

## Chapter 201: Silver's Art

Everyone was frozen when they saw a student tear through the void.

There were few who would go so far during the initial tournament stage of Three Academies Guarding the Gate. The stronger students would usually breeze through unprovoked as attempting to stop them would only prolong the battle. Dai Ao's one attack made many truly understand the power of the Astral Combat Academy's top students.

The student was unfortunately eliminated. It was because their actions had been deemed an attack even though they had held the strength of an Area Master.

Dai Ao sighed when he realized that he had actually tried to go all out against an Area Master.

At this time, only about a hundred students had been eliminated. Most of them had died to Chilian Daynight's poison, but some had also died to Dai Ao's gravity field.

It seemed that this first round was doomed to be a repeat of the previous Astral Combat Tournaments. In that tournament, the three guarding academies had all been eliminated, and from what everyone could see, this year's first round seemed to be going the same way. No matter how strong a student from Astral-10 was purported to be, was it possible for him to stop so many students?

Many of the students from Astral-7 had fallen into despair.

Nightqueen Yanqing had a cold look on her face. This was the one Astral Combat Tournament that everyone was focused on, but she might not even have the right to participate. What a bunch of fools.

At that moment, on a spacecraft in space, Liu Xiaoyun was also frowning as her eyes flashed with helplessness.

Madam Nalan sighed. "Forget it, Xiaoyun. You'll get plenty of opportunities in the future."

There was nothing that Liu Xiaoyun could do.

"Do you honestly believe that Silver can't hold his own?" Lu Yin asked.

Liu Xiaoyun glanced at him coldly, not even bothering to reply.

Madam Nalan's eyes lit up at Lu Yin's words. "Do you think that he can do it?"

Lu Yin shrugged as he replied, "I can't say for sure, but it's definitely possible."

Lu Yin did not know how deep the Neohuman Alliance's strength went, but he knew that Silver was more than he appeared to be. Even now, when Lu Yin looked at the screen, Silver's sly, wolfish grin had yet to disappear from his face.

Outside the valley, the people from Astral-10 were similarly at a loss. They also thought that Silver was helpless.

There were people chatting amongst themselves not too far away. "Look at that disgusting smile on that Astral-10 bastard's face. I wish that I could tear his face off and smash it."

“Right? His smile is so sneaky. It’s horrifying.”

“He’s obviously not a good person.”

...

The people from Astral-10 silently took several steps backwards.

Within the valley, four hundred or so students excitedly charged towards the end. When they saw that the last guard, Silver, was nonchalantly leaning against a hill, their excitement peaked. Did he give up? Awesome! That’ll save us a lot of energy.

Among the crowd, Liu Ji instantly paused the moment she saw Silver. It’s him? He’s the person who made my scalp go numb and who made me realize that Astral-10 had secrets in it! Liu Ji remembered this person well and was sure that he was very powerful.

“What’s wrong, Liu Ji? Let’s go!” Gus tried to hurry her along. Liu Ji’s eyes flashed, but she did reply.

The first batch of students had already charged over to Silver. Many were furious and had started cursing Astral-10 for sending this piece of trash over; this student was about to be defeated, but he still didn’t have the courage to attack them.

Outside the valley, Wu Da’s eyes widened. A piece of trash? That person is definitely extremely strong despite him being only in the Melder realm.

Wind blew by as dozens of students rushed past Silver. Someone even mocked him as they passed him, calling him a piece of garbage.

At that moment, Silver’s eyes completely opened. An indescribable chill that penetrated all the way to the bone spread out in all directions around him. All of the students felt a shiver creep down their spines from the startling change in Silver. Everyone who had run past Silver had died without a sound or struggle. All they had seen was a flashing butterfly knife stained with blood.

How quickly had Silver killed all of those people? Out of all of the numerous students in the immediate vicinity, only the Area Masters were able to tell. Most hadn’t seen anything, and even the dead had only been able to grasp the moment they died when they saw the butterfly knife slide across their necks. The only evidence of Silver’s attack was a light redness on their necks afterwards. There were no other signs of injury on their body.

In just ten seconds or so, at least twenty people had fallen. Silver, meanwhile, was still standing in the middle of the valley as he smiled at the rest of the students with his same horrifying, wolfish grin.

If Chilian Daynight’s attacks were glamorous and Dai Ao’s attacks were shocking, then Silver’s attacks that were delicate and left no trace were the most startling.

The valley was smothered in silence now. All of the students stared at Silver in shock. In just an instant, he had killed more people than Chilian Daynight or Dai Ao, and he had done it without batting an eye.

Atop the peak to the south of the valley, Nightqueen Yanqing’s eyes lit up. “How interesting. His attacks were extremely fast—even most Area Masters can’t reach his level of speed. Is this the level of power in Astral-10? Not bad.”

Kuang Wang was shocked as well. "I thought that only those two senior students who remained in Astral-10 despite its scandal were powerful, but he's pretty good as well."

"I'm very excited to see what kind of person the leader of the tenth academy is." Far away, the man in the eighth seat mentioned Lu Yin with curiosity. His name was Feng Shang, and he was the leader of Astral-8 and the Realm Master of the Dao of Illusion. He was also one of the people whom Jared feared.

After making this comment, Feng Shang glanced at the person on the ninth seat. A man with a huge pair of headphones sat there, bobbing his head. He was the leader of Astral-9, the Dao of Change's Realm Master, Liu Yin.

"Can you hear me, Liu Yin?" Feng Shang shouted.

Liu Yin continued obliviously swaying his head about, leaving Feng Shang speechless.

Silver's ability to kill so many people so quickly had shocked everyone, including the ten academies' students and mentors who were all watching the tournament. They had never imagined that there could be somebody this outstanding in Astral-10.

Within the spacecraft, Madam Nalan looked at Lu Yin in shock. "This student is amazing."

Liu Xiaoyun was surprised as well.

Lu Yin merely smiled in response. "He's definitely very good. Even I don't know how powerful he truly is."

"Aren't you the leader of Astral-10?" Madam Nalan asked curiously.

Lu Yin burst into laughter. "My title came out of nowhere. He might have even been the one who gave it to me."

"Is that so?" Madam Nalan refrained from asking any more.

Within the valley, Liu Ji's eyelids continuously twitched. She knew it! She knew that this guy was more than he seemed.

Even though Silver had revealed a surprising strength when he killed all those people incredibly quickly, the other students were still Astral Combat Academy students that had enrolled based on their own merits. Silver was still merely a Melder, which meant that his strength wasn't terrifying enough to freeze all the other students in place. Before long, they resumed the charge forwards.

Silver grinned as he watched the tide of students approach. His butterfly knife twirled around like a dancer, and with each glint of light that it reflected, more people died. He was killing people way too quickly, and his attacks seemed to always completely disregard his targets' defenses.

However, the people that Silver chose to attack were never Area Masters. He wasn't crazy enough to think that he could stop everyone. Chilian Daynight and Dai Ao had adopted the same tactic, all of them choosing to avoid obstructing the Area Master-level students.

As the butterfly knife flashed out again, Gus clutched at his neck. He had nearly reached the level of an Area Master, and yet, he had also been killed. Beside him, Liu Ji also grew pale. She was weaker than Gus, and when she looked up, she found herself staring straight into Silver's icy gaze.

Silver smiled at her, and after that, his butterfly knife flashed.

Liu Ji grit her teeth as her eyes flitted around. With the help of her innate gift, she was able to see the trajectory of the butterfly knife, but she still was not able to block his attack.

With a clang, the butterfly knife was blocked by a palm that suddenly appeared in front of Silver; Charon had stopped his attack.

"I'm sorry, but she's not someone who you can touch," Charon said coldly.

Silver smiled and fluidly transitioned to attack another nearby student. The butterfly knife struck his neck, and the unfortunate student collapsed in disbelief before disappearing from the Lifeseek Realm.

The rear of the valley was now the site of a gigantic massacre. For Silver, killing was an art form, but in the eyes of the general populace, he was a terrifying murderer. This became even more true when his butterfly knife wondrously split from one blade into two, and then from two into three. Everyone felt a chill run down their spines. "It's a domain! That guy has comprehended a domain!"

Quite a few were shocked by this scene. Not just anyone could comprehend a domain, and even a genius Lockbreaker like Charon had only just begun comprehending his own.

At this moment, everyone understood why this Melder had been able to cut down everyone in his path with ease, even those above his level. For those who had comprehended a domain, battling above their realm was not a problem.

A lucky few students managed to slip through the valley while many others collapsed. Though Silver was the last line of defence, he killed more people than even Chilian Daynight and Dai Ao combined. His domain was extremely suited to slaughter.

As the audience watched Silver, even the Realm Masters seated atop the peak looked grim. Anybody who had comprehended a domain was not to be underestimated, even if they were only a Melder.

On the sixth seat, Dao Bo's eyes twinkled; he was interested in all variations of domains.

To the south of the valley, there were ten large battle drums. There was one person standing in front of each one. They were the students who had been selected for the second section of the tournament, one from each of the ten academies. These battle drums had ten arenas marked out behind them, and at this moment, the first students were beginning to arrive.

The first arrivals were all Area Masters from the various trial zones, and they were all very powerful. The three students guarding the valley had not attacked them, which was why they'd managed to reach this point without much difficulty. When the rest of their fellow academy branch students who passed through the valley arrived, they could immediately start striking their drum.

In front of Astral-10's drum, Lulu was looking up at the screen, shocked. She never expected that Silver, who had never revealed his skills, would actually be this amazingly powerful. He had activated a domain of all things, and he could even easily kill those who were a realm above him. He was definitely no

weaker than Lu Yin—no, he might even be stronger. While Lu Yin had indeed comprehended battle force, his was still only at the elementary level. Silver's domain was clearly not something recently comprehended, which made him terrifying. It was no wonder why he was always grinning in such a disturbing manner.

With this in mind, Lulu glanced at the war drum that was the furthest away. That was Astral-1's war drum, and a girl stood in front: Grandini Mavis, someone else from the Mavis family.

Perhaps she felt Lulu's gaze on her, but Grandini turned around to smile at Lulu.

Lulu pursed her lips pensively and scanned the rest of the students standing in front of the war drums. They were among the strongest of their respective academies, and they might even be second only to the realm masters. This was because it took an inordinate amount of strength to make these war drums sound out. Only those with the strength of an Area Master had the required power.

The other students standing by the drums didn't really stand out, but the person from Astral-5 caught Lulu's attention. It wasn't that he seemed particularly powerful; rather, he seemed far too weak. This man gave Lulu the impression of extreme frailty. Could someone like him even strike the war drum? It required great physical strength.

Lulu looked away and glanced to the side. Astral-9 had chosen a grim young man with a pale face. He emanated coldness from every pore of his body. If his eyes were closed, Lulu might have even assumed that this person was a corpse. The Astral Combat Academies really took in all sorts of people.

In the middle of the valley, Dai Ao managed to stop a hundred or so students; his innate gift of gravity had reached the limit. These students were all powerful, and even if they did not fight back, they had all kinds of different methods to save themselves. Dai Ao had a menacing expression as the gravity covering the middle part of the valley vanished. Right after, he pushed his speed to the maximum and even applied antigravity to himself to increase his speed even further.

Without the gravity holding them back any longer, a new wave of students immediately charged forward.

## **Chapter 202: Knocking On The Dragon's Door**

Visible clouds of green, toxic gas could be seen floating through the air. Chilian Daynight had broken through the ice seal, releasing a poison gas that filled the valley. It covered an enormous area, which also meant that it was much more dilute compared to before. With Dai Ao and Silver's strength, however, most of the students would not be able to pass through the valley unless they were a top ranked fighter of their academy.

Twenty minutes passed before the last student exited the valley, thus ending the tournament's initial segment of Three Academies Guarding the Gate.

A total of 362 people had managed to break through, which was nearly half of the starting number. If just a few more had slipped through, then the three Astral academies guarding the gates would have been eliminated from the tournament.

Nightqueen Yanqing heaved a pent up sigh of relief. Thankfully, the Three Academies Guarding the Gate stage was mainly for entertainment purposes. If the Area Masters had seriously attacked, then even if all

three of the students from Astral-3, Astral-7, and Astral-10 had worked together, they would not have been able to stop the other academy students from breaking through.

This portion of the tournament allowed the spectators to see just how powerful the students of the Astral Combat Academy were. It wasn't just the students guarding the gates, but also those who broke through. Many of the spectators had realized that they wouldn't have been able to get past those three defenders themselves. They had used poison, gravity, and a killing domain—each terrifying in their own right. Even some of the Explorers had a grim look when faced with the reality that the young generation was growing increasingly powerful.

Out in space, Liu Xiaoyun sighed in relief that her academy had passed this initial stage. She looked at Silver on the screen, who was still wearing his perpetual smile that gave her the chills. He was merely a Melder, but in his domain, he was able to fight against Limiteers as an equal. Even though the Limiteers weren't allowed to counterattack, few could even block his moves. The moment Silver became a Limiteer, he would definitely become someone to watch out for in the battles for the Realm Master titles.

It was not just Liu Xiaoyun; the other Realm Masters sitting atop the peak at the south of the valley had their eyes on Silver as well.

And within the Great Yu Empire, Jue Lang had a large frown on his face as he considered Silver's mysterious origins. Although Silver was from the Great Yu Empire, there was a pathetically small amount of information about him, and it even seemed that his information had been covered up. Who exactly is he?

On the screen of Undying Yushan's gadget, Silver's background information was displayed. It was very normal and simple, and also very mysterious.

Within the valley, Chilian Daynight and Dai Ao curiously sized Silver up. This person was terrifying; he was personally responsible for nearly half of the students' deaths. Although they were in the Lifeseek Realm, they had a strange feeling that Silver wouldn't hold back even if he were actually killing people. In other words, he was a madman.

Silver had an enormous grin as he looked up at somebody.

When the participating students reached the areas behind the battle drums, the next stage, Knocking on the Dragon's Door, started.

All the students from Astral-4 gathered together right away. On the screen, under the gazes of countless people in the universe, a man grunted as his palm expanded and the air around him distorted. His battle technique caused the ground to crack beneath his feet, and there were even some spatial tears that reached into the sky, leaving the onlookers in dumbstruck in awe.

