

## Star Gate 36

### Chapter 36: Discovering New Territory (II)

Within the training grounds.

Li Hao immediately turned back after leaping past Liu Yan and grabbed for her back. She grunted when the young man's hand was about to connect, flinging one leg backward in response!

It was as if she had eyes in the back of her head and her flexibility far exceeded expectations. Most people lost their center of balance when they kicked backward and could barely reach their butt, but Liu Yan's leg seemed to be boneless and unerringly aimed for Li Hao's face.

Incredible!

This was immensely surprising as Li Hao had considered the woman might dodge, turn, or bend down...

Everything but suddenly kick backward!

Bam!

He wasn't able to evade in time and suffered a blow to his nose.

OW!!

His nose exploded with pain as blood streamed out; tears immediately welled up in his eyes.

Fuck!

He cursed loudly inside. Damned unlucky! But instead of stopping to clutch his nose, Li Hao remained on his feet. He didn't want the fight to end right after encountering a huge setback.

Liu Yan might've thought that the young man would stop after taking a critical blow—the last thing on her mind was that he would rather grin and bear it if it meant he could clock a swing in return.

Although blood and tears blurred his vision after Liu Yan retracted her leg, Li Hao kicked forward with every fiber of remaining strength. His kick wasn't too high in contrast, but he connected squarely with the vice captain's butt!

She wasn't able to avoid the riposte since she was halfway through withdrawing her leg. Thrown off balance, she reeled and stumbled forward several steps before finding her footing.

Liu Yan sent a death glare at the young man, whereas Liu Long and Yun Yao were shocked into complete silence. A foreboding still reigned in the basement—Li Hao had struck back after being kicked in the nose!

His counterblow landed precisely on Liu Yan's bottom and sent her flying for a marked distance. This ran completely beyond Liu Long's speculations!

"Li Hao!" Liu Yan almost shrieked.

The young man immediately clutched his nose and stooped on the ground with a cry of pain.

"Ahhhh! My nose! Big sis Liu, my nose is broken..."

Her rage immediately deflated. Anger shot through with indignation, Liu Yan was also quite resigned. She'd broken the lad's nose? She hadn't planned on hurting him! Who would've thought that he'd pull out a two-stage jump and suddenly land behind her? She'd reacted instinctively, but breaking his nose?

Well... she was no weakling!

“I didn’t mean to...” Halfway through her protest, Liu Yan flared with anger again as she thought of Li Hao’s reaction.

Yun Yao swiftly stepped forward and pulled Li Hao’s hand away from his face, poking and prodding his nose. She quickly smiled. “It’s not broken, there’s nothing to worry about. You’ll be fine after some rest!”

Li Hao raised a teary face. Woman, you’re doing this on purpose, aren’t you?? I know that it’s not broken! Would I be putting on this act if I didn’t kick Liu Yan in the wrong spot and send her flying? What are you checking me out for?!

As expected, Liu Yan’s concern melted into a frown and she took a deep breath to launch into a tirade.

“Alright! Well done, Li Hao!” Liu Long interrupted with authority. He turned to Liu Yan. “You were struck by a non-martial master!”

The vice captain’s words stuck in her throat.

“Liu Yan, you know how dangerous our line of work is! You were slacking off!”

The woman quieted down. Slacking off?

That was a little out of line.

She'd pulled her punch because Li Hao wasn't an enemy and very weak to boot. Although she'd been afraid of killing the guy, it was true that she'd committed an error. Li Hao had successfully kicked her and if this was a mission, she'd already be dead.

"I..." Liu Yan said nothing. Vexed and somewhat resigned, she turned on her heel. A mum Li Hao tearfully watched her go, there was a large footprint on her butt!

Equally silent, Liu Long also pretended not to see it. Meanwhile, Yun Yao took a good look and smiled. Chuckling softly, she patted Li Hao. "Few are those who can make her suffer a loss and be unable to talk about it. You're quite a bundle of surprises!"

The young man smiled sheepishly. He hadn't meant to do so; accidents were bound to happen in bouts of sparring. I suffered more in that exchange, okay?

.....

Liu Long remained staring oddly at the young man while Li Hao cleaned up himself. A guilty feeling crept into the latter as they stood facing each other.

"You've got a good physique!" Liu Long broke the silence. "Your absorption efficacy is very high! Do you practice a revised edition of Yuan Shuo's New Book of Five Styles?"

"I don't know." Li Hao shook his head. "This is what teacher taught me from the very beginning. I don't know what version it is."

"Are you aware that your foundations rival those of a Slayer?"

Astonished, Li Hao looked baffled. Inwardly, however, he knew that he wasn't in such good shape. It was all due to absorbing the mysterious power within the jade sword, particularly after last night! He'd been compressed to the point of getting shorter!

A thousand questions swirled in Li Hao's mind. The energy within the jade sword was truly different. It was overly gentle and didn't result in tangible improvement, but it certainly provided certain benefits that were not seen in the mysterious power that he'd absorbed today.

