

Star Gate 48

Chapter 48: Stone Blade, Demon Hunters (I)

Openlight.

Building 6.

A simple dog den was located under the building stairs on the first floor. Far from clean, it exuded a faintly pungent smell. This was Panther's home.

Li Hao's home was Li Hao's. He didn't let the little black dog inside when he was at work. Not to mention, staying indoors might not be to Panther's liking. No one had time to walk the dog, the dog walked itself.

It was only these two days that Li Hao permitted Panth to stay inside, to see if it could detect the scarlet shadow. The den was lined with old tattered clothing and straw dragged in from who knew where. Li Hao's contribution was an unused sofa cushion for a bed.

No one looked after the dog during the day, to say nothing of where it lived.

Li Hao spared a swift glance for the dog den after parking his bike and quickly made his way upstairs. Leftovers swung from his hand. There'd been no time to cook over the past two days and they were out of expired dog food. Panth had gone hungry today.

Thankfully, there were enough leftovers from dinner for him to take home. Being so well off, Wang Ming had ordered a delicious variety of dishes. The little black dog was in for a treat tonight!

Upstairs.

His second floor neighbors had their front door open; there was only one occupied unit on the floor. Both had been occupied back in the day, but one family had moved away.

“You’re home, Little Hao!” greeted an auntie when she saw the young man.

“That’s right, Auntie Zhang, I’m off work.” Li Hao nodded. The woman called out awkwardly when he turned to continue up the stairs.

“Little Hao, I don’t mean to lecture you, but you should stop keeping that stray around. This house is all that’s left of your mom and dad and it’s full of mementos. The dog kicks up quite a racket when you’re not home—I suspect it’s ripped up half the house!”

Kicks up quite a racket? Li Hao blinked. Panth was a good dog! Ripped up half the house? No... way?

The dog understood human speech now and Li Hao had reminded it to not make a mess.

“You’ll know when you go home.” The auntie shook her head helplessly. “Another thing, Little Hao, are you under a lot of pressure lately?”

“.....”

Where am I supposed to begin?

“I’m fine, Auntie Zhang. Please say whatever you want to say.”

“Ahem, there’s been significant disturbances coming from above whenever you get off work lately. Little Hao, your previous training only lasted for a few minutes. These days... tell me the truth, are you... are you seeing someone?”

This neighbor couldn't resist some good gossip and brightened. "If you are, bring her by to show us! Just don't... don't go for those dubious sorts of women!"

"There's no sight of you during the day and all that noise at night... This is not what a decent, respectable young man should be like!" The auntie pounded her chest with anguish as a massively sordid scene played out in her mind. There was no other possible explanation—Li Hao's nightly disruptions were the result of unsavory women from outside!

It made sense, he was young! Blood ran hot through his veins and he didn't have a girlfriend. It was natural that his thoughts turned in that direction.

Li Hao's jaw dropped. "Auntie... you're mistaken," he responded awkwardly after a long pause. "I'm just going through a training routine! Next time I'll remember that soundproofing is bad in an old building like ours."

"Don't worry, I understand!" Auntie Zhang responded meaningfully. Don't you worry, kid, I won't tell a soul.

Utter resignation seized Li Hao when he read his neighbor's expression. Great, everyone would learn tomorrow that he brought home random women everyday and stayed up all night with them. There was no way he could explain himself—no one would believe him if he did!

Therefore, he didn't bother extricating himself from the mess. He headed upstairs and almost tumbled back down when he reached the next floor.

"Little Hao, it's fine if you're really bringing women home. Just don't... just don't have any thoughts about your dog!"

The young man nearly lost his footing. This was how a Slayer of Tens martial master was defeated!

“Nothing happened in your house when the dog lived under the stairs,” the auntie continued in pained tones. “But the disturbances go deep into the night in the two days that you’ve brought it home. So don’t misunderstand, it’s not your auntie thinking too much. Just consider your actions some more, this really isn’t a good thing!”

She couldn’t be blamed for her train of thought. Upstairs was as quiet as a mouse when the little black dog lived outside. Thumps and bangs abounded when it was an indoor dog. How was it possible for anyone to be oblivious of the truth?

“.....” Li Hao nearly fled upstairs. “I’ll take Panther downstairs immediately. Auntie Zhang, this really is a misunderstanding!”

You can wrongly accuse me of bringing women home, but you can’t say that I’m doing anything with my dog!

“Mmhmm, good, good!” Auntie Zhang didn’t care about anything other than kicking the dog out. The lad was young and should not proceed down the wrong path.

.....

Open door.

Enter house.

Close door!

Li Hao breathed out explosively and locked eyes with Panth.

“Did you hear that?” Auntie Zhang’s ferocity in a fight scared even him.

“Arf arf arf!”

“Shut it and go downstairs to your den.”

“Arf!! Arf!” Panther was reluctant as the dog den smelled. Do you think it’s worthy of my current coat of fur? Just look at how gleaming and glistening it is! The den’s smelly and might get my fur dirty!

“Get down there!” Li Hao raised a brow and cocked his elbow like he was throwing a rock. Panther immediately understood.

The rock! Precious rock! Got it. If you’re going down there to look for the rock, then this dog is going too.

It opened the front door without further word—that’s right, the little black dog had learned how to open doors.

One human and one dog swiftly descended the stairs. The door on the second floor was closed, but Auntie Zhang nodded to herself when she heard the commotion. Good, good, the lad was returning to the light and retracing his steps from the wrong path!

.....

Ground floor.

