

Chapter 111: Instant Kill

Not far from the teleportation stone was an old man with a white beard and eyebrows. He appeared benevolent, and without a single drop of star energy leaking from his body, he seemed just like a commoner. Michelle landed in front of him and saluted, "Ten Arbiters' Council Representative Michelle pays her respects to the Trialmaster."

Lu Yin and the rest immediately followed suit, with only the black-haired Darkvoid and Hui Daynight refusing to even look at him. The man opened his eyes, lips creaking open as though he had not spoken in a long time. He had to cough twice before his eyes seemed to regain focus, sweeping across them all to focus on Michelle, "My apologies, Student; my ears aren't what they used to be. Could you repeat yourself?"

Michelle repeated, "Ten Arbiters' Council Representative Michelle pays her respects to the Trialmaster."

"Ten what Council?" he seemed lost.

"Ten Arbiters' Council."

"Ten Arbiters' what?"

Michelle frowned, and it took multiple repeats for the man to finally understand, "Ten Arbiters' Council?"

She relaxed and nodded, saying seriously, "I'm here on behalf of the Ten Arbiters' Council to inspect Astral-10. Mentor, may I ask why the students of Astral-10 have to win a hundred ported battles to enter the trial zones?"

"What? Could I trouble you to repeat?" the old man leaned forward slightly and tried his best to speak. A stumped Michelle walked a few steps closer and repeated loudly, but he seemed to grow distracted and pointed at the teleportation stone, "That is the teleportation stone, Student. Do you want to join a ported battle?"

Michelle was left speechless. Lulu laughed and Lu Yin chuckled, prompting a fierce glare from her before she looked at the old man helplessly. Was this fogey really hard of hearing? It did seem like it. She ended up walking towards the teleportation stone, coming across Zhao Yilong who was waiting nearby, "Who's in there?"

"The one from the Daynight Clan," Zhao Yilong replied coldly.

She looked at the mist below the teleportation stone and waited silently. Meanwhile, Lu Yin and the others arrived as well, all wanting to try the ported battle. Only one person could use a teleportation stone at a time, and Astral-10 only had one such stone. Fortunately, Hui Daynight left quite quickly, an ugly expression on his face.

"How's it? Should have failed," Lulu rejoiced at his misfortune, only drawing a snort.

"Hui Daynight, zero victories to one defeat," a voice rang out all of a sudden, making everyone jump. They all turned to look at the old man, while Hui looked annoyed at the report. Michelle's expression

wasn't all that great either. Who would believe that old coot couldn't hear if he was calling out names so clearly?

Lu Yin felt more weirded out by the old man the longer he looked at him. He had the feeling that the coot wasn't as kind as his appearance suggested. In the meanwhile, Zhao Yilong stepped directly into the teleportation stone and back out a short while later, looking just as bad as Hui Daynight had.

"Zhao Yilong, zero victories to one defeat," the elder shouted.

Michelle grunted and stepped in. She spent a little more time there than the two boys, but it wasn't that much longer.

"Michelle, one victory to one defeat."

Hui Daynight tried to walk in again the moment Michelle walked out, drawing an annoyed shout from Zora who was next in line, "Hey, Daynight kid, get in line."

"You'd just be wasting resources." He couldn't be bothered to turn towards her as he stepped towards the stone, but before an angry Zora could attack him, he was pressed into the ground by an invisible attack. Everyone turned to look at the old man, who said indifferently, "No cutting the line, Student."

Hui was furious, but he had been suppressed by an invisible and immaterial attack that he simply could not resist. Michelle was stunned as well. This old fellow was far deeper than they could measure, so he had to be an Explorer at least. How could someone like that be deaf? He was clearly acting stupid! She decided to report back to the Ten Arbiters' Council once she left, asking them to crack down on Astral-10 and allow other academies to replace it.

"Zora, zero victories to one defeat," the old man called out only moments after Zora entered. Coming out of the portal, she could only grit her teeth and stare at him. Xia Luo followed calmly behind her, his entrance drawing Michelle's attention as he was the second person to receive a gift at the Rain Observatory.

Unfortunately, he walked out soon after and spread his hands. "Xia Luo, zero victories to one defeat."

Lu Yin was stunned at this. The ported battles had to be terrifying if even this immeasurable youth was defeated, and Michelle's one victory suddenly seemed all the more stunning. It was no wonder that she was a representative of the Ten Arbiters' Council as a mere Melder.

"Schutz, zero victories to one defeat."

"Darkvoid, one victory to one defeat," the old man said with a little astonishment. He'd never thought someone else here could actually emerge victorious. Everyone looked at the youth whose hair swallowed all light, but he remained indifferent as he gave off an aura of cold solitude.

All the Melders had entered by this point, and Zhao Yilong had also tried from the Sentinels. Lulu jumped in happily, and returned just as quickly, "Ridiculous! It was actually a sylvan dragon, and even a Limiteer; such a bully!"

“Lulu Mavis, zero victories to one defeat,” the elder shouted. His gaze lingered slightly on her before moving away.

“Meng Yue, zero victories to one defeat.”

“Coco, zero victories to one defeat.”

Everyone had tried by this point outside of Lu Yin and Silver. The latter smiled and gestured for him to proceed, and Lu Yin didn’t stand on ceremony and entered the battle. It felt like he’d entered a different world when he entered that mist, and the world spun around him as he touched the stone itself. He instantly appeared atop a volcanic crater with lava spewing all around him.

Ported battles could perfectly clone anyone into a virtual space, but the environment wasn’t fixed. It could be land, ocean, or sky; this time, Lu Yin had arrived at a volcano. He looked at himself as the heat spewed all around; the space copied the build exactly, but his appearance was a little hazy with his face a black void. Trying the Cosmic Art, he found no abnormalities at all, a fact that shocked him. This stone truly was mysterious, and every sense of this virtual space felt exactly like a real world. He bent down to touch the volcanic rock and was burnt; even his body’s ability to withstand heat was exactly the same.

A new figure suddenly appeared before him, accompanied by a terrifying pressure that distorted the void and burst the volcano open. Lu Yin’s eyes narrowed, but he couldn’t even gather his senses before he was killed. The only thing he saw was a silhouette with words atop its head—Big Windy Bro.

“Oh, it’s just a Sentinel rookie. My apologies, I should have exercised some restraint. Such a pity, he died before his codename even appeared, haha!” Big Windy Bro sniggered atop the volcano. There was no form of communication here, and they could only think to themselves.

Below the teleportation stone, Lu Yin opened his eyes with sweat beading on his forehead. He’d thought he really had died in that instant. That person was definitely an Explorer at least; they were so powerful that he didn’t have a chance to react. This was way scarier than even someone like Sigmund Mathers, the strength of a young genius in the ported battles.

As he walked out of the teleportation stone scope, the elder’s voice rang out, “Lu Yin, zero victories to one defeat.”

No one was surprised, as it would only be peculiar if he won. Silver beamed at him and entered the portal, while Coco asked curiously, “How was it, Brother Lu? Who did you meet?”

Lu Yin shrugged, “Unsure, it should be an Explorer.”

She stuck out her tongue, “Worse than me, I met a Limiteer.”

He smiled bitterly. Xia Luo was right; they were too weak. They were the worst among the ported battles, and the requirement of a hundred victories to enter the trial zones was unbelievably harsh. It was a pity that Michelle hadn’t succeeded in changing their minds.

“Oh right, what are your codenames?” he asked. One could use their real name in a ported battle, or just a codename to represent them. He hadn’t even come up with one for himself before getting wiped out by Big Windy Bro.

“I’m Hercules,” Lulu clenched her fists. It was a formidable name, just in her style.

Chapter 112: Image

“How about you, Coco?” Lu Yin’s lips curved as he looked at the girl.

“I... I’m called Little Angel,” she said with a blush, leaving him speechless.

“I’m Silver Needle,” Zora walked over and volunteered.

Mend Yue headed over as well, staring at him, “I’m Desolation, remember that. If I meet you in a ported battle, I won’t show mercy.”

“There’s only one teleportation stone, we won’t meet,” Lu Yin replied.

At this point, Silver walked out with his trademark sly smile. They all thought he’d won for a moment, but the Trialmaster announced, “Silver, zero victories to one defeat.”

By this point, all twelve of them had tried their hand at the ported battles. Outside of Michelle and Darkvoid who had one victory each, the rest were all defeated. Their opponents weren’t just beyond their realm, but also absolute elites or geniuses with innate gifts. The universe was just so big, and Lu Yin now sensed acutely just how small the Great Yu Empire was. He could match up to Yu Academy’s Melders as a Sentinel, especially with his sixth star where he was now confident in facing a hall master like Gerbach, but he wasn’t even confident against opponents of the same level in these ported battles. Perhaps he might even meet another powerhouse who had learnt the Cosmic Art in these battles.

Hui Daynight stepped into the teleportation stone’s domain once more with a desire to continue battling, while most of the others got back in line. These battles were a fresh experience to them, and they all wanted to try again. After several rounds, Lu Yin got his second chance. He gave himself the codename of Seventh Brother; he did not know why, but he’d always felt like he was ranked seventh. However, his luck wasn’t too great over the next few rounds. He met two Limiteers, an Explorer, and a Melder, but even the Melder had defeated him easily.