Boom!

A startling sound echoed throughout the arena as soundwaves that were visible to the naked eye rippled through the air. The ones who were first affected by the soundwaves were the participating students from Astral-4.

This was a form of initiation by battle drums. During ancient times, when wars were waged, an army would always strike their drums before entering battle. Only those who were able to withstand the drum's heavy soundwaves were allowed to enter the battlefield. And here, the Astral Combat Tournament could be considered a battlefield as well.

The dozens of participating students from Astral-4 could not move as the heavy soundwaves passed through them. Even if blood flowed out of their eyes, ears, mouth, and nose, they had to endure it. At this moment, they refused to collapse no matter what.

The soundwaves passed through the students from Astral-4 and spread outwards, gradually encompassing all of the participating students. This included the students from Astral-3, Astral-7, and Astral-10, who had just arrived.

The ground cracked, and shards of stone flew into the air before being pulverized into dust.

At that moment, another drumbeat rang out from the direction of Astral-1's side. Right before Lulu's eyes, Grandini Mavis attacked the drum with a punch. Although her attack didn't create spatial tears like the man from Astral-4, her attack was just as shocking because she was beating the drum with pure physical strength.

Boom!

Boom!

Boom!

Boom!

Boom!

Boom!

The deafening sounds caused the very air to distort, and the explosion of concentrated sound waves caused a huge ruckus in the arena. In front of Grandini, the three valleys from the previous segment had been destroyed. The other various combat academy students who were watching from the side were also affected by the stacked soundwaves. They covered their eyes as their faces scrunched up in pain.

Behind Astral-10's battle drum, Coco bit her lip, Meng Yue's face turned red, and Schutz clenched the handle of his sword. These soundwaves had forced them to the brink of fainting.

Lulu let out a sound, lifted her hand, and punched forward. It was only when her little white fist made contact with the drum skin that she finally understood why she had been told to go all-out. The battle drum was so tough that ordinary people wouldn't even be able to cause the drum to make a sound.

Boom!

The soundwaves from the drums kept overlapping, until finally, some students collapsed from the power of the vibrations. These students had managed to pass through the previous segment by sheer luck, but that alone was not enough for them to qualify to pass through this stage. The Astral Combat Tournament was a place where only the truly powerful and not those who were merely lucky would shine.

In front of Astral-5's battle drum, the man who Lulu had assumed was frail raised his hand. Water gathered in the sky until it formed a giant ball. As time passed, the size of the ball continued to increase. Many were startled by how much water had gathered, and the water ball was clearly horrifyingly heavy.

Boom!

Astral-5's battle drum produced an earth-shattering sound that overpowered the sound from Astral-9's drum. It also caused at least twenty students to cough up blood and collapse.

Behind Astral-10's battle drum, Darkvoid looked up at the frail-looking man. His name was Tu Bo, and like him, he was an individual who was being nurtured by Shamrock Enterprises. This meant he had a terrifying innate gift.

All the battle drums were beat resoundingly, but this also caused everything within a radius of ten thousand meters to be destroyed. The ground turned to dust as smoke and dust filled the air. Above the war drums, the sky itself had cracked, as if it were unable to withstand the pressure from the beating drums, with more cracks appearing with each passing second, like raindrops.

The numerous people spectating throughout the universe watched on in shock. The participants were merely hitting drums, so was there a need to make such a huge commotion? Wasn't tearing the void something that only cultivators who were at the Explorer realm or above could do? How were these students casually causing such a terrifying phenomenon to appear?

At this moment, Gerbach and the rest of the Yu Academy students who were watching the screen finally understood the vast difference that separated them and the top geniuses of the universe. It wasn't something that could be measured with just numbers—there was simply no way to compare them. It now made sense why Wendy Yushan had thought nothing of the Yu Academy's students in the past.

Lulu was not a topic of major conversation because her identity was obvious to anyone who looked. The Mavis family had an innate gift of strength, and they were also known for their extreme talent. Her abilities were nowhere as surprising as Silver's earlier reveal.

At this point, Wu Da's focus had shifted toward the south, where there were towering incense sticks that were five hundred meter tall. These incense sticks were very difficult to light up, not because of their material, but rather because of the ancestral bloodlust that surrounded them. It was hard to explain this bloodlust with words, but it was similar to a domain. Regular people would not even be able to approach the incense sticks.

Lighting up these giant sticks of incense might seem simple, but in actuality, it was the most difficult stage of them all. Throughout the storied history of the Astral Combat Tournament, quite a few academies had been disqualified at this stage because none of their students had been able to successfully light up a stick. Hence, anybody who could do so was definitely a powerhouse of the Astral Combat Academy.

The other academies definitely had their trump cards for this stage, but what about Astral-10? Who from their academy would light the incense? It was possible for Big Pao and Little Pao, but these two were only capable of barely doing so. One's combat power was not an indicator for one's ability to light the incense sticks. Just the brothers' personalities were enough to reduce their chances of success



greatly, as lighting the incense was a form of paying tribute to their forebearers, which required a reverent heart.

As the soundwaves gradually dissipated, the sky regained its calm. The video feed cut to another scene, refocusing all the spectators' vision onto the ten towering ancient incense sticks in the distance, as well as the ten figures standing a thousand meters away from the sticks.

In the previous tournaments, it had almost always been the leaders of the academies who took this challenge on. Thus, these ten figures were the ones with the most eyes on them.

The ten solitary figures stood in front of the incense sticks that were a thousand meters away from them. This was their test.

Everyone looked at Astral-1's representative, who was a woman, and she was standing in front of the incense stick. There was a veil covering her face, but despite that, her cold aura that had a hint of an ancientness to it still emanated through. Nobody dared to underestimate her. Astral-1 had been the top academy for many years, and historically, they possessed the most monstrous powerhouses.

Next was Astral-2, whose representative was a man with a sword who quite a few people recognized. His name was Liu Tang, and he was a disciple of the Sword Sect. While he wasn't an Area Master, he was not any weaker than one, and he might even be more powerful. There was no need to explain his talent; the two words "Sword Sect" were enough to explain everything.

Astral-3 had sent someone from the Daynight clan and so did Astral-4. The Daynight clan represented power, so nobody bothered wondering how powerful those two were as it was patently obvious.

Astral-5's representative was an Area Master, and he had a gentle demeanor, had smiling eyes, and overall, seemed rather calm. Quite a few people already knew of him. He was called Xia Ye, and he was the Area Master of the Dao of Heaven's Mechanical Mound. Even though he was widely recognized, almost nobody knew his true strength. However, the fact that he was standing there proved that he must be very powerful.

Astral-6 sent out a fresh face. Many powerhouses in the academies did not readily show their strength, and perhaps only their respective Realm Masters knew how strong these students really were.

Astral-7 and Astral-8 also sent out unknown students, so it was similarly hard to gauge how powerful they were. However, if they were chosen to compete on the stage of Tribute to the Ancestors, it meant that they were sure to become superstars by the end of the tournament.

Quite a few recognized the person that Astral-9 had sent out. To be more specific, his family was very well-known: the traitor of the Phoenix Family, the Black Phoenix Family. The representative was Bonny Phoenix, who had become a Limiteer.

Behind Astral-5's battle drum and among the dozens of other participants, Hart Phoenix's eyes blazed as his lips curved upwards. He'd gone through hell before finally successfully metamorphosing. His most ardent desire was to tear Lu Yin and this traitor apart with his own hands during the tournament so that everyone could see the splendor of the Phoenix clan once more.

Everyone gaped when they saw who was standing a thousand meters away from Astral-10's stick. A Melder? They actually sent a Melder?

Many had guessed that Astral-10's representative would be Big Pao or Little Pao as these two had challenged a Realm Master before and were as powerful as an Area Master. While it would be difficult for them to light the incense because of their temperament, it still made more sense than sending a Melder of all things!

Yes, Astral-10 had sent Xia Luo. He calmly smiled as he stood there even as numerous people in the universe doubtfully looked at him. His expression remained unchanging and he even seemed relaxed.

Wu Da was excited when he saw Xia Luo. "That's the one! He's the one who easily dispersed Uro's full force attack. He's definitely very powerful. It's even possible that he comprehended a domain, and on top of that, he's a Lockbreaker! The moment he succeeds at lighting the incense, he'll definitely shock the ten academies. He'll be the first Melder in history to succeed at this stage. Hurry up! You've got to succeed!"

Out in space, Madam Nalan froze and turned towards Lu Yin. "Your Astral-10 really has boundless courage."

Lu Yin chuckled. "He's very strong."

"How strong is he? As strong as Silver?" Madam Nalan was very curious. Her inquisitive nature had been piqued by Astral-10; the academy that had been expelled from the Inniverse.

Lu Yin nodded. "Though I will say, I don't know exactly how strong he is since he hasn't revealed it."

Liu Xiaoyun disdainfully replied, "It seems that you really are what the rumors claim to be, nothing more than a false front for Astral-10."

Madam Nalan hurriedly exclaimed, "Don't be rude, Xiaoyun!"

Lu Yin just chuckled, not minding the derogatory comment at all.

At that point, the pilot announced, "We are about to reach Astral-10, madam."

Both Lu Yin and Liu Xiaoyun's eyes lit up. It was finally their turn to take to the stage.

### **Chapter 203: Lu Yin's Arrival**

In the Great Yu Empire, Huo Qingshan and Jue Lang exchanged glances at each other. This Xia Luo was also from the Yu Empire, and he had a similar background to Silver's. When had the empire become so powerful? Astral-10's representatives so far, for Three Academies Guarding the Gate, Knocking on the Dragon's Door, and now Tribute to the Ancestors, had all come from the Great Yu Empire. Even Astral-10's seeded student was Lu Yin. This was just too strange.

Neither of them could stop themselves from gazing towards the palace when they thought about this. The crown prince, Dorren Yushan, had tried to investigate Xia Luo's background when he first passed Astral-10's entrance exam, but he had been informed that he did not have the authority to do so. Perhaps His Majesty was the only one who could look into Xia Luo's history.

Meanwhile, Undying Yushan was looking up Xia Luo's background on his gadget, but the display only showed two words: "top secret." He also had no authority to probe, because Xia Luo's identity was kept confidential from the entire Outerverse. Undying Yushan sighed as he rubbed his temples. "It looks like quite a few outstanding people came out of the empire over these last few years."

In the Lifeseek Realm, while the various academy leaders sat up atop the tallest peak, the next stage, Tribute to the Ancestors, officially began.

The ten selected students each raised a foot and started approaching the ancient incense sticks.

The power and effects of these ancient incense sticks was no secret. Descriptions of the incense sticks' suppressive field that was scarily similar to a domain were widely spread, but even so, it was still shocking for the audience and the students who were experiencing it for the first time.

Liu Tang's gaze grew cold when he stepped within the incense sticks' range. He saw an endless amount of sword qi that tore through the heavens. This was the remnant aura of the ancient elders' bloodlust. Each sliver of sword qi sliced through the void as they headed towards Liu Tang. Despite this infernal world before him, he steadily moved forward step by step, unwavering and majestic in his bearing as he seemingly walked towards his death.

As the Astral Combat Academy students approached the ancient incense sticks, each of them felt the pressure on them mounting with every step. By this point, the differences between the students were clear for the audience to see. Of the ten students, the girl from Astral-1, Liu Tang from Astral-2, the Daynight clan members from Astral-3 and Astral-4, Xia Ye from Astral-5, and Xia Luo from Astral-10 were the only ones who were able to steadily take multiple steps forward while everyone else had paused in their march.

Xia Luo's performance astounded many, as moving forward this smoothly without any breaks as a Melder was really not easy.

Silver leisurely stepped out from the valley and stared at the screen in the air. The smile of his lip curved up even wider. "So you cannot resist it either. Some people are born to be powerless while others are destined to be outstanding. Are you the same as me? Let me see it clearly."

The ancient incense sticks were only a thousand meters away from the students, but they felt as distant as the sky. When Xia Luo and the rest reached the hundred meter mark, they all stopped.

The bloodlust emanating from the incense sticks was like a raging torrent, and the remnant auras from the ancient elders meant that the students saw something different from the spectators. At this moment, even the girl from Astral-1 had paused to look at the sky in shock, awed by the scene before her.

At the same time, the Nalan family spacecraft finally docked at Astral-10's space station. Lu Yin took the lead to exit as soon as the cabin door opened, followed right behind by Liu Xiaoyun. Only they two were allowed to enter the academy.

"Auntie, I'll be leaving first," Liu Xiaoyun said as she waved goodbye to Madam Nalan.

Lu Yin also thanked Madam Nalan again.

She smiled, looked at Lu Yin, and said, "I don't know why, but I have a feeling that you'll surprise me."

"I hope so," Lu Yin replied with a smile of his own. He saw Liu Xiaoyun look back at him, clearly anxious to leave. He immediately walked out towards the teleportation device.

Soon, the two arrived at the trial zone entrance, where they saw the Trialmaster. He didn't say much and quickly allowed them to quickly enter the trial zone mountain.

Liu Xiaoyun did not say another word as she directly flew to the highest point on the trial zone mountain. She was Astral-7's Realm Master, and as such, deserved to sit at the highest point.

Lu Yin laughed. Are all powerhouses this proud? His gaze burned as he wondered what expression she would have if he stomped that pride to bits. He was anticipating seeing this Realm Master's strength for himself.

Meanwhile, in the Lifeseek Realm, the girl from Astral-1 took the lead and continued approaching her ancient incense stick. Liu Tang was close behind her while the rest successively reached the hundred meters point. None of them stopped for long before steadily continuing on towards the sticks.

The bloodlust did not cause substantial harm to their body as it only affected the students' state of mind; however, it tested both their strength of body and of mind.

There was a disparity between the personal combat strength of the students that the ten academies had sent out for this stage, but the difference was not huge. The one who had lagged behind the most was Xia Luo, who had stayed outside the hundred meters mark for the longest, but he had still caught up to the other students and was now advancing step by step with them.

At that moment, Lu Yin appeared in a forest within the Lifeseek Realm and looked at his surroundings. He saw some figures streaking towards the east, so he instantly moved in front of one of them, startling him badly. "Student, may I ask where the location for the Astral Combat Tournament is?"

