

## STAR ODYSSEY

### Chapter 20: Origin Of The Apocalypse

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The Timestop Domain initially provided Lu Yin with three days of frozen time, but the price to extend that was far too steep. One fist-sized crystal only added five seconds; if that scaled, a full cubic meter would only add about 80 minutes to the timer. His need for star crystals had grown once more; he needed them for cultivation, battle technique training, equipment, charging his die, increasing the duration of the Timestop Domain, and a million other small things. He was starting to believe that some disreputable acts would be worth it if he could get enough crystals; in fact, maybe becoming an interstellar bandit wasn't a bad career choice.

Shaking off that thought, he examined his surroundings. Three days of time here was a rather awkward duration; he didn't have any star crystals to absorb, and there wasn't enough time to upgrade his Cosmic Palm. What about other techniques? Wondering for a moment, he soon decided that there was only one technique that he could practice right now: the Spacerender Palm.

Spacerender Palm was the upgraded version of the Shockwave Palm, another battle technique available to the masses. Its physical requirements far exceeded that of the Shockwave Palm, to the point that not even many Melders could utilize it. However, this suited him perfectly; he had no energy crystals to train anything else, and he was confident in the strength of his body. Spacerender Palm was much more powerful than Shockwave Palm, and more importantly, it was a long-range attack; it could make up for his current shortcomings. Although he hadn't been practicing his battle techniques for a while, he hadn't relaxed his training regimen for his body.

The near-zero star energy cost of Shockwave Palm was the reason that Lu Yin had managed to use it to kill Vesta. Although the universe was flooded with star energy on the whole, every planet had a unique ecosystem and some of them weren't compatible with it. Techniques like the Shockwave Palm that relied on one's physical energy were extremely underrated by most people; in the process of chasing more formidable battle techniques, they didn't pause to wonder whether those techniques could be used in all situations. As the timer continued to tick down, he went down and started doing push-ups with a single finger.

Three sweaty days quickly passed, and Lu Yin watched the scenery before him warping once more. He returned to the training arena he had just entered on Earth, and a quick glance confirmed that only a second had passed in his three days of rough training. Taking a quick bath, he rested for the rest of the night.

When he met Jeraldine the next morning, Lu Yin noticed the hint of dread in her gaze as he asked, "Do you know what your role is?"

"Your bodyguard," Jeraldine answered softly.

He chuckled, "Let's go, the Executioner should be awake soon."

Having sustained injuries far worse than Jeraldine's, Zhou Shan had been undergoing advanced therapy. After sustaining severe wounds from Terence, he would have been killed by Orton if not for Lu Yin. Even with the half-month of treatment, he was visibly thinner and weaker.

When Lu Yin brought Jeraldine towards the Executioner's ward, Feng Hong got up immediately, "Brother Lu— no, Hidden Sage— the Executioner has woken up."

Lu Yin felt helpless at the use of the moniker. He definitely didn't want that title when the second batch of students was about to arrive, as it would place a

target on his back. However, all of Nanjing now called him by that title, and it was widely known that he had reached the Realm of Sky. There wasn't any way to refute.

"You can stay here," he responded, stepping past Feng Hong to enter the ward. Feng Hong stared vigilantly at Jeraldine for obvious reasons, but she didn't bother with him. She didn't care about anyone outside of Lu Yin himself here; were he not from the greater universe like her, it would have taken a while for her ego to allow her to give in.

In the ward, Qin Xuan was the only one present besides Zhou Shan. She grew alert as soon as she saw Lu Yin stepping in, moving in front of Zhou Shan.

Lu Yin was quite amused, "Don't mind me, I'm just here to talk to the Executioner."

"Qin Xuan, move aside." Zhou Shan's feeble voice prompted her to stop muttering to herself and step aside.

Lu Yin looked towards her, "You can leave."

Qin Xuan's gaze changed, and she looked at Zhou Shan who nodded in agreement. Still, the hesitation was clear in her steps.

"My apologies, she's too worried about me." Zhou Shan said weakly as he gestured for Lu Yin to sit.

Lu Yin sat beside the man's bed and smiled, "She's afraid I'll harm you."

He chuckled, "If you wanted to do that, I wouldn't have lived this long. I heard you gave up on the north to focus on Nanjing and the west?"

