

Star Gate 51

Chapter 51: Feeling Things Out (II)

The more Li Hao waved the short sword around, the more the icy grip of fear closed around him. Why??

What was the scarlet shadow?!

He casually swept the sword across the shadow several times, but it passed through without hesitation or damage every single time. Why was this?! Supernatural didn't mean undying! What was this thing??

However, the young man heaved a sigh and retracted his sword. "Come out, chief! No one's following me. Are you there?"

Moments later, a frowning Liu Long dressed in a trench coat padded out of the darkness. He cast a frosty glance in Li Hao's direction—not because of the young man, but because he vaguely sensed something off. The scene rang of wrongness and something really did seem to be close to Li Hao.

He peered around with all of his might, but found absolutely nothing.

There has to be something here! Liu Long strode up to Li Hao.

The scarlet shadow swiftly vanished as he did so. Oh? Does it not want to face Liu Long? Is it wary or think it's an unnecessary waste of effort?

The deputy chief seemed aware and suddenly looked in a certain direction, his eyes full of killing intent. He didn't speak until a long while later, after the scarlet shadow fully disappeared.

"Interesting... what a pity!" Liu Long was coolly threatening.

“A pity?” The reaction surprised Li Hao.

“A pity that I’m not a Dominator of Thousands! This seems to be a type of mental energy. Sunderers wield aura and Dominators wield the consciousness. No wonder it’s so bold! My aura cannot pry into the enemy, which means only a Dominator can use their mind to lock onto them.

“Damn, they’re cocky!”

They had every right to be cocky. Liu Long could sense them, but not identify them. This was an enormous test for him—one very difficult to pass and easily tagging him as a laughingstock.

On the other hand, the look in Li Hao’s eyes changed slightly. Aura, consciousness! His teacher had spoken of these. Dominators possessed consciousness! So that can see the scarlet shadow? Or could Dominators lock onto where the shadow was while remaining blind to it?

This trip had not been taken in vain! The shadow didn’t think much of Liu Long because the captain couldn’t see it, but Li Hao had obtained a vital piece of information. It was a type of mental energy that Dominators could possibly hone in on!

Deep in thought, Liu Long looked at the young man. “Did you come out on purpose to lure out the ones in the shadows for me to observe?”

“Yes!” Li Hao nodded. His primary goal was actually to test whether or not Liu Long could see it and if he himself could touch the shadow. It appeared that neither martial dao nor supernatural abilities could.

However, the stone blade and jade sword could! They stirred with energy that he suppressed. He’d stayed strong against the urge to bring them out.

Liu Long said nothing further. His gaze glittered with light when it shifted to the short sword in Li Hao’s hand.

“We should know the enemy as well as we know ourselves. It was a risky move, but I have a better understanding of the danger facing us now... That it touches upon a mental state indicates we might be in real trouble! We could be facing an existence on par with Dominator of Thousands...”

It wasn't impossible to face a Dominator level opponent—when he could see what he fought. “Go home soon and don't go anywhere else!” Liu Long changed the topic before vanishing on the spot. They might have to change the plan.

Li Hao's nighttime excursion had proven to be beneficial and resulted in more awareness of their enemy. Liu Long was already prepared to fight Dominators and Sunflares—while he was just a Sunderer, this was his homeland. For instance, there were massive quantities of grenades buried in the warehouse on the city's outskirts.

However, a Dominator-level expert that could not be seen was tricky. He needed to make more comprehensive preparations and brainstorm a thorough plan for this challenge.

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The moon's radiance dappled the land.

Li Hao cinched his shirt tight. Liu Long must be thinking of countermeasures if he didn't mention giving up. That was good, it meant the captain wasn't shrinking back in fear.

“Dominator of Thousands... mental energy!” The young man committed the notion to memory and continued forward. The scarlet shadow did not reappear.

He quickly reached the Institute and climbed the wall instead of entering through the main gates. With his newfound nimbleness, he made quick work of the wall around campus and set foot on Institute soil.

The school's security detail was sufficient against ordinary people. It was an easy task for him to avoid them since he was a Slayer of Tens.

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Outside the Yuan residence.

On duty in the shadows, Hu Hao furrowed his brows and looked in a certain direction. A heavily injured Li Meng waited next to him with a pale face. She suddenly looked at Li Hao and regarded the young man with incomprehension and irritation.

"What's he doing here again?" she muttered. He came too often!

"Ignore him!" Hu Hao responded. They'd just come off worse in an exchange at noon, so it was time to stay quiet and let the visitor be.

Li Hao entered his teacher's residence as they conversed. No one stopped him this time.

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The Yuan residence.

All was quiet. Yuan Shuo was not in the yard. He didn't have a habit of moon-bathing late at night. The door to the main house swung open of its own accord in the still night.

Yuan Shuo was in the living room, possibly having just finished training as he needed to consolidate his new cultivation level after breaking through. His hair was white again and wrinkles repopulated his face. He looked the same as before, not the middle-aged man Li Hao had seen earlier.

“Teacher!”

Yuan Shuo nodded at him and frowned at his student. “Is someone after you?”

“Yes.”

Yuan Shuo’s frown deepened and he said ponderously, “I see traces of a consciousness on you... someone’s locked onto you!”

