

Star Gate 34

Chapter 34: A Human Is Less Than A Dog (II)

Li Hao blinked. My... wages?

“I’m a third rank inspector and earn one thousand star coins a month as an intern. After coming on full time, I received a huge raise to two thousand a month. If I get promoted to second rank after joining the law enforcement team, I’ll earn four thousand star coins a month!”

Four thousand a month was a respectable salary. Li Hao was single and cooked often—half a kilogram of high grade rice was only one coin. He’d already lived a pretty good life as an intern on one thousand star coins a month.

One fast food meal cost five coins. Even if he ate out three meals a day, that was only four hundred and fifty coins a month. His current salary more than covered life’s expenditures. If he was promoted to another rank, he would have to consider getting a wife to help him spend so much money.

“So you earn two thousand a month at current, do you?” Liu Long smiled oddly.

“Yes!”

“Do you know how much one cube of mysterious power goes for?”

“There’s a market for these things?” Li Hao started. These things could be sold?

“Not openly—there are many black markets!” Liu Long snorted. “The rich and powerful are just ordinary people at the end of the day. Not only do supernaturals possess immense battle strength, but they also live longer. Who doesn’t want to be one of them? However, the Night Watchers are the only official channel for ascension if one isn’t Heaven Favored. Underground markets naturally sprang up given the lack of legitimate means!”

The young man nodded with understanding. “Fair enough. If I had money and couldn’t cross over through orthodox methods, I might buy a ticket to becoming greater too!”

It was only to be expected! What a huge pity it would be if one had all that money but was still consigned to being mortal.

“The prices must be high!”

Mysterious power was hard to come by, otherwise everyone would be supernatural.

“Of course!” Liu Long replied with amusement. “Guess how much one cube goes for in the black markets.”

“One hundred thousand?” On second thought, Li Hao felt that was lowballing such a rare resource. “Five hundred thousand!”

It was the highest price he could imagine. At his current salary, he would save twenty-four thousand a year if he didn’t eat or drink. Given certain expenses he still had to incur, it would take thirty years to buy one cube.

That was expensive enough, wasn’t it?

Inspectors were a highly salaried profession. Most Silver City citizens earned less than one thousand star coins a year—it would take fifty to sixty years to buy one cube.

“Not bad, that was a ballsy guess!” Liu Long chuckled. “But you’re still too low. One cube goes for one million coins on the black market.”

Li Hao heaved a slight sigh. Damn that was expensive! A promotion was the prerequisite to him ever being able to buy one.

“Are you not excited?” Liu Long looked at him with a smile. “I’m giving you two million here!”

The young man remained calm. “Chief, things from that domain are beyond the mundane to me. They’re no longer connected to money, so it’s all the same no matter how expensive!”

“That’s a good mentality to have, but you’re thinking too much.” Liu Long broke into true laughter. “You think being supernatural will transcend you beyond the mortal world? Think again! Putting a roof over your head and food on the table requires money! Buying and selling supernatural items requires money! Ordinary people make up the bulk of society, so money is an unavoidable necessity!”

“Take accommodations, for example. Where will you live without money? On the street? Do you know how much ice crystals cost? How will you buy them and store mysterious power without money? You still need to walk from place to place—do you think all supernaturals can fly or travel through the earth?”

Li Hao started multiple times in quick succession. He really had thought that one wouldn’t need to worry about trivial matters like money if one was supernatural. But now that the chief pointed it out... the young man realized that supernaturals were also human. If one was human, one needed to consider matters of survival!

“Then...” Li Hao said dazedly. “Will I get a raise after joining the Demon Hunters?”

“.....” Liu Long was speechless. This was what the lad was concerned about after all that? He didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. “You do, and you got it on your first day. Ten thousand star coins a month!”

Li Hao raised an eyebrow. “That means I earn more than first rank inspectors?”

A first rank inspector earned at most eight or nine thousand a month. They could break ten thousand when taking into account bonuses and other rewards.

“Yep!” Liu Long nodded and changed the subject. “I tell you this so you understand how precious mysterious power is! Don’t think it’s readily available by the side of the road. Two cubes would be out of reach your entire life if you didn’t join the Demon Hunters!”

Li Hao finally smiled. So it was valuable? That’s not bad then. Granted, money wasn’t of primary importance to him—he couldn’t wait to absorb the energy. Would it be the same as the energy in his jade sword, or would it have even better effects?

“Chief, how do I absorb it?”

Liu Long gave him a booklet. “This is the Energy Induction Method, the Night Watchers use it too. It’s the standard body method for conducting mysterious power into yourself. Other supernatural organizations use it as well!”

A Night Watcher cultivation method? That piqued Li Hao’s interest. He quickly took the booklet and flipped it open... finding a very thin booklet indeed!

He committed the contents to memory with one glance, flipped to the second page, then the third, and that was it!

Three pages, one thousand characters! Such was the Energy Induction Method, the standard procedure that supernaturals used to absorb mysterious power.

Bizarreness bubbled up in Li Hao’s heart. The hell? Why was this similar to the breathing techniques of the Five Styles? Not the Breathing Method of the Five Styles that his teacher just taught him, but the technique he used when he first started practicing the ape style.

It was what he employed for the sword water on the first day—the efficacy rate was very low. What his teacher taught retained seventy percent of mysterious power, whereas what he used originally preserved thirty percent and wasted the rest.