This was a student who had been eliminated during the Knocking on the Dragon's Door stage and had forcefully endured the mental fatigue from dying to reenter the Lifeseek Realm. He was in a very bad mood and instinctively wanted to scold this person for blocking his path, but then he thought of how this person had strangely appeared before him and realized that the person in front of him might be a powerhouse. "It's straight east."

"Thanks," Lu Yin said with a curt nod before immediately vanishing, leaving behind a thin crack that extended deep into the void.

That student was dumbfounded. What kind of freak is this person? He was so fast that just his speed tore the void apart! He can't be an Area Master since he's just a Melder. When did the ten academies have such a freak? Or is he one of the ancient powerhouses who emerged from a frozen slumber? The student was glad that he had held back and not offended Lu Yin, as he would not be able to return to the Lifeseek Realm if he died a second time.

Liu Xiaoyun's luck was much better than Lu Yin's, and when she appeared in the Lifeseek Realm, she was not far from the tournament. When she appeared at the highest peak where the other academy seeds were sitting and walked to the seventh seat, the first incense stick had already been lit, and it was

emitting a green smoke that rose to the sky. "Astral-1's entire student body pays their eternal tribute to the forebearers."

When the girl from Astral-1 paid tribute, everyone in the entire Astral Combat Academy remained solemn and bowed together, even the leaders of the academies and the observing mentors.

"Astral-2's entire student body pays their eternal tribute to the forebearers."

"Astral-5's entire student body pays their eternal tribute to the forebearers."

...

Xia Luo was the last of the ten to reach the ancient incense stick. He had originally planned to light it as soon as he arrived, but then he paused and looked into the distance. At the same time, many spectators saw a black dot appear in the distance, moving towards the tournament site at a normal speed. It was Lu Yin, who had intentionally slowed down when he neared the tournament site. He directly walked onto the highest peak.

Astral-5's Realm Master Kuang Wang frowned and waved a hand. "Scram. Do you think that just anyone can come up here?"

Kuang Wang caused a gale to sweep up that then rushed at Lu Yin with an unstoppable force.

Lu Yin waved his hand in a similar manner, effortlessly neutralizing the attack. "I'm Astral-10's leader. Lu Yin pays his respects to my seniors."

Kuang Wang was stunned. "You are Astral-10's leader?"

The others also looked at Lu Yin with renewed interest.

Coincidentally, at that moment, Xia Luo's voice rang out. "Astral-10's entire student body pays their eternal tribute to the forebearers."

When all ten lines of green smoke billowed into the air, the crowd seemed to hear a bloodlust-filled snarl echo out, as if countless ancient elders were expressing their intent.

This was an extraordinary phenomena that was unique to the Lifeseek Realm, and it could not be transmitted through the video feed to the screens of the viewers throughout the universe.

At that moment, countless eyes in the universe could only watch the ten lines of green smoke rising into the sky and the nine shadows sitting atop the highest peak.

Wu Da looked excitedly at Xia Luo. He succeeded! This Melder actually managed to successfully light up the incense stick! In the future, Xia Luo will undoubtedly be one of my greatest stories. Well, along with Silver, that is. Astral-10 definitely has more gems to uncover. What a great place!

The Astral Combat Academy students watching the tournament bowed once more towards the incense sticks and then went back to staring at the highest peak. Many focused their gaze on Lu Yin, who had sat down in the tenth seat, as they mocked him. "Astral-10 is really treating everyone as a fool with their

play of exhorting a weakling as their leader. The truly strong ones from Astral-10 are Big Pao, Little Pao, Silver, Lulu Mavis, and Xia Luo. Though it must be said, Astral-10 truly isn't weak."

"Don't underestimate him. He defeated Craynor, who's the number two on the Blaze Realm Rankings. He even took advantage of Xi Yue once and extorted many people afterwards."

"Obviously, one of the other students must have helped him out since he's a fellow Astral-10 student. It's even possible that a mentor might have stepped in."

...

Behind Astral-5's battle drums, Hart Phoenix stared at the screen. "He's finally here. Just wait for me to tear you to shreds."

Not far from Hart Phoenix, there stood a man with a simple sword on his back, also staring at the screen. "So that's senior's fiancé? He shouldn't be too weak since he's also a seeded competitor."

Behind Astral-6's battle drums, Charon clenched his teeth in fury. That bastard didn't die?!

Frankfurt's face sank. The person who had been instantly killed by one of his spears was now standing at the highest spot with the other Realm Masters. It was humiliating to him.

Uro was about to vomit blood, as this was the brat who had been the first to sneak attack him.

Behind Astral-8's battle drums, Jared's had a forlorn look in his eyes as he clenched his fists tightly.

Xi Yue's eyes widened when she saw Lu Yin. Pervert, just wait for me to make you pay the price! Then, subconsciously, she looked at her chest. Hmph, it's obviously not a washboard.

...

In the Great Yu Empire, Undying Yushan was pleased to see Lu Yin on the screen. This child had actually risen to the point where he could now stand face to face with the other academy leaders. Undying Yushan hoped that Lu Yin would be able to handle the pressure, but it was simply too difficult. It was an impossible dream for Lu Yin to compare to the other academies' leaders after just a year of cultivation at the academy.

In the Auna clan, Xueshan Auna and the rest watched the screen with bated breath as they glanced at Jenny Auna. Their brat was truly shocked, as this level of glory was completely unattainable to her. Lu Yin had actually become his academy's leader.

Peach clenched her fist tightly. "All the best, friend."

On Earth, Zhou Shan and the rest were basically panting with excitement. Without a doubt, that was Lu Yin who was sitting in the tenth seat. This was the difference of just a single year, but he had actually climbed to the peak of the universe's greatest institution and was representing Earth.

Not many on Earth personally knew Lu Yin, but almost everyone had heard of him. Because of him, the countless cultivators of Earth had been spared from the bleak fate of being sent to a frontier battlefield and were able to continue living on Earth. Lu Yin's reputation had long since surpassed the Seven Sages,

but today, many of Earth's cultivators finally realized the terror of the universe's powerhouses for the first time. And on top of that, Yin was now one of those same powerhouses!

On a vast mainland, at the border of a city floating in the skies, Wendy Yushan looked at her screen, pondering something.

Three Academies Guarding the Gate had eliminated half of the competing students, leaving 362 of them. After the participating students from Astral-3, Astral-7, and Astral-10 joined, that number had grown to a total of 598. After Knocking on the Dragon's Door eliminated another hundred-some people, there were 434 left. The Astral Combat Tournament's final stage of drawing lots would take place with these 434 people.

The giant incense sticks had burned away as green smoke and vanished, leaving everyone's gazes to turn to the south, which was right below the high peak where the ten academy leaders were seated. There was a giant field there, and a gale suddenly swept across it, carving the plain into 217 arenas without countless air blades. Each arena was surrounded by an invisible barrier of wind that prevented any attacks from spilling out. The stage of drawing lots would be held here, not far from the highest peak. That peak represented the students' goal: the ten academy leaders.

The ten of them represented the Realm Masters of the trial zones, and they also represented the Council of Astral Academy. Even more importantly, they represented the Ten Arbiters Council, as they were the only students who were qualified to directly discuss issues with the Ten Arbiters Council.

#### **Chapter 204: Repeatedly Emerging Powerhouses**

The Ten Arbiters Council was one of the most powerful organizations in the entire universe. No matter who they were, or what power or what region they were from, every member of the younger generation was within the Ten Arbiters Council's scope of influence. Not only did the council have the authority to judge and evaluate them all, but it even had its own subordinate army. The council was the greatest change to the human race since it had been founded with the advent of the formcast model.

Many people dreamed of joining the Ten Arbiters Council and writing a new chapter of the human race with those ten great characters. Right below the Ten Arbiters Council was the Council of Astral Academy, which was very close to the Ten Arbiters.

There were nearly ten thousand students spread out among the ten branches of the Astral Combat Academy, and among them were innumerable hidden powerhouses. Each one of them had been patiently waiting for this moment, where they would defeat the academy leaders before the universe's eyes. They wanted to enter the sights of the Ten Arbiters and become a young powerhouse famed throughout the universe.

Under everyone's watchful gazes, there was a constantly changing number in front of each competitor. After a bit, each flashing image eventually stopped onto a single number.

"Place your hands on your number," a loud voice rumbled from the sky.

All of the competitors raised their hands and touched the number in front of them. The scene before them changed, and all 434 of them suddenly appeared within the arenas. Each arena held two people,

evenly dividing all of the competitors up into pairs. With the exception of the academy leaders who remained seated atop the highest peak, every competitor was facing off against an opponent.

The loud voice came out again. "The one who kills their opponent first is the victor."

All of the spectators stared excitedly at the array of arenas strewn across the plains. There were unparalleled Area Masters, soul hunter team members, hidden experts, and ancient geniuses here, but everything would be completely exposed in these arenas. At this point, no one could hide their strength anymore. This was the most dazzling stage in the entire universe.

With a loud bang, 217 arenas shook as the battles commenced. On the screens, everyone could see any arena they wished.

The battles started quickly, and some ended just as quickly, as the disparity between some of the competitors was too great.

In the trial zones, every student had the number of their academy marked on the back of their hands.

Ma Ruo felt that her luck was great because she had actually run into an Astral-10 Melder for her first round. He was obviously a fresh recruit of the academy, but his appearance was a little scary. There were many strange people in the universe, but that did not necessarily mean that they were strong. From Astral-10, the only strong students should be the ones who had been highlighted in that newspaper article that came out awhile ago. The rest should only be participating to make up the numbers.

The person facing Ma Ruo was actually Darkvoid, who was very calm. His hair that was so black that it seemed to swallow the light around him was indeed scary. His demeanor and unique appearance had initially drawn a great deal of attention to him, but the crowds' attention had quickly shifted elsewhere. The eyes of many observers had been attracted by a scene that was unfolding not far from their arena.

In that arena, the Daynight youth who had been Astral-4's participant for Tribute to the Ancestors was facing off against a very normal-looking youth. However, contrary to expectations, this seemingly average person had actually avoided multiple attacks from the Daynight youth.

The male from the Daynight clan was called Tiankong Daynight, and he was one of the top five strongest students in Astral-4 as well as one of the Dao of Slaughter's Area Masters. Unless an Area Master met another powerhouse of the same power level, they would be able to instantly defeat any other opponent that they faced. But Tiankong was currently stuck in a deadlock against this unknown opponent. He was not a seasoned student of the Astral Combat Academy, but rather someone who had only just recently joined Astral-3.

News that the Astral Combat Tournament would be broadcast to the entire universe had attracted countless freakish talents, and this youth was one of these hidden geniuses whose interest had been piqued, as no one recognized him.

Bang!

There was a fearsome shock wave as Tiankong Daynight's attack enveloped the entire arena. It even ruptured the sky above him, distorting the space to the point where the invisible air barrier had to actively block it. This attack would definitely hit the youth.



But when the smoke cleared, the youth was still standing properly with a stiff expression, as if the attack had not affected him in the slightest.

Tiankong Daynight's pupils shrank to pinpoints. Impossible!

At the same time, in another arena some distance away, Frankfurt gripped his spear and looked at the vortex facing him. All of his attacks had been rendered useless, and his battle force had been easily shattered by the beautiful Yue Xianzi who was standing in the middle of the approaching vortex.

"This is the battle technique that you inherited from Blackwater Lake?" Frankfurt's voice was hoarse, and there was a hint of disbelief within it.

Yue Xianzi's expression remained cold as she looked at Frankfurt with her beautiful eyes. "Disappear." The vague image of a cold moon appeared above her head, causing an icy chill to rush through Frankfurt's body before the vortex swallowed him.

The first Area Master had been defeated, shocking all of the other students.

An Area Master was only second in strength to a Realm Master, and there were several in each academy. No matter how weak they were, they always ranked within the top ten of each academy. Despite their impressive strength and standing, one had nonetheless just been easily eliminated from the tournament.

Everyone had known from the outset that this Astral Combat Tournament would not be normal, but no one had imagined that an Area Master would be defeated right from the start. This Yue Xianzi from the Frostmoon Sect was yet another student who had recently joined the Astral Combat Academy.

Ma Ruo was also defeated without much commotion, and in an inexplicable manner that shocked her as well; she had been blown to shreds by a void explosion. That Astral-10 male could actually tear the void apart with ease, which was inconceivable. Astral-10 had concealed its strength too much.

Darkvoid had won his first battle, but Schutz had lost. Despite the grueling hard work that he had put into comprehending battle force, Schutz had failed this time. He had sufficient battle experience, but he could only accept his bad luck of being easily squashed when he was matched up against an Area Master.

It was not only Schutz who suffered this fate; Zora and Zhao Yilong were also defeated without much suspense. Although they had been personally guided by their respective mentors for a few months, all of the students who had reached this stage were powerful in their own right. They, on the other hand, had only been truly cultivating for a few months, and it was not enough to make up for the disparity that existed between them and genius Limiteers. Sometimes, 99% of hard work just could not make up for what 1% talent gave.

In another arena, Coco was running away nonstop while a blade-wielding man chased after her. Their game of cat and mouse had gone on for a while, and this scene also attracted many people's attention. They were enraptured by Coco's cuteness. Did this child come even here to compete?

"You, you, stop running! This is a fight, not a race," the man shouted while panting heavily as he gave Coco a helpless look.

She adamantly pursed her lips. "I won't fight."

"Then admit defeat."

"That's not an option. There is only victory or death."

"Then die. You can't beat me anyway."

"I can't. I'm scared of pain."

"I'll be gentle."

"I'm scared."

"Just behave, it'll only be a single stab."

"It'll be painful."

...

The people in the nearby arenas had originally been focusing on their own battles, but they all ended up staring at this strange fight. Are these suitable words to be exchanged in this scenario?

On the highest peak, Liu Xiaoyun looked at Lu Yin strangely. "Your fellow students from Astral-10 sure have some unique personalities."

Lu Yin was embarrassed. "Coco's still young, very young. But she's terrifying."

"Terrifying?" Kuang Wang was incredulous. "How so?"

Lu Yin pointed downwards. "She has a terrifying innate gift."