As he walked out of the scope of the teleportation stone for the fifth time, Lu Yin heard the Trialmaster shout, “Lu Yin, zero victories to five defeats.” He minded his own business and walked away, deciding not to enter again in the short term. Fighting like that was useless; his opponents didn’t even give him time to react, so it wasn’t very helpful in practice. It was clear that he could only use the ported battles as a benchmark for his own strength.

“Want some food, Friend?” Silver smiled and raised a sausage in the distance, the aroma wafting out as he added seasoning. Coco, Zora, and Lulu were already eating there, so he didn’t bother with pleasantries and just grabbed one and dug in.

“Brother Silver, you’re a great chef!” Coco commended.

Silver smiled, “Eat more if you like it, I’m a gourmet.”

“How many matches have you fought?” Lu Yin asked.

Silver lifted up one finger.

“Just one?” Lu Yin was incredulous.

“You fought five matches, are you going to continue?” Silver flipped the meat and smiled back. When Lu Yin shook his head, he threw another sausage towards the Trialmaster.

The old man caught the meat and sniffed it, “Not bad, you have some sense. Good kid.”

“As long as you like it,” Silver smiled.

The old man’s face blossomed with a smile of his own, “I do.”

Fortunately Michelle did not see this scene. Silver had not spoken too loudly, but the Trialmaster clearly heard what he’d said. He’d clearly been acting deaf in front of her, a fact that would anger her to no end.

More people left as time passed, with Zhao Yilong, Schutz, Xia Luo, and Zora all leaving to find a more interesting place to train. Silver finished cooking and left as well, but Lu Yin stuck around near the teleportation stone to see how many victories Hui Daynight and Darkvoid could get. Those two were still going at it.

“Hui Daynight, one victory to 27 defeats,” the Trialmaster said.

Not long after, “Darkvoid, seven victories to 22 defeats.”

Lu Yin was shocked by Darkvoid’s win rate, while Hui Daynight was flabbergasted as well. This person was far stronger than himself.

“Seven victories, how powerful,” a male stranger appeared about ten metres away from Lu Yin and gazed at Darkvoid in wonder. Lu Yin looked at him with suspicion, but he smiled back, “Let me introduce myself. I’m Little Pao, you can call me Senior Little Pao.”

Lu Yin felt strange, “Little Pao? You’re with Big Pao?”

“That’s my older brother,” Little Pao replied.

Lu Yin nodded, as the two brothers had rather convenient names, “Senior Little Pao, there’s something I would like to ask. We’ve been here for three days, but why has not a single other senior appeared?”

Little Pao felt embarrassed, “They all left. Outside of the tutors themselves, we’re the only two remaining.”

“What? All of them left?” Lu Yin was stunned.

Little Pao nodded and sighed, “Astral-10 was once in the Innderverse, but we were sent to the Outerverse. All the other students tried to enter the other academies or just left. No one wants to come to the Outerverse.”

Lu Yin hadn’t imagined that Astral-10’s situation would be so poor. No wonder he couldn’t see a single other student. He bid farewell to Little Pao and left the trial zone entrance, heading for the Sand Ocean that Big Pao had introduced them to before. The others had all left over the past three days.

The Sand Ocean was one of three great landscapes of Astral-10 with the Rain Observatory and Stargazing Deck. Their specific uses were not really introduced to him, but given that the Rain Observatory could polish their star energy, he guessed that the Sand Ocean would help with the physical body or battle techniques. The teleporter only had a few options anyway, and the ripping force quickly left him in a wide expanse of yellow sand.

From Big Pao's basic introduction, the Sand Ocean was far larger than the Rain Observatory. Dangerous sandstorms swept across the region on occasion, and after seeing the yellow desert that stretched as far as the eye could see, Lu Yin stepped back into the teleporter and headed for the Stargazing Deck. He wanted to look at all three major landscapes once, and the Stargazing Deck was the most mysterious of them all. This was the one landscape that all ten Astral Combat Academies possessed.

According to Big Pao's introductory message, everyone saw something different on the Stargazing Deck. Some saw their past, some saw a smear of the heavens, and some saw powerful battle techniques. It was said that some even glimpsed a hint of the future; Lu Yin could not believe this, but those rumors did go to show how mystical this place was. It was actually just an octagonal wooden building with many layers, but it wasn't more than a hundred meters tall and the top was a leveled terrace. The entire thing looked quite average, but there were just too many rumors about it.

Xia Luo walked out of the Stargazing Deck just as Lu Yin arrived, and the two bumped into one another.

"How many times have you tried the ported battles?" Xia Luo asked. He had left after his first defeat.

"Five."

He smiled, "We're in early stages still; we can't challenge the Inniverse powerhouses just yet."

Lu Yin nodded and pondered over it, changing topics, "You know Silver?"

Xia Luo was taken aback, "Why do you ask?"

Lu Yin laughed, "I'm not blind. You treat him completely differently with the way you treat others."

Xia Luo shook his head, "I don't know him, but I hate the smell on his body."

Lu Yin thought of the Neohuman Alliance and their Corpse Kings from the planetary trial. Silver didn't actually look like one, but he just let the conversation die. Xia Luo left for some other location, and he slowly stepped onto the Stargazing Deck. The place seemed just as normal on the inside as on the outside; even at the top, the scenery he saw and the sensations he felt were nothing out of the ordinary.

"Close your eyes, meditate, and feel," a voice rang beside his ears. Lu Yin understood that this was a tutor, and he thought no further before slowly closing his eyes. A short while later, he entered a strange sleep where he felt like he was still awake. His gaze flitted past the Stargazing Deck into the starry heavens, entering a foreign space that was flooded with a desolate aura. Further away, he saw titanic ancient battleships sailing through the stars, each one so large that their ends could not be seen. They almost seemed to embrace the galaxies they floated across, and an ancient warsong played in his ears. There was one word he saw in front of the frontmost vessel—Boundless.

Everything suddenly bubbled apart, and a jade finger tore through the skies to crush him. "How audacious!" Limitless wrath filled Lu Yin's mind and soul, but when he opened his eyes, everything had

returned to normal. He was still on the Stargazing Deck, with no heavens, warships, or jade fingers in sight. His eyes gleamed and he panted. It was that scene again, the scene of him being crushed. Was it reality or an illusion? If it was real, why was he still alive? If it was an illusion, how were his emotions so believable?

Chapter 113: Old Lunatic

Clothes soaked with sweat, Lu Yin continued to stare at the ground and recall the scene he had just witnessed, that foreign heaven, the giant ancient battleships, and that jade finger.

“Go down. The Stargazing Deck shows you the stars, your gratitude and grudges, the world through the ages, the cycle of causality, and a part of the heavens that belongs to you,” the tutor’s voice rang out again.

Lu Yin looked up before bowing slowly, “Tutor, might I ask a question? The Stargazing Deck can look into the past, but can it also look into the future?”

“Causality dictates everything,” the Starmaster said dully, “If you see the cause, there will be an effect.”

“And what does a part of the heavens that belongs to me mean? I clearly saw some foreign space.”

“Ask yourself what you witnessed; there have been many changes since ancient times. Go down, I will not answer you further.”

Lu Yin had many questions as he walked down the Stargazing Deck. He still was at a loss; if no one saw the exact same thing, what did his vision represent? His innate gift and the Stargazing Deck had both shown him that jade finger. Whose finger was it? Why did it crush him? Why did he feel so angry?

Ever since arriving at Astral-10, Lu Yin had only experienced one thing: insignificance. Unmatched as a Sentinel? That was just a joke, and only in the Great Yu Empire. A person’s strength didn’t just depend on their relative strength in the same realm; how many people in the Inverse were younger yet much more powerful than him? Unequaled in the same realm, fair fights... those were all false glory. Like Bazeer had said, no one limited themselves in an actual battle. Star energy was a definitive part of power, proved by the ported battles. He hadn’t met any Sentinels in five battles; the powerful believed in crushing victories, not fairness.

He would never forget the humiliation that Wendy Yushan had wrought upon him. She hadn’t even canceled their engagement in person, looking down from a high vantage point with disdain. Muttering to himself, he raised his head and headed back to the Rain Observatory. That was the place everyone who passed the assessment had been sent to first, which had to be intentional. Perhaps that would be the right place to begin.

The dark green skies suddenly felt strangely familiar this time. He looked around and leaped into the sky, crossing one tree after several minutes of flight. The entire forest looked a little scary from the skies; as Big Pao had said, each treetop had its own limestone platform. He spent two hours on the journey before settling on one he liked, sitting down cross-legged and staring silently at the raindrops.

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Great Yu Empire, the second ring around the Zenyu Star. A blade sliced through the air and chopped down a flying beast, drawing cheers from a man nearby, "You're back to a Sentinel, amazing!"

Zhang Dingtian calmly looked at the sky, staring at the first ring, the Zenyu Star, and finally out into space. Lu Yin was likely at Astral-10 by now.

"Brother Zhang, let's have a friendly duel to see how strong your realmbreaking power is," the man walked over excitedly.

Zhang Dingtian refocused and gripped his sword, "Alright."

Not long after, the two of them parted. The man was a powerful Melder while Dingtian was just a Sentinel; the outcome had been decided quite quickly.

"So powerful, you just recovered as a Sentinel and have the power of a Yu Academy elite. No wonder they made an exception for you to remodel, and you even have the Captain's favor," the man exclaimed. Seeing the Bladesage just wipe his sword in disappointment, he continued, "Right, I heard you know King Zishan?"