Lu Yin nodded and stood up, walking to the window and staring at the ruins of Zhongshan, "It's been half a year since the Apocalypse; there might be a lot of zombies, but they're not too much of a threat. The mutant beasts are a

different story; they'll grow stronger with time, and the entire frontline might collapse if it's stretched too thin."

"It's exactly because it's been half a year that I wanted to reach out to the rest and join hands to reclaim China. Zhao Yu risked her life to come to Nanjing for that reason."

Lu Yin turned back, "How many casualties does the stronghold suffer every day? How long do you think our path will be? I already had Luo Yi report that the supposedly safe roads had a zombie king with intelligence. That thing could evolve, and even consume special materials to develop rudimentary battle techniques. Your captains can't handle that, will you go there personally? And how much can you do yourself? Can you ensure that there won't be a single Realm of Sky on the way?"

Zhou Shan went silent for a while before smiling bitterly, "I can't, but I need to establish contact with the capital. I need to figure out the origin of the Apocalypse."

Lu Yin perked up, "The origin of the Apocalypse?"

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Zhou Shan stared solemnly at Lu Yin, "We received some news when the country brought that corpse back from Neptune. We relied on the news to be ahead of everyone else and become the Seven Sages, but the corpse posed its own problems. But there were problems; the Ministry of Science and Technology discovered an abnormal substance on its body that can instigate strange changes in DNA; I believe that is what brought about the Apocalypse."

"What happened then?"

Zhou Shan continued with a pained expression, "The Ministry couldn't control the substance, so Primary ordered for the corpse to be transported away. The seven of us were separated to protect different parts of China. Primary might

have guessed things already, but the Apocalypse struck the very day the corpse was to be transported.”

Lu Yin was staring intently at Zhou Shan, but the Executioner stared at the ceiling instead, “We don’t know how it happened, but there was great change in an instant. The researchers, Primary, and a lot of other people died in a great explosion. We tried our best to get in touch, but no one knew what happened, even Zhang Dingtian who was in the capital.”

“What about that corpse?” Lu Yin asked quickly. That thing would contain a formcast model, and it could be the same criminal from the Innerverse that these students were trying to find.

Zhou Shan shook his head, “No idea, there was only a giant pit filled with lava left behind. All the information vanished in that explosion, and the Apocalypse arrived.”

Lu Yin could tell that Zhou Shan was not lying. He had come to Nanjing from Hubei precisely as a part of his search for the corpse; it seemed like he had to pay the capital a visit. He sighed, “Get some rest, I’ll be going.”

“Are you leaving Nanjing?” Zhou Shan asked.

“You don’t want me to?”

“Of course not, you’re the only one who can defend the city. You managed to injure the strongest of the aliens even when you were in the Realm of Earth. Now that you’re in the Realm of Sky, you’re certainly stronger than me. I hope for you to stay. The camp will follow your orders, as will I.”

Lu Yin was confused, “Why? You’re still the revered Executioner, Nanjing will still be yours after I leave.”

Zhou Shan could not help but laugh bitterly, “Do you think I want that title? I’m a career soldier; I defend Nanjing because of Primary’s orders, nothing else.

The survival of the millions in Nanjing is what's important, I hope you can stay and protect them.”

Lu Yin stared into Zhou Shan's eyes, and the man did not show a single hint of weakness. He eventually nodded and turned to leave the ward, “I'll stay, for now.”

Zhou Shan heaved a sigh of relief and looked out the window. The battle half a month ago was etched deeply in his memory. He was termed the Executioner, but he was no more than a pawn. The pressure of millions of lives was too great, and he truly hoped for Lu Yin to stay behind for a future where his people survived. The information about the corpse was top secret, but it had shown his sincerity.

Qin Xuan hurriedly entered the ward as Lu Yin left, and Lu Yin nodded towards Feng Hong before leaving with Jeraldine in tow. Zhou Shan being a soldier was a heavy revelation, as it was an added responsibility. Lu Yin didn't want to bear that burden; while he respected the Executioner, he wouldn't stay behind forever to lead the man. With Terence's formcast model on hand, he could stay here for now and wait until he became a Melder. However, nothing was more important than that corpse; he would leave the moment there was news.