

STAR GATE

Chapter 1: Military Inspectorate

Silver City.

The Inspectorate.

Third rank inspector Li Hao stepped into the Inspectorate's administrative area. Falling on the thin side with substantial dark circles under his eyes, the youngster seemed to have stayed up all night.

As a new recruit with only one year under his belt, Li Hao's tenure at the Inspectorate wasn't much to speak of. He usually reported to work a bit early so he could do a quick clean of the common areas, boil some water, and wait for colleagues to arrive.

He was slightly late today, so there were already a few at their desks when he walked in. A middle-aged woman, likewise dressed in a uniform and seated by the door, greeted Li Hao enthusiastically when she saw him.

"Little Hao, you're late today," she teased. "Look at those bags under your eyes! Did you paint the town red last night?"

Li Hao flashed her an innocent smile, the very picture of down-to-earth naiveté.

"Don't say that, big sis Yu!" He waved agitated hands around. "I don't have a girlfriend and I'll never find one if there's rumors like that about me!"

"Hehehe, kiddo. You've been at the Inspectorate for a year, but still can't handle our joking." The middle-aged woman loved ribbing Li Hao, yet there were hints of something different in her gaze. After a round of hearty laughter, she suddenly brought up an old topic. "Little Hao, you don't cook since you

live by yourself, right? Eating out isn't clean or healthy, so come have dinner at my place after work."

"No no, I can't be making trouble for you, big sis," Li Hao declined with another smile.

A brawny, middle-aged man close to them snorted with laughter and interjected, "Little Hao, do you think your big sis is really inviting you over for dinner? She wants you to be her lover boy! Aiyo, read between the lines, kiddo!"

"Hahahahaha!!" Uproarious laughter rang out of the nearby cubicles.

Far from coloring with embarrassment, big sis Yu glared hotly at everyone and blustered, "What? So what?? Little Hao is a fine young man! He has a great personality, great brains, and great looks. I'll laugh in my sleep if he's really my man!"

Laughter redoubled at her words, but many nodded in agreement as well. Li Hao was generally regarded as a promising young man.

The brawny man didn't mind the heated retort. "You're right, Little Hao is not bad at all. It's just a bit of a pity..." he said sadly.

What was a bit of a pity?

Regret appeared on everyone's faces with the turn of conversation, but their object of discussion didn't mind.

"It was my decision to make, big bro Zhou. What's there to feel sad about?" The young man grinned brilliantly.

"Now, we can't really put things that way, Little Hao," Brawny Zhou sighed with pity. "Silver City Inspectorate is a fine place and anyone would be doing well to reach third rank after half a year of full time employment. But, you're here because you withdrew from your studies at the Veteris Institute. [1] If

you'd waited to first graduate from Silver City's most prestigious hall of learning, you'd join the Inspectorate as a first rank inspector. And that would be the lowest possible rank you'd come in at!"

His comments opened the floodgates and the fashionable Chen Na quickly added her opinion.

"That's right, the heck you drop outta school for, Li Hao? None of us are qualified to sit for the institute's entrance examinations, even though we would love to. You would've graduated in two more years, whereas it'll take at least five years of smooth sailing to get from third rank to first. And if we hit some bumps in the road? We'll be lucky to be promoted to first before we retire!"

Envy and regret tinged the voice of the young woman who'd just arrived at work. She envied graduates of the Veteris Institute and felt regret on Li Hao's behalf that he'd been a scant two years from graduation when he suddenly withdrew and joined the Inspectorate.

Even the inspector general had been concerned about their new recruit—he tried to persuade Li Hao to return to school and finish his studies first. If the young man really wanted to join the Inspectorate, he could register for the examinations after he graduated.

Sadly, the young, polite, and typically easy-going Li Hao proved to be incredibly obstinate in this matter. Normally a docile soul, he absolutely refused to go back to the institute.

Chen Na knew that even Li Hao's mentor had tried to convince the young man to reconsider his withdrawal. There was a very promising future ahead of him!

