

Star Gate 25

Chapter 25: The Supernatural Field (I)

“Are Slayers of Tens really that strong?” Li Hao asked incredulously in the basement of Law Enforcement. Ten? That really didn’t sound like much. It wasn’t such an incredible feat as, to his knowledge, some of the older inspectors could also fight ten at the same time.

“Really that strong?” Liu Long replied with aloof pride. “They’re incredibly weak to me, but for you, a Slayer can kill several of you without breaking a sweat!”

The petite Yun Yao interjected softly, “Don’t underestimate a martial master despite what you’ve heard, Li Hao! One who is a Slayer of Tens can kill an entire contingent of ten soldiers in a single second. It’s not successive one-on-one fights against ten people—that’s an entirely different concept.”

“There’s no point in saying this much to him,” Liu Long remarked. “Chen Jian, teach him what it means to be a martial master.”

“Me?” the fatty answered slowly. “I’m not skilled at offense and I’m really slow. The kid’s speed is up to par.”

Their strengths lay in different areas. Li Hao was a bit faster than him whereas he was more adept at defense.

“Give it a try!” Liu Long furrowed his brows. “Just take him through his paces. It’s good that you’re more practiced at defense, this means you won’t accidentally kill him!”

Fine then! Li Hao was a bit saddened by the exchange. They were sending a shield to test him because they were afraid of accidentally smacking him to death. All the same, it was rather exciting.

Men usually nursed a slight competitive streak and they typically sought to be number one. While the young man didn't know how strong Chen Jian was, the fatty was such a lumbering heft that Li Hao could at the very least run from the fatty, no?

A simple and honest smile spread across Chen Jian's face as he glanced at the eager Li Hao. "Shall we go for a round or two?" he quickly added, "I'm the weakest in our team and not good for anything other than defense! You're pretty quick since you know the ape style. I may not be able to catch up to you..."

Li Hao glanced at him. It was one thing if he hadn't said anything, but now that he had... It worried Li Hao more instead. Was this fatty a secret expert?

"Chen Jian is the weakest on the team in terms of speed, attacks, and ability to penetrate the enemy's defenses," Liu Long said impatiently. "If you don't want to fight him, we'll send Wu Chao instead!"

Li Hao quickly shook his head when he looked at the man. Nah!

Skinny over there was obviously agile and nimble. Being the team's scout, he was unquestionably sharp-witted. Li Hao knew the limits of his abilities well—he might not even get to touch the guy.

"Then here I come!" Chen Jian took a slow step forward.

Li Hao settled into the opening stance of the ape style without another word, jumping upward and back without thought when his opponent's large fleshy hand swung at him. This guy's palm didn't seem like it'd land lightly.

When he saw the young man leap upward, Chen Jian subconsciously shifted slightly to the right. The unhurried adjustment drew a change in expression from Li Hao. That was where he planned to land! Not the direction he was jumping backward in!

He quickly flung himself further upward, kicking out wildly sans all grace or elegance. There wasn't much beauty in real martial arts to speak of. The ape style was already one of the better Five

Styles. Some of the others looked downright foolish as the practitioner had to sprawl on the ground and propel themselves with their four limbs. Honestly, there was no other way to describe it but ugly.

Chen Jian flashed a simple grin, as if having anticipated Li Hao's reaction. It didn't stem from a fast reaction speed or strength, but purely from experience! One would die very quickly if one didn't gain any experience from fighting supernaturals.

Li Hao flailed around wildly, making use of air resistance to adjust his position. Meanwhile, Chen Jian took two casual steps. When Li Hao descended because he could stay aloft no longer, he happened to land less than a meter in front of his opponent.

They were nearly face to face!

The second the young man felt solid ground beneath his feet, he wanted to push off again. However, a massive hand loomed in the corner of his eyes—the slap from the very beginning.

Smack!

A crisp impact!

Li Hao somersaulted through the air and crashed to the ground. Chen Jian had hit his neck instead of his face—there was a bright red handprint on it. The young man had the wind knocked out of him, it felt like his neck was broken!

His mind a groggy mess, Li Hao couldn't feel anything. There wasn't much sensation anywhere beneath his neck. The young man jumped up again, wanting to flip himself out of the way, but another smack slapped him down to Earth.

He was completely befuddled!

Chen Jian was still as simple and honest as before. He first looked at his hand, then at the tangled Li Hao on the ground. The fatty smiled an open and awkward smile before turning to Liu Long and the others.

“I... didn’t think his reaction would be so slow,” he said sheepishly. “And I didn’t think he’d start by jumping into the air. You said so before, chief, that leaping high without enough strength to back it up is a death wish. I... didn’t think that I’d run into that today.”

Jumping into the air without sufficient strength to determine the outcome of battle meant that once Li Hao’s return trajectory and landing spot were fully calculated, he was at the mercy of others. This was a grave taboo in combat!

Even Sunderers of Hundreds took to the air only if they had no other choice. One’s weaknesses were on full display in midair and there was a lack of ideal opportunity to counterattack. Keeping one’s feet firmly planted on the ground was the primary rule that every martial master adhered to in battle!

Li Hao had been overconfident given his skill in the ape style. He felt that he was fast and nimble enough to soar through the air, but was knocked senseless in a split second!

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All was quiet in the basement; only Chen Jian’s explanation echoed in the void. Li Hao’s head was lowered and his face beet red. He’d always fancied himself clever, but had suffered an enormous setback today. He thought himself strong enough, but the team member in charge of defense had sent him flying with a simple slap. If Chen Jian hadn’t shown mercy, Li Hao rather suspected that his head would already be torn off!