Kuang Wang peered downwards and his eyes widened in shock. "What's that toy? A syringe?!"

It wasn't just him—Liu Xiaoyun and the other student leaders were all intrigued, and even more of them looked at Coco. This cute child was hugging a giant syringe and aiming its tip directly at the attacking man. A smile blossomed on her small face. "Come on. Let's stab each other."

The man was similarly astounded. What is this toy?

There was a large commotion, and the man did not even react when the needle tip pierced his body. Coco's eyes grew large, and she quickly apologized. "I'm sorry. I didn't know that you were so slow. You were even chasing me before thus! I'm sorry. I'm sorry!"

Her opponent's face twisted indignantly as he watched Coco helplessly. He felt that his reputation had been ruined by this brat; he had been stabbed to death by a needle! He was probably the first in history to be stabbed to death like this, and he could already hear the jeers from the entire universe. He really wanted to die right now.

As the man's body vanished, Coco patted her chest, released a pent up breath, and then smiled sweetly towards the highest peak.

Lu Yin grinned. This kid was just too adorable.

Coco's victory was unexpected. By the time her battle concluded, most of the first round battles had already finished. The most shocking battle was Tiankong Daynight's, as his opponent had easily avoided all his attacks. To some extent, his reactions even seemed to be inhuman. Some observers felt that something was off the longer they continued to watch.

"How strange! The Daynight clan's battle techniques are very powerful, but that person has dodged everything so far very smoothly. It's almost as if his body is instinctively avoiding the attacks."

"Why do his movements and reactions seem so familiar? I feel like I've heard of a similar skill before."

...

Suddenly, someone shouted out, "Chaosgod Mountain! It's Chaosgod Mountain."

Many were horrified when they heard this exclamation, and they all took a closer look at the youth. At that moment, he was easily avoiding Tiankong Daynight's finger attack when he suddenly raised a hand. He made a grabbing motion towards Tiankong Daynight, and although his hand wasn't very fast, Tiankong Daynight couldn't avoid it and was easily grabbed by the man. An instant later, Tiankong Daynight's entire body was hurled so deep within the ground that nobody could tell where he was, causing the arena to shatter into pieces as a side effect. His pupils alternated between dilating and contracting as he spat out mouthfuls of blood. A massive force followed up with another attack and nearly pierced through his body, but that still wasn't the end. The impression of a black shadow appeared before his eyes, and then all of his strength drained away in the next moment. He was surrounded by darkness, and when he reopened his eyes, he had already appeared at Astral-4's trial zone mountain.

Tiankong Daynight growled angrily, as he had been defeated due to his own mistake. His opponent was from Chaosgod Mountain, and the disciples of that place specialized in disrupting their opponent's breathing rhythm. Only the lunatics from Chaosgod Mountain could have such insane evasive instincts.

Outside the valley, Wu Da was so excited that he found it somewhat difficult to breathe. Chaosgod Mountain! Great, another hot headliner! Chaosgod Mountain was one of the Inniverse's dark powers.

At Astral-10's space station, within her spacecraft, Madam Nalan's gaze flickered. This Astral Combat Tournament had indeed attracted a bunch of freaks, and even someone from Chaosgod Mountain had shown up.

Many in the universe were confused by the result, and they could not understand how Tiankong Daynight had been grabbed or why he had been defeated so easily. It almost seemed as if it were staged.

Atop the high peak, Lu Yin's expression was solemn. Chaosgod Mountain? He had heard of them and their terrifying methods. Their disciples cultivated bizarre techniques that gave them nigh-superhuman reaction times, and they also had the ability to disrupt the opponent's breathing rhythm. Finally, they taught their disciples to pour all of their strength into a single attack. This was a Chaosgod Mountain disciple, someone who had an unimaginable ability to dodge attacks. To defeat them, one would have to

completely crush them and not get grabbed. Once a Chaosgod Mountain disciple grabbed their opponent, it was the end for them.

Among the eight largest Flowzones in the Innerverse, there was one called the Chaos Flowzone, which was home to the universe's dark forces. Chaosgod Mountain was one of the masters of the Chaos Flowzone.

Astral-3's leader, Nightqueen Yanqing, had a terrible expression on her face. Even though Tiankong Daynight was from Astral-4, he was first and foremost someone from the Daynight clan. However, he had been strung along in a string of missed attacks before being defeated in one move by that Chaosgod Mountain disciple, essentially reducing him to a mere stepping stone. This could not be forgiven.

Astral-4's leader, Xue Liuyun, remained as indifferent as before as he stared at the Chaosgod Mountain disciple, who's name was Cang Shi.

Even before the shock from this upset had dispersed, another Area Master was killed. This again incited cries all around, as Hart Phoenix was the one who had killed the Area Master. He was still at the Melder realm—just a Melder! Thus, his victory over a powerful Area Master jolted the entire Astral Combat Academy.

"Phoenix? If I remember correctly, there's a powerful member of that clan among the Ten Arbiters," someone cried out.

He was immediately silenced by someone beside him. "Do you want to die?! The Ten Arbiters' names cannot be casually spoken. They are one of the peak powers in the universe."

## **Chapter 205: Bright Stage**

Hart had undergone such a drastic transformation that others could no longer even recognize him. He raised his head to gaze at the peak above him, with a blatantly haughty expression. His brother had been a Realmbreaker in his challenges, and he had even challenged Explorers as a Melder. For Hart, defeating a Limiteer Realm Area Master was not his limit. He had already metamorphosed through his phoenix bloodline and become another lifeform. His new goal was to defeat a Realm Master; Lu Yin was no longer sufficient.

Many knew that this Astral Combat Tournament would attract many powerhouses to compete, but they never expected that the first elimination round of the tournament would result in so many Area Masters being eliminated. They were Area Masters! And in previous tournaments, Area Masters would generally last till at least the third round before one of them was matched up against a Realm Master. But now, multiple Area Masters had been eliminated in the first round, which was unprecedented.

At this time, a blazing inferno roared to life and enveloped the skies, changing the temperature of both heaven and earth. Countless spectators looked over to see a man floating high in the sky and arrogantly looking downward. The fiery blaze roared all around him, as this was not just a firestorm simulated through star energy, but rather a true conflagration. The flames had a tinge of black at their center, and the inferno created a distortion in the void. A black color accompanied the inferno as it distorted the void; the temperature had climbed high enough to cause cracks to appear in space.

On the stage below the flames, a woman was kneeling with a terrified expression on her raised face.

The man in the sky laughed wildly and he flew further up until he was eye level with the peak overlooking the valley. Then, as if he were an equal to the student leaders seated there, he said, "Feng Shang, I never thought that you would become a Realm Master after not seeing you these years."

His words shocked many people, but on the peak, the leader of Astral-8, Feng Shang, was puzzled. "You are?"

The man laughed before replying, "Old friend, have you really forgotten me? It was I who burned you to a crisp back then. It's been so many years. Do you have anything to say?"

Many were dumbfounded when they saw the exchange unfold on the screen.

Feng Shang's face suddenly turned cold. "I remember now. So it's you, Arikar."

"Finally! I never thought that that impulsive junior would end up becoming a Realm Master. You're really capable."

"When you lost that battle for the title of Realm Master to Brother Neru, you actually dared to mount a sneak attack after that. If you rejoined the academy after going missing for so many years, it seems that you must have frozen yourself to preserve your bone age."

Arikar's eyes beamed as a frigid expression flashed across his face. "Don't mention the matters of the past to me. I only came out of hibernation this time to erase the shame from that year. Neru already died on the frontier battlefield between the star expanses, so you'll have to stand in for him and pay me back for everything that happened to me." Arikar then slapped down with his palm, causing the void-shattering inferno to transform into a black palm that covered the entire arena. With a bang, the woman battling Arikar vanished along with a good portion of the arena floor.

Many were shocked by this reveal; this person had actually fought against the previous Realm Master of Astral-8, and he was a frozen genius as well.

Feng Shang's face sank. As he scanned over the destroyed arena, he recalled the battle scene from when he had just joined the Astral Combat Academy. That battle had overturned his conception of strength, and this person had been one of the participants in that battle.

"What a powerful attack," Lu Yin marvelled, "Why is this person's attack so similar to the Blaze Realm's?"

Feng Shang replied, "Because he's from the Blaze Realm. He was the previous champion before Jared on the Blaze Realm Rankings."

"No wonder he seems to need a beating," Lu Yin muttered.

Beside Lu Yin on the ninth seat, Liu Yin removed his headphones with a dazed expression. "It's so hot. What happened?"

Lu Yin glanced at him strangely. Is this fellow really a leader of his academy?

The first round of the lottery battles had eliminated half of the students, with 217 advancing onto the second round. The arenas on the plains changed again, and the 217 arenas from the previous round merged into 108 larger arenas. A number once again appeared before each competitor, and without the

need for any reminders, they all lightly grasped the number before them. The scene shifted before their eyes as they appeared in an arena facing their next opponent. One short male remained in his original position with a blank look on his face, confused.

“Uhh, Mentor, what about me?” asked the short male as he raised his head.

“You’ve advanced onto the next round.” The loud voice made the crowd jump.

The short youth was delighted by this news. Since there was an odd number of contestants, it was normal for one to receive a bye and advance to the next round without competing. He was the lucky one in this instance.

Coco looked at him enviously and almost cried when she saw her opponent. Before her stood a huge, muscled man who was at least three meters tall. He had a square face and did not look like a pushover. Why did I end up with such a person?

“There will be a three hour break. Then, the tournament will resume,” the loud voice declared once more.

A strong wind suddenly appeared in the middle of each arena, separating the two opponents.

This break was not just for the competitors; it had also been implemented out of consideration for the countless spectators. With such a large audience, it was not appropriate to end the Astral Combat Tournament too quickly.

From the start of Three Academies Guarding the Gate to the conclusion of the first elimination round, a full day had passed. The Astral Combat Tournament had to last for at least three days, which meant that there would naturally be a break between each set of battles, and the breaks would also become longer and longer as the finale approached.

A sense of superiority filed Lu Yin as he sat on the tenth seat atop the highest peak. It was quite reasonable for him to feel this way as this seat was a goal of all students.

Since the competition was temporarily on pause, everyone looked at the ten student leaders, as they were the ten strongest, or at least, so it was on the surface.

Aside from the first seat, all of the other nine seats received intense scrutiny, especially Lu Yin, who was sitting on the tenth seat. After all, he was the only Melder among them.

Many now held the opinion that Astral-10 had a gift for creating miracles. Silver had successfully defended the final section of the valley, Lulu had beat the battle drums, and Xia Luo had lit the ancient incense stick. These were activities that usually could only be accomplished by Limiteers, but Astral-10 had successfully sent out Melders to complete it all. But no matter how good they were at creating miracles, a Melder could not possibly compare to an academy leader. Throughout the history of the academy, only the Ten Arbiters had been able to do so. In that case, what qualifications did this person have to join the other leaders?

Lu Yin’s identity was revealed layer by layer, but there was nothing exciting to discover. The Great Yu Empire was just a weak power to the Inniverse, and no one had even heard of Earth before. Even so,

countless people in the Great Yu Empire and Earth were cheering for him. However, there were just too few of them, and they were like specks of dust to the rest of the universe.

Despite all that, Lu Yin sat there with a clear conscience. He did not mind what others said, although he did feel that his chair was a little stiff.

Feng Shang looked at Lu Yin curiously. Lu Yin could feel his stare, so he turned around, smiled, and said, "Senior Feng, do you have any advice for me?"

Feng Shang smiled. "I had thought that I was ambitious, but I never thought that someone would surpass my drive. Junior, how does it feel to be seated here?"

Lu Yin nodded. "Not bad. Everything is great, aside from this stiff chair. Oh, and it would be nice if they provided some snacks for us."

"Haha, how interesting," Feng Shang said with a small laugh, speaking no further. He could not sense any significant power from Lu Yin, so this person was either extremely adept at concealing his strength, or he truly was just a distraction sent out by Astral-10. Regardless, only the Ten Arbiters had ever been able to stand besides the Realm Masters when they were mere Melders. It was impossible for this person to be the same as an Arbiter; Astral-10 was most likely just being too careful. They must be afraid that others would target them and destroy their dream of rising up again.

On the other side of Feng Shang, Liu Xiaoyun was intently focusing on a particular arena where a very young man was sitting. He seemed to be about the same age as Lu Yin, and he was sitting down, cross-legged, with a rusty iron sword on his lap. That sword was actually condensed purely from star energy. He only sat silently there, but Liu Xiaoyun's attention never left him once; that person was Liu Shaoqiu.

Lu Yin's gaze swept over Feng Shang and the other student leaders before it landed on Nightqueen Yanqing. Apart from the leader of Astral-1, Lu Yin was the most curious about Nightqueen Yanqing. This woman was from the same Nightking clan as Qingyu, and she was miles above the rest of the Daynight clan.

He still remembered the topmost name inscribed on the stone when he had walked into the Daynight clan's corridor of inheritance, Nightking Zhenwu. He still wondered what sort of status that person held.

When Nightqueen Yanqing sensed Lu Yin's gaze, she glanced over with a frown.

Lu Yin averted his gaze, closed his eyes, and quietly exhaled.

Nightqueen Yanqing snorted, disgusted that trash like him was actually allowed to be seated alongside her. It was a pity that they had not been allowed to wipe out Astral-10 back then and that they had only chased them out of the Innerverses: a true pity in her eyes.

Within the Innerverses, in the Erudite Flowzone, the massive Astral River's tributary flowed through it, decorating the heavens. It looked beautiful beyond comparison, but it was a danger that could take even a Hunter's life.

Outside of the Erudite Flowzone's Astral River tributary, there was a giant protective net formed from planets. It extended out for an unknown distance and was one of the boundaries that separated the human star expanse and the astral beast star expanse.

Within the control room of a giant war spacecraft, a thin man of average height stood there. Although his height was average, his mere presence seemed to emit a boundless charisma that caused the surrounding soldiers to become more zealous. He was Shui Chuanxiao, the Grand Marshal of the warfront at the Human Domain's border and praised as the best strategist in human history.

As he looked at the screen depicting the Astral Combat Tournament, he smiled strangely as thoughts that no one could decipher ran through his mind.

