

# STAR GATE

## - Chapter 9: New Book of Five Styles (I)

Was immersion in water the key?

Li Hao had no idea. It wasn't like the sword never touched water since he'd worn Stellaris for many years. He didn't even take it off when showering, but nothing out of the ordinary ever occurred.

He'd shoved it in his mouth numerous times when he was a boy; that was equally ineffective.

Somehow, it seemed to have an effect this time. At least on Panther.

*Within the kitchen.*

Li Hao took out a large bowl for soup and placed Stellaris within. He poured the pot of drinking water into it—was potable water the key?

Of course he didn't shower with drinking water. Had the mysterious attributes of the jade sword not activated before because the water wasn't at a required temperature?

Nothing noteworthy happened either when Panth first licked it. It was only when the little black dog drank the water used to disinfect the sword that its fur swiftly grew sleek.

"If drinking water's not enough, I'll heat it again with the stove. And if *that* still doesn't work... I'll be out of ideas. Is it only dogs that can absorb the mysterious power?"

A glut of emotions warred in Li Hao's heart. Anxiety, excitement, agitation, and worry that everything would be an extreme let down. He really wanted to set foot into the extraordinary! Perhaps he would have a way to handle the scarlet shadow then.

He desperately needed the power for himself. There were people keeping him under watch, the scarlet shadow might arrive at any second, the Night Watchers were possibly looking for anyone who could see the shadow, there was potentially a spy inside the Inspectorate...

The look in Li Hao's eyes grew tenacious as trains of thought charged through his mind. He wouldn't give up this time even if he failed!

The water in the bowl showed no signs of change after a few minutes with Stellaris. A groggy Panther was sprawled on the ground. It raised its head to look at the bowl, too full to drink it despite wanting to. It didn't display the same urgency as before.

"Whew!" Li Hao exhaled heavily and carefully picked the bowl up, walking out of the kitchen.

Double checking that the front door's deadbolt was engaged, he firmly pulled the curtains closed. He had to ensure that either no one outside saw him or that there would be ample forewarning if someone tried to break in.

Preparations duly made, he returned to the couch and sat down. The jade sword was present in the bowl and seemed more translucent and radiant than before.

Of course, it was equally likely that he was seeing things.

"If the Li family sword could be passed down through the folk song for so many years... that must mean there's something special about it, right?" Li Hao brought the bowl up to eye level, clenched his jaw, and placed his gun next to him for easy access. He carefully took a small sip, the smallest of sips. The water was a bit too hot, but he didn't mind.

He didn't feel anything at first upon swallowing, just that the water was hot. But gradually, he seemed to detect something different—a warm current wafted through his stomach. It quickly faded away.

Li Hao's eyes widened and a keen light sparkled in them. Did something work just now? Was it another delusion?

What if it was a phantom sensation or he'd started pulling things out of thin air? Had that warm current been real?

"All I need to know is that I won't die from it!" Plucking up his courage, Li Hao swallowed a bigger mouthful. The sensation was more pronounced this time, there really was a warm current flowing through his stomach!

He jerked his head down and saw something like starlight sparkling around his stomach.

"Mysterious power?" His heart quailed. Was this the mysterious power that hovered around the edges of society? He could see radiance glimmering like starlight after he drank the water!

His expression flickered rapidly as the starlight began to extinguish. It winked out of existence, dispersing around Li Hao and fading away.

The groggy Panther suddenly opened its eyes and crawled in Li Hao's direction. It stuck out its tongue and licked the air, but didn't find anything.

"Hmm?" Li Hao furrowed his brows in quick analysis. "Is the starlight mysterious power? It appears in the stomach first, spills over, and then vanishes. Is that because I can't hold onto the power?"

He knew nothing about these supernatural forces, but did know that everything needed to be defined by a set of rules or skills as he practiced martial arts. Not only did random practice fail to strengthen the body, but it might also accidentally cripple oneself. His teacher had spoken of that once and right now, he was wholly ignorant of what should be done.

The starlight might be the mysterious power that he yearned after, but he was unable to retain it and could only helplessly watch it dissipate.