The young man remained wreathed in smiles as he listened to everyone talk about his affairs. He walked over to the corner and boiled some water, busying himself as he responded, "Isn't it nice to start as a third rank

inspector? Besides, if I really waited until graduation, I would lose two years of time with everyone. Wouldn't that be a pity!"

"Hahaha, you're right!" Easy laughter answered his pleasing words.

Li Hao always knew the right thing to say and, having just turned twenty, he was one of the youngest at the Silver City Inspectorate. Highly pedigreed as a top student, his colleagues rather enjoyed listening to his flattery.

Cheerful laughter and discussion filled the administrative cubicles this morning. People dropped the topic of Li Hao withdrawing from school. It was the fact that he didn't mind doing so that they mentioned it in the first place.

After all, failure to graduate from the Veteris Institute was grave enough to be one of the greatest regrets of life.

When it came to what the young man's considerations were and why he'd chosen to do so, well, they weren't at liberty to ask. The group once received an answer that Li Hao wanted to start earning money. Tuition was too high and his expenses too great—his savings had run dry.

But would Veteris students really be short on funds?

Joviality in the administrative area gradually petered out as senior officers began filtering into their offices.

Silver City Inspectorate was the city's law enforcement agency. There were four other branches in the city apart from its headquarters and it was comprised of multiple departments. Li Hao was assigned to the Department of Classified Affairs. His main duties involved archiving files, opening the books for old cases, reviewing cold cases, documenting important proceedings...

The Department of Classified Affairs didn't operate on the front lines and rarely involved itself in the field. But if other departments were shorthanded, Li Hao and others were sent over as temporary backup.

Overall, his position was more of an office job.

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Another busy day at work commenced when the senior officers sat down at their desks.

Li Hao didn't have his own office—a third rank inspector fresh to his post wasn't qualified to have one. Neither did big sis Yu, Brawny Zhou, and the others from earlier, despite being second rank inspectors.

Li Hao's desk was located close to the restrooms. Thankfully, there was no accompanying smell that one might expect with such a spot. It was, however, too bustling and noisy for the likes of the veterans in the administrative area.

The young man's desk pushed up to Chen Na's across from him. Joining half a year earlier than him, she was also considered to be a rookie. It was almost time for a fresh batch of recruits to enter the Inspectorate, which would finally free them from rookie status.

Li Hao was buried deep in some files when a gentle tapping came from his neighbor across the way. He lifted his head to find Chen Na sprawled over her desk.

"Li Hao, there's a field mission coming up," she whispered with a radiant smile. "It's an easy one and we get to spend a month away from the office. Wanna apply for it together? It'll be fun to stretch our legs for a month."

Li Hao blinked and quickly ran through a mental schedule, then shook his head. "Nah, nothing good comes from going outside. It might not be as safe as you say either."

"It'll be very safe!" Chen Na deflated. "It's just to accompany the Veteris Institute..."

She paused, blinked, and looked at Li Hao with new awareness. “Ah... sorry, I almost forgot,” she said apologetically. “You don’t want to see your old classmates and mentor, do you? I hear it’s Professor Yuan Shuo leading the expedition team this time...”

She inwardly cursed at herself for completely forgetting the ramifications of this mission. Hadn’t Yuan Shuo mentored Li Hao when the young man still attended the institute?

Apparently, the professor held high hopes for Li Hao and almost thrashed his student when Li Hao refused to rescind his withdrawal. It’d raised quite a fuss at the Veteris Institute and many students swore at Li Hao for being a fool of an ingrate.

Who was Yuan Shuo?

One of the most distinguished names at the school! There were so many students who wished to learn from him, but failed to find favor in his eyes.

Li Hao smiled and didn’t refute her words. *I don’t want to see them?* Well, not really.

Reality wasn’t anywhere close to the wild rumors. His teacher simply found his decision regretful. It’d only been a few days since Li Hao last paid a visit to Professor Yuan’s and ate dinner together. There was none of this beating up Li Hao as soon as the man saw his former student.

