from before soundlessly crept up to Li Hao, faint perfume grazing past his nose.

“Little Hao, come find me tomorrow if you want to join us!” She chuckled in his ear. “My name is Liu Yan and I'm the vice captain of the enforcement team. You can come to me anytime!”

Liu Yan!

Li Hao didn't know who she was before she gave her name. After the introduction, he found that he was acquainted with her. While there were plenty of people he'd yet to meet after a year in Classified Affairs, he knew of them and their associated gossip.

Liu Yan was a name that often appeared in conversation.

Rumor had it that she was Liu Long's bed partner. Of course, that was just gossip from Classified Affairs. Li Hao had no idea whether it was true or not. But judging from the situation he saw today, perhaps it wasn't strictly empty talk.

The Classified Affairs aunties often discussed Liu Yan with contempt, saying that she'd used her pretty face to climb to the position of vice captain of the law enforcement team.

One had to know, the vice captain should be at least a first rank inspector. After inspector came commissioner inspector, which was Liu Long's actual rank. Only at this rank did one wield true authority. It was slotted just beneath the inspector general in the hierarchy of power. There were some assistant inspector generals who didn't command as much power as Liu Long did.

"Alright!" Li Hao nodded decisively.

A wise man goes with the flow! This wasn't the time to decline, nor could he decline. He had to accept!

"Nicely done!" Liu Yan smiled alluringly. "You won't regret this!"

She was already gone.