Zhang Dingtian nodded silently, and the man was stunned, "Tell me, is he really such a genius? He's one of the four people from the Empire that enrolled into Astral-10. I heard he was unparalleled as a Sentinel and even defeated Melders from Yu Academy."

"I'm not sure," Zhang Dingtian growled.

The man tutted, "So stupid. If you could use your connection to King Zishan, you could have walked alongside him and decided the future of the Great Yu Empire. His title might have been empty before, but now that he's entered Astral-10, everything is different. He might be able to enter the Innerverse just like Princess Wendy in the future, and she might not hate our Empire anymore."

Zhang Dingtian's gaze flickered and he gripped his blade with resolution, swearing to himself that he, too, would walk out of the Great Yu Empire to find Qingyu Daynight and Liu Shaoge for vengeance.

Elsewhere on the second ring, Bai Xue was panting heavily as she stared straight ahead. Her body suddenly vanished and reappeared a few meters away.

"No, no, nope. Too slow, this is a turtle crawling, not the Flash!" Peach said unhappily from her perch atop a peach tree, swinging her legs while she munched on snacks. She saw the sweaty Bai Xue gritting her teeth and followed, "Faster. Faster! The Flash is my specialty; as my assistant, you need to be super fast. Faster, use it with your innate gift."

The royal courtiers were walking out of the royal palace on the Zenyu Star below. It should have been an ordinary day, but all of them were scampering to hide from the Blind Monk. Him alone was one thing, but he had brought Seruzen along. No one dared approach them because of their appearance.

'I miss you, Boss.' Inside an enormous spacecraft in the distance, Xu San looked out the window with dejection as the Zenyu Star shrank into nothingness in the distance. He wanted to cry, but the tears simply would not come. He was being shipped off to the seventh filament to meet captain Batson, and did not know when he would return to the capital.

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Astral-10, Rain Observatory. Lu Yin sat on his chosen platform for five days straight, remaining motionless throughout that duration as he stared at the raindrops without end. There was no change in them from start to end, but he had slowly stopped thinking of them as drops of water. They were now a heavy curtain that connected the heavens to the earth, and his body's star energy slowly started imitating them. His surroundings slowly changed as a shower of star energy joined the dark green rain.

Ten more days passed in the blink of an eye, and Lu Yin had continued to sit and stare. He could feel the changes in his star energy at this point, but it was far too slow. He was certain that his star energy control would massively improve if he sat here for the next year, but he couldn't wait that long.

Lu Yin was the first to admit that patience wasn't his strong suit, or he wouldn't have robbed all the trainees for star crystals back on Earth. He had to think of something! As he diverted his mind, he huffed and shook his limbs, "I haven't rolled the die in a while. But I don't have enough star energy crystals, it isn't worth it."

The dark green sky suddenly trembled as he was pondering over it, and the rain actually stopped. Unimaginable pressure swept across the Rain Observatory and sent him to the floor in an instant, spitting out a mouthful of blood. Terrifying star energy formed a visible tornado that crushed the tree he was on, heading right for him.

Lu Yin's eyes shrank with fear; he was going to die!

"Headmaster, stop!" a voice barked just as he was about to be crushed into a pool of blood, dissipating the terrifying strength.

An old man in ragged clothes flew by, howling in laughter, "You started this war, you'll suffer the consequences of your actions! Hahaha! You started this war..."

Lu Yin stared blankly as the crazy old man passed him, and his throbbing brain finally gave up. Many profound runes flashed behind him in the instant he fainted, forming a lock that flickered with light before fading away.

A middle-aged man stepped out of the void and arrived behind Lu Yin, staring in shock, "Was that a seal? For what? How have I never seen this before? There are even a few lines I can't decipher, and it can't be broken either... Interesting..."

The old man wrecked a dozen more trees before vanishing; Lu Yin just happened to be unlucky enough to be on one of them. If not for the tutor in the Rain Observatory intervening, he would have died.

It took a day and night for Lu Yin to wake up, and his head was still hurting when he did. His gaze slowly focused on the raindrops that were dripping down on his hand, the process helped by the slight chill. Was this the Rain Observatory? What happened?

"You're awake," a wizened voice rang behind him, and he turned to see a middle-aged man. He seemed normal, but he had heard this voice before; it belonged to the tutor here.

"Are you the tutor?" Lu Yin asked, his voice very hoarse.

The middle-aged man looked at Lu Yin with a bizarre expression, "I'm Guanyu, you can call me the Rainmaster."

"Yes, Rainmaster," Lu Yin bowed.

"Do you recall what happened?"

Lu Yin frowned and thought about it, his expression changing as he saw the dozens of destroyed trees all around. "There was a crazy old man."

"Forget it," the Rainmaster sighed, and Lu Yin just nodded. He had a vague memory of the word 'Headmaster' being said before he fainted. Was that old fogey Astral-10's headmaster?

Chapter 114: The Treasury And The Mission

"This is for you," the Rainmaster threw Lu Yin a chip, and he accepted it with gleaming eyes. This had to be the same thing Michelle and the others had gotten, and now he had one too. It was probably something for him to keep his mouth shut, or just compensation of sorts for the near-death experience. He was about to ask more questions, but the Rainmaster just disappeared. Slightly disappointed, he inserted the chip into his gadget. It contained an introduction to star energy and its different variations, which showed him the way forward.

"Every student should have gotten one of these," he muttered to himself. There really was a problem with Astral-10's teaching methods.

According to the information on the chip, one's control of star energy was dictated by a process of removing its impurities, physically manifesting it, and then achieving the realm of infinite change. Many cultivators needed the help of elemental crystals for their battle techniques, but those at infinite change could imitate those kinds of energy on their own.

He lifted his hand and condensed some star energy in his palm. Without the Cosmic Art, it barely formed a single strand that was far from physical manifestation, forget the stage of infinite change. Besides, infinite change wasn't even the end of it; there was a brief note about forming one's own power system afterwards which attracted his attention, but there was no further explanation. Star energy was the foundation of all cultivation, and his understanding of it was currently far too crude. It was no wonder that all students who passed the assessment had appeared at the Rain Observatory. Astral-10 hoped for them all to start their training here, but they had all chosen to focus on other places instead.

The screen disappeared and the chip cracked into pieces. Lu Yin truly wanted to train in the Rain Observatory in order to improve on his star energy, but that would take too long. His primary goal now was to get another batch of star crystals and use his die; he hoped to unlock the yet-unseen roll of three, and figure out what the roll of six actually did outside of consuming enormous amounts of star crystals. He determined the direction of the teleporter and flew away.

Meanwhile, the Rainmaster was staring at him from the distance while deep in thought, "Strange... I've never seen that seal before. It's too complicated for the Outerverse, even most of the Innerverse. Could it be..."

Outside of the three major landscapes in Astral-10 was the treasury. Big Pao had introduced it as a place with a dual purpose; it housed the school's countless treasures, but also put up training missions with

rewards for completion. Desperately in need of star crystals, Lu Yin had decided to go there and try his luck.

The Astral-10 treasury was an enormous place that looked grand and magnificent from the outside. Hui Daynight was leaving just as Lu Yin walked in, and he glanced over arrogantly before leaving a growl behind, "Get lost."

A cold glint of annoyance flashed across Lu Yin's eyes.

"Hey, another newcomer! You're the seventh one, what do you need?" A short and skinny old man cackled from within.

Lu Yin looked over and was stunned. The old man had an interesting beard that moved when he smiled, and the cunning look in his eyes made it clear that this wasn't a nice person. "Are you the Treasuremaster?"

The old man nodded and stroked his beard, "Are you here for treasure or missions?"

"Can I go in and take a look?" Lu Yin asked.

The old man waved his hand to summon a screen that displayed various objects, "Everything in the treasury is here if you want to look, but you can't enter."

Lu Yin went through the enormous catalog with some surprise. There were all sorts of items here, from weapons and armor to books, potions, and even spaceships. However, the screen disappeared soon and the old man waved again to summon a different one that showed a list of missions, "Anything you want from the treasury has to be redeemed with mission points. Interested?"

"Mm, but they're all Sentinel missions," Lu Yin mused.

The old man pinched his beard, "Only powerful forces in the universe dare to issue missions to Astral-10, their missions aren't easy. Don't think about exceeding your realm; it wouldn't be bad if you can complete even these. Look at the top one.

"Hmm... Five wins?" Lu Yin asked in shock as he looked through it. Mission: Get five consecutive wins in battle. Reward: one Aurora spaceship and 10,000 cubes of star crystals.

The old man nodded, "Read it properly, it's five consecutive wins, not five wins in general. The difference is enormous, but the reward is obviously quite attractive as well. That brat from the Daynight Clan is trying to do this right now."

Lu Yin laughed at that. It was far too difficult for any of the new students to get to five wins total right now, forget five consecutive. It was no wonder that Hui was in such a bad mood. He shelved the mission immediately, scrolling through the list to find something suitable.

"Find the rumored Zhilan Muya on the Muya Planet."

"Complete a weave trial."

"Lockbreaker needed."

"Lockbreaker needed."

“Lockbreaker needed.”

“Don’t talk for one year.”

“Lockbreaker needed.”

“Recycle unwanted materials for Iltoco. Reward: a third of the value of the recycled materials.”