So teacher’s leading the team... Professor Yuan was one of the foremost professors at the Veteris Institute. Security should be tight if he was leading a team. Whether it was the Inspectorate or other agencies, everyone would make the necessary arrangements.

There was nothing for Li Hao to worry about and frankly speaking, the Inspectorate was just there to go through the motions. It wouldn’t be small fry like them in charge of Professor Yuan’s security detail. That would be the

Night Watchers that Li Hao had heard about in hushed tones over the past year.

The Night Watchers were a law enforcement agency much like Silver City Inspectorate, but they handled different cases. Unresolved cases or ones that the Inspectorate didn't know how to handle were transferred to their jurisdiction.

Neither outsiders nor the Inspectorate knew what the Night Watchers did. But since Li Hao was stationed in the Department of Classified Affairs and was primarily in charge of archiving files and tracking mysteries, he possessed a vague understanding.

The Night Watchers!

Li Hao's decision to withdraw from school and become a third rank inspector had much to do with this secretive organization. It could be said that they were the biggest motivation for his actions.

Of course, he would never tell anyone that.

The Night Watchers were so mysterious that he wouldn't have heard about them before joining the Inspectorate. But thanks to his mentor, he knew a thing or two and that such an agency existed. Regular people weren't aware of them at all.

One crucial detail he'd learned before withdrawing from school was that the Silver City Inspectorate was directly subordinate to the Night Watchers. His teacher once mentioned that the most promising talents at the Inspectorate could potentially be transferred to that agency.

It's been a year at the Inspectorate and people seem to think highly of me. I wonder if I'll have a chance to come in contact with the Night Watchers. Li Hao's thoughts flew rapidly with a hint of urgency, but he kept a firm grip on his emotions. His expression remained the same as usual.

It should be soon!

Unrest should be coming to Silver City soon, but the Inspectorate seemed blithely unaware. It looked like it would fall to the Night Watchers to handle it, so all he needed was an opportunity!

1. Veteris: ancient Latin for 'old' 📖

etvolare's Thoughts

Hello and welcome! I'm your translator etvolare and I'm **so excited** to be bringing you Star Gate: Master of Time!

This is a crowd favorite on Qidian as it hit **#1 all site** when it was updating and never fell out of #2. Given how Qidian is well known for their fantastic library, that says quite a bit about this series!

Written by Eagle Eats Chick, this author is well known for writing **gargantuan chapters**. For ease of reading, I've split his chapters into regular web novel lengths of 3000+ characters. Therefore, our chapter numbers will not match the raws. There are 638 Chinese chapters, we will have roughly two thousand. The chapter titles remain the same as in Chinese.

Star Gate is set in a **generic modern Chinese society** with conflicting power systems. The synopsis, as written by me, might give you a taste of what's to come:

Traditional martial cultivation and a budding society of arcane abilities clash in modern Silver City. People have walked the path of qi and body tempering for ages, but one day find themselves challenged by a new supernatural system. Are the tried and true approaches better, or are flashy arts of overwhelming power the new world order?

Li Hao is dragged out of normality by a song and the death of his childhood friend. Thrown into a war between old and new, he must decide how to pick his way forward. The Inspectorate agency seems to be a good place for shelter, and possibly also a springboard for revenge.

Little do others know that the young man with an easy smile is the textbook definition of playing a pig to eat the tiger. It's not a matter of finding those who hurt him, but how much he'll make them pay.

What will it be, qi or magic? But why do decisions always have to be black and white? Can't he mix his own shade of gray?

If you're new to one of my novels, it's so very good to meet you! A little about my translation style:

I prefer **translating for meaning and context**, as opposed to direct and literal translation. My perspective is to make sure the author's meaning and story is fully conveyed, as opposed to the number of commas or exact paragraph structure. I want to make sure you guys get the same hit of humor/anger/awe/etc in English as there is in the raws. Hence, the English may not be a 1:1 match to the Chinese, but the content and relevance are.