“What?” Li Hao didn’t understand.

“The consciousness awakes at Dominator of Thousands! I wouldn’t be able to discover this before, but now I can tell that there are marks of a consciousness on you. They’re fresh—did you run into the killer just now?”

“I did!” Li Hao nodded. “Captain Liu was with me, but he didn’t see them. He says this might involve the mind!”

“They’re definitely a tough opponent!” Yuan Shuo sighed. “Though I had my guesses, it’s still a headache to actually confirm it.”

“And another thing,” Li Hao mused. “There was no trace of them to be found—Captain Liu couldn’t see or hone in on them. Teacher...”

“Don’t worry!” Yuan Shuo shook his head. “Those of my level don’t look at what’s in front of us—it may not be real! With the consciousness in hand, not even an invisibility art can pull the wool over my eyes unless the opponent is much stronger.”

The young man nodded. It wouldn't be an empty boast if his teacher said so. He wasn't here for that. Li Hao took out the stone blade and placed it on the table. Yuan Shuo looked at him, seeming to comprehend something.

"There's a special mysterious power inside that's fiercer than ordinary power," Li Hao whispered. "It's different from the mild nature of cosmic power and comes with incredible impact!"

"So blade and sword are meant for different purposes?" Yuan Shuo hummed with thought. "The sword of the Lis, blade of the Zhangs—one is gentle and nurturing, the other is keen and shaped for attacking. There's also the fists of the Zhaos, footwork of the Lius, the big turtle kept by the Wangs, mallet of the Hongs, spear of the Zhou, and the trouble that is the Zheng young master..."

"If we go by the words of the folk song, the Zhangs, Lius, Wangs, and Zhengs might not have weapons. It's hard to say though—fists and footwork don't necessarily mean no weapons. The turtle might also represent a shield or something like that."

The professor analyzed the entire situation before diving into the stone blade. "If the other six weapons have been claimed, then the enemy will have absorbed the energy within. The spear and mallet are meant for offense, the turtle for defense, fists and footwork to deploy force..."

"This really is turning out to be a sticky situation. The main thing is that we don't know how much they've absorbed. Is it everything, a small portion, or do the other weapons lack this energy entirely? That would be a reason as to why they don't just rip the sword from your hands and might even want to take you with it.

"If they are wary of the Night Watchers, that indicates they're not much stronger than we think." A headache brewed and he quickly concluded his speculations. "I'll accept the blade, but I'm still not sure I can cross over! The crux of the issue is that I don't know how much time we have left and how much energy is inside. But don't worry, there are ways to take on even a Sunflare if it comes down to it!"

"So long as you think this way, teacher." Li Hao nodded. "Run if real trouble crops up. If you can't beat them, run for your life. You can take me with you, yes? We'll flee to the Night Watcher

headquarters if it comes down to that. They won't idly stand by if they see us on their doorstep, right?"

Yuan Shuo grinned—kid's starting to sound a bit like me. Too bad it's a tough call and too far away to run. Silver City was so small and White Moon City so far removed.

Neither teacher nor disciple could accept backing down now. Not to mention, that would only cause the enemy to commence their plans ahead of time. Yuan Shuo might only need a few days before he could attempt a cross over.

The two didn't mince words and Yuan Shuo outright accepted the stone blade without refusal. There was no need for pleasantries at this critical stage.

Li Hao didn't stay long and quickly left the professor's residence.

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Yuan Shuo tried absorbing some energy as soon as his disciple left. Although the young man left a final word of warning that the process was very painful, the experienced martial master didn't think much of it.

His lips spasmed after he absorbed a bit of blade energy. Fuck, that hurts! This energy was too ferocious!

However, his eyes lit up. This was a marvelous treasure! The heritage weapons of the eight families were indeed premier treasures. How was there so much offensive capability in a sealed blade?

"The more I understand about the eight families, the more mysterious they are!" Yuan Shuo sank into deep thought and considered the excavation at the end of the month. "Does that ruin have something to do with them?"

The two couldn't be more unrelated to each other. One was in Silver City and the other was almost outside the province. It was a tiny area that was the ruins of an ancient civilization. But somehow, the two suddenly seemed related.

"I remember that a turtle is etched on the front doors of the ruins. I didn't think much of it before, but can it have something to do with the Wangs?"

Yuan Shuo rummaged through his thoughts. This was the biggest set of ruins he'd found in recent years and the most intact. They were also the most dangerous—it was where he'd been injured three years ago.

So many had died that the Night Watchers gave up exploring and sealed it away. They were reopening it in conjunction with several other supernatural organizations. Plainly, the Night Watchers were afraid of high casualties again. They had no other choice but to split the gains. There was strength in numbers and losses were better borne on the backs of many if they were incurred in large numbers.

"The eight families... ruins... self-immolation cases..." If the killer knew about the eight families and had either guessed or knew that the ruins were related, would they participate in the field mission to come?

In that case, would more of their strength be concentrated there if they were an organization? That would make Silver City safer.

"Let's put that aside for now!" Yuan Shuo took a deep breath. The most pressing task at hand was to resolve Li Hao's troubles. They could think about the ruins later.