

Star Gate 46

Chapter 46: Contentment (I)

It was four o'clock in the afternoon on July 14 when Li Hao left the Veteris Institute. Silver City's rainy season was forecasted to start on July 18 and would run for a prolonged period of time.

"Three more days," Li Hao murmured to himself as he biked back to work. It would start raining on the 18th, so he didn't have much time left. One could trust the forecast as Silver City's Weather Bureau was rather accurate.

He rolled into the Inspectorate, thoughts chasing each other in his mind. He needed to clock out for the day and Wang Ming had mentioned that he was treating them tonight. As someone perpetually single and the acclaimed nice guy of Classified Affairs, Li Hao wouldn't turn him down. That didn't suit his image.

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The Department of Classified Affairs.

Wang Ming brightened slightly when he saw Li Hao return. Curiosity flashed through his eyes as he continued listening to Chen Na's overview of how to process documents. Despite how brief this flicker was, Li Hao clearly noted everything.

The reaction would go overlooked if Li Hao wasn't paying attention to him, but since Li Hao was, some of the signs were easily detected. Wang Ming plainly wasn't a deeply shrewd and deliberative person. Perhaps that was due to a truly younger age, or perhaps he was similar to Li Meng and this was his first mission.

I bet they know about teacher injuring Li Meng. This guy hadn't been so curious when Li Hao left. Perhaps he was also wondering what his teacher had taught him. Passing on a secret art had been the excuse that Yuan Shuo employed.

“You’re back, Brother Hao!” Wang Ming was a very polite soul who didn’t put on airs. He easily greeted Li Hao with respect usually shown toward older people.

“Mmhhh, I’m done for the day.” Li Hao nodded with a faint smile.

“What done for the day!” Chen Na giggled. “More like you don’t want to cook and came back for dinner! You’re back even though the day’s over. You’re thinking about that meal that Little Ming said he wants to treat us to, aren’t you!”

Little Ming!

Li Hao held back his mirth. Chen Na had probably heard him call Wang Ming that and followed suit.

Resignation flickered in Wang Ming’s eyes, but he didn’t give voice to it. He bobbed his head in tacit acceptance of his new nickname. “I found a good restaurant. We can head there as soon as everyone’s done. I hope it suits both of your tastes.”

“I don’t care, I eat anything.” Li Hao was naturally even more easygoing than Chen Na. “Are we the only ones?”

“Just you two for today because I’ve troubled you all day. I’ll treat the others in the department tomorrow!” Wang Ming quickly responded.

Li Hao returned to his seat without another word and quickly handled some documents. The end of the work day arrived after a brief flurry of activity.

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Five thirty. The main entrance to the Inspectorate.

Wang Ming's eyes lost their focus when he saw Li Hao's bicycle. "Brother Hao, are you taking your bike there?"

He hadn't driven his car to this posting and neither had he had time to buy one. Li Hao was very courteous and said he'd take the newcomer to the restaurant, but here he was with his shabby bike! Although Wang Ming had seen the bike at lunchtime, who would've thought that this would really be all that the guy had to his name!

"It's not far!" Li Hao smiled. "Just ten minutes up ahead. You can take the car instead if you want, Sis Na is driving."

"How about both of us ride with Sis Na..."

"No way!" Li Hao shook his head. "I need to go home after this. If I leave my bike here, I have to come back for it. That's too much of a hassle!"

Wang Ming wanted to break into loud curses! This guy was so damned uptight! Why did he have to split hairs like this at his age? He rode a bike for transportation and opted for an easy job for his career. He was a Veteris Institute student, alright? Get some ambition into you!

Although far from satisfied with a bike, considering that Chen Na was driving the car by herself and Li Hao on a bike... Wang Ming decided to go with Li Hao after some consideration. This was the person he wanted to get to know more, anyhow.

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Wang Ming's long legs were impossible to fit on the bike, making for a very uncomfortable position. He was forced to hug Li Hao's waist. Now this was a new experience. After a while, he couldn't help but ask, "Brother Hao, what do you have in your pocket? It's so hard and pointy."

His thoughts would go down a wild path if it wasn't for his hands being around Li Hao's waist. It was rock hard and he was a man! But since it was around the waist... he was probably thinking too much.

"Oh yeah, I almost forgot," Li Hao answered in affable tones without looking back. "It's an old family heirloom. My neighborhood hasn't been too quiet as of late—the dogs bark up a storm at night. I'm worried about losing it, so I carry it in my pocket."

Wang Ming's eyes lit up! Old? Family heirloom? Interest piqued, he asked casually, "What kind of object is it that you carry it around like that? What if you break it? It looks like you're not the super conscientious type, Brother Hao."

"I won't!" Li Hao chuckled. "It's not porcelain, it's a small metal sword. It won't break even if I smash it on the ground. I did just that many times when I was young."

"A small sword?" Wang Ming's face was unguarded since it was Li Hao's back facing him. His eyes were so bright that they'd startle anyone who saw him!

Well that was easy! The sword of the Lis is on Li Hao, huh, and in his pocket? I can take it if I want to!

It was incredulous, but also made a great deal of sense. If unrest had come to the neighborhood, then of course one kept their valuables on them. Wang Ming just hadn't anticipated seeing the sword of the Lis so soon.

There was a file about this sword in the Night Watcher headquarters. It was very generic as it hadn't been long since the organization's founding. There was only a general summary based on what little they knew.

The heritage of the eight families of Silver City could span several hundred or several thousand years. The specifics were very difficult to track down. The weapons mentioned in the folk song, however, were estimated to be Sunflare at the very least!

