

Star Gate 31

Chapter 31: Starlight, Mysterious Power (I)

Li Hao thought for a bit, maybe the chief thought that he'd discovered the Demon Hunters tailing him?

The scarlet shadow sure as heck wasn't part of the team.

Guessing that Liu Long had misunderstood, Li Hao brainstormed for how to continue. "I don't know how to describe it, it felt like there was a gust of evil cold air blowing through my house. The stray dog that I keep around suddenly barked, then laid unmoving. When I checked, it'd peed on the floor!"

"Hmm?" Liu Long blinked. Evil cold air, a dog barking and peeing? His composure receded as he realized what the possibility was. "Are you sure?"

Li Hao kicked Panther—the little black dog was despondent. I peed? You peed! Your whole family peed!

Sadly, it could only bear the transgression since it couldn't talk.

"Absolutely!" Li Hao lied without blushing.

"I see!" Liu Long sounded a bit solemn and thought things over. "Don't move and don't say anything more. I'll be there shortly, but you won't see me! I'll follow you in secret starting tomorrow, so don't slip up or reveal anything."

He didn't command Li Hao to stay at the Inspectorate instead of going home because he needed the young man to continue leaving himself in the open.

Li Hao grunted in assent and asked, “Do I just ignore everything then, chief?”

“Ignore everything!” The captain’s voice grew stern. “You only have one mission—when you get that feeling again, pull open the curtains!”

“I’m afraid... that I won’t have the chance to open them,” Li Hao mumbled.

Liu Long seemed to realize that as well and changed his mind. “Come find me first thing when you report to work tomorrow!”

“Understood!” Li Hao agreed promptly. With his astuteness, he could tell that Liu Long was likely going to bring out some precious baubles. That was for the best, he would take whatever he could get—er, was offered.

Kids who made a fuss were the ones fed. If one remained silent in the Demon Hunters, there might not be anything that would come one’s way. Liu Long seemed to be a miserly sort and hadn’t given Li Hao anything on his first day. Even Liu Yan had said he could take any hot weapon he wanted!

“Whoo!” Li Hao sat on the floor in deep contemplation after hanging up. He frowned when he saw the palm print on the wall. Had the scarlet shadow seen that?

Granted, it wasn’t a big deal if it had. A pseudo-martial master yet to reach Slayer of Tens wasn’t worthy of a second glance from supernaturals. It would actually be a good thing if they thought this was the real strength he was hiding.

There was still energy left in the jade sword and he knew the breathing method. He might see increases in strength everyday over the next few days. Judging him on the basis of what he displayed today would only confuse the enemy.

Despite the fact that any increases in strength might still be insufficient to threaten supernaturals, Li Hao doggedly continued onward.

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The night passed peacefully.

July 14, a fair day.

Another night passed and the scarlet shadow continued to fly under the radar. Li Hao had a good night's sleep and issued a few reminders to Panther before leaving for work. He shook out some dog food before hopping on his bike.

The young man didn't know whether Liu Long had come last night or not, and he didn't ask. All he knew was that he needed to see the man today. Could he worm some benefits out of the captain, something ideally like a powerful supernatural object?

It was more likely than not that this was wishful thinking.

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Department of Classified Affairs.

This was still Li Hao's post. Oddly enough, Chen Na was first to arrive this morning and excitedly beckoned at him when she saw the young man.

What's she doing here so early?

Li Hao was most familiar with Chen Na out of the Inspectorate and they were reasonably close with each other since they were the youngest in the department.

“Li Hao!” Chen Na bubbled with enthusiasm. “Great news!”

“What is it?”

“Newbies are coming, did you forget? It’s time for the annual batch of new recruits, we’re free! We won’t have to come early to clean up or fetch water anymore!” Chen Na’s hands danced animatedly.

Although she was a fellow rookie alongside Li Hao, the latter did a bit more work since she joined the Inspectorate a tad earlier. She had to pitch in at times too, however, since it was too much for Li Hao to handle everything by himself.

“New recruits?” Li Hao started; he’d completely forgotten about this. It wasn’t a big deal to him as he was about to leave Classified Affairs. Technically speaking, he wasn’t part of the department anymore. It would be official once the announcement came through.

So she’s here for this! Happiness filtered into his answering smile. “Great news! Freedom at last. I wondered why you’re here so early. Is today when they report in?”

Chen Na nodded with high spirits. “That’s right! Higher-ups finalized the selection a long time ago—they’ve been training ever since. Today is their first day at work!”

“Got it, that’s nice!” Li Hao shared Chen Na’s joy. It was indeed a joyous occasion! The girl would otherwise be steaming mad if she had to take over all of his work. “How many are there?”

“Two... no, three!” A merry Chen Na replied, her sources of information vast. “The third is a recent addition. Three of them! They’ve got it good. I was the only one when I came because you were a transfer. I had to do everything and then so did you. They’ll have an easier time of things coming in three at once.”

Li Hao murmured in agreement. He was only half paying attention to the conversation as he waited for the department head to arrive. After roll call, he would report to Law Enforcement for the real business at hand. What did he care about this?

But he was known as a good, honest guy in Classified Affairs. That persona had to be upheld even upon departure, so he was appropriately just as happy. Their colleagues walked in as they chatted and Li Hao busied himself as usual. He didn't slack off just because he was about to leave.

Wang Jie came around 9:00 am, followed by the three rookies. They were very young and comprised of two males and one female.