Three hours quickly passed by before the energy dividing the arenas dissipated, signalling that the second battle round was about to start.

At this point, most of the spectators had targets of interest that they were fully focused on. Feng Shang was staring intently at Arikar, Nightqueen Yanqing was looking at Cang Shi, and the crowd and spectating organizations watched the various well-known Area Masters that they supported.

Jared's face was sullen, as Arikar's appearance had stolen his limelight. The Blaze Realm had concentrated all its resources into Arikar when he emerged from hibernation, and even the Blaze Realm's inherited battle technique, the Karmic Flame Sword, had been given to Arikar. Jared had been stripped of everything, but he was not resigned to this fate.

He looked at the student charging towards him, and his suppressed anger exploded. He waved his hands and sent out a peculiar ripple that phased through his Limiteer realm opponent. A mere instant later, the student's eyes lost focus and they immediately dropped to the floor, dead.

Many witnessed this scene, especially Craynor. He had been watching Jared, and a chill ran down his spine when he saw that scene. This was a battle technique that Jared had inherited while in the Dao of Illusion, and it was immeasurably strange and confusing.

Jared was not the first Area Master who revealed a hidden card in this round. The appearance of Arikar and other such hidden experts had caused the various Area Masters to feel a hint of danger. As more hidden experts began to reveal themselves, many commonly mentioned battle techniques were revealed, giving the eyes of the countless spectators a visual feast.

The Astral Combat Tournament's effect was beginning to show as more and more people believed that, with so many powerful students in the Astral Combat Academy, the other star realms definitely would not be able to compare to them. Many others were even dreaming of one day showing off their own abilities on this glorious stage.

Now that a considerable portion of the universe was connected to this network, this glorious stage would be available for all future tournaments. This possibility of universal glory aroused dreams and ambitions within youths everywhere.

## **Chapter 206: Ten Arbiter's Mount**

The human race's loss in the war at the Human Domain's frontier was unrelated to the Astral Combat Tournament, but their tournament was nonetheless still being used to recruit new troops for the war



effort. This method had results, as many people who could not enter the Astral Combat Academy would choose to become soldiers. This was good enough, as the greater goal was for this tournament to inspire humankind and mollify the negative effects from their recent defeat.

From Lu Yin's perspective, this tournament was more of a cover up than a response to the defeat, but it was all the same to him. He knew that, at times, the higher echelons' decisions were forced. Besides, the students were still able to enjoy this incredible stage because of the situation.

Lu Yin's eyes flickered as he watched all the proud geniuses battling it out from his position on the highest peak. He thought back to his experiences on the pirate port planet and his desperate straits on Driftcharge Planet. Despite the large jump upwards, he still was not satisfied with his current position.

He glanced over at the other nine student leaders besides him, who were also watching the battles from above. In truth, they were just pawns of certain parties who had been placed here to receive adoration from the crowds. The backers of these student leaders could actually strip them of everything they had at the snap of a finger. Those masterminds in the dark possessed the true powers that Lu Yin firmly desired.

Lu Yin smiled, knowing that he was overthinking his position. He did not yet hold the qualifications to entertain such thoughts.

At that point, Nightqueen Yanqing's expression suddenly soured.

Lu Yin looked downwards at the arena where many spectators had also focused their attention—Hui Daynight had been defeated.

A Daynight clan member would draw attention wherever they walked. Even though he was from Astral-10, Hui Daynight had attracted everyone's attention from his first battle, and his defeat just now had roused surprise among the crowd.

A girl had defeated him. Although she seemed to be a very normal girl, she had calmly defended against every one of Hui Daynight's battle techniques. Eventually, his inability to break through had driven Hui Daynight to his wit's end until he finally fell.

There were too many geniuses in the Astral Combat Academy who were participating in this tournament, and Hui Daynight's defeat was not exceptional in any sense.

Not too far from Hui Daynight's arena, another falling corpse attracted Lu Yin's attention. Astral-6's leader, Dao Bo, suddenly stood up and stared at the same arena as well. His sudden movement caused the other leaders to also direct their attention to where he was focused.

The falling body was Uro's.

Lu Yin's face turned serious as he observed the man standing near Uro's corpse. It had been an unbelievable battle where Uro had been instantly eliminated in a single strike. His opponent had moved at an incredible speed—no, instead of speed, it was more like his movement had broken through space itself, just like... a domain. Lu Yin's eyes brightened. Right, that man's movements had been very similar to Silver's domain, which was something that had been condensed purely for the sake of killing others.

When the crowd looked at the person who had killed Uro, they were all dumbfounded. No one recognized this stranger even though he had instantly killed Uro, an Area Master. He seemed to have appeared out of thin air and had a completely ordinary appearance, but all that belied his thunderous move. Just who was he?

“So it’s him. I didn’t think that he would also show up here,” said a melodious, ringing voice from near Lu Yin. He turned around and his pupils shrank. When did she arrive?!

There was a girl sitting in the first seat that had been empty all this time. Her face was covered with a veil, but she had a similar appearance to the girl who had paid tribute to the forebearers for Astral-1. Her demeanor was so mild that it felt as if a soft breeze would blow her away. However, Lu Yin had not even sensed this girl’s presence until she opened her mouth and spoke out.

This girl was Astral-1’s leader.

“You know him?” Dao Bo slowly asked.

“He’s Calcifer, an assassin from a hundred years ago.”

Feng Shang was astonished. “You know someone from a hundred years ago?”

The girl turned around, revealing pupils that sparkled like stars with the faint trace of a smile, as if the stars themselves were smiling at them. “It’s because he assassinated Starsibyl.”

Her explanation shocked all of the student leaders, and even Liu Yin shook his head nonstop. They all stared in disbelief at Astral-1’s leader.

“You said that he assassinated Starsibyl?” Liu Xiaoyun was amazed.

Astral-1’s chairperson calmly nodded. “That’s right. Although he failed in his attempt, there are records of it. To think that he froze himself for a hundred years and then joined the Astral Combat Academy after he was unsealed. Who knows what he’s thinking—he’s an assassin who was exposed to the eyes of the entire universe.”

“You people allowed him to live on?” Nightqueen Yanqing gave the Astral-1 leader a strange look.

“It’s not a problem,” Astral-1’s leader replied with a breezy smile.

Lu Yin was puzzled, but he did not jump into the conversation. These people still had not acknowledged him, and it would be embarrassing if they just ignored his questions. But Lu Yin couldn’t push Nightqueen Yanqing’s question from his mind. Just who was “you people” referring to? And what did Calcifer’s assassination attempt on Starsibyl have to do with Astral-1’s leader?

Calcifer’s power shocked many, but few recognized him, so his identity was not revealed to the general public.

Soon after, a different battle overshadowed Calcifer’s that drew everyone’s attention; Big Pao was in danger.

Ever since the two brothers from Astral-10 had teamed up to challenge Kuang Wang, Big Pao and Little Pao’s reputations had spiked up as a result of the academy newspaper’s popular article on them. They

had received attention from not only the entire Astral Combat Academy, but also the outside world. After all, anyone from the younger generation who could directly confront a Realm Master was a genius.

But despite his burgeoning reputation, Big Pao found himself in a tough spot. He was panting heavily, and his body was in a dismal state. His shoulder had been stabbed though, and fresh blood dripped down his arm.

Additionally, his sorry state was a direct result of the Melder realm sylvan dragon standing in front of him.

Lu Yin's eyes narrowed, as he was familiar with these dragons. But if a Melder realm dragon could force Big Pao into this miserable state, then it implied that this dragon's strength was comparable to Xia Luo's.

Feng Shang exclaimed, "It's Long Yi! It looks like the sylvan dragon clan is also taking this Astral Combat Tournament seriously."

Lu Yin looked at him. "You know him?"

Feng Shang smiled. "Of course, this dragon's famous. Fifteen years ago, he challenged one of the lords that now presides in the Ten Arbiters' Council."

Lu Yin was shocked. The "Ten Arbiters" specifically referred to this generation's Universe Youth Council's authority figures, as the councils of previous generations had never been referred to as "the Ten Arbiters." This also meant that this dragon had once challenged a member of the Ten Arbiters, even if it was fifteen years ago.

"I recall him now. Fifteen years ago, a peak genius emerged in this dragon clan with a terrifying innate gift. His clan named him the symbol of their emergence. That should be him," Nightqueen Yanqing haughtily added on.

Feng Shang nodded. "That's right. Fifteen years ago, that Ten Arbiters lord was just a Sentinel. The two fought, but it resulted in this dragon being crushed. Based on their agreement, he should have become that lord's mount, but the dragon clan refused to acknowledge the bet and unceremoniously whisked him away. After being sealed in ice for fifteen years, he's finally returned."

Kuang Wang sneered. "He can't have come out now just to attend this Astral Combat Tournament. It's quite possible that he wants to repair his relationship with the Ten Arbiters. After all, becoming the mount of one of the Ten Arbiters isn't embarrassing. This race is getting more and more shameless as time goes on."

Lu Yin was curious. "You guys seem to all hate this dragon clan."

Feng Shang glanced at him, but only smiled in response.

"No one likes traitors," Dao Bo duly replied.

Lu Yin nodded and stayed quiet.

Below them, Big Pao looked at the sylvan dragon with a grimace. He had been too careless in this battle. He had assumed that he would have an easy victory, but he had ended up being injured by a strange ray. If he had known this would happen, he would have mercilessly tried to end the battle immediately.

Opposite Big Pao, Long Yi's giant body exerted a formless pressure before he split into five dragons. This was the sylvan dragon race's extreme speed technique that caused phantom images indistinguishable from the actual body to appear from the void. Each of the five dragons then opened their mouths.

Big Pao's scalp turned numb, and two-lined battle force instantly covered his body. He had used his most powerful defense, but he was still struck by a ray that pierced through his body, causing him to die instantly.

Many sighed at this scene, as a two-lined battle force was very powerful. Big Pao was definitely at the level of an Area Master, but he had still been defeated so early on.

Lu Yin squinted and stared downwards. That ray attack was Long Yi's innate gift.

Big Pao's corpse fell to the ground, but before it completely vanished, Long Yi pounced on top of it. He raised his head, let out a fierce roar that shook the void, and then turned back around to look at the peak above him.

"This pet is still so disgusting." Kuang Wang's eyes were cold, as if he hated the entire dragon clan.

Lu Yin's eyes also took on a steely glint. Long Yi stepping on Big Pao's corpse was an insult to him. This unruly pet needed to be put in its place.

In the second round of the random match battles, Coco had been defeated by the muscled man. Despite her blazing fast speed, the muscled man calmly enveloped the entire arena with his attacks, leaving no room for escape. The power behind his attacks was also more than Coco could handle. Thus, she could only resign herself to defeat, just like Zhao Yilong back in the first round.

Multiple Area Masters were also defeated in this second round, exposing more hidden powerhouses, many of whom had only recently joined the Astral Combat Academy.

This result frustrated all of the academy leaders, as these hidden powerhouses who had recently joined the Astral Combat Academy could not be considered fellow students. Instead, they were outsiders who were continually provoking the true students of the academy.

Lu Yin could feel that several of the student leaders sitting here at this peak were on the verge of exploding with anger. These newcomers were far too arrogant, and they believed that, by defeating the Area Masters, they could dominate the entire Astral Combat Academy. However, the strongest were undoubtedly here, at the very top.

Astral-10's results were unexpectedly good. Xia Luo, Silver, Darkvoid, Lulu, Little Pao, and Michelle all won their second round matches. Although Astral-10 only had fourteen students even with Lu Yin, half of their students had made it to the third stage. Proportionally, their academy was unmatched.

The Sand Master and Rain Master were watching the tournament and were very satisfied with their students' results. They had only mentored them for half a year, so it was already quite good for them to

achieve these results. If they had entered this tournament with the strength that they had when they first joined Astral-10, not a single one of them would have lasted to this point.

There was another three hour break after the second round to allow both the spectators and the competitors to rest.

After the break, the arenas shifted again, reducing to a total number of fifty four arenas. There were only 108 competitors left as one person had directly advanced.

At this stage of the competition, almost nobody had come this far through sheer luck. Only the true elites of their respective academies remained, and most were among the top ten of their academy. Nearly a quarter of those remaining were Area Masters, which meant that all the other competitors had a good chance of encountering one of them.

Apu felt that he was lucky beyond belief as he earnestly thanked the heavens. He had melted into the crowds and passed the Three Academies Guarding the Gate stage like that. Then, he had faced a Melder during the first round of the stage battles. Any Melder who could reach this stage was definitely a genius, but even geniuses needed time to mature. His opponent had not been very strong, and Apu had slowly defeated him, allowing him to proceed to the second round of battles. Then, as one might expect, he had been lucky enough to receive the second round bye and directly advance to the third round.

Apu's original goal had been to reach the second round and bring honor to his ancestors. Although he was one of the top fifteen students in his academy, he was aware of how strong the other students who had reached this stage were. He was not greedy and was already satisfied with his results. However, at this moment, his thoughts changed when he saw the youth opposite him. He felt that the god of luck had descended for him once again.

He was facing another Melder, and his opponent was young as well. Although he was probably not a teenager anymore, his immature face indicated that he should still be around twenty and that he was just a youth. It seemed that this youth had reached this third round through luck as well, but unfortunately for him, he had encountered Apu. Although Apu had also reached this stage by luck, it didn't feel like his luck would run out any time soon.

### **Chapter 207: The Realm Masters' Entrance**

From Apu's perspective, the results of his third round battle were already determined, but what about his fourth? Just the thought of that gave Apu a headache, as the ten academy leaders would join them for the fourth round of battles. But then, he suddenly had a thought as he looked up at the peak high above him. If he recalled correctly, there seemed to be one person among the ten academy leaders who was there just to fill out the numbers. That's right, it was Astral-10's leader, that youth! There were many rumors that Astral-10 had just sent him out as a distraction. Given his current lucky streak, he had no doubt that his next match would be against Astral-10's leader.

Apu grew more and more excited at his prospects as he hoped that he would continue to receive heavens' blessing. Could he reach the fourth round? Maybe even the fifth? That would be enough to make him famous throughout the universe! His gaze wavered as he imagined a glorious scene of him returning to his home planet. How would those lofty figures welcome him? Would that loaded, snobby second uncle finally come fawn over him? And that beautiful Liana—oh the Liana of his dreams! He

would definitely marry her this time, as after this, he would be a super powerhouse who had reached the fifth round in the Astral Combat Tournament.

