

Star Gate 67

Chapter 67: Training Forged Force, Darkness Rises (II)

Though it was just a beginning and certainly much less than what Liu Long could bring to bear, Li Hao had achieved Twice Forged over the span of a single night! In his wildest daydreams, he fancied calling upon Nine Forged after a few days!

He might still be a Slayer of Tens then, but he could possibly beat a Sunderer to death if he erupted with full strength.

“I’ve finally done it!” Initial success meant that future attempts would be easy. Indeed, Li Hao found that each repeated instance of Twice Forged was successful, but he reverted back to his previous state when attempting Thrice Forged. The third layer was incredibly difficult and required a long interval to complete.

“It’s the 17th.” The young man looked outside when he pulled back the curtains. Noticeable changes were observed in the weather today. Gusts of cool wind unfurled through the blazing hot day and the sky seemed to be overcast.

“It might rain tomorrow.”

It’d only been a few days since determining the next target might be him, but it felt like it’d been a century. During this period, he ascended to Slayer of Tens, joined the Demon Hunters, discovered how to utilize the energy within the jade sword and stone blade, and learned the Breathing Method of the Five Styles as well as the Nine Forged Force.

Some might go their entire lifetime without experiencing these events.

“It’s finally almost here!” Right now, Li Hao was more anticipatory of the scarlet shadow’s arrival than anything. Though he was still very weak, the prolonged torment of awaiting death was almost more than he could bear.

He caressed Stellaris hanging in front of his chest. How was the tiny sword supposed to be used? Was he to kill the enemy with it? Wouldn't that be poking them with a toothpick?

"The sword always shows an abnormal reaction against the scarlet shadow, so it must be effective. But... it's not like I can pinch it between two fingers and kill the shadow that way..." This was Li Hao's greatest headache at the moment. It felt so unnatural!

Was anyone accustomed to stabbing enemies with a toothpick?

In his eyes, the scarlet shadow was their biggest threat because no one could see it. It could easily approach him in a moment of carelessness and set him on fire. The others may not save him in time, so he'd have to take care of it himself...

What could he do about it?

Li Hao took off the chain and held up the jade sword that was the size of a cross. He grasped the hilt with two fingers and waved it forward!

...this is seriously awkward.

"So what if it's awkward. Maybe it'll have a big effect. It's not the smoothest, but it's serviceable." Li Hao put on the jade sword again and experimented swiftly drawing it.

A yank on the chain, a grasp with his fingers, and a quick jab completed the task.

... so anticlimactic.

The movement did make it hard for Nine Forged Force since he hadn't practiced directing his strength into only two fingers.

“Perhaps it’s the same for the shadow whether or not the force is layered.” Li Hao put the notion out of his mind. It is what it is.

These were the limits of what he could do for the moment. He’d prepared everything he could, asked for all the help available, and offered whatever he could to his teacher. Compared to fighting solo like he’d been previously, he was now more than one hundred times stronger than before!

If he still couldn’t make it to the other side, then so be it.

Li Hao was about to wash up when a disturbance sounded from the house. Panther suddenly raised its paw and slammed it down on the coffee table...

An agonized squeal rang out.

“Aouuu!” The little black dog considered its swollen paw and looked piteously at the human. What gives? Why can’t this dog smash the table to pieces?

Li Hao was absolutely speechless. He absorbed some cosmic energy and circulated it through his arm, directing some out of his fingers and pointing it at the dog.

Its swollen paw deflated slightly, but Panther still looked at him morosely. It seemed to be asking for instruction. It’d also absorbed much of the sword energy that’d seeped out of Li Hao last night and followed him in practicing Nine Forged Force. Why hadn’t it worked?

“Dogs and humans are different after all, I have no idea how to teach you. You’re supposed to concentrate layered force on the arm—your legs, in other words, but as for how... I’m not a dog, so I can’t explain it to you,” Li Hao said with resignation. “Figure it out yourself! And Panth, how about you follow me starting tomorrow? Can you handle that thing?”

The little black dog shook with fear.

“Not me then, but Liu Long—the big guy from last time. I’m worried he won’t be able to see or sense it, so just bark a few times in its direction! Give him some pointers so he knows where it is. How about it?”

Panther was still afraid after thinking about it.

“Whatever you want then, I won’t force you. I might be dead after tomorrow though, so you’ll go back out on the streets again!”

The little black dog’s heart raced with anxiety when it heard—dead? Then what’s going to happen to me?

“Arf arf arf!”

“Are you agreed?”

“Arf!”

Li Hao chuckled. Good dog! I’m not forcing you to do this, you wanted to yourself. This is a democracy and I won’t force you if you refuse, even if you’re a dog.