"Everyone, listen up!" Wang Jie clapped his hands with a smile. "Take a break for a second..."

Well, no one was working apart from Chen Na and Li Hao. The rest were waiting for the latest gossip. The department head ignored the state of his subordinates and continued merrily, "We're being assigned three newbies today, all of them elites! To be able to join the Department of Classified Affairs is a sign of their strength and capabilities..."

The three were introduced amid a wave of plaudits. Li Hao set aside his tasks to take a good look at the three. Dressed in brand new inspector uniforms, they cut dashing figures. He focused on the young man standing on the left. The newcomer seemed young—younger than Li Hao—at only nineteen years old. He was quite handsome and beamed with boyish charm.

Li Hao was typically hailed as the best looking of Classified Affairs. There was certainly fluff to that title since most department staff were middle-aged men and women. There weren't many young people stationed at Classified Affairs.

Decent looking enough, Li Hao did indeed fall short compared to the new guy. The most obvious was in terms of their skin. The newcomer had fair skin that was evenly toned and milky smooth. Flushed with good health, it was tender just from appearance.

Constantly seeking to make Li Hao her man, big sis Yu stared raptly at the rookie. Was today when she switched targets?

Chen Na also took a few glances and looked at Li Hao. She lowered her voice with amusement. “Do you see that, Li Hao? Your biggest competition is here. He’s called Wang Ming, right? He’s a little better looking than you!”

“Feast your eyes on a sight you like!” Li Hao inclined his head with a smile.

“Pfft! Who says I like cutesy types?” All the same, Chen Na snuck a few more peeks before saying, “His eyes are so bright!”

Indeed, they seemed particularly alert because they were very bright. The eyes were the windows to the soul. If a dull look in the eyes accompanied a handsome face, it made for a listless demeanor. Wang Ming, however, looked around with brilliant eyes.

“Hello everyone and good morning seniors. I am Wang Ming and I come from the Inspectorate Academy. I graduated this year...” the young man introduced himself to everyone.

Wang Jie quickly led him to Li Hao and Chen Na, chuckling when he glanced at the two youngsters. “Li Hao, Chen Na, you’re seniors now too. Wang Ming, learn from Li Hao and familiarize yourself with his cases. Chen Na and Li Hao, make sure to teach Wang Ming what you know.”

Rather than special treatment, sending Wang Ming to learn from them was a function of Li Hao’s impending transfer. Although Chen Na remained unaware, Wang Jie was fully clued in. Thus, he needed to find someone to fill in Li Hao’s position.

Wang Ming was perfect!

“Alright, do we need to get another desk?” Chen Na chuckled.

“Nope!” Wang Jie smiled. “Just move a chair over for a few days!”

Albeit mystified, Chen Na didn’t ask further. A few days it was. Li Hao remained pleasantly quiet and smiled faintly at the newcomer. He was hardly as calm on the inside as he appeared to be on the surface.

Wang Ming!

The heck was going on?

His eyes were trained on Wang Ming not because of the rookie’s handsome looks or bright eyes, but because he saw a faint illumination of starlight on the young man. It was less than what wreathed Liu Long and the others, but it was more resplendent!

There wasn’t much—in fact, it was the barest twinkle. However, it was so scintillating that Li Hao could sense the cool tranquility of starlight though they were a distance apart.

Starlight!

The term floated to the fore. Of the two ways to set foot into the supernatural, those born with innate talent were Heaven Favored and those who conducted energy into themselves were Starlight. Regardless of how one made the crossover, one was supernatural!

For some reason, Li Hao thought of the Starlight name at this moment. His expression remained mild as usual while waves of shock roiled his heart. Why was there suddenly a Starlight here? Who’d sent him?

The scarlet shadow? The Night Watchers?

These were the only probable factions that would send a supernatural, so which had done so? Why was the supernatural in Classified Affairs and assigned to him?

It was one thing if this was a regular intake of new recruits, but how would supernaturals ever come to this department? Something was plainly amiss here. No one else could see the starlight radiating from Wang Ming, but it was clear as day to Li Hao.

Can Liu Long and the others see the energy?

He'd forgotten to ask yesterday how to determine supernaturals!

Damn!

An icy grip closed around Li Hao to find that a supernatural was by his side. Damn it!

Was it the Night Watchers?

It was far better if it was the Night Watchers—it'd be too terrifying if it was the scarlet shadow's side. There would be no place safe in Silver City anymore; this was a Night Watcher base camp!

"Brother Hao..." A voice traveling into Li Hao's ears interrupted his wild thoughts. He lifted his head to see Wang Ming flashing a sunny smile at him. "Brother Hao, you're my senior and thus probably older than me. I'll call you Brother Hao, but you can just call me Wang Ming."

Li Hao answered with a slightly fake smile, but no one found it so since this was how he always smiled.

“You’re too polite!” he replied enviously. “I’m a year earlier than you, but I’m half-baked, a complete amateur. You’re different, you’re a real professional who graduated from the academy! Which one did you go to? Silver City?”

Silver City had an Inspectorate Academy that served as the reserve corps for the Inspectorate. Most staff came from the academy.

“No.” Wang Ming shook his head with a radiant smile. “I’m from White Moon City and the White Moon Inspectorate Academy.”

“The White Moon Inspectorate Academy?” Chen Na expressed with surprise.

Wang Ming inclined his head without further explanation; he didn’t seem to be as interested in her. Li Hao, on the other hand, thought of something else.