Apu was still daydreaming about the future when the energy in the middle of the arena vanished, indicating that the battle had started. Suddenly, a light flashed in front of his eyes.

What is this toy? Apu was dissatisfied by this light. Who interrupted my dreams of living with Liana?

But then, in the next instant, Apu's eyes readjusted to his surroundings and he blinked. Isn't this the trial zone mountain? Did I die?

Apu's name indeed became famous throughout the universe, but not because he was powerful. Rather, he had broken the record time for the fastest defeat.

Nobody who had reached the third round was average, and almost no one would be instantly killed. However, despite the general high leveled competitors, Apu had instantly died, and he hadn't even noticed the moment of his death.

This scene dumbfounded many as Liu Shaoqiu's name appeared as the victor.

Lu Yin looked closely at the arena and at the youth who had instantly killed Apu. So that's Liu Shaoqiu. Isn't he supposed to be a Limiteer?

Liu Xiaoyun also closely examined Liu Shaoqiu, whose eyes had turned to look at the highest peak, sweeping across each of the seated figures. This was no ordinary gaze; he actually seemed to disdain all ten of these student leaders.

Compared to Arikar or Long Yi, Liu Shaoqiu's appearance was too ordinary. However, it was precisely the incongruity between his appearance and his true abilities that rendered the academy leaders speechless. Liu Shaoqiu truly was qualified to look down on them like that; he was a powerhouse from the Sword Sect in the Inverse's First Flowzone. It was because of him that Liu Xiaoyun had been forced to join the Astral Combat Academy. Otherwise, she would have been forever suppressed by him in the Sword Sect.

Liu Xiaoyun did not care about this Astral Combat Tournament at all; to her, only Liu Shaoqiu mattered.

Astral-1's student leader marvelled, "The Sword Sect has produced two top geniuses this generation. One is a member of the Ten Arbiters and the other is right before us. I really want to experience the terror of the Thirteen Swords."

"You'll regret it," Liu Xiaoyun coldly replied as she clenched her sword's hilt tightly.

Astral-1's leader smiled but did not reply.

Suddenly, Liu Shaoqiu looked towards Lu Yin with a bizarre expression that also contained a hint of bloodlust.

As the distance was too far, no one knew who Liu Shaoqiu was looking at. Only Lu Yin felt his animosity, as Liu Shaoqiu had directed his gaze straight at him.

Can this person sense my strength? Lu Yin felt that Liu Shaoqiu's reaction was strange, as the Invisible Aura Technique that he had learned from Undying Yushan was very useful. Even Liu Xiaoyun and those sitting beside Lu Yin could not sense his true strength. Of everyone so far, only Liu Shaoqiu reacted differently.

Bang!

In another arena, Michelle was defeated by her opponent, Yue Xianzi. All of Michelle's attacks were rendered useless against the Blackwater Lake Area Master's vortex, leading to Michelle's defeat. The disparity between them was just too great.

Xi Yue also lost. Even though her strength neared that of an Area Master, she was still lacking when faced against a genuine Area Master.

Darkvoid was also defeated, but his defeat had been rather baffling. This battle had opened Lu Yin's eyes, not because of Darkvoid's powerful abilities, but rather because of his opponent, who had been very timid.

In Darkvoid's arena, a pool of black ink slowly vanished, eventually revealing a youth in long robes. In one hand, he gripped an ink brush, an ancient writing tool, that gave him the aura of a scholar. This was the person who had defeated Darkvoid.

Many were amazed by the battle, and most could not understand this person's attack methods.

On the highest peak, Astral-2's leader, Han Chong, smiled. He never thought that those rotten archaic relics would allow their precious disciple to join this competition. How interesting.

But out of all the battles in the third round, the most attention-grabbing battle was a violent confrontation. One of the fighters was Astral-7's Dai Ao, who had been Astral-7's defender during the Three Academies Guarding the Gate stage. And his opponent was Astral-10's Lulu Mavis.

No one expected that, when they had collided, a real fire would emerge. Lulu's terrifying strength directly clashed with Dai Ao's Starburst Palm, and their fight was a fierce struggle from the start. Countless onlookers felt their blood surging from watching, especially since one of the competitors was from the Mavis family.

The Mavis family had always been synonymous with wealth, and while everyone knew that this clan was powerful, no one was sure how well their members would perform. This battle served as a clear demonstration of their strength, and it showed that their power had no need to be concealed as it was able to shatter even Dai Ao's Starburst Palm.

Dai Ao endured the intense pain coursing through his body and stared intently at Lulu; the girl was very strong.

Lulu rubbed her reddened wrist. "Eh? You're not going to use your innate gift of gravity?"

Dai Ao frowned as he replied, "Then be careful."

"How boring. You're too confident." Lulu pursed her lips and then vanished. She had used White Flash, and when Nightqueen Yanqing saw this, her brows lifted as the technique felt very familiar to her.

Dai Ao's eyes suddenly widened as he did not expect that this girl would be able to use an extreme speed technique. However, gravity was the very nemesis of speed, and a moment later, the entire arena was enveloped by a black gravity field. A gravitational force no weaker than 150 times that of normal gravity caused the ground to crack and Lulu's body to waver as she reappeared on the stage. Dai Ao then attacked her with another Starburst Palm. This time, Lulu did not find it as easy to withstand as before; the gravity had greatly impacted her attack speed. She collapsed after taking several blows.

Dai Ao pressed down with his palm in an attempt to crush Lulu through pure power.

Traces of battle force appeared around Lulu's body as she continued to resist the pressure. Her battle force cancelled out a portion of the effect that the increased gravity had on her, allowing her to counterattack with a fierce uppercut at Dai Ao.

He lowered his eyes and the gravity field in the arena suddenly seemed to vanish. But in reality, it had concentrated into a black halo that surrounded his palm as he suddenly struck out.

He met Lulu's fist directly with his gravity-powered Starburst Palm, and the shockwave that resulted tore the void to shreds. Although it was not able to break through the barrier that surrounded the arena, the force was redirected upwards, causing it to sweep into the sky and shatter a square region of space. It was a shocking sight to behold.

Lulu was pressed into the ground by Dai Ao's attack. The black halo of intense gravity had greatly increased Starburst Palm's power, allowing the attack to reach her heart and crush it. Lulu had been defeated.

In an arena a bit further away, Grandini Mavis shook her head. Lulu was still young and had yet to grasp the true strength of the Mavis family's innate gift. She had also learnt other clans' methods in an attempt to increase her strength, resulting in her branching away from the main path.

A few meters away, in an arena neighbouring Grandini Mavis's, a man looked at Grandini in alarm. At this moment, there was practically no more arena left underneath her feet, as it had all been smashed to dust along with her opponent. What a freak!

Neither Xia Luo, Silver, or Little Pao's battles were exciting, perhaps because their opponents were not very strong. Either way, they smoothly passed the third round of the elimination battles. The upcoming fourth round was when the ten academy leaders would join the battles.

In the Lifeseek Realm and outside the field of arenas, all of the observing students grew solemn; the start of the true Astral Combat Tournament had finally arrived.

Most of the audience watching across the universe were indescribably excited as they stared at the screens, enraptured. The ten academy leaders were about to enter the fray. It was stimulating just thinking about if these pillars of the Astral Combat Academy would be able to prevail against the freakish geniuses who had only recently joined.

Wu Da was also excited, as this Astral Combat Tournament had already given him enough material to publish five weeks' worth of articles.



Back at Astral-10's space station, Madam Nalan was sipping her tea inside her spacecraft while she watched her screen. She was also full of expectations, as she had refrained from telling Liu Xiaoyun about how she had picked up Lu Yin in the middle of outer space because the story was just too unbelievable. No one would ever believe that a lowly Melder could actually survive in outer space, and because of this, Madam Nalan had huge expectations for Lu Yin's upcoming performance.

Within the Great Yu Empire, Undying Yushan sat up with a grave expression; Little Yin was about to enter battle.

In the Auna clan, Jenny Auna was rendered speechless for a long time. She had long since heard that the Astral Combat Academy students were all freaks, but only now had she realized what this statement entailed. Was Lu Yin really going to fight against such freaks now?

On Earth, countless people were also excited as they focused on the screens before them.

At this moment, as long as one was near a screen, they would pause whatever they were doing in anticipation of the start of the true Astral Combat Tournament.

There was a full five hour break before the fourth round of the elimination stage began. After those five hours passed, Lu Yin and the rest of the leaders on the highest peak stood up.

At this point, the arena plains had transformed yet again. There were fifty four competitors remaining after the three elimination rounds, and with the ten seeds, there were now a total of sixty four competitors. Therefore, one would naturally expect there to be thirty two arenas dotting the field. But instead, the plains showed no sign of change. They remained the same without any traces of the previous fierce battles.

Someone commented, "The battles must be taking place one by one. That way, we won't have to split our attention."

"True, the previous tournaments were also like this. There was only ever one arena from the fourth round until the end."

"No one reached this round with luck."

"You're wrong. There's one guy who managed to get here through pure luck—Lu Yin. Not only did he defeat Craynor and Hart Phoenix with outside help, but he also stirred up a disgraceful scandal to boost his fame. He fabricated news that he had died at the pirate port, and he even released a doctored video. He's pathetic."

"That's right! But the higher he climbs, the harder he'll fall. This stage will take place before the entire universe. I can't wait to see how he mucks this up."

...

Atop the highest peak overlooking the valley, the number "1" suddenly appeared in front of Feng Shang. He raised his head, lightly tapped the number in front of him, and was promptly transported to the center of the arena field.

Lu Yin was astonished; he didn't expect that a Realm Master would fight in the very first battle. It appeared that the Astral Combat Academy's mentors felt that they had held themselves back for long enough; Feng Shang's opponent was Arikar.

Everyone was stunned, but they quickly grew frenzied at the thought of witnessing this match. Feng Shang vs Arikar was a long-awaited match.

Arikar's identity had been exposed after the first round of battles. It was now widely known that he was Feng Shang's senior, a genius who had been frozen by the Blaze Realm. He had once fought for the position of Realm Master for Astral-8, but he had ultimately been defeated. This match would definitely be a highlight of the tournament, and it would also showcase the difference in power between Feng Shang and the previous student leader of Astral-8.

Arikar looked at Feng Shang excitedly. "I never thought that I would be able to face you in the first match! It turns out that the Astral Combat Academy's mentors are very understanding."

Feng Shang calmly replied, "Begin."

"It seems that you're very confident, but even Neru had to be careful against me," Arikar said with a sneer.

### **Chapter 208: Karmic Flame Sword**

Feng Shang's eyes narrowed and a light flashed across them after he heard Arikar's words. "You aren't fit to mention Brother Neru's name."

"I lost to Neru back then because the Blaze Realm hadn't given me the Karmic Flame Sword's sheathe yet, but I brought it today, little junior. You can once again experience the sensation of being burned into a crisp," Arikar jeered condescendingly. He then rose into the sky before a black dot pierced the earth, causing a surging wave of blazing hot heat to descend, just like the scene from the previous battle round.

On the other side, Feng Shang remained in his original location, calmly watching Arikar rise into the air and attack him with a palm.

The fiery palm silhouette enveloped an area of a thousand meters. On the screens, the spectators watched on as everything in the inferno's area of effect burned to ashes, and the heat even caused the void to distort. Thin spatial cracks spread out from the flames as they compressed into themselves, intensifying their destructive potential as they continued burning even within the void. It was a stunning scene.

Outside of the plains, Jared's face paled; this was Arikar's Endless Darkgold Palm. Arikar's innate gift of darkgold meant that he only needed a small amount of heat to coax violent flames with extremely high temperatures to life. When these flames were combined with the Blaze Realm's battle technique, it formed a unique combination battle technique that had allowed Arikar to dominate the Astral Combat Academy in the past. This attack was also his trademark skill.

Ripping apart the void was a sign of a powerhouse. Generally, only experts at the Explorer realm or above could tear through the void, but it had become a commonplace sight in this Astral Combat Tournament.

The void was formless, and a normal person could not even fathom how much strength was needed to tear through it. For flames to distort the void and even cause it to collapse, the temperature of the blaze needed to be impossibly high. The sight caused many to feel numb, especially the members of the Outerverse's younger generation. This palm represented the hopeless disparity between them and Arikar, who could even surprise space-exploring powerhouses with his attacks.

Boom!

The earth was powderized under that domineering Endless Darkgold Palm. As the dust settled, the screen revealed a jet-black palm silhouette while the remnant flames engulfed the arena in all directions and steadily continued to burn.

When the scorching heat wave swept over them, a portion of the students in the audience outside the arena involuntarily took a step back.

Even the student leaders still on the nearby peak were affected.

Lu Yin continued to stare at the arena. What a powerful strike, what high temperatures! Compared to Arikar, Craynor and the others were nothing.

Everyone looked inside the arena as the flames on the ground died down. What had happened to Feng Shang?

A breeze blew across the battlefield and dispersed the final fire, exposing a shade of green. In the thousand meter rectangle that the palm imprint had incinerated, only that smear of green remained unblackened; it was actually completely unharmed.

A hurricane twisted around Feng Shang, and he slowly raised his head. "Your power's only reached that level?"

Many students cheered and started chanting Feng Shang's name.

Countless spectators among the universe took in a deep breath of fresh air while standing in front of their screens. That attack, which could be considered to be the apex of a Limiteer's strength, could not even singe a hair against this person. This was a leader of the ten great academies, a trial zone Realm Master.

In the sky, Arikar's pupils shrank to pinpoints. "Impossible! Not even Neru from back then could have received the Endless Darkgold Palm that easily. How can you be completely unharmed?!"

Feng Shang's eyes remained ice cold. "The times have changed. Frozen geniuses? How pathetic. In my eyes, they're nothing more than a group of pitiful bugs who have fallen behind in the times."

"Shut up! You're just Neru's lackey! I'll show you the Blaze Realm's top-notch battle technique!" Arikar roared as his veins bulged all over his entire body. A trace of dark red energy could be seen flowing over his figure.

