

Star Gate 50

Chapter 50: Feeling Things Out (I)

The others didn't say a word.

"Have Li Hao head for the outskirts once the rains arrive," Liu Long took a deep breath. "We'll make the large warehouse the final battle site! They think they're invincible and have nothing to fear because they're supernatural, but we'll show them the Demon Hunters are not to be trifled with!"

The deputy chief abruptly clenched his fists when he looked at the others.

"We are upholders of justice, eliminators of evil, and protectors of dao!" he rumbled. The rest of the team, even Yun Yao, repeated the incredibly flamboyant declaration with likewise tightened fists.

"We are upholders of justice, eliminators of evil, and protectors of dao!"

A sacred light shone upon them! The Demon Hunters exterminated evil and safeguarded dao!

.....

The oath that the Demon Hunters made in the neighboring building was both hallowed and ludicrous. Li Hao was aware of none of it; he'd probably laugh if he knew.

Upholders of justice... That was just wishful thinking on Liu Long's part, a type of self-brainwashing. Did they really picture themselves as defenders of Silver City?

When Li Hao made this oath, all he wanted was to claim the moral high ground.

.....

Inside the room.

Li Hao and Panther completed their routines. Human and dog panted on the ground, completely exhausted. Li Hao sagged against the couch whereas Panth sprawled on the floor. The little black dog couldn't even lift its head as it sulked over the injustice of being tricked.

After resting for a while, the young man forced his sore and aching body to rise and tidy the room. It smelled foul; the pungent scent of blood tinged the air. Sweat intermixed with blood and the odor of dog made the apartment air quality unbearable.

He also needed to quickly clean up before the scarlet shadow appeared and saw something.

The surroundings were much better after a while. Li Hao plopped down on the couch and stared blankly at the three treasures. There were two swords and one stone blade in front of him—all supernatural objects.

Who deserved to die if not him, a mundane with three extraordinary treasures? An innocent's only crime was their wealth!

"Teacher... Liu Long..." Li Hao mumbled. His teacher was a good man—at the very least good to him. Of this, he was well aware of. As for Liu Long... Well, the deputy chief was a decent sort too. If he refrained from taking Li Hao's stone and blade in the matters to come, it would demonstrate that he really did have a foot in the camp of justice.

Liu Long was aware that Li Hao possessed one of the family treasures. He might not know how powerful it was, but he knew that the young man owned one and that even the blade might be on him. Apart from Yuan Shuo and Li Hao, Liu Long might be the only other who knew that the blade of the Zhangs was on Li Hao. The scarlet shadow faction might be in the dark.

And yet, Liu Long never mentioned any of it. All he was focused on was killing the supernatural, stripping them of mysterious power, and crossing over to the other side.

One had to know that to the deputy chief, even the most mediocre supernatural object was still a treasure. He might not have a use for it, but he could easily trade it for mysterious power. If Liu Long was fixated on becoming supernatural and willing to sink into the depths of depravity, he could trade Li Hao and the weapons to the scarlet shadow in a heartbeat.

Clarity suffused Li Hao's thoughts.

"Teacher might not be at liberty to easily show himself. He'll have his own set of troubles and aspirations once he becomes supernatural.

"Liu Long... What does his path look like after we take care of the scarlet shadow?" Various thoughts bubbled in his mind. Perhaps he should help Liu Long cross over if there was a chance to.

Li Hao put on his inspector uniform as he pondered. Panther raised its head with confusion. What was the human doing, putting on clothes in the middle of the night?

"Come out with me!"

"Arf!" Confusion shifted to skepticism. What for?

"We're making a trip to the Institute. The usual goes for you, stand guard."

"Arf arf arf..." Panther responded lowly in obvious reluctance.

"Are you afraid of that thing?" Li Hao chuckled. "What for? Don't be afraid! It's best if it appears actually, I hope it does! The more times it shows up, the less I'm afraid of it and the more I know about it!"

He did hope that the shadow would appear. More of its shroud of mystery faded away each time it manifested. It was no longer an existence that he couldn't cope with!

Although he could only hope that his teacher and the others could resolve the situation, he couldn't always rely on outsiders to straighten out his issues. They might not see the last of the scarlet shadow with just one mission either—such was his intuition!

“Arf arf!” Panther had no other choice since it wanted to continue staying by Li Hao's side.

.....

Moments later, one human and one dog set out in the night.

To the Veteris Institute!

.....

In the building across the way.

On surveillance duty, Wu Chao's expression suddenly shifted drastically. “Chief!”

The others in the room looked at him.

“Li Hao's gone outside!”

Liu Long was taken aback. What was Li Hao doing outside in the middle of the night? Didn't he know he was in grave danger? The hell!

“After him!” Liu Long grunted, spurring the Demon Hunters into a flurry of action. Though it wasn’t a rainy night, it was still very dangerous for the boy to be out alone. Supernaturals loved mobilizing at night. They were a rare sight in the daytime because they wished to avoid too much contact with mundanes.

The supernatural and mortal worlds had drawn clear boundaries with each other. And with the Night Watchers on the scene, disrupting the mundane world would result in certain retribution.

.....

At the same time in a shadowy corner of Openlight.

