

## Star Gate 29

### Chapter 29: A Return Visit (I)

Starry energy sparkled within the room, but it didn't spill over. No one outside the room, not even a supernatural, could see or sense it. Stellaris didn't throw off a large radius of power—whatever reached the boundary quickly vanished into the void.

Not to mention, there was a little black dog called Panther present as well. The dog fully absorbed any overflow. None was wasted.

Li Hao had bitten off more than he could chew! Strength brimmed in his body and his heart raced with agitation. The young man had to continuously practice the ape style and cycle through endless three minute iterations. He would explode if he didn't vent the overabundance!

Even so, he continued to operate the Breathing Method of the Five Styles—not the full method, just the breathing technique.

The breathing method could be divided into two parts. The complete version was the coordination of posture and breathing technique. The partial consisted of just the breathing technique and was also effective, but less so compared to the complete version.

“Hup!” Low grunts sounded in the room. Li Hao abruptly stopped jumping around and curved his hands like an ape would, grabbing for the wall.

The ape style wasn't just fleetness of foot. He'd simply found no use for its other functions prior to today as he'd never sought to kill anyone. There was so much energy within his body that he couldn't contain it all and he would soon be in danger. Thus, he went down previously unexplored paths and waved his hands around like an ape's paw.

Bam!

“Ouch!” Li Hao sucked a breath in. Damn that hurt!

His hand was flesh and blood after all. The blow created some small holes in the wall, but his fingers also screamed with pain. He’d almost torn some fingernails off. However, the pain wasn’t the point!

The young man brightened when he looked at the wall. Clawing a few holes out of its smooth surface had been out of reach before. The point of contact between finger and wall was too small, he couldn’t bring much strength to bear. Being smooth as it was since it was painted concrete, there was also a lack of certain leverage available for use. It would be much easier to find grip on a dirt wall.

“Liu Long broke through a kitchen wall with one punch... A punch is way stronger than some fingers and the Zhang kitchen wall was just brick. He’s really strong, of course, but I seem to be much stronger than before too!”

He only needed to briefly practice the Breathing Method of the Five Styles for a swift increase in strength! Granted, this had much to do with how weak he was. The weaker one was, the more apparent improvements were.

At Liu Long’s level, vast quantities of mysterious power were inconsequential. It would barely result in any changes.

“Teacher’s method is amazing!” Li Hao took a close look at his fingers. They were red at first and the fingernails a bruised purple, but as mysterious power continued to surge into his body, the minor injuries quickly receded.

He also sensed his muscles becoming more compact and blood flow circulating faster! In fact, his bones were changing too. They were... being compressed?

Indeed, the energy seemed to be squeezing Li Hao. He was 178 centimeters to start, neither short nor tall in the grand scheme of things. Though he didn’t take immediate measurements, he appeared to have gotten shorter. Perhaps just a centimeter or less shorter, but shorter nonetheless.

He'd been compressed!

The more dense and compact one's muscles and bones were, the less empty space there was within them.

"I'm... not going to become a lot shorter if this continues, am I?" Li Hao found the phenomenon strange. Liu Long was very tall; the young man had also never heard of anyone getting shorter as they practiced martial dao.

On the other hand, people usually started training as a child. Li Hao commenced only three years ago at the Veteris Institute, and he hadn't taken his first two years that seriously.

To think was to act. He opened his hand instead of curving it like earlier. Splaying his fingers this time, he grabbed the wall in front of him!

Bam!

A crisp collision and stomach-turning nail scratches sounded as his fingers sank into the wall. Not too deep, just enough to leave a handprint. He didn't touch the cement construction inside. The wall, however, seemed to shake—or perhaps that was a delusion.

What was clear to see was that this move was more lethal than the one before it.

"Tiger Claw!" This was the attack technique of the tiger style in the New Book of Five Styles. Though Li Hao wasn't as versed in the other four, that didn't mean he was completely unpracticed with them. Yuan Shuo had taught all of the styles to his disciple—the young man simply focused on the ape.

He felt that the tiger style was more suited to combat, and indeed, one simple jab demonstrated that Tiger Claw landed with more strength! It required a different way of utilizing strength, a shift in posture, and an adjustment in breathing.

Fleet-footed and swift, the ape style was suited for scouting the path ahead. The strength that Ape Foot brought to bear was much less than Tiger Claw.

“Right, the tiger style is most suited for offense among the five!” Li Hao grew agitated as he assessed the minute changes in his body. He was stronger than before! His muscles responded more quickly and he felt lighter on his feet.

It felt like he’d been running with weights and the burden had now been lifted off his shoulders. Were these the effects of mysterious power? They were so apparent!

No wonder Panther’s fur shone after its first encounter with sword water. Li Hao had thought then that perhaps the effects were different because Panth was a dog. Now that he thought it over again...