This was the Karmic Flame Sword, the strongest ancient battle technique inheritance that the Blaze Realm had. Only its top disciples were allowed to learn it, but learning it was just the first step. To use it in its complete form, one needed a sheath. This so-called "sheath" was not a material item, but rather something that had been successfully unlocked by an almighty figure from the Blaze Realm many years

ago. More specifically, the sheath was an indescribably powerful flame, and only those who absorbed this flame could display the full might of the Karmic Flame Sword.

Once this flame merged with a cultivator's star energy, it would cease to be an external force, so it could be displayed within the trial zones like an innate gift. This sheath, this flame, was what Arikar had received instead of Jared.

The Blaze Realm's disciples had consumed this flame for countless ages, so there was not much left. Even the region's top disciple was no longer guaranteed to receive a trace of it.

Countless people from the Inniverse knew that the Blaze Realm had a top-notch battle technique, the Karmic Flame Sword. But few knew the truth of the technique and why there could be such a disparity in the power of the battle technique even when used by people of similar strengths.

In the sky, Arikar straightened his right arm as a dark-red thread writhed within his body as if it was alive. Finally, it completely gathered together in his right index finger. In the very next moment, an indescribably terrifying aura emerged from that finger. It caused the void to ripple dangerously as an endlessly climbing heat wave engulfed heaven and earth and it a dark red color.

Many were shocked, as they knew that the strength of this attack would be terrifying beyond belief even before it was released.

Arikar stared fervently at his right index finger; this was the feeling. This inherited strand of flame was what allowed the Karmic Flame Sword to become truly terrifying. At this moment, he even felt confident about challenging an Explorer, let alone a mere Feng Shang. But then, Arikar's scalp suddenly turned numb as he instinctively tried to dodge to the side, but it was too late. Feng Shang's figure appeared before him as an intense pain spread out from his abdomen.

"Don't strike a pose for too long in your next battle" were the last words that Arikar heard before he died.

The Karmic Flame Sword was indeed very powerful, and there was a good reason why it had become the inherited battle technique of the Blaze Realm, which was an ancient power in the Inniverse. Its power could shock many, but Arikar was still too weak to fully display its power. It took him too long to ready it, and Feng Shang could have killed him more than ten times in that time span. Nobody was foolish enough to wait patiently and receive such a devastating attack.

Feng Shang's actions had shocked many, to the point where the audience couldn't even react.

According to the popular stories that they had all heard of, shouldn't one allow their opponent to display their ultimate moves before calmly dispatching them, to demonstrate the power of the protagonist? Was that just now a sneak attack?

Lu Yin, on the other hand, found the scene hilarious. He chuckled not at Feng Shang's abrupt attack, but rather at Arikar, who had been frozen for so many years that it seemed that his brain had become stupid. For some reason, Arikar had thought that Feng Shang was an idiot who would wait for him to display his strongest attack. But Feng Shang's last strike had been so fast that it was unbelievable. Arikar had reacted extremely quickly, but he still had not been able to dodge Feng Shang's attack. In fact, Feng Shang's speed had even overtaken Lulu's.

This was a Realm Master's strength. Graceful at a glance, but strong enough to shock people's hearts.

The other student leaders' expressions did not change. Kuang Wang arrogantly declared, "Another piece of trash. Anyone who can't display their battle techniques, no matter how strong that technique is, is trash."

Feng Shang returned and casually sat down at his seat. Although he had not displayed anything particularly terrifying, his battle had still stunned others. Arikar was so powerful, but he could not even handle a single strike from Feng Shang.

The arena plain still had a jet-black giant palm imprint from Arikar's Endless Darkgold Palm. But then, the earth squirmed, and the arena quickly regained its normal appearance.

Beside Lu Yin, a number "2" appeared in front of Liu Yin, who was rhythmically bobbing his head.

Lu Yin was astonished. The first battle had included a Realm Master, and the second one would be the same.

Liu Yin didn't even take off his headphones when he touched the number. He suddenly appeared in the arena below, where Little Pao was already waiting.

Lu Yin was surprised to see that Liu Yin's opponent was actually Little Pao.

Lu Yin wasn't the only one surprised; everyone from Astral-10 was stunned. Little Pao was up against a Realm Master?

Liu Yin had a youthful appearance, and he even had a delinquent's demeanor, but no one dared underestimate a Realm Master, not even Astral-9's Realm Master.

Of the Nine Trial Zones, the Dao of Change was deemed the trial zone with the most ancient and strange bloodlines. There were actually many inherited bloodlines there, just like how the other trial zones had battle technique inheritances and other teachings. But as the Dao of Change's Realm Master, Liu Yin had never shown any strange bloodline innate gifts. Nobody knew whether or not Little Pao would be able to force it out by himself.

Little Pao had a serious expression, as everyone knew that the nine Realm Masters were all very powerful. Even if this Liu Yin was calmly bobbing his head, Little Pao did not dare underestimate him.

Little Pao considered his options and rose into the sky. He then raised a hand as his star energy condensed into simulated flames and black veins bulged out on his raised hand. He barked, "Black Blazes Palm," as a giant black flame slammed downwards, straight at Liu Yin.

Many were shocked, as this strike appeared to be rather similar to Arikar's Endless Darkgold Palm. However, one was a true flame formed from an innate gift while the other was simulated through star energy. However, Little Pao's black palm similarly scorched the void with its high temperatures and caused it to distort. Even if the observers were watching from a screen, they could still sense the insanely high temperature of that simulated flame.

Liu Yin suddenly raised his head, opened his mouth, and let loose such a ferocious roar that everyone watching jump up in fright.

His roar was so loud and resonant that it directly caused the void to fracture. The sound wave was visible to the naked eye as it tore through the Black Blazes Palm and continued on towards Little Pao.

Little Pao's pupils shrank as he tried to dodge, but the sound wave had ripped through space and caused a crack to form. It was as if an abyss had been gouged out of the sky. The shocking scene stunned everyone.

Liu Yin raised his head and breathed in deeply. Following his actions, another queer sound wave was released into the sky. Sound, obviously, had no material substance, but this sound forcefully caused the air to condense into strange lines that twisted together.

Little Pao felt something was amiss and summoned his two-lined battle force to cover his body before he charged towards Liu Yin in a bid to interrupt this sound attack.

But it was too late, or rather, Liu Yin was too fast. Those lines of air formed by the sound waves fell down like rain drops, covering nearly half of the entire arena plains. Little Pao could not avoid the falling lines and was easily pelted by them. Each line had little to no destructive ability, but when they entered his body, they caused a sound wave to ring out within his body. When multiple lines entered Little Pao's body, they reverberated against each other, causing his body to quickly shatter into a million pieces.

The ground was also struck by the lines of sound waves, causing multiple fissures that were immeasurably deep to appear.

Countless spectators were stupefied by this scene. This was a Realm Master, one who had truly displayed his abilities and as a result, won in an instant.

Liu Yin continued to bob his head rhythmically as he made his way back to the high peak.

Some who had previously treated him with contempt were now frightened. This brat was silent and odd, but also extremely terrifying.

Lu Yin glanced at the person sitting next to him. Had he been serious just now?

Little Pao was strong, without a doubt. He had combined forces with Big Pao to force Kuang Wang to reveal a hidden card, which was testament to Little Pao's strength. However, when he had to face a Realm Master by himself, he had not been able to last for even a single strike, as the disparity was just too large.

Suddenly, Lu Yin thought of something, and he looked at Kuang Wang, who was sitting there with a calm expression. Lu Yin's eyes flashed; the other nine student leaders must roughly know the difference in power between each of them. Kuang Wang was not at all shocked by Liu Yin's power, which meant that he was just as powerful. This meant that when Big Pao and Little Pao had joined forces to fight Kuang Wang, he had never been serious.

The Astral Combat Academy had lasted for countless years, and it was logical to say that it stood at the top of the universe. The Ten Arbiters Council had designated the Council of Astral Academy as one of its strongest subsidiary councils, and the council could even stand by the Outerverse Youth Council on

equal footing. Lu Yin had never really understood what this implied before, but based on what these Realm Masters had shown so far, they were indeed qualified to have such a lofty position.

Once these Realm Masters broke through and became Explorers, they would immediately be able to challenge the Top 100 Rankings, and they would definitely not place low either. Even with their current power, they might even be already able to step into the Top 100 Rankings.

These Realm Masters were absolutely within the top hundred of the universe's younger generation rankings, with the exception of the Ten Arbiters of course.

The next three matches had no Realm Masters, and Lu Yin did not recognize any of the participants either. Finally, for the sixth match, a number "6" appeared before him.

### **Chapter 209: Shock**

At the same time, outside the arena plains, a number "6" appeared before Long Yi as well. The dragon licked his lips rapaciously.

When Lu Yin appeared in the arena plains, countless onlookers grew excited as two camps of opposing extreme emotions rose.

Many Astral Combat Academy students were delighted at Lu Yin's misfortune; they believed that all of Lu Yin's battle results were fabricated and that Astral-10 had appointed him as its student leader to distract the rest of the academies.

On the other hand, when countless people throughout the universe saw that another academy leader was stepping out to do battle, they grew excited upon the thought of seeing another high leveled battle.

At this moment, Gerbach and the rest in the Great Yu Empire were watching with grave expressions.

Undying Yushan had a calm expression.

The Auna clan, Huo family—among the three rings of territory surrounding Zenyu Star, everyone was staring intently at their screens at the thin figure who represented the Great Yu Empire as King Zishan.

On Earth, Zhou Shan and the rest were so nervous that they could hardly breathe. They had never imagined that Lu Yin would participate in a battle at this level, as this battle represented vying for the very peak of the universe's younger generation.

On a vast continent, in a city floating in the sky, Wendy Yushan's eyes wandered as she looked calmly at Lu Yin.

On Astral-10's space station, Madam Nalan put down her teacup and her gaze deepened immeasurably.

...

Behind every competitor were countless people supporting them. Lu Yin was no different, and the sight of his appearance on the battlefield lifted many hearts.

Long Yi's giant body appeared before Lu Yin, and the sylvan dragon revealed a grinning expression.

"Another one from Astral-10, and the leader at that. Interesting. This time, I won't kill you too quickly. I'll crush your body and then crush Astral-10 beneath my feet."

Lu Yin's gaze turned frosty as he recalled the sight of Big Pao's corpse being trampled. "You like to step on people?"

Long Yi released a long, maniacal laughter.

Lu Yin frowned. "Is it because you're going to become someone's mount?"

This sentence angered Long Yi to no end. The battle that he had lost in the past had scarred him for life as it would be an everlasting shame upon his name if he were reduced to being a mount. Although his clan had released him so as to borrow his status as a mount to approach the Ten Arbiters, it was still a humiliation for him no matter what the context was. Hence, he had developed a complex for stepping on other people, and the word "mount" had also become taboo for him.

Long Yi immediately opened his mouth and shot out a ray at Lu Yin. It was a great sylvan dragon ray, the very same attack that had severely injured Big Pao. Long Yi had used this attack to become famous in the universe as it was his powerful innate gift.

Lu Yin abruptly vanished before instantly appearing above the dragon. Long Yi's body split in response; one became two, and then two became five. This was the sylvan dragon clan's innate gift of extreme speed, and this was the same speed that had rendered Big Pao helpless.

Boom!

The center of the arena suddenly shattered as giant cracks spread out in all directions, stirring up a heavy cloud of dust and smoke. The audience had yet to react to the dragon's extreme speed, but the battle had already ended.

As the smoke dispersed, countless students were stunned. Long Yi's giant body had been ripped into multiple pieces, and each piece was embedded deeply into the ground, his blood staining the plains. A footprint could be clearly seen on its shattered head; this was where Lu Yin's deadly stomp had landed.

In an instant, all of the student leaders sitting atop the peak overlooking the valley were moved; it had been such a quick speed, and a powerful strike as well.

Lu Yin silently floated in mid-air with a calm expression for a few seconds before slowly returning to the high peak and gently sitting down in his seat again.

No one spoke, as the battle had ended far too fast for them to even react. This was an expected outcome to the people who were watching the tournament through their screens, as Lu Yin had indeed displayed the power of a Ream Master. However, this result was too shocking for the Astral Combat Academy students. After all, wasn't this fellow supposed to be a distraction propped up by Astral-10? But didn't he seem a bit too powerful to just be a distraction?

Outside the plains, Liu Ji stared at Lu Yin closely. He truly was Astral-10's leader who had actually been hit by the beam of light that was meant for Explorers at the pirate port. How had he survived? And that wasn't even mentioning his abnormal strength; Liu Ji had not even been able to see his movements.

Countless students were shocked, and many more spectators in the rest of the universe were stunned, including the Great Yu Empire. Gerbach and the rest could not even comprehend what had just happened; the gap between them had grown much too large.



Undying Yushan smiled. Not bad, not bad at all.

In the outskirts of San Dios, a city in the sky, Wendy was amazed. This speed was rather excessive even for a Limiteer, but Lu Yin was just a Melder. She suddenly realized something; Lu Yin was currently Astral-10's leader, but once he truly became a Realm Master, he would automatically join the Council of Astral Academy. The status of a student council member was the same as her own...

Wendy Yushan was not the only one watching the match on San Dios; Puyu was as well, though his mood was completely different. He could even be considered to be in a towering rage. "Why did that trash, Bazeer, not just slaughter him back then?!"

A figure was silently standing behind him: it was the man known as Vulture, the corpse king who had fought against Lu Yin on the Giant Planet. Vulture was also staring at the screen, at Lu Yin.

The shock that Lu Yin had created among the spectators had not yet dissipated when another two figures appeared on the plains. The first was Grandini Mavis and the other grasped a simple sword, clearly from Myriad Swords Peak. Lu Yin was interested in the capabilities of the disciples of Myriad Swords Peak, as he would one day have to interact with this monstrous organization.

Outside the arena, Lulu grit her teeth as she stared at Grandini. That damned woman just has to show me up.

This battle also ended quite quickly, creating a bit of a stir among the audience again. The Myriad Swords Peak disciple, Na Mu, had the ability to fuse 3000 blades into one, greatly surpassing Zhao Yilong. However, Grandini had still forcibly smashed his technique apart. She, like Lulu, used pure strength, but Grandini's strength seemed limitless. Each shockwave that accompanied her punches had sent cold shivers running down the audience's spines.

