

Star Gate 30

Chapter 30: A Return Visit (II)

If he were to go against Chen Jian again, Li Hao felt that he might be able to avoid that slap now. But it was still impossible to have even a hope of winning against the man.

Chen Jian was a Slayer of Tens—whether it was one ten or nine tens? That was difficult to tell. Based on what Li Hao knew, there was a vast difference between Slayers of Tens and Sunderers of Hundreds.

Apart from Liu Long, all of the Demon Hunters seemed to be Slayers. However, there were differences of strength among them as well. Liu Yan looked to be the strongest, but she said that Yun Yao was not to be provoked.

“I’m probably not a Slayer yet, so I need to work hard. I need to keep myself alive at least!”

Ensuring his safety was key in the danger yet to come. The scarlet shadow was not something to run afoul of.

“Let’s keep training!” Li Hao didn’t use the breathing method this time since there was still mysterious power lingering in his body. He was in fine fettle and able to continue practicing the New Book of Five Styles.

He had to make good use of time! Since there was a way to increase his strength, there was no reason to slack off.

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At the same time.

Openlight, sixth floor of Building 5.

Liu Long stood on the balcony with his arms crossed, looking across to a certain apartment in Building 6. The windows were shut tight and the curtains drawn. Still, one could vaguely make out a figure jumping around inside.

It was Li Hao's house.

The tall and skinny Wu Chao stood next to his captain, likewise watching the apartment. He shook his head after a while. "The guy drew the curtains before the sky got dark—he's exercising vigilance. He's probably suspected for a while that Zhang Yuan's death is a murder. Chief, do we just watch him like this? Is someone coming?"

"I don't know," Liu Long responded calmly. "Just keep watching!"

Wu Chao swept his gaze in another direction and said lowly, "Chief, our position is the best for a stakeout! I also briefly circled the perimeter and found that no strangers have come to Building 5." He paused, then continued, "Is there no one watching him, or are they using supernatural means to keep an eye on Li Hao?"

The enemy might not be here in person even if they were following the young man. Some supernatural methods could be utilized with none the wiser. It was just rare for a supernatural to personally keep an eye on a mundane.

Liu Long didn't rebuff his subordinate, but neither did he think there really was a supernatural tailing Li Hao at the moment. It was more likely that they were secretly observing the young man while they waited for the right moment to arrive. Perhaps it was the rainy days that Li Hao spoke of.

The young man was right here and wouldn't run for safety. If that was his considered course of action, he would've done so long ago. If that occurred, it didn't matter to the enemy whether or not they followed him.

After brief contemplation, Liu Long changed the topic. “How much mysterious power do we have right now?”

“Twelve cubes,” Wu Chao answered. “Ten with attributes, two without.”

The deputy chief seemed to be weighing something up. “Have the boy come see me when he reports for work tomorrow. Retrieve the two unattributed cubes. Let him absorb them and let’s see what happens.”

Wu Chao wasn’t too surprised by the command, just envious. “Chief, we don’t have many and unattributed ones are more valuable. Why don’t we try the attributed ones first?”

Attributed mysterious power came with certain energy—fire, thunder and lightning, as well as others. They weren’t necessarily a match for the one absorbing it, but they would be the preferred choice if they were a right fit. It all depended on the person!

For martial masters yet to ascend to the supernatural domain like Wu Chao and the others, unattributed energy was more precious. They strengthened the person without risk of rejection or danger. Thus, everyone on the team treasured unattributed cubes of energy.

“He’s too weak!” Liu Long replied calmly. “We’re not the Night Watchers with their trove of powerhouses who can yank out energy at any time. If he absorbs the attributed power and his body rejects it, there won’t be much we can do to suppress the reaction. He’ll explode and die. Do you want to go back to being bait after that?”

Fine then, Wu Chao had nothing else to say. Li Hao was indeed too weak and it was right and proper to give the lad a welcome gift after joining the team. But the man still had his doubts.

“Chief, did you recruit him for one time use... or do you really plan to nurture him further?” he whispered. This was something he’d been wondering for a while.

Liu Long flicked a glance at him and smiled. “He is our teammate so long as he’s alive! He is our comrade-in-arms and what’s his is his, what should be protected should be protected, and what should be taught is taught. If he dies... Well, need I say more?”

Wu Chao understood. This was how he’d reached his current stage in life. Survival of the fittest!

Only when alive was one part of the team. Nothing mattered anymore if one died. Everyone understood on their first day of joining the Demon Hunters just how dangerous it was to hunt supernaturals. No one would be here if they didn’t have their own story to tell or specific motivation driving them.

“It’s nice being new!” Wu Chao sighed. Newbies didn’t have to do anything to receive benefits, how lucky!

Granted, this was also the team rule. Newcomers were so weak that without protective measures, the team would consistently bleed its fresh blood and weaken until it died. It was just... they’d only been given one square of mysterious power when they joined. The founding members hadn’t even received that because they hadn’t had a treasury then. What reserves they possessed now were produced through the skin of their teeth.

Expectation crept into Wu Chao’s voice as he thought about it further. “I wonder if we’ll be able to kill them this time, how much mysterious power they can provide, and if it’ll be attributed or not. Chief, will you be able to cross over if you absorb some more?”

Liu Long shook his head wordlessly. Cross over? Too hard!