It greatly enhanced the physical condition, for example!

His body digested almost none of the energy from the two cubes today—that power did not have a nurturing effect. It only destroyed!

Indeed, destroyed. It continuously destroyed his muscles and washed over them, then exuded a tiny bit of itself to heal the tissue. The end result was a repeating cycle of extreme pain! When everything concluded, a new domineering strength appeared in his body, one that contained immense offensive capabilities!

These two types of mysterious power feel completely different! Li Hao came to certain conclusions. The energy within the sword seemed more geared toward nurturing and support. What the Demon Hunters collected was suited for attacking. They were two different categories of power!

No wonder neither Panth nor I grew stronger after absorbing so much. But having a strong body is good all the same. Panth's coat is so glossy that it's almost dripping oil!

If the little black dog had absorbed the power available today, it would've probably exploded. Li Hao had almost done so!

Nurturing... Li Hao had a strong hunch that while this kind of mysterious power was mediocre when it came to amplifying battle capabilities, it was more valuable than what he'd absorbed today.

I can't talk about it!

Not on pain of death!

Therefore, he didn't mind its effects being attributed to the New Book of Five Styles. His teacher more than likely didn't care either.

"Maybe teacher is just too incredible," Li Hao quickly responded. "Chief, do you mean that my foundations are more or less on par with a Slayer of Tens?"

Liu Long thought for a bit. "There's not much of a gap if we're talking strictly physical condition! What remains is strength, speed, and experience. If you train more and take part in a few battles... You'll become a true Slayer!

"Of course, this is all a result of mysterious power. Do you understand how precious it is now?"

Li Hao bobbed his head rapidly. He did! What the Demon Hunters had was not to be dismissed!

"Chief... I notice that the energy both destroys and heals body tissue, but does that leave any injuries behind?"

Liu Long bestowed him with a look of appreciation and nodded firmly. "It does! Destruction and rebirth do not easily come about. It stimulates your potential as it grants you more strength, placing your body in a state of depletion. This is when it's important to quickly enter the supernatural field! You can slowly heal and recover after ascending as Starlight—this is a required step to crossing over."

Li Hao nodded, but contrary opinions swirled in his heart. He felt a bit different as starry energy from the jade sword lingered in his body. When the mysterious power ravaged his muscles, the gentle sword energy helped heal him.

A state of depletion?

Not at all!

He'd actually almost fully recovered and didn't feel too tired or find things too painful.

"Chief, is there a limit to absorbing mysterious power?"

"Yes!" Liu Long explained. "Each absorption is destruction because the energy is too domineering for your body's tissues to contain. A newbie like you can try once a month at most. Too many times will result in too many injuries! At my level, once every three to five days is good—but the caveat is that there's enough energy for us to use!"

Is that so?

Li Hao remained silent. Why did he think that it would be fine if he had another go right now?

Energy from the jade sword is different! he realized once more. So very different! Damn, Panth made out like a bandit! I wondered why the dog's fine after taking in so much. It looks like the jade sword's mysterious power is meant for healing and nourishing.

Perhaps it was time to put the jade sword's energy into a category of its own. Let's call it... cosmic power! It's different from other types of mysterious power.

The young man was suddenly curious. "Chief, people like you and my teacher have absorbed mysterious power for a long time but failed to cross over. Does that mean you bear a lot of injuries?"

"Yes, and that's normal!" Liu Long didn't mind admitting. "Your body makes a full recovery if you ascend and if not... you can die from your injuries! A Sunderer of Hundreds has no shortage of latent injuries. I've never heard of a martial master walking around with no wounds whatsoever!"

“Can’t supernaturals heal the damage? Isn’t it easier to cross over if one is in good health?”

“It’s not that simple!” Liu Long shook his head. “Setting aside whether or not there are supernaturals who have healing abilities, they would be beyond precious if they existed! Why should they heal you? Can you pay the price? Don’t think too much—you should be considering how to set foot into that world and become Starlight. Forget about recovering from wounds!”

He thought Li Hao was scared, but the young man was thinking of something else. His teacher!

His teacher was elderly and bore a hefty array of injuries. He might have also absorbed mysterious power quite a few times, worsening his general condition.

When the young man heard Yuan Shuo cough before, he’d thought that was a byproduct of advanced age. But now that he thought about it, it might be the result of injuries from absorbing mysterious power because that was what the New Book of Five Styles was intended for!

The more one absorbed yet was unable to crossover, the more grave the injuries.

What if he gave his teacher a cup of starry water? Would that heal him and propel him to the supernatural domain?

Li Hao didn’t want to conceal anything from Yuan Shuo because the eminent professor treated the young man very well. He readily passed on his secret knowledge, holding nothing back. Not to mention, if teacher really progressed, that might confer Li Hao more support and confidence to take on the scarlet shadow!

If one cup isn’t enough, then two... Or maybe I’ll just let teacher use the sword itself? Li Hao pondered deeply. He didn’t mind exposing the jade sword, since his teacher might’ve guessed it long ago given his keen intelligence.