Damn it! There must have been more energy in the bowl the dog drank! He’d drunk the second bowl, but the dog had taken first dibs. Did that mean Li Hao had been left with the dregs?

Wait a second, Panth...?

The dog seemed particularly quiet today!

Li Hao tilted his head and paused with surprise. The little black dog lay with its belly up to the ceiling and breathed at a similar rhythm to the young man. The dog was... cultivating!

“The hell?!” Li Hao’s jaw dropped with shock. He could accept Panther understanding him, but the dog’s powers of comprehension were this strong?? It was imitating him and practicing the Breathing Method of the Five Styles!

Mysterious power ceased emanating from the jade sword when Li Hao stopped training and the energy within the room gradually faded away. The young man kept an eye on the dog, watching as starlight dwindled for the dog.

When Panth opened its eyes and saw Li Hao looking at it, it bounded upward and pounced at the young man!

Li Hao shifted slightly to evade the incoming creature. Panther didn't mind landing on empty air; it licked the young man's foot instead.

"Go away!" Li Hao shook it off and bent down to scratch the dog's head. "Are you becoming more human?"

He frowned, contemplating if this was a good thing or not. Panth was turning into something more than a dog!

As an ordinary person and a member of the Inspectorate, Li Hao's first instinct was to wonder if this might lead to unwanted consequences. But as soon as his thoughts traveled to the supernatural and the scarlet shadow that ordinary people couldn't see... the development quickly lost its significance.

What did people care about a human-esque dog these days? What was the scarlet shadow? Not even human!

At least Li Hao was familiar with Panther and half a master to the dog. If it really became more than what it was, then so be it.

"Teacher said that the Breathing Method of the Five Styles cannot be taught to outsiders!" Headache brewing, the young man looked at the dog. "Thank goodness you're just imitating me. You've learned the breathing technique, but not the rest of the method..."

The breathing technique focused on rhythm and coordinating one's breaths with one's pores. The dog had performed a strong imitation of that! Meanwhile, the rest of the method was the upwards splayed position. It wasn't as simple as it looked and required several exclusive synchronistic means. Panther hadn't learned any of the rest.

Additionally, humans and dogs were different at the end of the day. The little black dog may not be able to use its knowledge even if it fully picked it up.

"It's my oversight that someone—something else picked up the breathing technique!" Li Hao wouldn't fully immerse himself under normal circumstances, even if he was practicing the breathing method. He would never fully demonstrate the entire method in front of someone else. That might lead to the negation of the entire method if anything went wrong.

However, he'd lowered his guard since there was only a dog in front of him and breathed heavily, enabling Panther to see and learn everything.

The little black dog at his feet seemed to understand something and raised its head, an ingratiating look in its eyes.

Li Hao frowned and muttered, "I know you understand me, so don't use what you've just learned unless I'm with you! And... I've got to visit teacher when I have time. I wonder if he's willing to take a dog for a disciple..."

He suddenly broke into a grin. Why did it sound like he was insulting himself?

"Forget it, pretend I didn't say anything." The young man wanted to crack a joke at his teacher's expense, but recalled how unpredictable Yuan Shuo could be. If he really accepted Panther as a student, future introductions would go, "This is my student, the human Li Hao, this is my other student, the big black dog..."

It would be Li Hao who wanted to die of embarrassment!

Panther didn't know what was going on—it was happy and wagged its tail because the young man was smiling. Dogs understood human emotions and Panth had been slightly scared earlier. But since the human was smiling, that meant everything was alright.

Li Hao set the matter out of mind. He'd let his teacher know when he had time. Given teacher's character, he would be more curious than anything and wouldn't mind that a dog had learned his breathing method.

Ignoring Panther, Li Hao fished out the jade sword and studied it closely with shining eyes.

“Mysterious power!”

There seemed to be quite a lot of it in the sword. Of course, that might not be the key issue to many people. They would be much more interested in the jade sword itself.

According to his teacher's words, each supernatural object possessed limited quantities of energy. Some reserves were so minuscule that using the object once or twice consumed all of it. It was possible that Liu Long didn't care about the family heirlooms because he knew there was so little energy in them that they were nearly ineffective. Another point of consideration was that he might not be able to use these family treasures in the first place.

Li Hao was possibly worrying too much. He'd pondered if Liu Long was planning something in the dark, but it now seemed that might not be the case.

“They don't care about these heirlooms, but I do!” Li Hao murmured. Teacher felt that the energy was too little to be of use to him, as did Liu Long since he was another Sunderer. But Li Hao was a weakling who wasn't even a Slayer of Tens. Even a tiny sliver of energy would improve him greatly.

“My speed, strength, and physique are all better than before! I wonder what level I'd be if I was tested now?”

Probably not a Slayer of Tens yet, not that fast!