There were many types of missions, including something as crazy as not speaking for a year; they truly broadened Lu Yin’s horizons. He asked, “Treasuremaster, what does lockbreaker mean?”

“You haven’t heard of lockbreakers?” the old man glanced at him, continuing when he shook his head, “Kids these days are really blind to the world. You’ve never even heard of lockbreakers, huh? I’m too lazy to explain, you can find out on your own.”

Lu Yin ignored the berating and pointed to a mission, “I want this, please.”

The old man looked over, “Iltoco is an old friend of Astral-10, don’t embarrass us when you go there or I’ll punish you.”

Embarrass them? Lu Yin smiled. This was a joke; breaking things down was extremely simple with his die, he was confident that he would recycle enough to stun the company.

“Alright, I’ve assigned it to you. The mission details on your gadget include the location of their recycling plants, you can go over on your own,” the old man said.

Lu Yin looked at the location. Iltoco’s nearest location was two days away from Astral-10, and he would need to take a wormhole on the journey. He followed the instructions and borrowed a personal spaceship from the treasury, but the old man commented on that as well, “I want it back in perfect shape once you’re done. You’ll have to pay if you lose it.”

He registered with his fingerprint and teleported to Astral-10’s space station. Finding hundreds of personal spaceships around, he got on a random one and flew out. He wanted to figure out where the school was when he left, but there was nothing in sight all around when he was warped out of the station. The Academy was completely hidden despite its enormous size, something that flabbergasted him.

After nearly a month in this new school, Lu Yin was finally traveling out in space as a student of Astral-10. On the other hand, Coco was at the teleporter in the Sand Ocean, looking at the desert timidly, “Senior Little Pao, I don’t like it here.”

Little Pao laughed, “This is a really good place for training, it can unleash anyone’s potential.”

“I’m not in a rush, really!” she answered anxiously.

“Well, then I hope you’ll win in the new student competition,” Little Pao said.

“New student competition? What’s that?”

“A contest for students to determine their ranking in the school. First place gets great rewards,” Little Pao explained.

Coco pouted, “When will it be?”

Little Pao shrugged, “I’m not sure. Maybe a couple days, maybe a couple months. Everything about it depends on the tutors, even the rewards, but there’s one guarantee; the person in last place will definitely get punished.

Coco thought about the other new students and realized that she probably was the weakest one, “What? Why would they do this?”

Little Pao laughed, “Get back to training.”

Chapter 115: Disassembly

Two days later, Lu Yin weaved through the comets flitting through space and appeared at a dull yellow planet. This was one of Iltoco’s recycling plants; the entire planet was under their control. His spaceship was allowed to land after they confirmed his identity and purpose, and he met a plump middle-aged man with a bright smile down below.

“Welcome to Iltoco; I am Ahke, the manager at this small plant,” the middle-aged man said eloquently.

“I’m Lu Yin,” Lu Yin said with a nod.

“Welcome, Student Lu. Let me give you a tour,” Manager Ahke said cordially, hiding his shock at the surname.

Lu Yin looked up at the dark yellow sky without any trace of a sun. The thick layers of yellow clouds gave off an oppressive feeling that was anything but welcoming. He shook his head, “It’s alright, Manager Ahke, please bring me to the mission location.”

“Alright, come with me” Ahke nodded, leading him to a giant plane that quickly left the station and flew into the distance. He started a brief introduction to the plant, “Student Lu, this planet is full of toxic gases that make it unlivable. Iltoco bought it specifically to store scrap metal; the stuff is everywhere, from abandoned spaceships and planes to weapons and armor...”

Lu Yin looked on calmly. This was a planet approaching its demise; perhaps it had birthed a civilization once just like Earth, but various causes had left it on the verge of destruction. It could only be used as a dumpyard now, and a few hundred millennia could drive it out of existence.

The ground was unbelievably dry, with not a single source of water to be seen anywhere. People in hazard suits were sifting through all the rubbish down below, likely slaves that Iltoco had brought over from other backward planets to search for useful items in the trash. There were more of these people than he could count; had Earth not been protected by his identity, its cultivators would have been sent to battlefields and the normal people would join those down below, living on such abandoned planets and sifting through rubbish until they died.

“Student Lu, which disassembler do you use?” Manager Ahke asked. There was just too much garbage in the universe, and a considerable portion of it was man-made. Many companies sifted through abandoned trash and reused what they could; this both reduced their costs and cleared the universe’s

trash. There were many different models of disassemblers, devices powered by star energy that could strip materials apart. The better one's control of star energy, the finer the disassembly. Astral-10 accepted such missions because it trained students in star energy control.

"I don't need any disassemblers," Lu Yin replied.

Ahke was stunned, "I'm sorry, what did you say?"

Lu Yin frowned, "Find me a quiet place, I don't need any disassemblers."

Ahke's eyes gleamed and he nodded, ordering the plane to change directions. Half an hour later, they stopped beside a hill, "There is no one here, Student Lu, and there are many abandoned machines all around. You can use whatever you want; rest assured that no one will watch."

Lu Yin walked down from the plane and frowned at a breath of pungent gas. While this gas wasn't toxic to cultivators, it stung.

"I'll have someone get you an air freshener," Ahke offered immediately.

Lu Yin shook his head, "No need. You can leave, I'll call you when I'm done."

Ahke didn't bother with any more pleasantries and just left. Once he was on the plane, however, he switched his gadget on, "General Manager, the student from Astral-10 doesn't need any disassembler. He either relies on his star energy or some innate gift."

"Must be an innate gift; he'd need to be a lockbreaker to disassemble materials with star energy alone, and he wouldn't accept a mission like this if he was. Don't bother him; wait for the results and we'll see," a pleasant female voice rang through. Ahke acknowledged and hung up.

The mound Lu Yin had been brought to wasn't all that tall. He flew up and looked through the countless abandoned planes and spaceships in his surroundings. They came in all sorts of sizes, with the biggest one extending far into the horizon. Glancing at the dark yellow clouds, he stretched his limbs and summoned his die, "Time to start, let's hope I roll a two right away."

With so many days since his last roll, the die was already emitting hazy starlight at this point. Lu Yin gulped with the same nervousness he felt every time he rolled, tapping on it lightly to set it off. It spun rapidly and landed on Pilfer, at which point a thump followed as a large sword dropped down from the portal. He picked it up and exerted some force to test it; it wasn't bad but was more suited to Melders and he had no use for it right now. Putting it away, he retrieved a cube of star crystals to replenish the die and set it off again.

His luck was rather good this time, and he landed on Blackhole Disassembly on his second roll. Elated, he didn't think further to crush eighteen more cubes and extend the duration just like Timestop. One cube provided about 160 minutes of extension, double that for his Timestop domain. Eighteen were enough to run the thing for a day.

"Just a little too small," he muttered to himself before picking up a random discarded instrument and tossing it in. The item passed through and an unknown material landed on the floor below. He took a deep breath, "Alright, time to start."

Lu Yin pushed the mountainous heap of trash towards the vortex. Although the thing was small, anything that passed through its domain was disassembled. He only had to move things back and forth, consuming the entire mountain in only two-ish hours to leave behind a considerable pile of all sorts of unrecognizable materials. He thought of the previous situation with the cosmic rings and guessed these materials could be passed through again to produce something more precious, but he hesitated to do so. His speed would already be questionable anyway.

A day thus passed with Lu Yin spending his time disassembling a considerable batch of abandoned machinery. Everything around him seemed a little emptier by the time he was done, and the materials formed a significant heap. He wondered how much income that would be, but after some thought decided to crush eighteen more cubes of star crystals for another day.

When Ahke received a notification after two days, he immediately flew out to Lu Yin's location once more. Seeing two tiny hills of disassembled materials, however, he had to rub his eyes vigorously to believe it was actually real. How did he recycle so many things in only two days? Even Limiteers with the most efficient disassemblers couldn't do this much in a month. This was far too efficient! For a moment, Manager Ahke looked at Lu Yin like he was a deity.

Lu Yin coughed, "How is this, Manager Ahke. Enough?"

"Of course! You've completed your mission, Student Lu, and exceeded the quota by a large margin. But, did you do all this by yourself?" Ahke asked suspiciously. Some students had brought in a lot of disassembled materials in their cosmic rings to complete missions before, claiming that they had done the work. Iltoco didn't care because it was pure profit, but the amount before his eyes was far too much. Just how many cosmic rings could a student bring? Was this even real? How could he do it so quickly?

"I hope it won't be too much trouble to calculate my reward," Lu Yin prodded faintly.

Manager Ahke immediately agreed and assigned someone to settle Lu Yin's rewards, even contacting the general manager in charge within the Frostwave Weave.

"Impossible, one student cannot recycle that quickly unless he's a lockbreaker!" the voice said with certainty.

"I'll ask," Ahke answered.

"No need, it has to be fake. A lockbreaker wouldn't bother with a tiny reward like this; let him go."

"And what about the assignment progress?"

"Overperformed."

"Alright," Ahke hung up.