A ghostly face suddenly materialized beneath a massive tree. A man in a ghost mask stood with a scarlet shadow next to him! Vivid blue eyes looked out of the mask and peered into the distance with some bafflement.

Li Hao had left his house late at night.

“He can’t leave Silver City before the rainy season arrives!” A reminder of the request and command from above floated into Ghostface’s mind.

Ghostface wasn’t here to kill anyone or target Li Hao. His only mission was to prevent the young man from leaving the city. That one needed to stay in Silver City!

Is this a trap? Ghostface knew that the so-called Demon Hunters kept Li Hao under constant surveillance, but he didn’t care.

The Demon Hunters?

The supernatural and mundane were already two different worlds. Their leader—Liu Long—held some acclaim as a Sunderer of Hundreds. However, martial dao was obsolete. Even the once domineering Yuan Shuo was nothing more than an errand boy now. He worked for the Night Watchers in exchange for their protection.

The era of martial masters was no more!

“Let’s take a look!” Ghostface vanished in the darkness, leaving the scarlet shadow behind. It drifted in the air before openly chasing after Li Hao. Concealing its traces wasn’t a concern; Ghostface wasn’t worried about discovery.

He wouldn’t care if the shadow faced a Sunderer because these mortals were completely ignorant that the supernatural was truly larger than life!

.....

Night time.

Li Hao headed toward the Veteris Institute with a dog padding next to him. Just a few kilometers away, they would reach their destination in half an hour. He carried the three treasures on him—the young man was very bold when he needed to be.

Since the scarlet shadow wouldn’t kill him now, he actually wished it would come. If it did, it was a chance to better understand the shadow and see if the Demon Hunters could see it. The team certainly had someone on him. Could martial masters see the entity? Li Hao wasn’t sure.

There didn’t seem to be mysterious power exuding from the shadow. Liu Long had mentioned that martial masters discovered the supernatural through extremely weak pulses of energy. Would Liu Long be able to see it without that energy?

Being blind to it was the most dangerous of all. And if Liu Long couldn't see it, what about Yuan Shuo? It would be a very sticky situation if the professor couldn't see it either. While Li Hao could see it, that might not do any good. The crux of the situation was whether or not the others could attack the scarlet shadow.

I hope you appear! Li Hao ardently hoped to see the shadow again; he was ready with an extremely audacious idea. Perhaps he could try and make a move against it. It wasn't going to kill him at this moment, after all!

No one came after him after five minutes.

No one came after him after ten minutes.

After fifteen minutes, Panther suddenly shifted with agitation and bit Li Hao's pant leg. The young man stilled inwardly. It was here!

They really were bold enough to send the shadow! This also indicated some awful truths. The one behind the scenes was either confident that the Demon Hunters couldn't see it, or they were confident that it didn't matter. Liu Long and his team weren't worthy of notice.

One had to keep in mind that Yuan Shuo spoke of Liu Long being able to defeat supernaturals who'd just risen to Darkmoon!

An expressionless Li Hao continued forward. Meanwhile, a terrifying sight reflected in Panther's eyes. A scarlet shadow suddenly materialized in front of the young man. It was the color of blood, and it stood right in front of him!

Li Hao passed right through it like he couldn't see it; the shadow shifted slightly. The young man abruptly fished out a small sword from his clothes. Mysterious power shimmered beneath its surface and the young man frowned, looking around him with a wary expression.

.....

Within the shadows.

Liu Long furrowed his brow and muttered inaudibly, “What’s going on? He senses danger... Do you guys?”

None of those present felt anything out of the ordinary. Not even Liu Long perceived anything—just a vague sense of unease! It wasn’t until Li Hao took out a small sword that faintly glimmered with mysterious power that he realized something was untoward. Had Li Hao discovered something, or had his sword sensed something?

Was that the sword of the Lis? He was too far away to sense anything, but it must be a supernatural object!

.....

At the same time.

Ghostface manifested in the gloom, surprise in his vivid blue eyes. A supernatural object! Was this the treasure that his superiors wanted?

That’s the sword! Has he discovered something?

Ghostface was both mystified and startled. Li Hao couldn’t see the shadow, that he was certain of. The young man didn’t see the shadow last time and he didn’t see it this time. Otherwise, he would react before passing through it. The sword should’ve tipped him off. It was a treasure, alright!

So what if you’ve realized that something’s off? What can you do about it?

Ghostface wasn't too worried. What could the young man do about the shadow right in front of him? There were increasingly fewer numbers of people who could see the shadow—he'd killed quite a few himself. Those still alive cowered in the Night Watcher headquarters. They might not be found in any part of the province.

.....

By the side of the road.

Sword in hand, Li Hao frowned and scanned his surroundings.

"Stop hiding! I know you're there!" he ordered coldly.

Nothing answered.

The young man abruptly waved the short sword around. "You'll have to pay a price if you want to kill me!" he stated grimly. "Do you think no one knows about you just because you've hidden yourself?? I've known about you since a long time ago!"

He postured threateningly, but he was faint of heart!

"My teacher is a Sunderer of Hundreds and a premier martial master. He's about to become a Dominator of Thousands! You'll be offending a Dominator if you touch me, is that worth it?! Let's talk, we don't need to bring life and death into everything!"

His words echoed in the darkness as he waved his sword around, passing through the scarlet shadow multiple times!