It looked like it was time to put the thought that he was at least a Slayer of Five or Six to rest. He came to a certain awakening and understanding in this moment. I... am not a martial master. Strictly speaking, I’m just an amateur who’s had a few days worth of training. I’ve never been in practical

combat and am nothing more than a rookie through and through. I thought way too highly of myself before!

And here I thought last night that I could kill the scarlet shadow and its master if I drew my gun fast enough. How naive I was twelve hours ago!

How childish!

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The team looked at Liu Long, then at Li Hao. Strange expressions spread across their faces. Was the young man crumbling from his defeat? That... would make for a very poor psychological temperament!

Liu Long frowned slightly as well. He'd wanted to give Li Hao a harsh dose of reality, but that wasn't his main goal. He just wanted the young man to understand that the enemies they faced were far greater than the young man imagined.

Now wasn't this a pickle? One round of sparring had shattered his confidence. Li Hao was still sprawled on the ground—was he that unable to deal with failure?

“Is that all you're worth?” Faint disappointment dawned in Liu Long's eyes. Though Li Hao wasn't strong enough, at least his thought processes, brain, patience, and endurance were top notch. The young man was worth cultivating if he'd caught Yuan Shuo's eye and secretly investigated a case for a year on behalf of a friend.

But was the real truth that Li Hao had led too smooth of a life this far? Could such a person handle setback?

As Liu Long mused, Li Hao stood up, rubbed his neck, and smiled bashfully. He was the perfect image of a young man still progressing through life!

To be honest, he really wasn't that old. If he hadn't withdrawn from the Veteris Institute, he'd still be in the middle of his studies.

"I always thought I was different from others, that I was smarter than everyone else. It felt like I could do anything since I passed the exams for the Institute, became Professor Yuan's disciple, entered the Inspectorate, and found the connection between the cases... I did good in everything I tried." Li Hao shook his head with a rueful smile. "Only today do I learn that I'm nothing in a fight! I've practiced the ape style for only three years and slacked off this year. How can I possibly compare to all my elder brothers here? Big brother Chen has probably trained for many years!"

"Sixteen years!" Chen Jian responded happily. "I started only when I was twelve!"

"....." Li Hao was speechless—not at his opponent's tenure, but because he was twenty-eight!

Are you shitting me? You're only twenty-eight? I thought you were at least forty the first time I laid eyes on you! You're twenty-eight?? The hell??

Naturally, Li Hao expressed none of his thoughts and displayed some resignation. "My teacher once said that proficiency in martial arts depends firstly on innate potential and secondly on diligence! Hard work is more important than potential!

"I daren't say I have potential. Even if I do, my lazy habits mean that I'm alive only because big brother Chen pulled his punches!"

"Nah, don't say that," Chen Jian smiled shyly. "I did, but I also used thirty percent of my power to begin with. You're already very good to still be on your feet after taking one of my blows."

"....." Is he complimenting me? Li Hao looked at the seemingly honest and aboveboard fatty. There... weren't any hidden meanings behind this reply, were there? The member for defense struck me to the ground with only thirty percent of his strength. Am I supposed to be proud that I survived?

“Good, I’m glad you recovered,” Liu Long spoke up. “I was thinking that I’d let you go if you wanted to withdraw after being defeated. It looks like you’re tenacious enough.” His tone turned aloof again, “What I want to tell you is that Chen Jian is a Slayer of Tens, and one focused on defense! You must keep in mind that any supernatural is much stronger than him. If you can’t avoid even Chen Jian, don’t think of surviving an encounter with a supernatural!”

“It’s normal for you to be weaker since you’ve just joined us. You’re only a probationary member for now. Apart from the guy in the self-immolation case, you’ll also be bait on other occasions. Your primary task is to strengthen yourself and help us analyze some data!”

There was no way that Li Hao would be useful right now, not a chance!

Liu Long tightened his trench coat and looked at the rest of the team. “Liu Yan, you’re in charge of this guy. Make sure he understands the full situation! Don’t have him dying randomly in the missions to come.”

“No worries, chief, I’ll take care of him!” Liu Yan chuckled merrily while Li Hao wanted to protest.

Ah, forget it, whatever. He was the youngest of the Demon Hunters and the weakest team member could easily smack him to death. What place was there for him to speak?

He didn’t want to ask anything about the team doctor anymore. Yun Yao looked kind and fragile, but who knew how she actually was? The more some people looked gentle, the more frightening they actually were.

At the very least, he was a bit more familiar with Liu Yan and had spoken to her a few more times.

Liu Yan looked merrily at the young man. “Little Li Hao, let’s chat in my office. It’s too oppressive here.”

“Wait a second, vice captain,” Li Hao said after thinking it over. He looked at Liu Long. “Captain Liu...”

“You are permitted to call me chief!” Liu Long barked out coldly, like the privilege was a badge of honor.

Li Hao said nothing. He was under another’s roof, so if the captain wanted to be called chief, then he was the chief.

“Chief, Zhang Yuan’s murderer probably knows we’re investigating him after our disturbance last night. Based on the files I analyzed, they seem to always make their move on overcast or rainy days. It’s been almost a year since the last case and given my calculations, the bad weather we’ll see in the next few days might be when they’re planning to make a move.”

“I see!” Liu Long inclined his head. “I’ll be ready. You want to say that you’re next, aren’t you? Are you afraid?”

Li Hao didn’t respond.

“Don’t worry!” Liu Long didn’t explain much, just issued reminders. “Your current goal is to understand more of the world. The more you know, the better you are able to protect yourself. We’ll think of how to take care of the self-immolation guy!”

The only choice that Li Hao had available was to trust the team. At the same time, he also felt that Liu Long didn’t have a death wish.