

Star Gate 37

Chapter 37: Yuan Shuo's Eccentricity (I)

The jade sword... Right, I still have the stone blade! If teacher actually wants it, I can give him the stone blade since the jade sword is a family heirloom.

Zhang Yuan was dead, but Li Hao felt that his friend wouldn't mind giving the blade away if it meant revenge could be had.

"Focus on cultivating!" Liu Long clapped Li Hao's shoulder with encouragement. "Your foundations are good. If you can fully digest the energy over the next couple of days, you'll truly set foot into Slayer of Tens! Your odds of survival will increase greatly then!"

There wasn't much time left. Li Hao quickly bobbed his head, an unusual expectation and desire dawning in his eyes. He wanted to grow stronger and obtain a bit more mysterious power from the vault. It didn't matter if the power was secondhand—the combination of tyrannical mysterious power and the jade sword's cosmic power resulted in enormous benefits!

If I can get a little more and get Panth some... it definitely won't die after eating so much cosmic power. Maybe I can raise a Slayer of Tens dog? Li Hao swallowed hard. It might be very useful to have Panth as a hidden ace. What a pity that there were only two cubes and they all went to me!

Mysterious power was a marvelous thing, no wonder it was so expensive. Li Hao no longer turned up his nose at what the Demon Hunters offered, he just wanted more!

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Within the basement.

Li Hao sensed an enormous improvement after his last absorption of energy. However, it remained questionable whether he'd reached Slayer of Tens. Liu Long and the others were too vague—

perhaps they felt that saying more was pointless since Li Hao was yet to reach that level. Even now, the young man didn't know what the traits of being a Slayer were.

Was it just a stronger physical body?

The captain was more talkative than he'd ever been and temporarily lost his aloof arrogance—possibly due to Li Hao's excellent performance. That opened the door for further questions.

“Chief, is there a way to identify a Slayer of Tens apart from actual battle?”

“Yes!” Liu Long nodded. “Liu Yan didn't bother telling you before likely because you're cannon fodder. You might die before you reach Slayer of Tens. Other than paying attention in actual combat, you don't need to care about any of this...”

Hot damn! You know, I kicked her good. I don't regret that anymore. Liu Yan shows me a smiling face all the time, but also thinks I'm not long for this world??

Women were tricky alright, they were one way on the surface and another way inside.

“So what's different about Slayer of Tens?” Liu Long thought for a while. “Let's start with a premise that combat is not what determines cultivation levels. Actual combat is the foundation, so remember that well!”

Li Hao nodded, that he understood.

“So in terms of actual combat, we can go off the words themselves. You can test this out for yourself. Whether it is Sunderer of Hundreds or Dominator of Thousands, you'll know once you throw yourself into an army barracks.”

Li Hao laughed awkwardly. Are you kidding? I don't want to die. And if I really reach Dominator, it's not like the army will fight me with bare hands and feet. One blast from a cannon or a thousand guns firing in unison means the death of a Dominator all the same, no?

That isn't how I'd want to die, even with a death wish!

"If not through actual combat, there are also notable characteristics to each cultivation level. A Slayer of Tens is a true martial master and as such, qi blooms from inside! It is what's considered internal force among the people, or at least you can consider it so. Before the supernatural domain appeared, martial masters were also extraordinary and beyond the mundane. Their greatest trait is vibrant internal force!"

Li Hao brightened. "Internal force?"

"Yes!" Liu Long nodded. "A type of force that gathers from within and manifests as qi. To put it plainly, a martial master's qi reverberates, their blood courses with vigor, and their meridians and bones resonate in unison..."

He suddenly shook his arm, summoning a concerted hum from his bones and meridians.

Pop pop pop!

The air cracked as if there was a long whip snapping through it.

"You see that?" Liu Long smiled. "That is the most noticeable mannerism of a Slayer of Tens! The meridians and bones resonate with kicks or punches and internal force suffuses them. This is the end result!"

Li Hao's eyes lit up! Slayer of Tens! The weakest of the martial masters, their lowliest member, punched with the ringing of bones and meridians! Amazing, and he couldn't do so at the moment!

This meant he was yet to reach the Slayer level. Not only would he not operate at these heights in actual battle, neither was his cultivation up to par.

“What about Sunderer of Hundreds?” Li Hao’s interest was piqued.

However, Liu Long frowned slightly. “Sunderer... You should put that out of your mind. Martial masters have fallen out of fashion! You stand a very decent chance of advancing to the supernatural domain if you’re a Slayer, but once you become a Sunderer...”

The man sighed imperceptibly. “Don’t seek to break through to Sunderer of Hundreds! Many are the Starlight who have ascended from Slayer, but I’ve almost never heard of one who advanced from Sunderer. Perhaps there were a few in the beginning—there’s likely almost none now.

“Remember this, Li Hao, try not to absorb unattributed mysterious power in the future. It is both a treasure and bane to martial masters. Absorbing too much will enhance the body and strength to a point where metamorphosis is too hard! Your chances of ascending are almost nonexistent once you become a Sunderer.”

His tone turned self-deprecating. When did the identity of a mighty Sunderer of Hundreds become a burden instead? Weaker martial masters could cross over and become otherworldly, but the difficulty grew exponentially when one was a Sunderer. Too much mysterious power was required to attempt the change, and success wasn’t guaranteed even when there was sufficient energy.

Whether it was he or Yuan Shuo, both had been figures of note among martial masters twenty years ago. But now, one taught in classrooms and studied ancient civilizations, while the other was a law enforcement officer on the front lines.

