

## Star Gate 49

### Chapter 49: Stone Blade, Demon Hunters (II)

Self-reflection was in order! Li Hao swiftly absorbed power from Stellaris, hoping to recover from his wounds and corral the stone blade's energy. He'd truly been too careless this time!

"Come!" Li Hao grit his teeth and fully operated the Breathing Method of the Five Styles on the jade sword. A warm and gentle current swirled into being, sweeping through his entire body—hurtling power from the stone blade abruptly quieted down like it'd seen its elder brother. Cosmic power began repairing fractured and burst blood vessels while his shifted organs found their proper places. Li Hao heaved a sigh of relief as his wounds started to close.

He'd almost been the death of himself. It took only one blunder to cause an irrevocable mistake amid carefully laid plans. He'd grossly overestimated himself!

Moments later, the young man started up the Five Styles. He focused on the bear style this time instead of the ape style. The bear style centered on strength and physique enhancement as opposed to agility. The stone blade's energy was well suited for offensive deployment as its momentum was fierce, which actually made the tiger style more apt for it. However, that style would cause such a great disturbance that the auntie downstairs would be inspired by new rumors.

The bear style centered around stability and supplemented with offense. It looked naive and somewhat silly, but even tigers had to cower docilely when a bear palm struck!

Li Hao's movements remained measured as he ran through the bear style; each step and hand strike used every iota of strength in his body. Vast sums of blade and sword energy traversed through him, particularly his four limbs.

A lock... no, multiple locks in his body manifested to his eyes. They were wrapped tightly around him—supernatural locks!

Opening the supernatural locks enabled one to cross over to the otherworldly domain. He'd felt them when he absorbed energy from Stellaris, and now he sensed them again. These locks and

chains constricted him and prevented mysterious energy from entering core areas such as his brain and heart. It meant he was unable to metamorphose and could only enhance his physical body.

Boom!

The floor shook when Li Hao gently stomped his foot!

He'd grown stronger, and by a lot! It overwhelmed his capabilities for a second and he couldn't control himself despite the tiny movement. He'd improved too much today. First it was mysterious energy from the Demon Hunters, then it was his teacher forcefully helping him ascend, now he was absorbing energy from both stone blade and jade sword.

His strength reached several times greater than yesterday's within the span of a single day. It was inevitable that he lost control!

"What are you doing now, Little Hao?!" Auntie Zhang shrieked. "The dog's out of the house, why are you doing this again?!"

This has nothing to do with the dog! Li Hao thought resignedly.

"Auntie Zhang, the fridge fell over! I'm fixing it!" he called out. The young man wiped off his forehead when downstairs fell silent, coming back with a hand full of blood. He'd lost a lot of blood when his blood vessels burst.

Li Hao didn't care, instead focusing on decreasing the force behind his movements. He'd liked living here before as the old house held a lot of memories. But now as he ran through his training routine, a new thought distracted him.

If I make it through this.... I should get some money and move to a bigger place. It'll be best if it's a single family home with enough space to train in. Teacher's place is nice, he has his own house and yard and can do whatever he wants.

That was all talk for another day. Everything was off the table if he died to the scarlet shadow!

Humm! Punch, punch punch!

The young man refrained from stomping his foot to decrease the amount of disturbance he made. His bones quivered, singing with a low sound every time he moved. Bones and meridians resonated in unison!

Thankfully, this could be controlled. Otherwise, a martial master's ringing blows would easily be deciphered in combat and countered. Li Hao yet struggled to control his newfound strength; the sudden increase was as if a child stumbling around after picking up a mallet. It took him half an hour and ten rounds of the bear style before he finally stopped.

"Absorbing only a little bit took half an hour to digest... This energy feels stronger than what came from the two cubes." Li Hao regarded the stone blade and jade sword with a shifting gaze. "This... also seems to be mysterious power meant for offense! It's different from what I took this morning though, it feels higher quality."

He decided against absorbing more. A conversion process was required with any amount of energy, so he wouldn't improve any further over the next couple of days. It would be good enough to proceed a little further within the Slayer of Tens realm.

Improving too much overnight might also draw suspicion from others. He needed to slowly digest his gains!

"I can't... but didn't teacher say that he needs vast sums of mysterious power to cross over? Is he talking about highly combative energy like what the stone blade contains?" Li Hao sank into deep thought.

The professor knew about the jade sword and had likely guessed about the stone blade, despite Li Hao not saying anything. Breathing out heavily, the young man decided to explain that it was possible the scarlet shadow's faction was much stronger than imagined.

It was probable that they'd taken the other family weapons. Once they discovered the secrets within, they might grow greater than Sunflare even if this kind of energy wasn't found in all of the weapons!

"If teacher is able to cross over, he might bypass Sunflare and stand among the five that he speaks of!" Li Hao took a deep breath. He might've saved all of this for himself in ordinary times. Humans were selfish creatures after all—there was a certain kind of amusement in gradually growing stronger.

That was not an option for him at current.

"I hope the reserves here are enough for teacher to advance... Only when he succeeds do I have a chance at a future!" Li Hao smiled as he triumphed over the greed in his heart.