Those who didn’t ascend on their first try ended up enhancing their martial dao, constitution, and strength. That in turn made metamorphoses even more difficult. For a Sunderer like him, many more attempts were required and ideally, mysterious power that was matched to him.

As useful as unattributed energy was, it enhanced his physique more than anything. Thus, it wasn’t necessarily a good thing to absorb too much as it made crossing over that much harder.

Liu Long sighed inwardly and looked at the window across from them again. “Stay here and notify me of anything that happens!”

“Understood!”

The captain left without another word. It didn’t seem like anything would happen to Li Hao over the next couple of days, but it was another story once the rainy season began. The young man might be in danger at any second then.

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The sky darkened soon after Liu Long left and night was swift upon them. Li Hao continued practicing the ape style inside the house, maintaining his form longer each time. Sweat spattered over the floor until it grew slick with sweat. Just when he was about to go through another runthrough, Panther started growling from its sprawled out position on the ground.

Li Hao raised an eyebrow at the little black dog. Was someone here?

His heart skipped a beat and his breathing stuttered when he looked up. The young man quickly settled into the opening stance and began the ape style again, albeit at a much weaker level than before. He was shocked and terrified out of his mind!

The corner of his eye caught a smear of red outside his window. It was pressed against the glass! The scarlet shadow was here! It was his first time seeing it in his house!

Was Liu Long nearby?

Did he see it?

Could he see it?

Damn it!

Li Hao's heart raced with panic and worry. Was the shadow here to keep him under surveillance? What could he do other than remain composed and pretend he didn't see it?

He was extremely tired after another round of the ape style and halted for the night. The scarlet shadow still floated outside—on the window. It was like it'd pierced through the window and was perching on the glass.

Did this mean that the supernatural behind it was close by? Would they attack tonight? They were too bold! Zhang Yuan's house was dismantled just yesterday and here they were today. This was blatant disregard of Liu Long and his team!

What do I do now? Li Hao grew more uneasy the longer the shadow stayed. In order to conceal his anxiety, he walked into the bathroom to take a shower.

The hairs on the back of his neck stood up when water hit his face. He forced himself to stay still and look at his toes. He couldn't let the scarlet shadow realize he could see it—it was right next to him!

The two were nearly cheek to cheek in the small bathroom!

Don't worry! It's just here to keep an eye on me! It didn't attack the second it appeared, so it doesn't want to kill me right now. Based on teacher's deductions, this isn't the time. So relax, relax! I don't see anything, training is sweet, Liu Yan's boobs are so big—do they make fights difficult?

Li Hao shifted his gaze and wrenched his thoughts around, concerned that he'd work himself into a frenzy if he continued to dwell on the situation. The jade sword around his neck remained inert, appearing to be any regular pendant. He didn't know if the scarlet shadow could see it and what it would make of the necklace. He didn't have the capacity to think anymore, much less be shy that his naked self was on full display.

Who would think about that at a time like this?

My circumstances are getting more and more dangerous! Time passed in the throes of his wild thoughts; the shadow disappeared when he finished showering.

Panther sprawled in the living room, quiet as a mouse the entire time. It wasn't until the scarlet shadow disappeared that it heaved a sigh of relief. Li Hao also breathed out more easily as well. Dog and human looked at each other in complete silence—there was also some confusion in the dog's eyes.

You saw it too? I thought you were blind! You're so good, I thought you couldn't see it! You're better at this acting business than I am!

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Inside the apartment.

Li Hao had the distinct sensation of surviving a calamity. This was the second time in two days that the scarlet shadow had approached him! Did this mean that the enemy was about to make their move? Was this why the shadow kept him under observation, to see if their pig was fat enough for the slaughter and assess how much meat he'd produce?

Indeed, that was Li Hao's current takeaway from the situation. The scarlet shadow seemed to be repeatedly admiring whether or not its crops had matured.

“Damn you!” the young man cursed lowly. What do you take me for?!

He would’ve bowed his head to fate, but still tried for a desperate gamble if things had been as if before. But now... he refused to acquiesce!

The jade sword was a supernatural object and he’d learned his teacher’s breathing method. He’d come in contact with the supernatural domain and could absorb mysterious power! Why should he blindly accept what fate had in store for him??

“No matter how strong they are, they’re not invincible!” Li Hao set his jaw. Why would they exercise such caution if they were that domineering?

The truth was, they were afraid!

Of what?

Of the Night Watchers!

There must be someone even more powerful than the scarlet shadow among the Night Watchers. Thus, the shadow’s faction didn’t dare raise too much of a disturbance.

“What am I scaring myself for?” Li Hao reassured himself and cursed at Panther, “Damn, you’re trash. You’re always the first to cry whenever you see it.”

Wounded innocence filled the dog’s eyes. I’m just a dog and very weak. If you’re afraid, then of course I am too!

The little black dog felt that it was still young, that it was normal for it to be afraid.

A young man and a dog slumped in the living room, staying quiet for a very long time. After a while, Li Hao picked up his communicator and dialed a number. It wasn't his teacher for once.

Liu Long's coldly arrogant voice traveled through it after a while. "Speak!"

There was no greeting or pleasantries, just that one word.

"I feel like someone's watching me!"

"Uh huh!" Liu Long responded, unperturbed.