Bystanders walked through the neighborhood as the night was young. Li Hao didn’t mind them since the scarlet shadow typically didn’t appear when there were a lot of people.

“Have some food, Panth. Where’s your bowl gone to?” Li Hao darted into the dog den and felt around, casually sweeping a rock into his sleeve. He tossed the leftovers to the little black dog and muttered, “Keep an eye out. It’s fine if people visit, but bark a few times if that thing shows up!”

“Arf arf!” Panth nodded with fear in its eyes. It was also afraid of that thing, but it could handle a few barks.

With that, Li Hao returned upstairs. He’d left the stone blade in the den over the past two days to avoid raising attention. With his earlier maneuvers, no one could be certain that he’d taken the blade. Even Liu Long couldn’t be certain, despite seeing the incongruence in the kitchen.

Li Hao shut his door tight when he returned home with the stone blade.

.....

The stone blade was filthy after spending some time in the dog den and numerous years in the kitchen. Li Hao considered it with disdain and washed it repeatedly.

On the couch.

The young man studied the stone blade, debating whether to dunk it in water or attempt a direct absorption. The Breathing Method of the Five Styles should work, right? Was it possible that it worked for the jade sword and not stone blade?

The lineage weapons that his teacher spoke of mattered only if he wanted to unseal the weapon. Li Hao didn’t need a fully released stone blade, he just wanted to absorb cosmic power.

“I don’t think my bloodline comes into play for just absorbing energy... Panth and teacher wouldn’t have been able to absorb anything in that case.” Such was Li Hao’s conjecture, but he wasn’t certain of this theory.

Another point that gave him pause was whether the energy from the stone blade was the same as the jade sword. Or was it similar to what Liu Long gave him? His teacher had been very clear that the jade sword was very special and precious.

“I’ll know if I try!” It was pointless to keep spinning his wheels. All he worried was that the scarlet shadow might appear when he was absorbing energy. That would be an extremely tricky situation!

“Little Yuan, I’m going to borrow your family’s blade now. Please don’t mind, I’ll use it to get revenge for you!” Li Hao chuckled. It’s been one year. I’ll slaughter that shadow and sacrifice it to you on your death anniversary!

He swiftly operated the Breathing Method of the Five Styles, adjusted his breathing, and turned himself up to the sky. The stone blade rested on his chest—he would soon know if it contained cosmic power.

A peculiar energy surged out of the stone blade. The Breathing Method of the Five Styles was truly the most premier method of the supernatural domain! Liu Long’s Energy Induction Method was ineffective on both the jade sword and stone blade. Thank goodness his teacher had taught him another. Otherwise, Li Hao would have to immerse the weapon in water like before to diffuse a tiny bit for use.

Most supernaturals would also find it difficult to absorb the special energy within these weapons. Only if they stumbled upon the water-steeping method by accident could they utilize a tiny bit of the reserves.

Cosmic power glittered!

It looked the same as what was contained within the jade sword. Li Hao saw the sword when he opened his eyes.

So it’s the same as Stellaris...

The thought just flashed through his mind when he spat out a mouthful of blood. A powerful surge of violent power scrambled his body! The young man's expression changed drastically—mysterious power!

This wasn't cosmic power, it was mysterious power, and something much more aggressive than that! Agonizing pain assailed Li Hao; it felt like knives slicing into his flesh. The energy contained within the stone blade was too belligerent! It rampaged through him like multiple great blades!

This time, Li Hao experienced what Liu Long spoke of—the bursting of blood vessels due to sheer violence of mysterious power. What he felt now was more than three times the impact of the energy he'd absorbed during the day!

“AHH!” Li Hao growled, veins popping out all over his body and some blood vessels already bursting. He quickly changed his posture and abandoned the breathing method. Too much blade energy had entered his body in the blink of an eye and slammed through him.

Pain!

Incredible pain!

He'd also postulated that the stone blade might contain mysterious power instead, but that wouldn't be an issue since he'd already absorbed two cubes without any problem. He was also much stronger than his former self during the day since he was Slayer of Tens now.

Thus, the risk was acceptable and manageable. And now Li Hao knew how very wrong he was.

“AHH!” he growled again as colossal force crashed into him. The unmanageable power was ripping through even his skin. He had absolutely no way of controlling this energy, to say nothing of absorbing it.

“I’m doomed...” He remembered something just as it looked like the end was nigh and hastily grabbed the jade sword lying next to him. He clutched it for dear life and furiously operated the Breathing Method of the Five Styles. I wonder if cosmic power can repair the damage caused by this energy and neutralize it. If not, I’m gonna die! It’s too strong!

“Pfft!” Blood sprayed everywhere as another blood vessel burst. This was miles apart from the scene during the day. “I was too brash!”

Instead of panicking at his blood vessels bursting, Li Hao felt only surprise and self-recrimination. Everything had gone smoothly over the past two days. Although the scarlet shadow occasionally loomed, he relaxed his guard after his teacher ascended to Dominator of Thousands. That prompted a direct trial of the stone blade without further consideration!

He knew full well that energies might differ between varying weapons, but he’d dismissed the concern and felt that he could endure it. The reality was, he couldn’t!

“I’m just an ordinary person who broke through to Slayer of Tens thanks to teacher’s guidance. If it was up to just me, I might not break through for another three years if I didn’t absorb the jade sword’s energy!

“Li Hao, did you forget that you’re mundane?? You need to be extremely, extremely careful. Have you forgotten the horror of the scarlet shadow and how the supernatural domain is much more terrifying than you think?!”