

Star Gate 23

Chapter 23: I Feel Like I'm Really Strong! (I)

Liu Yan didn't take Li Hao to Liu Long's office. Instead, she turned left and right and up and down through the hallways until they entered the basement. They were in a part of the basement that no one else could enter.

It was a big space as Li Hao found a slight echo when he walked through the door, but it was very quiet.

Almost eerily quiet.

A place that could make one's hair raise in the Law Enforcement building was certainly a very unique place. Large quantities of training equipment greeted the eye while vast amounts of weaponry adorned the walls—much like Liu Yan's office. There were hot weapons and cold weapons, with everything one could want from blade, spear, sword, to polearm.

Li Hao's scalp went numb when he saw a decently sized miniature fire cannon by the door. My gosh, how many weapons have these people stockpiled??

Such was the innate advantage of the law enforcement team. It didn't matter if someone found this place—Liu Long was the captain of the enforcement team and the boss of Silver City's Agency of Brute Force. If he said these weapons were meant for taking down suspects, no one would gainsay him otherwise.

And if it was Li Hao hoarding so many weapons, he would've been rounded up and executed a long time ago.

A tiny passageway on the other side of the fitness equipment and weaponry seemed to lead elsewhere. Liu Yan did not take Li Hao there. She walked into the fitness area and called out, "Chief, I brought him!"

Several figures walked out of the shadowy depths. The towering and muscular Liu Long, Wu Chao thin as a rail, a man that shook the floor with every step, and a diminutive young woman with a friendly look on her face.

When Liu Yan was added to the mix, that made for five total. Such were the Demon Hunters of the law enforcement team.

Despite the hot season, Liu Long was dressed in his customary trench coat. Part of the reason for that was to conceal the myriad of weapons on him—anyone would find it suspicious if he openly carried all of them.

“Liu Long!” The deputy chief strode over, aloof as ever. He introduced himself once more, “Captain of the Demon Hunters and in charge of frontal assaults!”

“Wu Chao.” The scrawny man smiled nonchalantly. “Scout for the Demon Hunters, in charge of gathering intelligence and drawing fire!”

“Chen Jian,” slowly rumbled fatty of startling mass. “Rear guard for the Demon Hunters and in charge of defense!”

The petite woman spoke with a gentle voice. “Yun Yao, doctor for the Demon Hunters and in charge of looking after everyone.”

The four had distinct positions and abilities—their responsibilities were clear! As tiny as the team was, it possessed all the parts that it should have. Li Hao flicked a glance at Liu Yan, what did she do?

Liu Yan smiled winsomely and tittered when she noticed the young man’s attention. “What are you looking at? Liu Yan, vice captain of the Demon Hunters and secondary offense! Chief is the primary attacker and I follow up!”

Ah, I see.

“We are the full complement of the Demon Hunters!” Liu Long looked calmly at Li Hao. “There used to be more of us, now there are quite a few less. We are all that remains—a primary and secondary attacker, one doctor, one defender, and one scout. Li Hao, are you willing to join us?”

The young man nodded.

The chief’s gaze deepened with meaning. “Li Hao, do you know why we’re called the Demon Hunters?”

Li Hao remained silent.

“Because we are justice!”

Justice? Li Hao blinked rapidly at the small contingent in front of him. You... are justice?

“Yes, we are justice!” Though Liu Long’s tone remained dispassionate, it carried the unquestionable ring of conviction. “Perhaps we have our individual goals and thoughts, but don’t forget that we are the law enforcement team of the Inspectorate! We are an agency that administers the rules and regulations—we dispense justice and protect Silver City!

“Everything we do is to safeguard and strengthen ourselves so that we can maintain peace! The demons we hunt are fiends of slaughter with blood on their hands!

“The first task you have after joining us is to forget about everything else. Remember one thing only—we are justice! Supernaturals who commit crimes are demons. Those that the Night Watchers cannot take care of are left to us. We are in charge of clearing out the filth!”

Liu Long infused Li Hao with their mission statement the moment the young man joined the Demon Hunters. Such were their guidelines and precepts!

It would be exceedingly dangerous for the team to be focused on a bevy of personal schemes, no matter how small the group, because their enemy was larger than life. Thus, the team's handful of members had their own faith that they adhered to—upholding justice!

Whether true or not, they firmly believed that they were on the side of good and exorcised demons from Silver City.

“Justice...” Li Hao murmured.

“Correct, justice!” Liu Long declared solemnly. “Remember this, Li Hao! The Demon Hunters are the guardian angels of Silver City! Who knows what horrors would be visited upon our home without us! It would be a playground for the supernaturals, a garden for them to take whatever they wish!

“Of course, you may not believe me or fully trust what I say. In that case, all you need to do is travel out of the city and visit the hundreds or thousands of cities elsewhere in the world. Apart from the central portion, all other regions have long dissolved into chaos. Turbulent times are upon us and human lives are completely worthless like ants!

“Just one supernatural can plague a city and only Silver City has remained at peace all these years. While we have our fair share of disturbances, tranquility has reigned overall. In the five years that the Demon Hunters have operated, we have killed one supernatural a year. Each of our hunts have saved our home!”

Liu Yan hugged her shoulders next to Li Hao. She chuckled merrily. “The chief speaks truly. Although he likes to talk big, none of what he says is false. We all had our own motives in joining the Demon Hunters and may not have wanted to protect anyone, but the truth of the matter is, Silver City is at peace because of us!”

