

## Star Gate 21

### Chapter 21: Demon Hunters (I)

Li Hao went to bed very late that night. He exercised extreme caution even in sleep—Panther was assigned to watch the door, the vortex gun laid right next his hand. There was no room for concern about accidental discharge; those driven to desperation would try anything.

Thankfully, the night passed without incident.

Perhaps they were also awaiting the arrival of the rains.

.....

July 13, 1730.

Yesterday's upheaval seemed but a dream. Openlight was as quiet as usual; no one paid attention to last night's disturbances from the street next door.

Or perhaps some noticed, but didn't think much of it.

Morning.

Li Hao woke up, washed his face and brushed his teeth, boiled a cup of water and placed the jade sword inside.

A few moments later when the water was cooler, he took a sip. A frown immediately creased his brows.

“There’s less starry energy this time.” The frown deepened with thought. Compared to yesterday, the water today did seem to contain less starlight. “It’s not a problem if it’s only a little less, the key thing is if this mysterious energy can be replenished...”

That was what he was most concerned about. Did the jade sword’s energy come from previously formed reserves, or was a certain time interval required between each immersion? If it could recharge, then he had an unending cornucopia!

As for the stone blade, Li Hao didn’t disturb it for now. He hadn’t taken it out last night due to fear of being followed.

Feeling the warm current circulate through his body after drinking the water, Li Hao swiftly practiced the ape style. Even if it proved ineffective against the scarlet shadow, improving it was always a good thing. He wouldn’t let this chance pass him by.

He mused as he trained—was it better to steep the jade sword multiple times throughout the day, or just once a day? What was the difference between each brew?

All of this required further experimentation.

He darted adroitly around the room, jumping up and down like a monkey. This time, he practiced fewer times than the night before. Li Hao stopped after the third consecutive runthrough. Although he had stamina to spare, the starry energy outside his body was fully dispersed. This was why he stopped.

What if the scarlet shadow or other supernaturals could also see this energy?

If so, he was a walking billboard. He could already see that Liu Long and the others possessed a faint sheen over their bodies. There was nothing about that aspect of their abilities that they could hide from him.

I've met Liu Long before, but didn't discover anything until last night...

Was it his eyes that couldn't see Liu Long's glow before, or had the man changed recently? Or was the sword water the reason for his newfound vision?

He knew far too little about his developing circumstances.

"The world of supernaturals!" Li Hao washed up again and changed into something much more refreshing.

Panther's tail wagged eagerly when he poured the rest of the water into the dog's food bowl. It swiftly licked the bowl dry and looked at Li Hao for more. Meanwhile, the young man sucked in a sharp breath when he studied the little black dog.

"Damn!" The starlight around the dog seemed to be denser than the light around Li Hao. Was this more diffusion and less absorption, or was it the other way around? Did the dog absorb so much that it caused starry overflow?

Li Hao had no idea!

He'd rather think it was leakage from the dog being unable to absorb it all. Otherwise, the dog trounced him in every aspect when it came to mysterious powers!

"Arf arf!" Panther seemed to be indicating for another cup.

Li Hao rubbed its head with a smile. "That's it! You can have some next time. I'm going to work now, so watch over the house while I'm gone. Keep an eye on anyone who comes. Remember their scent and follow them for a bit if you can, but don't go too far."

He was quite worried that someone would sneak into his home when he was gone. He wore the jade sword on him and there was nothing else valuable in the house. Granted, the stone blade from last night was also a treasure, but that wasn't at risk of being discovered. It was too bulky to be carried around, yet who would pay attention to a stone in the dog den beneath the staircase?

There was a possibility that passersby would take it—but really, who would take a rock from a dog's hideout?

Not even street sweepers would bother with Panth's bed unless they were bored out of their minds. In conclusion, nowhere was safer than the dog's den.

Panther would know and locate it if it really did get lost. That was far better than keeping it on him. The jade sword was a pendant, so that was fine. But even the biggest idiot would know something was afoot if the young man carried a rock around.

“Arf!” Panth nodded.

It really does understand! Dog's getting way smarter. Li Hao rose to his feet and walked downstairs.

.....

Li Hao didn't need to say a word at his regular breakfast spot outside Openlight for the stall owner to hand him several large meat buns and a cup of soy milk. After dropping appropriate payment into the change box, the young man leisurely took his bike to the Inspectorate.

The black car from yesterday was unexpectedly absent. Who knew if it'd given up the chase or resolved to act with more prudence after the events of last night?

Whatever it was, he didn't feel anyone following him all the way to work.

.....

Silver City Inspectorate. Department of Classified Affairs.

Li Hao was the first to arrive today. As per usual, people streamed in after he quickly cleaned the common areas and boiled some water. Since Chen Na was just as short-tenured as him, she came early as well.