Their status seemed high, but that was all there was to them. They were less than a youngster newly joining the supernatural field.

Li Hao considerably paused his questions when it seemed that Liu Long was lost in thought. Based on the captain's explanations and what his teacher had mentioned, the young man grasped that the stronger the martial master was, the less likely they were to cross over.

Unattributed mysterious power was more aimed at enhancing strength. If one wanted to ascend to the other domain, one should absorb attributed power. If the martial master was lucky enough to find one that was a near perfect fit, they might directly break through to the otherworldly. Of course, the caveat was that one survived the process.

The rate of death was moderate—odds of survival for the Night Watchers were 90%, but only 10% for the Demon Hunters. That was why Liu Long opted to have Li Hao improve his constitution as opposed to absorb attributed energy.

Don't reach for what's beyond my grasp! Li Hao kept reminding himself. Attaining Slayer of Tens first was equally good. So a vigorous internal force and resonance of bones and meridians were the signs of being a Slayer! As for practical combat... who cares, it's enough to keep up on a fundamental level.

Actual combat was easy enough—fight more, kill more. If they fight one hundred times in ten years, I'll fight one hundred times in one year. I can still keep up with them, that's not an issue at all.

"Chief, I'll stop here for today. I need to make a trip to the Institute."

"The Veteris institute?" Liu Long came back to his senses and furrowed his brows at the young man. "To meet with Yuan Shuo?"

"Yes, to meet with my teacher."

Liu Long thought for a bit. "Do as you wish, but remember to leave tonight!"

Li Hao looked quizzically at the man.

“We need more clues and traces of the people behind the scenes,” Liu Long explained. “They may not show themselves if you stay at the Institute! Because Yuan Shuo is soon to embark on his field mission, the Night Watchers might have already sent their representatives to Silver City. Of course, you can stay there if you’re more afraid of death and never set a foot out!”

“I want revenge more!” Li Hao shook his head, then asked hesitantly, “Chief, will we need to notify the Night Watchers if we can’t take care of this?”

“Remember this well, if the Demon Hunters can’t handle a problem, then ordinary Night Watchers will be going to their deaths as well!” Liu Long answered coolly. “Don’t think too highly of that organization. There’s not that many among them who can truly defeat me. Most who can have important missions and hold down the fort in the big cities. Do you think that any sent to a minor Silver City will be able to manage trouble that I can’t resolve?”

Confidence and arrogance!

Such was the pride of a Sunderer of Hundreds! Liu Long possessed his own self-assurance even though the supernatural domain defined this age.

Li Hao said nothing further and trusted that the chief wasn’t truly unaware of the dangers that were entailed. He insisted on this course of action not solely because he wanted to kill a supernatural for their power, but more likely of what he said. Anything that he could not handle would be beyond the reach of ordinary Night Watchers as well.

The Night Watcher senior council might not come in person for something that hadn’t happened yet.

Li Hao accepted things after he followed this train of thought to its end. Besides, he’d discovered Wang Ming. This guy had come undercover before the rain arrived. He needed to expose the pretender—a supernatural in hiding might result in unexpected developments.

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Li Hao left the basement and turned out of the law enforcement building. He was about to leave the Inspectorate altogether when something caught his eyes. What... a coincidence!

“Brother Hao!” Wang Ming grinned radiantly. “Brother Hao, want to get lunch together? I’m new here and don’t know what’s good at the cafeteria.”

It was noon and not that unusual to be bumping into each other here. However, Li Hao somehow knew that this guy had one hundred percent arranged for this chance encounter.

He flashed a pure and innocent smile. “I’m sorry, Little Ming, but I’ve got to make a trip to the Veteris Institute...”

“Are you dealing with a case?” His new nickname caused Wang Ming’s eyebrows to briefly rise. They quickly came back down and an expression of interest spread across his face, as if he very much wanted to take part.

“No.” Li Hao shook his head. “I’m going to see my teacher.”

“Brother Hao is a student of the Veteris Institute?”

“I used to be.” Li Hao smiled apologetically. “I gotta go. Little Ming, eat first or have Sis Na take you. We’ll grab dinner later.”

“Alright!” Wang Ming let him go without protest.

Li Hao strode out of the Inspectorate, wheeled over his bike, and started pedaling toward the Institute. A strange look appeared in Wang Ming's eyes as he watched the young man go. Liu Long is quite willing to expend his resources!

The Demon Hunters of Silver City don't seem to have a large reserve of mysterious energy, but they let even Li Hao absorb some. Did they really intend to recruit this guy?

What a bit of a pity. The next self-immolation case might be here soon and it wasn't that useful for Li Hao to absorb energy now. It wouldn't be very helpful even if he swiftly made it to Slayer of Tens.

What was the point in wasting that energy?

"Liu Long of Silver City..." Wang Ming looked at the law enforcement building close at hand. This one was known even in White Moon City.

What a pity!

The stronger one's martial dao was, the harder that boundary was to cross and the more difficult it was to break the supernatural locks.

Martial dao enhances supernatural locks! Wang Ming thought back to certain reminders from a few seniors, of how weak ordinary people were when they first broke through. It was as difficult as reaching the heavens for a Sunderer of Hundreds to shift to the supernatural domain.

According to the current limits of supernatural knowledge, it was best to ascend at the Slayer of Tens level. Supernatural locks were relatively easy to break at this level and one started off at a reasonably high level of strength. Thus, many supernatural organizations gave high priority to helping Slayers cross over.

No one wanted Sunderer of Hundreds.

Reservation grew in Wang Ming as he thought of Li Hao and he turned his gaze back to the direction where Liu Long had disappeared in.