“Does the power require using a secret art or something like that?” Li Hao looked at the little black dog at his feet. Panther didn’t know any cultivation techniques and neither was it a cultivator. Starlight flowed through the animal, strengthening it even though the power was present for only a short period of time.

Li Hao looked at the water left in the bowl and swiftly came to a few conclusions.

One—the jade sword really did contain some sort of energy that resembled starlight. It required water as a medium for the energy to seep into.

Two—the energy strengthened the body, but could not be retained.

Three—making the mysterious power his might require referencing secret arts or other cultivation systems. It wasn’t something that one gained through simply absorbing or eating the power.

Fourth—was he possibly cultivation trash??

His fourth point was far from wild speculation as Li Hao was contemplating what it took to practice the mysterious power. Were there any requirements, and did he fulfill them?

What if someone else was able to retain the warm current and only he was unable too? That wasn’t outside the realm of possibility!

Mysterious power wouldn’t be, well, so mysterious if everyone in Silver City was qualified to wield it. Vague rumors of the Night Watchers wielding larger than life abilities were the closest thing that most knew of, and that organization didn’t seem particularly large.

Keeping these points in mind, Li Hao mentally assessed his condition. There didn’t seem to be much difference. He wasn’t suddenly overflowing with

strength and neither did his hair turn lustrous or skin become smooth like Panther.

“It feels like I’m sitting in a hot spring. My stomach feels hot, but I don’t sense anything else,” Li Hao murmured with an abrupt fall in mood. How come his changes were less than a dog’s?

Panther’s fur had noticeably become brighter after drinking the water, but he didn’t feel anything different.

“Am I less than Panth?” the young man chuckled ruefully. Or perhaps the sword’s first “brew” was more effective? Who knew, maybe he really was less talented than the little black dog.

That would suck so much!

“This won’t do, I feel like I’m wasting the starry energy. It disappears quickly after it seeps out of my body.” Li Hao frowned at the remaining water in the bowl; he didn’t dare drink anymore. He was wasting it!

Water stored the energy and it entered the stomach after consumption, but vanished as soon as it filtered through the stomach.

“Can Stellaris be immersed in water all the time, or is this kind of usage limited?” Too many unknown variables prevented Li Hao from easily taking another sip. “I lack a way of retaining the starlight. Maybe some changes will finally occur if I can absorb all of it into my body...

“Wait!” He suddenly thought of something else. “The key thing is that I lack any kind of foundation. That’s why not much of the energy is absorbed and why it vanishes so quickly. Maybe it’s because there’s no foundation for the mysterious power to take root in in my body...”

This was all speculation as he knew too little about any of this.

“I don’t want to waste it and don’t know how long the water will preserve the energy...” He stood up when a new idea came to him. Perhaps he could give the “New Book of Five Styles” a try. [1]

It was a rudimentary martial method that promoted good health and fitness, one that his teacher created out of some ancient texts. Yuan Shuo was proof that the method worked as he was still light on his feet and could beat the daylights out of Li Hao, despite being more than seventy years old.

Rather than being a concrete system of moves or techniques, it was a method that tempered one’s muscles and bones to the greatest possible degree. The New Book of Five Styles also had nothing to do with mysterious power.

Li Hao thought of it at this time because he felt some physical training might help him absorb more starlight. As for whether or not it would actually prove effective, that was up to the heavens.

1. There are certain fighting styles modeled after animals in Chinese martial arts. The "Five Animal Play" (五禽戲, Wu Qin Xi) are a set of exercises developed during the Han dynasty. The five animals in the exercises are the tiger, deer, bear, monkey and crane. Each animal has two exercises corresponding to the yin and yang internal organs. Regular practice is said to improve functioning of the liver/gall bladder (wood element – tiger), kidneys/bladder (water element – deer), spleen/stomach (earth element – bear), heart/small intestine (fire element – monkey) and lung/large intestine (metal element – crane) respectively. 📖

etvolare’s Thoughts

So basically... this world’s version of tai chi? The Discovery channel version of tai chi?