“Very well. Come with me to the Inspectorate today and I’ll introduce you to the team captain. Behave, do you hear me? Don’t be too smart or understand too much. Pretend to be an ordinary dog, but one that can see that thing. You can bark when you see it—that’s a dog’s instinct. Well, it’s not like the captain knows what a dog is capable of either.”

Derision filled Panther’s eyes. Li Hao patted it on the head until it grew a little dizzy, calming the dog that was much too human.

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The Inspectorate.

Law Enforcement.

The basement.

Liu Long was very confused to see Panther. It wasn't until Li Hao explained that the little black dog could see the thing that Liu Long's bafflement changed to surprise.

A dog could see it?

"Are you sure that dogs can see the entity that exists in a mental state?"

Wait, that sounds a bit weird. It's almost an insult to me because I can see it too! Li Hao nodded without a change in expression.

"Yes, they can. Panther always looks in a certain direction and growls when something feels off. It's really smart and understands human speech, chief. You might have an easier time of things with it around. The dog won't add to your troubles and will remind you when that thing appears. That thing doesn't really care about a dog."

Liu Long nodded, finding it incredible, but willing to entertain that there was something different about this dog since Li Hao spoke of it.

“Alright then, I’ll take it with me and we can spend some time getting to know each other so we don’t alarm the enemy ahead of time.”

“Don’t worry, you won’t.”

The two exchanged a few more words before Liu Long continued, “Have you looked at the book? Burn it after you memorize it. All you need to do is remember the contents, I don’t expect you to master the method right now.”

He truly didn’t expect anything from the young man. Nine Forged Force wasn’t easy to learn, particularly the beginning stages. Those were the most challenging and it’d taken him three years to achieve proficiency. The situation improved somewhat afterward, making the third and fourth layers come much faster.

His father, Silver Gun Liu Hao, had possessed more potential and become a peak Sunderer before forty years old. Even he had taken a year to begin his journey with the method.

Therefore, although Li Hao boasted of a better constitution and tutelage from a famed master, Liu Long estimated that it’d take the young man at least a year and a half before he found success.

Li Hao, on the other hand, bubbled with the need to keep his secret quiet. There was no point in mentioning that he’d already learned it as one should hide one’s aces for a while. If even his team captain thought little of him, then the enemy would think less. Riches and big things could be accomplished when one kept a low profile. What could one do when sauntering around beating one’s chest?

“Don’t go home tonight,” Liu Long continued. “Come with me to the outskirts tomorrow. We’re in the light while they’re in the shadows. We have no choice but to go on the offensive and lure them out of their hidey-hole!”

“Wang Ming wants to hike Mt. Heavenly King tomorrow!”

“I know.” Liu Long nodded. “Don’t go up the mountain, our spot is at its foot. The mountain’s not suitable terrain for us, but you can go with him if you think the Night Watchers can handle the matter.”

He looked at Li Hao. Do you trust the Night Watchers more or the Demon Hunters? The Night Watchers might take action, but they might not prove sufficient for the task. And even if they do show themselves to be stronger, it might not be good for Li Hao. Supernaturals did not care about the wellbeing of others when they started fighting.

Liu Long would at least keep an eye out for the young man and not wish for him to die so easily.

“I’ll do as the chief says,” Li Hao laughed honestly. “But I just feel, wouldn’t it be better if you guys worked together?”

Wasn’t there strength in numbers? Guerrilla tactics were usually employed by villains—sending in people when the previous wave died until the targets were finally dead. This wasn’t very auspicious!

“You’re wrong, that may not make us stronger!” Liu Long shook his head with a laugh. “Some supernaturals attack everything in sight. Actually, most of them are like that, especially those suited for offense. One strike of lightning smites everyone but themselves. We might adversely affect each other if we conduct a joint operation, so working together isn’t necessarily better.”

“Then what about the enemy?”

What if they had numerous supernaturals on their side? Would they affect each other?

“It’s possible that the same happens to them, so they’ll most likely split up and minimize their influence on one another. Don’t worry, I’ll have Liu Yan protect you if that happens tomorrow!”

She was the strongest on the team apart from him.

Li Hao nodded after some thought, accepting the arrangement. As confident as he was, he didn't think he could handle the scarlet shadow by himself. Not to mention, he wasn't all that confident. Although he'd killed a Slayer yesterday, he still thought of himself as a puny weakling.

So he'd fought once—that was nothing compared to his teacher. His teacher could fly and blast two Darkmoon with one move! What did Li Hao amount to?

With Liu Yan on the scene, he'd try to land the finishing move if there was a chance to.

The two conversed for a while longer before Liu Long left with Panther. Given Li Hao's suggestion, the chief would familiarize himself with the dog first to ensure full cooperation when needed.