Lu Yin had already received his reward by this time. While a majority of the materials weren't worth too much, there were some special things that were sold by the gram. Everything weighed a few tons in total, adding up to a worth of nearly 1 billion credits. His share of the reward was a little over 300 million. A quick calculation told him that disassembling machines that were actually in good condition would jump his output a hundredfold. Iltoco paid extremely low prices for the scrap and had people like

him disassemble it for further usage. The finished products would fetch tens of billions of credits; even if the money given away was shaved off, the profits would be well over 10 billion. The only issue was that disassemblers needed care, maintenance, regular repairs, and training. This money would be paid by Iltoco, and they would never be short on money. It was no wonder they had enough to buy a planet to use as a rubbish dump.

Lu Yin felt rather envious. This company was so rich, and it was just one company in the Outerverse that couldn't compare to great powers like the Mavis Bank.

Chapter 116: Lockbreaker

While Lu Yin was busy wondering whether the Mavis Bank's total finances could keep the Timestop domain running indefinitely, Manager Ahke finished calculations and passed him a white crystal card from the same bank, "There are 3.2 billion credits here, you can exchange it all for star crystals at the nearest Mavis branch, they should be more convenient for transactions and storage."

"More convenient for transactions?" Lu Yin was surprised.

"Yes. Many transactions in the Innaverse are settled with star crystals and the like as currency; it is rather inconvenient to carry notes for 3.2 billion when you can just have 3,200 cubes of star crystals instead."

Lu Yin nodded with secret excitement; this job was just far too suited to himself. He decided to return whenever he needed money... Wait, when did he ever not need money? He would return to Astral-10 to complete the mission and see if he could come back soon after.

Ahke's doubts grew when he saw Lu Yin's high spirits. They had guessed that this student had brought his own materials to complete this mission, which they were fine with, but the student was only paid back a third of the value. Why was he so happy? Was this mission that important in Astral-10? That couldn't be, Iltoco wasn't worth that much.

"Do you wish to continue your efforts, Student Lu? We'll gladly pay the same rate," he tried to probe.

Lu Yin shook his head, "No need, let's go to the space station."

Ahke nodded, "Please follow me."

They passed by countless abandoned machines on the way back, but Lu Yin considered it all treasure that could be exchanged for money. He asked along the way, "Manager Ahke, can I come whenever I wish to recycle things?"

Ahke smiled, "Of course. Most pre-Limiteer cultivators have to pass an examination first, but students from Astral-10 are different. You've already proved yourself anyway; just inform me in advance if you want to come. Here's my number."

Lu Yin recorded it down and thanked him, but Ahke hesitated for a moment before trying to probe again, "Student Lu's star energy control seems rather extensive for a Sentinel. You were even faster than a Limiteer."

"My innate gift is useful for recycling," Lu Yin explained.

“Innate gift?” Ahke was shocked, unsure if this person was pulling his leg. If there was an innate gift this useful, Iltoco definitely couldn’t miss out on such an opportunity. There were many strange innate gifts in the universe, including those suited to lockbreakers, “Student Lu, is your innate gift in the exotic category?”

Lu Yin glanced back at him, inciting a prompt apology, “Sorry, I’m being too nosy.”

He turned away, “Well, you’re right.”

Ahke grew envious, “So you have the potential to become a lockbreaker.”

Lockbreaker? Lu Yin suddenly remembered that he had forgotten to look it up, “Have you seen a lockbreaker before?”

Ahke smiled bitterly, “Don’t joke with me, how could someone like me ever come across a lockbreaker? Even some of our executives might not have met one before; those are characters at the peak of the universe.”

Lu Yin nodded and went quiet, looking down to fiddle with his gadget. An introduction of lockbreakers came up rather quickly, revealing what they were. This was a title for someone who could perfectly disintegrate star energy.

The universe had been through countless years of the cycle of creation and destruction, leaving behind innumerable items from ancient times. These items were enveloped in layers of all sorts of energy that formed a protective shell known as a sourcebox. Forcefully prying these things open could damage what was inside, and the abundance of mysterious phenomena in the universe ensured that some of the layers were dangerous to destroy. One had to peel away each layer of protective energy slowly to retrieve the contents. Any object that could absorb star energy to form these protective layers wasn’t simple; these were all dust-caked treasures that only a lockbreaker could reveal.

Sourceboxes could hold such things as powerful battle techniques, cultivation methods, and even ancient technology. Every revelation of such a thing increased the prestige of the profession, but the requirements to become a lockbreaker were far too harsh for mere mortals to attain. Lockbreakers thus had enormous clout wherever they went. Lu Yin was rather surprised; he hadn’t thought such an occupation could exist.

“We’re at the space station, Student Lu,” Ahke said suddenly, pulling him away from his screen.

Lu Yin stepped off the plane, “Thank you for the hospitality, Manager Ahke. I’ll take my leave.”

“We should be thanking you for your help. Have a pleasant journey.”

“You’re welcome.”

Lu Yin quickly stepped into his plane and set course for the nearest Mavis Bank. As his spaceship disappeared into the depths of space, he thought over his current reward. Over 3,000 cubes of star crystals... this was far more than the entire amount he had gained in the Great Yu Empire. It truly was worthy of a big company that could send missions to Astral-10, something even the Empire did not have

the ability to do. Itoco seemed like a subsidiary of some big company in the Inniverse, and were likely using that relationship to send these missions.

The nearest Mavis Bank was a day's journey away, and Lu Yin spent the time reading up on lockbreakers. He only noticed a change when his plane docked at the space station, and in his elation, he didn't even flinch at the high parking fees. The planet he had landed on was quite big, and its buildings were similar in style to the Zenyu Star. He headed directly for the Mavis Bank and transferred the credits into star crystals, a total of 3,270 cubes. With the 28 he had on hand prior, he was almost at 3,300 cubes which was a huge sum. He still had the two million credits he'd obtained in the Great Yu Empire, but that sum now seemed small compared to his mission rewards. It was only when he checked the price of the most basic spaceship and found it to be at 10 billion that he realized how stingy The Undying Yushan had been to only give him 300,000 credits. It was far too miserly.

But it did seem that earning money was easy, if only for himself. Ahke had said that even a Limiteer with a good grasp of star energy couldn't earn so much in two months, and that sort of Limiteer was a rare breed. He guessed that it would have to be someone at the level of materialization or even infinite change, and there simply weren't that many of those around. Earning money wasn't all that easy; he just had a hack.

Lu Yin walked out of the Mavis Bank and looked at the branches full of credit notes, moved by how rich the Mavis Family was. He was about to leave when he recalled something and retrieved a black crystal card from his ring; this was what he'd gotten when he rolled Pilfer once. The words "Yao Gu" were front and center on it, so he'd thought he wouldn't be able to make a withdrawal, but he was already here and there was no harm in trying. When he went back in, he actually succeeded.

Success without authentication? How? Lu Yin grew excited at his luck, and the balance in the card was just as delightful. 12,000 cubes of star crystals, four times his current wealth. Wait, why did this card use star crystals directly instead of credits? He quickly brushed that thought aside, deciding not to look the gift horse in the mouth. He took out all of the crystals but found that his cosmic ring now wasn't big enough. In the end, he heroically spent 1,000 cubes on the spot to purchase a large cosmic ring. The pang of regret was washed away by the fact that this new ring had over 10,000 cubic meters of space.

Lu Yin left the bank with a mix of excitement and apprehension. He was carrying more than 15,000 star crystals, enough to invite anyone's greed. Everyone looked like a bandit now, so he headed directly to the space station and left the planet to return to Astral-10.

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Two days later. A giant meteor smashed right through a star and flew through a foreign sky, continuing to head into the distance. A pair of eyes that were impossible to describe opened up on the meteor, seeming to engulf everything like they were black holes. "There's news. Send someone to search the Frostwave Weave in the Human Domain. Find the person that dared to rob me, he'll learn the consequences of stealing Yao Gu's belongings."

"Yes, Master."

Chapter 117: Possession

Within Astral-10's treasury, the bearded old man sized Lu Yin up and down in shock, "Not bad, kid. You did more than required, it was probably a huge price to pay."

"What price?" Lu Yin was confused.

The old man snickered, "We all know the answer to that. Whatever, there's no need to hide it; they confirmed completion."

Hide what? Lu Yin was confused, but the old man scoffed and explained, "You went beyond requirements in only two days, do you think I'm an idiot? Only lockbreakers... Whatever, take a look and see which mission you want to take next."

Lu Yin ignored the man's words and left without taking on any new missions. Grabbing his star crystals, he wondered where to go before eventually deciding to head to the space station. There weren't any specific residential areas in Astral-10, but he guessed this was likely the only place not monitored constantly by the mentors. He was going to roll his die. With two uses at Iltoco and some rest afterwards, he hoped he'd be able to find out what rolling a three did soon.

The die appeared with a flick of the wrist, and Lu Yin crushed a cube of star crystals and set it off. He held his breath as it slowed down, but was left speechless as it landed on two. With nothing to disassemble, it was useless. With his next roll, he landed on five. This time he cursed; it was another useless roll. Who knew exactly who here had innate gifts, and how was he to find them in ten seconds anyway?

With only one roll left before he'd be exhausted, he tossed the die with a little worry. The thing turned slower and slower until five of its sides disappeared, revealing the number six.

SIX! Lu Yin's eyes went wide. He'd only gotten it once, and it had absorbed all of the star crystals he'd offered and given him nothing. It still felt like he'd been scammed by this die yesterday; what was going to happen this time?