All humans possessed selfish desires. No one was born a saint. Those who could see through themselves and look past the fog of personal benefit were the ones who succeeded.

His teacher once said that he was also self-serving. Li Hao even felt his teacher's greed rise when he absorbed cosmic power, but he'd emerged victorious over himself. This set a prime example for the young man!

"Teacher becoming stronger is the same as me growing stronger. It means that I have much more guarantee!" Li Hao stopped drawing upon the stone blade when his thoughts traveled here. It was a waste to absorb the energy like this. He should bring Panth back and absorb a tiny bit more, letting energy seep out for the dog's enjoyment.

The little black dog was plump and healthy thanks to cosmic power. It was time to add a little happiness to its comfort! That might also grant immense offensive capabilities and turn Panther into one of his trump cards.

Li Hao grinned with pure delight. Don't you drool over my sword everyday, doggy? See if you dare stare at Stellaris anymore after a good time today!

.....

Li Hao washed the blood from his face and body before heading downstairs. He dragged a full Panther upstairs, taking pains to make as little noise as possible. If Auntie Zhang saw him again, she'd suspect him of more unsavory acts with the dog.

Panther quietly acquiesced to its fate.

Inside the house.

"Hey Panther, I'm going to give you some different energy today," Li Hao murmured with a warm smile. "It's a bit painful, but you'll be a real panther after absorbing it. You'll beat the crap out of them at the very least!"

Anticipation dawned in the little black dog's eyes.

"Do you want it?" Li Hao decided to give a warning after some thought. "It's really painful, I just had some."

Haughtiness filtered into the dog's eyes. If you can absorb it, I can absorb it. Pain? What's that? I don't know that! Just look at the muscles I've got! I made a big dog cry with one smack earlier, I got what it takes!

"Are you sure you want the energy?"

Panther fidgeted with impatience. Li Hao was too much talk tonight!

“Alright then!” The young man said nothing further. I warned you, so enjoy!

He briefly operated the Breathing Method of the Five Styles and absorbed a little from the stone blade—not too much, just roughly one or two cubes worth. This energy could be sold for money! Damn he was good to his dog.

Clenching his jaw against the pain, he absorbed a touch of cosmic power and neutralized the body, letting half of the stone blade’s energy leak out of him.

Panther was on its back with its limbs splayed upward. The little black dog knew the breathing method as well, which funneled massive amounts of energy into it.

“AOOOUU!!” A ghastly shriek ripped through the air like a wolf’s howl!

Auntie Zhang on the second floor sighed, looked at the ceiling, then at her partner sitting across from her.

“There is no hope for the lad, he’s playing with the dog again! His parents would die of anger if they were still alive!”

To think that she would live to see this day! Why did she see this day! Li Hao had fallen by the wayside! Of course he’d sunk low as soon as he withdrew from school! Did this happen to all good students when they entered the Inspectorate?

It’s terrifying! My grandson better not join the Inspectorate when he grows up!

.....

Li Hao didn't have the capacity to consider his neighbors' opinions. He gripped the dog's mouth and cursed, "What are you crying for?! That thing will eat you if you lure it here! I told you multiple times that it hurts. You're the one who wanted to absorb the energy!"

"Aooo.... ouu...." Tears flooded out of Panther's eyes. It hurts so much! You're an awful human being Li Hao! You're worse than a dog! I wouldn't have absorbed it no matter what if you told me it hurts this much!

"Digest it well, this energy can't be had for a thousand pieces of gold! You'll be amazing afterward and kill that thing with one bite!" Li Hao admonished and focused on his own training.

The ape style!

What little he'd absorbed should not be wasted.

The little black dog writhed with agony and sorrow, but there was nothing to be done. It waved its limbs and tail upon seeing Li Hao jump and leap through the living room. Though Panther wanted to learn the ape style, the method wasn't a good fit. Its agility wasn't up to par, so it could only instinctively practice a doggy style—Dog Dig!

One human and one dog began digesting the blade energy, restoring quiet to the apartment.

.....

Outside the apartment in the building across the way.

Liu Long stared silently at tightly drawn curtains; the other Demon Hunters were also present.

"Chief, how about you head over and sleep with Li Hao..." Liu Yan tittered with amusement.

Liu Long swept her with a withering glare, instantly reducing her to silence. The woman's smile slowly disappeared as well.

"We might lose this time!" Liu Long said coldly. "But the gains will be plentiful if we win. Some of us may die, but those who live truly have a hope of crossing over!"

The group quieted down.

"I can vaguely sense a current of mysterious power in the surroundings," Liu Long breathed out. "It's very faint, but it's present even though it knows we're here. That means the enemy is assured of success and only waiting for the right timing!"

The killer behind the self-immolation cases should know about the Demon Hunters and how the team was hunting them. But they continued to follow Li Hao in close quarters. Liu Long could tell that they were up against a tough foe!

"Chief, we've put our lives on the line all five times!" sneered the skinny Wu Chao. "We're the only ones left after those missions. I don't want to live, I want to ascend! But if I die, then that's my fate! Just give the word, chief, how do we do it?"