It was another blazing hot day. The fashionable inspector was a bit sleepy this morning—possibly the result of a poor night’s sleep. She yawned widely and grumbled when she saw Li Hao, “Hey Li Hao, this isn’t how we do things! How come you didn’t take me with you when you investigated a case last night?”

“You know about that?”

“No duh!” Chen Na yawned. “Of course I do, the law enforcement team mobilized last night!”

She’d naturally learned of what happened given the degree of disturbance. Chen Na swung her head back and forth to clear the cobwebs. “Did you bump into the killer?”

“Nope.” Li Hao shook his head. “I just felt that someone was following me.”

“How exciting!” Curiosity seized Chen Na as she’d never been part of a major case. “Then the files you showed me before really were murders?”

Li Hao inclined his head. “More likely than not.”

“Then this is going to be a huge deed of distinction!” The young woman grew more animated. “Li Hao, credit will go to you first if we ferret out the person behind it all. This case might promote you to a second rank inspector!”

She was envious, but more so regretful that Li Hao could participate in a major case. Chen Na wasn’t the type to like twiddling her thumbs on the sidelines.

“We don’t even have any clues yet,” Li Hao replied noncommittally.

Chen Na thought for a bit, then whispered, “Didn’t we plan on making a trip to my family home tomorrow? Are we still going? If we go, will we be followed? I say, if we catch the killer by working together, will I get to share the credit as well?”

They’d agreed yesterday to visit Chen Na’s ancestral home and ask about the folk song. Unfortunately, unwanted and dangerous attention swiftly locked onto Li Hao—even the scarlet shadow had appeared! Therefore, he hesitated over their proposed course of action.

He flicked a glance at his colleague and said, “Forget it, we’re not going anymore. It’s too dangerous since we’re both rookies. We should lay low for a bit.”

He didn’t want to drag Chen Na into this; anything involving the supernatural field was too hazardous. As for the folk song, he was in no hurry to get to the bottom of that. There was much more clarity on that situation now, he could look into it after the scarlet shadow was eliminated.

“Huh? We’re not going anymore?” Chen Na’s face fell, she really wanted to participate in a major case! “C’mon, Li Hao, let’s go! What’s there to be afraid of? We can tell the law enforcement team if you’re that worried. Think about it, we can be bait and maybe get the killer!”

There was obviously certain risk at play, but all they needed to do was to tell the enforcers, no?

“Let’s wait and see!”

More people filtered into the area as they conversed—quite a few of them knew what’d occurred last night. Big sis Yu came in blustering, “Now don’t lose your marbles, Little Hao! Stay far away from dangerous cases like those. Classified Affairs is a place of light workload, low danger, and high pay. Where else can you go to find such a good job? Be a good lad and stay in this department, don’t get involved in the enforcement team’s affairs!”

“That’s right, Little Hao, listen to your ole brother here as well. Don’t stick your nose into these things. There’s nothing in it for you, to say nothing of the danger.”

“.....”

The crowd was enormously concerned about one of their youngest and offered a string of warnings. Most were rusty with investigations after being stationed at Classified Affairs for such a long time. Likely no one was willing to take an opportunity to join the front lines.

Li Hao neither refuted nor debated anyone. He kept nodding with a pleasant look on his face.

Just look at him, so unfortunate as to be unwillingly dragged into all of this!

.....

The group didn’t stop until Wang Jie walked through the front doors.

“Li Hao, in my office!” The department head called out before heading in.

Li Hao waited for a moment before following his supervisor.

.....

Inside the office.

Wang Jie carefully looked Li Hao over and smiled, pressing his hands down. “Sit!”

Li Hao gingerly sat down.

“Don’t be so reserved,” Wang Jie chuckled. “You won’t have an easy time of things in the enforcement team if you’re so uptight.”

The young man raised his head.

“The law enforcement team called me last night and said they want to transfer you over. Liu Long seldomly asks for people and he did it himself this time. I can’t say how rare this is and it means that he places a lot of importance on the request! Looks like you’ve entered his line of sight because of the self-immolation cases, Li Hao! What do you think?”

In all honesty, Wang Jie couldn’t refuse. He also felt that Li Hao wouldn’t be able to refuse either. Of course, if the young man’s teacher was as close to Li Hao as people said he was, then he would still be able to refuse if he really wanted to.

Liu Long of the law enforcement team was much higher ranked than Wang Jie—he truly held the reins of power!

Hence, Wang Jie wanted to hear Li Hao’s thoughts about the matter.



The young man thought for a bit and lowered his head. “Sir, I want to go! Classified Affairs is great and I really like it here, but you know I joined the Inspectorate for one reason... to get revenge for my friend!”