A terrifying suction force erupted from the die before he could think, and the star crystals in his cosmic ring started disappearing in the blink of an eye. 100 cubes, 1,000 cubes, 2,000 cubes... Before he knew it, he'd lost a full 10,000 cubes of star crystals.

The moment the last of the star crystals were pulled away, Lu Yin saw his surroundings warping into an unfamiliar dark space. His consciousness turned into a bundle of light that shot forward, slowing down with time as he saw numerous bundles of various sizes all around. Some were feeble glows, while others were hot as stars. He was shocked to realize what the roll of 6 was for; it allowed one to merge with another person, experiencing their life for the low starting price of 10,000 star crystals. The bundles of light he was seeing were the ones he could sense with his current power, and the ones closest did not seem like they would harm him.

All of a sudden, Lu Yin felt a pull and was startled. He didn't have enough star crystals on him, and not fusing with one of these bundles would be wasting a great opportunity. He didn't waste any more time and charged straight for the warmest bundle he could sense, guessing that the brightness was related to the owner's power. However, he felt like he was being burnt to ashes and was forced to turn back, heading towards the bundles that were only a little smaller than him. Meanwhile, all 15,000 star crystals on him were absorbed.

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“Da Lei, Da Lei! Wake up!” a beautiful girl was crying out anxiously on a dark field, awakening a hazy Lu Yin. She smiled emotionally when he opened his eyes, “You’re awake! That’s great!”

Da Lei? Who was that? Lu Yin was confused at first, but then he recalled rolling a six on his die and fusing with someone’s mind. Was this the person?

“What’s wrong, Da Lei?” The girl looked at him nervously. The man in front of her was obviously someone she knew, but his gaze was very unfamiliar.

As he rubbed his head, Lu Yin instantly knew everything he needed about the person he had possessed. His mind was still running a little slow, but he eventually turned towards the girl and smiled, “Nothing, I was just playing a prank on you.”

The girl sighed, “You scared me. Don’t do that again!”

Lu Yin—no, Da Lei nodded. “Aya, I’m hungry. Can you buy me something to eat?”

“Mm. Stay here, I’ll get you something.”

Lu Yin watched as the girl left before looking at himself and sighing. He was Da Lei now, and while he had no idea how long he’d stay merged with this person, it couldn’t be that long. Thinking of this, he reached in and sensed the large pool of energy within his body. Da Lei was actually a Limiteer!

Da Lei had the power of a Limiteer, but that wasn’t all. Lu Yin was delighted to find that his grasp of star energy had reached the realm of infinite change, and he was a famed genius on this planet that was planning on applying to the Thirteen Imperial Squadrons. To his surprise, this was the thirteenth filament which was at the edge of the Frostwave Weave. He had been sent here with only 10,000 star crystals; would he reach the Innerverse with more?

Star energy gathered in Da Lei’s palm, going from intangible to tangible. Soon, it reached a form similar to fire and vibrated with heat in the air; this was the realm of infinite change simulating fire energy. This person wasn’t even forty years of age, so he was still of the younger generation. This level of star energy control was prodigal.

With the same battle techniques and star energy, one’s control could make for a huge difference in power. It was a pity that Da Lei did not know any good battle techniques. He didn’t understand the need to find a backer, didn’t know how to earn money, and didn’t have the guts to chase the girl he loved. All in all, this was someone extremely stiff.

“AH!” a voice suddenly interrupted Lu Yin’s thought, sending him to his feet. Aya had fainted by the time he bounded over, and a number of cultivators walked out from the shadows. A young man smirked at him, “Long time no see.”

Lu Yin’s gaze focused. He recognized Ramos from Da Lei’s memories; this was the son of the most powerful person on the planet. Ramos had always been jealous of Da Lei’s talent and tried to bribe him to take part in the exam for the Thirteen Squadrons in his stead, but Da Lei had rejected him. He wasn’t supposed to show up now.

"I already said no, Ramos. Let Aya go," Lu Yin said seriously.

Ramos snickered, "I'll give you one last chance. Give up your place, and I can let you live and even give you battle techniques. You'll never be able to get one otherwise."

It was at this point that Lu Yin understood why Da Lei had no battle techniques or much general knowledge. He had been blocked off with intention.

"I don't agree," Lu Yin said once more.

Ramos shrugged, "You're so inflexible. Do you really think the Thirteen Squadrons will see anything in you? This universe has no lack of geniuses. I'll have you know that the Empire is now most interested in King Zishan and the others who entered Astral-10. What about you? They've forgotten you already. Nobody will cause trouble for me if you disappear. Kill him."

A number of Limiteers came for Lu Yin and he tried to Flash away, but he didn't have much control of this body and nearly tripped. He'd forgotten that this body was Da Lei's; even if he knew how to use the Flash, the body didn't have the muscle memory for it.

BOOM! The earth shattered and Lu Yin soared into the skies, a middle-aged Limiteer attacking behind him. He raised his hand and smashed down with converged star energy, sending the attacked flying into the ground. This was the terrifying power of the realm of infinite change; he could even go up against battle techniques with his star energy alone.

However, a few more Limiteers had surrounded him at this point. Lu Yin gritted his teeth and used the Flash consciously, this time succeeding as his body vanished to dodge their attack. He appeared behind one of the Limiteers and slashed out with a blade of star energy. The target had quick reflexes and dodged, so the blade cut through the air with a tremendous surge of star energy that cut a rift into the earth. The aftershocks spread into a river in the distance and reversed its flow.

Such a battle should technically have attracted the attention of the planet's troops, but they never appeared. Ramos had already planned this out; today was the day Da Lei died. He had no plans of letting Da Lei off. Even if Da Lei was willing to give up his position, that still wouldn't do. What he wanted to see the regret and despair as this genius died before him.

Lu Yin panted and then burst into laughter. Da Lei really was quite lucky. If he hadn't entered this body, this genius would have been done for.

"Your girlfriend is quite pretty, Da Lei." Ramos' voice rang out down below. He walked over to Aya and bent down to touch her.

Da Lei's fury bubbled up even into Lu Yin's mind, but he calmed those emotions down, "Don't worry, I'll handle him for you."

And then, Da Lei disappeared.

Chapter 118: Michelle's Shock

"Young Master, careful!" the Limiteers nearby shouted as Da Lei disappeared, but it was too late. Lu Yin flashed behind Ramos and grabbed him by the hair; the mere Melder was helpless against his strength.

Ramos paled, "Let go of me now, or my dad will make your life unbearable!"

"You can just die," Lu Yin said with a smirk; he wasn't the actual Da Lei to be threatened by that. Ramos's eyes narrowed with disbelief, but a loud bang rang out as Lu Yin's palm smashed past his ears into the ground. That attack was filled with bloodlust; Da Lei really was going to kill him!

"Stop, let him go!" the Limiteers growled angrily, but Lu Yin just pulled out a gadget and started a call. A beautiful lady quickly appeared on his screen, her face stunning Ramos and the rest. This was the captain of the Thirteen Squadron; Liuying Zishan.

"Who are you? Who gave you my number?" Liuying asked coldly.

"Hello, Captain Zishan, I'm Da Lei. His Majesty Lu Yin asked me to contact you if I needed help," Lu Yin said. This was his first time contacting the woman who was supposed to be his closest supporter in the Great Yu Empire, and he hadn't expected it to come out in this situation.

Meanwhile, Ramos paled at the mention of Lu Yin's name. How did Da Lei know the Zishan King? The Limiteers around were astonished as well; they realized that things weren't going too well.

"What's the matter?" Liuying asked with surprise, her gaze sweeping past Ramos and the rest as Lu Yin explained, "Oh. I understand, I'll handle it."

Lu Yin's eyes gleamed. He hadn't just contacted Liuying because she was the Thirteenth Captain, but also to see what her attitude was towards him. Da Lei was the best litmus test, and he'd always harbored a desire to join the Thirteen Imperial Squadrons anyway. This would be killing two birds with one stone.

Lu Yin let go of Ramos and stared the Limiteers down. Now, no one would dare cause trouble for Da Lei. Even Ramos and his father couldn't afford to offend someone who could contact Liuying Zishan directly. He carried Aya away towards a grassy field, feeling a pulling sensation that indicated his time was up. He had saved Da Lei's life today, but he wanted to give the man one more present before he left.

"Da Lei?" Aya woke up and looked around at her surroundings blearily while lying on the grass.

Lu Yin responded with a hug and a kiss on the lips that shot her awake, matching her gaze with a smile, "Aya... I love you."

Tears immediately welled up in Aya's eyes, and a look of disbelief overcame her face. She hugged him back tightly and cried tears of joy, "I love you too! I love you too!"

Lu Yin patted Aya's back as the pull grew stronger and stronger. He was about to leave, but he had helped Da Lei overcome the last obstacle before he left. He hoped the two of them could live happily ever after; that would be his thanks for helping him realize the true meaning of the realm of infinite change. The two of them would certainly meet in person in the future.

In the blink of an eye, Lu Yin was back at Astral-10's space station. His body shook and he opened his eyes, immediately summoning his star energy to feel it. He lifted his hand and turned it into wind, water, and flames in his palm; they were all just imitations, but this was the realm of infinite change. Many people depended on elemental crystals to use battle techniques, like Jeraldine with her fire punch.

However, that requirement faded once one achieved the realm of infinite change; if she were at that level, she could simulate fire with her star energy alone.