In his eyes, this Energy Induction Method at most rivalled his first technique.

Liu Long spoke solemnly while Li Hao rummaged through his thoughts. “This knowledge cannot be passed on to outsiders! Although many organizations possess the know-how, they keep it under wraps. Grave punishment will result if the Night Watchers find out! It’s fine if we of the Inspectorate use it, but outsiders are not permitted to learn!”

The deputy chief spoke extremely seriously, but all Li Hao could do was nod wordlessly. I knew this thing several years ago—not the exact same one, but more or less. I have the Breathing Method of the Five Styles now, so I can’t be bothered with this.

He wasn’t going to deploy the breathing method since his teacher had also said that his method was not to be shown to outsiders. Li Hao committed the Energy Induction Method to memory and quickly raised, “I’ve learned it, chief. Can I begin?”

Liu Long nodded and looked at Yun Yao.

“Stick out your right hand!” She cracked a tiny opening in the ice crystal cover. It was a unique contraption as mysterious energy didn’t pour out of it. At the same time, it was very limited in its uses.

Yun Yao pointed at the cover. “Reach in and operate the Energy Induction Method—it will direct energy into your body. But remember, energy will flow back out and dissipate very quickly if your absorption efficiency is too low.”

Li Hao knew all this, so he asked with confusion, “Then why not have me stand inside the cover? This way, we can use the mysterious power again if I can’t absorb it all.”

That was what Panther had done—the dog had used the energy that seeped out of the young man. Such a precious resource should be recycled as much as possible!

“First, it would cost too much to make such a large ice crystal cover,” Yun Yao chuckled. “Second, using the energy that flows out of the body is less efficient and more likely to cause a conflict. The more times mysterious power is reused, the more likely it is to clash with the next user. Our reserves already count as a second or even third usage...”

Because their energy was stripped from others!

To put it simply, it was better to let the power fade away than to use it again. The likelihood of rejection was too high. Not only would it result in suboptimal results, it might even cause greater harm.

“I see...” Li Hao mulled over her words. The dog didn’t care. Panth ate whatever was offered to it and didn’t seem to suffer any harm. It feasted upon whatever was present.

The young man’s right hand passed through the cover and a tendril of mysterious power visibly darted into his palm. It was Li Hao’s first time coming into contact with energy that did not come from the jade sword. His eyes swiftly widened when he operated the Energy Induction Method.

Holy fuck!

Why did this feel so awful? The jade sword’s energy was a gentle warm current. Although there was too much of it, it was a comfortable sensation.

In contrast, this attempt felt incredibly dreadful. The energy didn’t listen to him and rampaged furiously through his arm, violently barreling toward other areas in his body. A faint sense of rejection grew!

Is this what Yun Yao meant by the clash caused by repeated usage? Li Hao wondered with bafflement and incomprehension. Did this mean that the energy within the jade sword was firsthand, and that the treasury held second or third hand?

Was conflict greater when the energy was harder to absorb? Technically speaking, Panther took in secondhand energy as well, but here he was, doing worse than the dog!

A human was less than a dog!

Li Hao didn't dare display any part of what he was thinking. He focused on operating the method and absorbing the energy. Mysterious power surged toward him within the ice crystal cover. The veins on his hand bulged and blood oozed out—the negative reaction was growing so strong that his capillaries were bursting!

This is all that secondhand is good for! He cursed inwardly, suddenly thinking much higher of what he received from the jade sword.

He'd always thought that mysterious power was mild and moderate, but now he fully realized how unbearable it was. No wonder they said that inducting energy might kill the user. He didn't understand before, but he did so now!

His physical constitution was quite strong, but the energy had a terrible impact nonetheless. Just look at this, his blood vessels were bursting! Ordinary people would explode if they inducted unattributed mysterious energy, wouldn't they?

I'd die as well if this was a third or fourth usage!

Liu Long's voice rang in his ears at this time. "Not bad, the rejection isn't that strong. Very good! Looks like your constitution will do, you're only bleeding a little. I thought I would need to save you..."

This isn't strong rejection?? Li Hao suddenly pitied the others. They'd probably almost died during their first attempt to absorb energy! He tried to put the adverse reaction out of his mind and concentrated on absorbing energy.

Liu Long spoke again after a while, "Alright, you can take out your arm now and bandage it up. Your training over the past two days have borne fruit—you've managed to keep at least thirty percent of the power. Not bad at all!"

A stiff expression developed on Li Hao's face. That was it? That was it?? Two cubes of mysterious power were gone, just like that??

The fuck??

This was close to how much he absorbed after Panth on the first night! This was it?! Two million??

Uhh...

Li Hao was completely speechless and immensely disappointed. Aw come on! That was way too little. It doesn't even begin to compare to how much I took in last night!

Yet, Liu Long wore a look of lamentation. He explained proudly when he saw the young man was in a daze, "Now you know the might of mysterious power and how valuable it is, don't you? Work hard and don't let me down! If you do well this time and we kill the supernatural, I'll reward you with another two cubes!"

Li Hao stretched his lips into an awkward smile. So if I work like a dog and put my life on the line to kill the scarlet shadow, you'll give me another two cubes? I'm seriously worth less than a dog! Panth you lil bastard, how much of my energy did you eat?!

The young man suddenly realized why the scarlet shadow had its eyes set on the weapons of the eight families. He would be the same!