The supernatural field had developed so late that its objects were classified according to supernatural strength levels. Sunflare was on par with Dominator of Thousands. A treasure at that level was a rare sighting for a supernatural.

“Brother Hao, a small sword and a family heirloom...” Wang Ming couldn’t resist temptation. “May I take a look? I love antiques like these and have collected quite a few of them. If you like them, I’ll bring some from home next time I go on leave.”

“Don’t worry about it.” Li Hao’s lips stretched in a simple and honest smile. “Feel free to take a look, it’s nothing special. Don’t break it though. Though it’s not valuable, it’s still my inheritance. This is the only thing to remember the family by after the death of my parents.”

“Don’t worry, I won’t break it!” Wang Ming was overjoyed to receive Li Hao’s permission. This really had been very easy! Although he couldn’t lay claim to it, it was still good to take a look since the Night Watchers needed more information about these weapons and the people behind the scene.

He reached for the sword without further ado. Shock blossomed on Wang Ming’s face when he closed his hand around the silver sword. It really was a supernatural object!

While there was so little mysterious power that it was almost undetectable through clothing, he could clearly sense something different about it when he held it in his hand. The mysterious power in his body suddenly shifted with activity!

What a treasure! Greed dawned in Wang Ming’s eyes. Any supernatural would covet it if they saw or felt it. Modern times were so close to the origin of the supernatural world that not all supernaturals had a treasure to their name. That applied to even the Night Watchers and a portion of Sunflares.

Being only Darkmoon, it was even harder for Wang Ming to come across one on his own. However, he quickly tamped down his greed. This item wouldn’t be so easy to claim. He perceived a faint aura of slaughter as he held it—there was much more here than met the eye. It was also more mysterious than previous supernatural objects that he’d come across.

It seems to be under a seal! That was what his senses vaguely told him. No wonder the weapons of the eight families had gone unnoticed before. It wasn't until the rise of the supernatural that they saw the light again and gradually displayed their special characteristics when their seals were undone. That was when others grew aware of them and discovered their secrets.

This explains why the enemy hasn't just robbed the sword. There's probably a process necessary to unseal it! Sharp-witted as he was, Wang Ming quickly came to a few key conclusions. He looked at Li Hao's back with some pity—the guy was very likely the descendant of an ancient supernatural. What a shame!

The changing of the times had turned their ancestor's treasure into lethal poison. According to Night Watcher investigations, Li Hao might be the only surviving direct heir of the eight families—the caveat being that he really was the heir to the sword of the Lis.

The organization hadn't been certain before, but Wang Ming was one hundred percent certain now. He held the sword in his hand!

“Brother Hao, this is a nice looking sword!” Wang Ming praised with interest. “Do you want to sell it?”

“Nope!” Li Hao immediately refused. “Don't even think about it, it's a family heirloom. If I sell it, my old man will crawl out of the ground and beat the shit out of me! Besides, I've had it appraised before. It's not worth much since it's made of metal.”

“Now now, each to their own. I'm definitely interested if Brother Hao wants to sell it. I can't make any big promises, but I can pay one to two hundred thousand for it!”

“That much?” Li Hao jerked with surprise. “One to two hundred thousand?”

Wang Ming sighed inwardly when he registered the bike slowing down. What everyone made of the world was indeed very different. One to two hundred thousand? If this was a Sunflare supernatural object, those supernaturals would pay one hundred times the price. What was ten million star coins?

There were nearly one hundred million people in Silver Moon and only how many Sunflares. Each of them yearned for strength, so they wouldn't bat an eye at spending that sum. Of course, he couldn't quote an overly high price as that would lead to suspicion instead of temptation.

"That's right, we can discuss anything in this range. If you sell the sword, Brother Hao, you might be able to move to a new place."

Li Hao bobbed his head and made some quick calculations. "Don't be messing with me now. Houses in the neighborhoods around the Inspectorate go for three thousand. If I really do sell it for two hundred thousand, I can move to a new building with two bedrooms!"

"You got it!" Wang Ming felt the sword was in the bag. "I don't have that much money on me right now. I'll go home on my next vacation and ask my family for it. Brother Hao can tell me more about it later."

I can't take it right now, Li Hao needs to be its catalyst. We can talk about this transaction if he survives and still has the sword.

As for taking it by force... the Night Watchers wouldn't stoop to those levels. They didn't need to, normally speaking.

It suddenly felt that Wang Ming had completed half of his mission in one fell swoop. He'd confirmed Li Hao's identity, confirmed that the sword of the Lis existed, taken a look for himself and touched it, and confirmed that it was a supernatural object. There could be no doubt about it, the next target was Li Hao!

They arrived at the restaurant while they chatted. Wang Ming alighted to grab their private booth and place orders while Li Hao went to park his bike.

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By the street.

Li Hao parked his bike and took out his communicator to dial a number.

“Speak!” Liu Long was as aloof as ever.

Li Hao lowered his voice with a mix of trepidation and unease. “Chief, are our communications at risk of being monitored?”

“No!” Liu Long replied curtly, already sensing that something was amiss. “Where are you?”

“A restaurant called the Jade River!”

“What happened?”

“Chief, I seemed to be tailed by a supernatural!” Li Hao was so nervous that his voice was nearly inaudible. “Not tailed, but followed right next to me! We have a rookie in Classified Affairs called Wang Ming. I gave him a ride to dinner and uh, I have an old family heirloom that I keep on me. He insisted on taking a look at it and I thought nothing more of it since he’s mundane. But when he touched my heirloom, I sensed a burst of mysterious power!”