Lu Yin was elated; it was an amazing feat to achieve the realm of infinite change so quickly. It would have taken more than a year if he trained at the Rain Observatory, but he had reaped the benefits of Da Lei's experience. The only thing that depressed him slightly was the thought of the star crystals he'd used up. Possession had taken at least 10,000 and he hoped to have a few thousand left, but reality sent him to the pits of despair. There was nothing left in his cosmic ring at all.

He was destined to be poor! Lu Yin lamented the loss of his newfound wealth, but eventually flashed a better smile. It was definitely worth it to spend 15,000 star crystals in exchange for this level of star energy control.

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Michelle headed right back to the Rain Observatory upon completing a mission, watching the constant green rain. She'd only taken on a mission so she could go outside and report the situation in Astral-10 to the Ten Arbiters' Council; there was something wrong with Astral-10's teaching methods, and she was of the opinion that it didn't have the right to control access to the Nine Trial Zones. Unfortunately, the Council still needed some time to make a decision on the issue, so she could only return to the Academy and gather more evidence.

Rain splattered on the limestone platform and cooled Michelle's feet. She looked at it calmly, observing the changes in star energy intently. A silhouette brushed past the distance, but she didn't pay it much attention. It was just one of the new Sentinel students; while he deserved praise for entering Astral-10, someone like that wasn't uncommon in the Inniverse.

Lu Yin flew past the rain and was initially going to land on a platform in front of him, but he realized that there was someone there already and thus went looking for a different tree. Now, his perception of the rain all around was entirely different. He could see every minute change clearly; every drop of water was going through infinite variations in a moment. This wasn't ordinary rain as he'd once thought, but drops of miniature worlds that changed constantly.

Five more days of practice later, he lifted a palm filled with star energy. The energy materialized and transformed into wind, fire, and even joined the rain, eventually forming his name and flying into the rain.

The word Michelle was pushed into the rain simultaneously. Although the two of them were an entire tree apart and quite far from each other, their names were close enough in the rain that each could see the other's as they pushed the rain apart and rushed into the distance.

Michelle didn't pay much attention at first, thinking that Lu Yin's name would disappear quickly, but it stayed for quite a while. Eventually, her name was on the verge of dissipating and his didn't seem changed in the slightest. Her expression changed and she looked into the distance in shock.

In the depths of the rain, the Rainmaster was watching the scene with surprise, "This kid was only gone for a few days, how is there such a large change? His star energy control is already in the realm of infinite change before anyone else."

Lu Yin watched his name flying into the distance, believing that the realm of infinite change would be enough to gain the Rain Observatory's approval. His name continued to soar long after Michelle's had shattered; her control was very close to the realm of infinite change, but she wasn't there yet. Having experienced Da Lei's control and star energy, he was far beyond her now.

Three people watched two words soar through half the Rain Observatory before they shattered. Unfortunately, he wasn't familiar enough with his star energy control just yet. He ended up sitting down and staring at the rain, hoping to obtain the Rain Observatory's approval in the shortest time.

On the other platform, Michelle took off and flew towards Lu Yin, interrupting his solemn practice with her intoxicating scent. Lu Yin breathed in and turned around to look at the stunning woman, but she was indifferent to his gaze and asked curiously, "How did you do it?"

"Do what?"

"Your energy control. You reached the realm of infinite change."

Lu Yin lifted his hand and the star energy formed various shapes in his palm, "It's as simple as this, why?"

She raised a brow, "You couldn't do this when you first joined."

"Who told you that?" he smiled, "One just has to keep a low profile. Showoffs end up disliked by everyone, have you seen Hui Daynight?"

Michelle clearly didn't believe him; no one would ignore a gift from an Astral Combat Academy to hide their abilities. She turned to leave, "It's fine if you don't want to tell me."

Chapter 119: Nine Stacks

Watching Michelle's tempting figure, Lu Yin suddenly asked, "You said you're from the Universe Youth Council. Can you tell me who the Ten Arbiters are?"

"You don't have the right to know yet." She didn't even stop or look back.

Lu Yin took it calmly; desire for the knowledge of the Ten Arbiters was a test of sorts. Some would never pass it, yearning to understand who they were, while others would find out after passing that they were merely identities and nothing more. The Arbiters were free to do as they liked across the universe merely because they towered over the rest of their peers.

Soaring into the sky, Michelle felt the rain dripping on her and wondered something else; how had he done it? She was certain that this had been impossible for Lu Yin when he'd first joined the academy. He had gone from solid star energy to the realm of infinite change in such little time; even the most prodigal geniuses should have taken months. Was he really such a monster?

Lu Yin remained in the Rain Observatory for ten days, trying to send out his name every three days. His newfound control of star energy should have allowed him to keep his name from dispersing, but he was

a tiny step away from accomplishing that task. That tiny step was his understanding of star energy in relation to himself, taking Da Lei's comprehension and integrating it into his own.

It was on the morning of the twelfth day that he accomplished that task; the sky was still dark when he reached out and pushed his astral name into the rain. This time, he was confident that he could succeed. The two characters easily made it past the furthest point he'd been able to reach before, zooming straight past the Rain Observatory before dispersing on the other side.

He'd succeeded! He was now acknowledged by the Observatory! Lu Yin got up in excitement, feeling something new that caused his eyes to twinkle— he could now break through and become a Melder!

As the Rainmaster walked over through the rain, Lu Yin bowed down to the waist, "Hello, Tutor."

The man gave Lu Yin a look of admiration, "Your grasp of star energy changed completely in one month. This is prodigious."

"Thank you for the praise," Lu Yin answered.

The mentor nodded, "According to Academy rules, tutors provide personal guidance once you are acknowledged by the Rain Observatory. You can choose a battle technique for me to polish, or I can give you an entirely new one. It is your choice."

Lu Yin pondered over the decision. A battle technique from Astral-10 was quite tempting, but he already had quite a few battle techniques of his own. The Cosmic Palm, Skybeast Claw, Daynight Punch, Flash, and Three Stacks were enough of a drain on his attention; he didn't have the time to learn any more. He also didn't think the new battle technique could be better than the Cosmic Art, which he wanted to explore completely before looking for anything else. He looked up earnestly, "I'd like you to polish one of my battle techniques."

"Mm, sure. Show me."

Lu Yin took a deep breath and faced the empty rain before punching forward. The power of Three Stacks burst forward and resounded thrice in quick succession. The Cosmic Art was way too powerful and he had no idea whether the Rainmaster could improve it, while the Daynight Punch could expose him. The Skybeast Claw could be found in Yu Academy, so that left him with Three Stacks and the Flash. The former was the weakest link right now.

"Ah, stacking. I once met a genius in the Inniverse who was incredible at it. Alright, let me improve this for you." The Rainmaster placed his hand over Lu Yin's outstretched palm and pushed, forming a curious echo that coursed through Lu Yin's body. One, two, three, four... Eight soft echoes rang out.

"This should be enough until you become a Limiteer," the tutor continued, waving his hand around and striking the air. Nine explosions rang out and pushed back the rain, producing as many shockwaves that left Lu Yin wide-eyed. Nine Stacks! He'd somehow gotten to Nine Stacks!

"This technique does exist in the Outerverse, but nine should be the limit and enough until you become a Limiteer. Only go up to six for now, don't overdo it," the Rainmaster stated before disappearing into the rain.

Lu Yin bowed down as the man left, but doubt filled his face. Was this really only a Hunter? Could all Hunters take Three Stacks and improve it to the point of Nine Stacks? He remembered Tianming saying that Nine Stacks was a technique unique to the Grandtop Weave. If all Hunters could just recreate the technique so easily, it was impossible for that to be the case. Someone like The Undying Yushan would have spread the technique through the Frostwave Weave by now, at least. Was the Rainmaster even more powerful than a Hunter?

This doubt only lingered for a moment. Lu Yin knew he didn't have to bother with all those thoughts at this point; all he had to do was familiarize himself with Nine Stacks as soon as possible. The Cosmic Art and the personal experience through the Rainmaster ensured that it wouldn't be difficult, but his body could only handle up to six right now. It made complete sense that Nine Stacks would be enough until he became a Limiteer.

Days later, Lu Yin shouted and punched out, forming six explosions in the air even as he bled a little from his palm, "Tch, six is a bit too much as well. Hmm... If I can get to the Sixfold Shockwave Palm and stack that, it's sure to be very powerful."

After resting for half a day, he started wondering if it was possible to merge the stacking technique with his Cosmic Art. He'd thought about it when he'd learned Three Stacks, but never tried it due to a lack of time. If he actually managed to stack the Cosmic Art, his power would skyrocket. The more he thought about it, the more excited he got.

Lu Yin prepared to make a test run with Two Stacks, but the Rainmaster appeared out of nowhere and grabbed his arm before he could go through with it, "You'll lose your arm if you try that."

"Sorry?" Lu Yin was confused.

He let Lu Yin's arm go and said sternly, "You're trying to merge your stacking ability with that attack of yours?"

"Yes," Lu Yin's eyes twinkled.

"It's a death wish. Battle techniques are basically impossible to stack, or everyone in the universe would be going around doing it. Why do you think no one does that? Try to merge a battle technique and a stacking technique, and you'll shatter yourself before you hurt anyone. Many geniuses have tried and failed; powerful techniques have their own inner workings, and stacking them will overload you instantly. At the very least, a kid like you won't be able to bear it; you'd have lost your arm if you tried that just now."