Li Hao mulled over their words; perhaps Liu Long wasn't wrong. While they killed supernaturals because they wanted to become magical themselves, they really did eliminate some criminals ready to sink the city into terror.

Was it an anarchic world out there?

The young man didn't know because he'd almost never left Silver City. He'd only visited a neighboring city once in his life, and that was many, many years ago.

"Li Hao, this is your first lesson after joining the team!" Liu Long's voice sharpened with foreboding. "Do not think that we are specters who skulk around in the shadows, we are law enforcers! We are envoys that uphold and dispense justice! Therefore, all those who commit crimes are demons in our eyes. The quarry that we Demon Hunters pursue are those demons!"

Something within Li Hao abruptly eased when he heard this conclusion. Regardless of the slightly vain perspective and somewhat self persuasion, it was very... comforting to hear the deputy chief say that the team was still law enforcement. They were justice!

It was strangely heartening to hear this!

We are not unsavory characters that creep insidiously in the gloom. We are protectors of the entire city! Even if that may not have been the team's original goal, that was the reality that their actions led to.

A real expert! This was Li Hao's conclusion of Liu Long in this moment. The man was a true expert whether in terms of strength or mentality. He was immensely skilled in guiding thoughts down his proper path. Thanks to him, every member of the Demon Hunters firmly believed that they were on the side of good and never entertained the possibility of a guilty conscience.

When they killed supernaturals, all they felt was a sense of accomplishment. They protected the people, safeguarded justice, and secured the city. This kind of psychological contentment was a feat out of reach for ordinary leadership, but Liu Long had attained notable triumphs in this area.

In this moment, Li Hao felt that it might not be a bad thing to join the Demon Hunters.

This was when Liu Long rumbled, “Li Hao, introduce yourself!”

The young man thought for a bit. “My name is Li Hao and I was an inspector at the Department of Classified Affairs. Before that, I withdrew from my studies at the Veteris Institute! I have higher agility due to being skilled in the ape style of the New Book of Five Styles.”

“...that’s it?” Liu Long bestowed a withering look on him.

“That’s... it.”

“You became Yuan Shuo’s final disciple with just that?”

“It’s all thanks to teacher being gracious to me,” Li Hao answered awkwardly.

“Li Hao, we do not give up on team members in moments of danger, even if you lack sufficient value. However, that also means we will not risk our lives to save you! But if you are valuable enough, we would be willing to sacrifice ourselves so that you may live and our faith endure!”

Li Hao contemplated for a moment before adding on, “I’m also versed in paleography—analyzing ancient writing is an important segment of exploring ancient civilizations. My memory is very good, this is also one of my strong suits.”

The group looked at each other with strange looks. Paleography? Was that useful?

Very!

Extremely useful!

Yuan Shuo's status was so high because he was the department chair of Ancient Civilizations. His identity wasn't key—the key was that he was a veteran expert of ancient civilizations and had studied them in great depth.

Even the Night Watchers depended on him enormously, but they didn't dare let him become supernatural himself. Many troubles would arise once the eminent professor himself possessed extraordinary powers.

Some things were useless to ordinary people, but very potent for supernaturals. Most supernaturals, however, lacked sufficient knowledge and deductive abilities to identify what was useful to them.

Yuan Shuo could easily accomplish that task!

A mundane Yuan Shuo dared not misappropriate his findings, but a supernatural Yuan Shuo might grow out of control. He could very possibly keep some findings for himself and do so with none the wiser.

Therefore, Liu Long lit up at Li Hao's self-introduction!

“How much of Yuan Shuo's skill have you learned?”

“You think too highly of me, chief,” Li Hao replied humbly. “Teacher's wisdom is as vast as the seas. I have drawn upon but one drop of it.”

“Talk like a human being!”

“.....” Li Hao rambled with resignation, “I followed by teacher’s side for just two years and spent most of it studying. I never participated in any concrete practice. Teacher knows so much and I only specialized in analyzing ancient writing. I’m far beneath teacher in all other aspects—breaking traps, preserving artifacts, feng shui, ancient cultures and society...”

The young man waxed eloquent and was quite amazed by the heights that his teacher had reached. “I’ve busied myself with other things after leaving school and haven’t had time to study further. I am so far behind teacher that I only see the dust as he rides on ahead!”

“You are well enough!” Liu Long rumbled. “Yuan Shuo wanting to take you under his wing is already a sign of your potential and skills!”

Analyzing ancient writing...

The team captain changed the topic. “Very well, from today forth, you are the Demon Hunters’ analyst and... bait!”

“.....”

Silence reigned. Was bait also a job title?

Wu Chao snickered off to the side—an eerie and somewhat sinister laugh.

“Looks like I’m finally free, little guy! I’ve been bait since our last one died and been stressing about dying myself. It looks like I finally have a successor!”

Li Hao didn’t know what to say, despite Liu Long being very clear before he arrived—the young man’s role in the team would be bait. This was just an official declaration.

Liu Long looked at Li Hao with a faint frown. “I mean for you to be bait, not to send you to your death! Your body doesn’t seem to amount to much and you won’t have great skill under your belt despite knowing the ape style. You haven’t had enough time with it!”

The man strode toward the exercise equipment. “Come, let us test your abilities! I need a gauge of where you are to know how to train you. I’d also like to see if you have what it takes to escape from the supernaturals.”

A test?