"Oh. Thank you so much for the lesson!" Lu Yin said with gratitude. The Rainmaster's words made sense; he was being way too greedy. If the Cosmic Art could be stacked, which technique couldn't?

The Rainmaster grunted in acknowledgment, "Some people can strengthen their battle techniques by stacking them, but the further you go on your journey, the more you'll hurt yourself. You can only stack the Shockwave Palm because it isn't really a battle technique, just a way to produce physical force. Don't assume you'll be able to do the same for anything with power."

"Yes, Sir," Lu Yin bowed again.

Pleased with his attitude, the Rainmaster looked at Lu Yin's palm. "That technique you used just now was quite interesting."

"You've seen it before?" Lu Yin was shocked.

"No, but it seems rather unusual. How many stars can you use?"

"Six," Lu Yin revealed directly. The tutor had already seen things, so trying to conceal it would only make him seem petty. This was Astral-10 after all, hiding it forever was a pipe dream.

"Six? That's not a lot. This battle technique feels like one that needs to be a whole, and that isn't at six. Hmm... Nine might be able to do it."

Lu Yin was confused, "Whole? What does that mean?"

The Rainmaster waved it off, "You don't need to know right now. Effectively, what I mean is being able to display the power of the technique perfectly. Your grasp of all your techniques is only elementary at this point, but that attack would get to initial completion at nine stars. As for the power at that point... It will be incredible."

Chapter 120: Phoenix

Lu Yin looked at the Rainmaster expectantly, "Tutor, could you help me get to nine stars?"

"Let's see when you get onto the Rain List," the Rainmaster dismissed indifferently. The man left soon after, but he left an excited Lu Yin behind. His current Cosmic Art was only limited to eight stars, and the ninth could be a part of the next set. That was something he might never achieve on his own, so it would be wonderful if the Rainmaster could help him figure it out. But could it really be deciphered so easily? He wasn't sure. While he hadn't seen the full extent of this technique's powers, it was still terrifying.

"Getting onto the Rain List will have to wait until I become a Melder," he muttered to himself. While he could technically continue practicing until he reached that point, he had no plans to wither away on these trees. The best thing to do was find a way to make money and integrate with even more powerhouses, experiencing their strength as a shortcut to his own. For now, he would head to the trial zone entrance and participate in ported battles.

As Lu Yin left, the Rainmaster chuckled behind the veil of the Observatory, "A technique based around the stars... Lockbreaker."

"Meng Yue, 83 defeats," the old Trialmaster shouted as a depressed figure walked out of the teleportation stone, and that figure's expression turned uglier. Zhao Yilong entered the teleportation stone right behind, but returned just as quickly, "Zhao Yilong, one victory to 58 defeats."

Lu Yin arrived just as Zhao Yilong's results were announced, and he was rather surprised that any Sentinel managed a victory in the ported battles. He saw that there were only the two around and was about to head towards the stone himself, but Meng Yue grew excited upon seeing him, "Lu Yin! Let's spar!"

"Haven't you been thrashed enough in the ported battles?" Lu Yin found it funny.

"You don't dare fight me?" Meng Yue snorted.

“Hold on, I want to fight,” Lu Yin dismissed him.

Meng Yue’s eyes gleamed in response, but the youth did not stop him. He was already close to a hundred battles fought, but life was far too cruel; he had lost every single one. It wasn’t even like he’d been spending all of his time here; in fact, the majority of his time had been spent improving greatly at the Sand Ocean.

“Oh right, who has the best results?” Lu Yin asked curiously.

“Darkvoid. 13 to 47, and he even has four consecutive wins,” Meng Yue said enviously.

Lu Yin nodded and stepped into the teleportation stone’s domain, while a disinterested Zhao Yilong turned to leave. Michelle arrived around the same time, wanting to improve on her 6-29 scoreline, but she saw his figure stepping in and her eyes gleamed as she silently waited nearby.

Lu Yin had lost all five of his previous attempts, and the memory of those losses was still fresh. He was much more powerful now, but he didn’t feel like that would translate into results. There was no realm restriction on ported battles, just age; if Michelle and Darkvoid had losing records, he wouldn’t fare much better. His only hope was to have the good luck to get three consecutive victories and complete the highest Sentinel mission in the treasury.

The world changed as his fingers touched the stone, the loud roar of waves overcoming his ears. He looked around to find that he was actually over water, with a fishy smell all around. “Ocean, huh,” he mumbled as another figure appeared before him, sending out a wave of berserk star energy without restraint. The water was set aboil and shot into the heavens, rocking Lu Yin like he was a small boat ready to capsize.

“Limiteer!” he cursed his bad luck. The figure didn’t give him a moment before blinking right in front and punching out. He activated the Cosmic Art and determined the target quite quickly, but there was simply no way to avoid it. The opponent’s star energy had solidified and sealed the surroundings; the only way to avoid was to attack.

Lu Yin had two options right now: one was to attack the star energy around him, and the other was to attack the opponent himself. He didn’t hesitate to raise his palm to begin the Six Stacks Shockwave Palm, but a loud explosion sent him flying away to a loss.

He died too quickly to notice the opponent pausing for a moment in shock, “A Sentinel actually paused my attack... Another freak.”

“Lu Yin, six defeats,” the elder’s voice rang out as a helpless Lu Yin walked out. Michelle didn’t bother with him and entered the ported battle herself.

Meng Yue walked over, “It’s our turn.”

“You’re not my match,” Lu Yin waved him off again.

“Why don’t we try? Take this!” Meng Yue replied coldly as he started an attack, but the old man’s invisible force pressed him down, “No fighting near the trial zones.”

Lu Yin didn’t bother, continuing to stare at the teleportation stone. It wasn’t long after before a calm Michelle walked out, “Michelle, six victories to thirty defeats.”

Meng Yue was still suppressed by the elder, so Lu Yin entered once more. Meanwhile, Michelle paused quite close to the stone and waited. This time, he appeared on a large platform filled with broken rocks, with the opponent already having arrived. He was pleasantly surprised to see that it was a Sentinel; it was quite rare to come across those.

Within a gloomy forest in a distant sky, teleportation stones hung atop the trees like stars. A youth was seated under one particular stone, with a few scattered individuals waiting nearby. One youth commented, "So much time has passed. Junior Hart should have won a battle or two; he might even do three and finish the mission."

"Of course. Junior Hart is the only Sentinel who can get three consecutive victories in the ported battles; remember whose brother he is. His Undying Bird bloodline is quite powerful," someone agreed.

"Let's hope he only meets a Melder or something, he can win then."

"Mm. Astral-5's reputation will skyrocket right before the Astral Combat Tournament if he does."

Back atop the stone platform, Hart was pleasantly surprised as well. He had already achieved two victories, and never thought he'd have the luck to meet a Sentinel in his third match.

Hart Phoenix? Lu Yin looked at his opponent's codename and quickly realized that this was likely the person's real name. He had to be rather confident to use his actual name in ported battles.

Bang! The two attacked at the same time, Lu Yin's hand forming the twentieth form of the Skybeast Claw. He couldn't underestimate anyone in these battles, especially someone with the confidence to use his real name. However, a blaze flew forward from Hart's hand and drowned the attack, burning it to ash with a loud rumble that left Lu Yin shocked. An innate gift? Even a Melder would have a hard time against such temperatures!

Hart did not seem to have any reaction to the Skybeast Claw and his blaze continued to fly towards Lu Yin. He was firmly of the belief that no Sentinel was his opponent; in fact, the Phoenix Clan was unrivalled in the same realm.

The platform melted under the blistering heat. Lu Yin flashed away, but even the void was distorted by the blaze and he didn't get far. The flames twisted around Hart's body as he charged over at high speed.

Both combatants were lightning quick. Lu Yin's Flash even held hints of the speed techniques of the Daynight Clan, but Hart seemed capable of swimming freely through the flames and appearing wherever he wanted in an instant.

A dozen booms rang out as they exchanged blows. In order to experience his opponent's power, Lu Yin went on the defensive. On the other hand, Hart was genuinely surprised that his opponent could withstand his blows. Few Sentinels could survive his flames for so long, but it was time to end things. His figure suddenly paused and he clapped his palms together, unfolding them as a bird cry rang out in the void. A bird of pure flames appeared between his hands, distorting the air as it charged Lu Yin down.

Lu Yin tried to flash away, but the bird was even faster than him and burrowed through the void. He was forced to turn around and use the Six Stacks Shockwave Palm, giving rise to a loud boom as the

aftershocks dissipated the flames into the sky. Even Hart had to retreat a few steps in the face of that attack, staring at the distance in shock. Lu Yin withdrew his palm and stared back; this was a strong opponent.

Hart actually grew excited at the prospect of a Sentinel that could withstand the first form of his battle technique, but Lu Yin didn't give him much time to think. The initiative was switched around this time, and Lu Yin flashed over and used the Six Stacks Shockwave Palm once more. The air pressure all around concentrated to the point that sight was distorted, forcing a wide-eyed Hart to burst forth with that bird again. The flaming creature crowed in fury; how could the Undying Bird be a pushover?

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! The platform shattered completely, and both combatants rose into the skies. One controlled a blazing bird that baked the earth, while the other crushed air itself with his power. Their violent clashes sparked all around.