There were no highlights in the next few battles. All of them were completely one-sided, even when Area Masters were fighting. At this point, and on this stage, an Area Master was nothing much. Little Pao also had the strength of a top-notch Area Master, but he had still been killed near-instantly in his match.

Lu Yin only perked up when he saw Xia Luo appear, as he still had not seen how deep this person's strength truly went yet.

Xia Luo's opponent made Lu Yin feel that luck was on his side today; he was actually matched up against Jared.

The rivalry between Jared and Astral-10 had started when the Blaze Realm tried to take over Astral-10. But now, Arikar had been wiped out by Feng Shang and Long Yi had been stomped upon by Lu Yin, leaving only the Ross Empire's Jared still in the tournament of the Blaze Realm's three powers.

Jared was not worried about Xia Luo even if his performance during the Tribute to the Ancestors stage had been exceptional. Jared felt that, at best, Xia Luo had a firm willpower. However, his misconception was only because Jared did not clearly understand the details of that the Tribute to the Ancestors stage entailed.

The opponent who he wanted to face the most was Lu Yin, as they had a grudge between them. And that wasn't even mentioning the fact that Lu Yin was definitely the weakest out of all the student

leaders. If Jared beat Lu Yin, he would become famous throughout the universe, but unfortunately, he had not been that lucky.

“Senior, you seem disappointed,” Xia Luo said with a warm smile, his expression the same as always.

Jared shot a disdainful glare at Xia Luo. “There’s no need to spout nonsense. Just die.” He then raised his right arm. This posture was very familiar to the onlookers: wasn’t this Arikar’s Karmic Flame Sword that had never been fully displayed? Did this person want to have a repeat of that?

Xia Luo’s eyes flashed, and he eagerly watched Jared.

As an Area Master, and also as the strongest Blaze Realm disciple in his generation, Jared would naturally not make the same rookie mistake that Arikar had made. Jared had not received that strand of ancient flame, but his preparation time was much faster. As soon as his arm lowered, a strand of fire shot out of his fingertip and emitted a strange sword radiance that sliced towards Xia Luo while being propelled by star energy. As it moved through the arena, it scorched everything black, tore cracks through the void, and caused the ground to burn and melt.

This was the Karmic Flame Sword. Although this attack was not catalyzed with the ancient flame, it still possessed a powerful strength.

Many students backed away from the arena as they felt a searing heat wave wash over them.

Just this strike alone demonstrated Jared’s power as an Area Master. He could easily tear through the void, which was something that only someone with the strength of an Area Master could do.

Xia Luo took a single step forward with his right leg to confront this Karmic Flame Sword as he lashed out with a palm. The sword and palm collided, and the resulting shockwave rippled through the field, overturning the ground and shattering the nearby hills. However, the Karmic Flame Sword was stopped by Xia Luo’s palm, and when his palm started to vibrate, the sword shrank at a visible rate before finally vanishing.

Jared was shocked by the sight. “How is that even possible?! You actually dissolved the Karmic Flame Sword?”

It wasn’t only Jared; all of the observing powerhouses from the Blaze Realm felt a cold sweat appear on their backs. Even Arikar was gaping with his mouth open. Someone had actually dissolved the Karmic Flame Sword with ease.

Xia Luo waved his hand and smiled calmly at Jared as he extinguished the last strand of fire. “Has no one ever told you that the Karmic Flame Sword is not really that special? If even you can do it, then it means that it’s not very complicated.”

These words were shocking to Jared, but he could only stare at Xia Luo in disbelief. “That’s the peak inherited battle technique of my Blaze Realm.”

Xia Luo shook his head, seeming disappointed. “That’s impossible. The Blaze Realm has passed that technique down for countless generations. If the Karmic Flame Sword only amounted to this, then the realm would have been exterminated long ago. I could feel the power in Arikar’s previous sword, but the

most important aspect isn't the battle technique itself, but rather something else. In other words, it's the primer, which you lack. Such a pity."

Jared's heart was shaken by Xia Luo's words as he continued to stare at Xia Luo. "Such big words. You're just a new student of Astral-10, but you actually want to spout off nonsense about my Blaze Realm." He barked loudly, causing the star energy in his body to start simulating flames that burst out, engulfing his body in flames. After immolating himself, Jared swatted out with a palm at Xia Luo.

Xia Luo easily dodged Jared's continuous attacks. Jared smoothly used various battle techniques of the Blaze Realm, and even some that did not belong to the Blaze Realm, but each and every one of them was easily neutralized by Xia Luo.

Atop the peak overlooking the valley, Dao Bo sighed. "Such astonishing Lockbreaking talent."

Lu Yin also sighed as he thought back to how Xia Luo had entered Astral-10 with him and had searched for the gift at the Rain Observatory. Later, after Lu Yin Possessed Da Lei through his die, Lu Yin had been the first to grasp the realm of infinite changes of star energy control, but he had still been quickly surpassed by Xia Luo during the new students' competition. Now, he did not even know how far Xia Luo's grasp of star energy had become. This was Xia Luo's real power.

In the arena, Jared panted heavily and stared at Xia Luo as if he were looking at the devil. Where did this bastard come from? He's a terrifying fighter, and clearly a Lockbreaker. His method of dissolving attacks is definitely something that only a Lockbreaker could do. So Astral-10 actually has a Lockbreaker among its ranks.

There were around twenty Lockbreakers in the entire Astral Combat Academy, though only a few could reach this level of control. Xia Luo's performance even astounded Dao Bo, let alone the other Lockbreakers. Liu Ji was completely stunned, as she could sense that Xia Luo was much stronger than her. How is this possible?

Jared's eyes flared and he charged at Xia Luo again. Strangely, Xia Luo's eyes also flashed when he saw Jared's hands movements this time. The scene before them collapsed and then transformed. This was a completely different battle technique, an inherited one from the Dao of Illusion. Displaying this battle technique showed that Jared had become serious.

The two figures passed by each other, though there were no injuries on either. Following that, Jared's body collapsed to the ground, leaving Xia Luo victorious.

No one saw how Xia Luo had achieved his victory aside from Lu Yin. He was keenly aware that Xia Luo's unexpected attack was incredibly powerful. It was actually the attack that had once defeated Lulu. Even Lu Yin had only barely managed to avoid this attack. This guy seemed pure and kind on the surface but was actually very cruel at his core.

Xia Luo had beat Jared. He then turned around and smiled at Lu Yin.

Lu Yin felt that it was quite funny, as it seemed that Xia Luo also had a driving ambition for victory. Silver must be the same; Lu Yin just could not see through these two Astral-10 students.

## **Chapter 210: Domain**

The next match was Liu Xiaoyun's turn. Lu Yin was looking forward to seeing her true power, but her opponent was merely an Area Master, and the disparity was too great; the Area Master was easily dispatched.

After Liu Xiaoyun was Han Chong, Astral-2's leader...

...His battle ended in a similarly relaxed manner.

The fourteenth match made the crowds perk up. On one side was Sha, and on the other was Hart Phoenix, the genius of the Phoenix clan who had defeated an Area Master as a Melder.

Every Melder who had reached the fourth round of matches was a freak. The few Melders still in the tournament were Lu Yin, Liu Shaoqiu, Xia Luo, Silver, and lastly, Hart Phoenix. Also, Hart had a brother who dominated the universe: one of the Ten Arbiters, Serati Phoenix.

Ever since Hart had been defeated by Lu Yin, he had vanished, only reappearing now. Lu Yin was very curious as to what the young man had experienced during his time away and how he had grown so powerful. Hart's entire temperament seemed to have changed, becoming much more refined.

Many were waiting to see how Hart would fare in this battle and only a few were concerned about Sha, such as Lu Yin or Silver. Only those two knew that Sha was from the Neohuman Alliance, an incomparably frightening organization.

For Hart, Sha did not even qualify to enter his eyes. Hart was like Jared and was of the opinion that only those who he had targeted were worth his attention, such as Lu Yin or Bonny Phoenix.

Sha had a calm expression, as if he did not care about anything in the world. His entire body gave off an icy-cold impression, as if he were a block of ice. After all, he was the Ice Domain's Area Master in the Dao of Slaughter.

Hart finally looked at Sha and then immediately frowned—he hated the cold. Hart didn't even speak before making a move. Following a high pitched whistling sound, gigantic golden flames engulfed the entire arena plains. No one thought that Hart would cause such a huge spectacle with his first move, and many students retreated in fear, not even daring to touch the golden flames. These flames had already burned an Area Master to a crisp once before.

The golden flames surged as they wrapped around Sha. Hart reckoned that this guy would not be able to cope with the intense heat, but reality shocked everyone. The golden flames gradually froze over and were encased with ice. Then, the blue layers of ice started extending outwards, slowly but steadily freezing any and all golden flames that it came into contact with. Eventually, a marvelous display of golden flames encased in blue ice that covered the entire plains was formed.

Hart's pupils constricted. He knew better than anyone how terrifying his golden flames were. It shouldn't have been possible for this person to seal them.

Sha did not make any unnecessary moves. An area of extreme cold had formed beneath his feet before spreading out, freezing everything as it inexorably crept towards Hart.

Hart felt furious at this development, as this was his stage. He could not allow himself to be suppressed by anyone.

In the next moment, the clarion call of a powerful bird shook heaven and earth. From within the sturdy ice, the golden flames roiled and quaked. Its sudden liveliness shattered the ice before rising into the skies to assume the form of a golden Undying Bird. It spread its wings, and the high temperature that it released caused the void to twist and rupture. This scene was much more horrifying than Arikar's Endless Darkgold palm, as it felt that a real astral phoenix had been born before their very eyes.

Lu Yin leaned forward expectantly; Hart's Undying Bird had changed once again, and it was even more majestic and powerful than before. The golden flames of the Undying Bird practically evaporated everything that they touched, overwhelming many students who continuously retreated from the arena.

But no one noticed that the extreme cold beneath Sha never stopped spreading. The star energy in his body exploded out, triggering his blue ice to suddenly sweep out and seal everything within a thousand meters, which included the golden Undying Bird and Hart Phoenix.

Nobody had even comprehended what had just happened when Sha raised his hand and caused a sturdy ice spear to form in it. He then thrust it directly through Hart's body and into the ground, instantly killing him.

With Hart's death, the golden flames vanished, leaving only an icy-blue world in the arena plains.

No one thought that even the Undying Bird could be frozen. The confrontation between ice and fire had resulted in a complete landslide victory.

Up on the highest peak, all the student leaders had somber faces.

"What a strong domain. So even the Phoenix clan's Undying Bird was frozen by it. Xue Liuyun, did you know that this Area Master below you was this powerful?" Feng Shang asked with a strange expression. The others also shifted their gazes towards Xue Liuyun.

Xue Liuyun calmly stared at Sha, but there was a rarely seen glimmer of shock in his eyes. He really had no idea that this person was this strong.

Outside the arena plains, Xia Luo's brows creased in frustration. He hated this Sha purely because his aura was similar to Silver's; it was extremely disgusting.

Off in the distance, Silver's smile was splendid. He was standing alone as most of the surrounding students had avoided him out of fear that he would go crazy with his butterfly knife. This person had killed almost two hundred people by himself during the Three Academies Guarding the Gate stage, after all.

The next two matches were battles between Area Masters. Normally, these battles would be attention-grabbing, but they were not dazzling in the slightest on the current stage. Wu Da could not even be bothered to record them. While these battles were taking place, his small eyes were scanning all the other competitors, and nobody knew what he was thinking.

The seventeenth match was a long-anticipated one. Before their screens, countless people in the Inverseverse cheered when they saw the appearance of their goddess, Yue Xianzi.

Yue Xianzi was another student who had only recently joined the Astral Combat Academy. Although she was pretty, many students still regarded her as an outsider since she had also snatched the Blackwater

Lake inheritance not long after she joined. Hence, many students did not like her. Facing her was her opponent, Charon.

Lu Yin smiled when he saw Charon walk out; this was a sure victory.

The only thing that the spectating audience knew about Charon was that he was a powerful Area Master. Otherwise, he would not have been able to occupy Whitebones Gorge. Among everyone, only Lu Yin knew about Charon's true strength; between his mastery of a domain, his star energy control, and his Unveiled Sword, he was more than qualified to roam the universe unhindered. He was definitely the ideal candidate to challenge a Realm Master, but he had not yet revealed his power. Additionally he could not bring his sword into the Lifeseek Realm either.

Yue Xianzi slowly bowed as she faced Charon. "Senior, forgive my impropriety."

Charon duly replied, "It is my honor to battle against the young mistress of the Frostmoon Sect."

"The Frostmoon Sect is just a small sect, and it is not worthy of senior's notice. I ask that senior please show mercy." Yue Xianzi's words were respectful, and when that was coupled with her beautiful face and sweet voice, she caused many in the audience to admire her bearing.

But Charon remained unaffected; the only woman in his mind was his sister-in-law. But that thought caused him to think of Lu Yin, and he unconsciously raised his head only to coincidentally lock eyes with Lu Yin.

Lu Yin looked at Charon and then at Yue Xianzi. At this moment, this woman had shed her prim manners and mercilessly displayed the battle technique that she had inherited from Blackwater Lake.

Her star energy simulated the flow of water and produced a vortex, which protected her in the very center of the field. An extremely dazzling cold moon rose in the sky, giving Yue Xianzi the bearing of a true lunar deity.

Charon remained calm as he stared at the gradually expanding vortex, which had twisted more than one Area Master to death. The normal-looking flowing water actually had a terrifyingly destructive strength, and no one was capable of withstanding it regardless of how tough their body was. This was the fearsome nature of this inherited battle technique that had come from ancient times. Charon could not forcibly clash with the vortex, and he could only try to dissolve it from the outside. Fortunately, Charon was a genius Lockbreaker who greatly surpassed both Xia Luo and Lu Yin in terms of contributions.

When Charon's star energy expanded out, mysterious ripples swept out across the field one after another. Yue Xianzi was shocked: a domain! She did not know that Charon had comprehended a domain.

For the first time, the power of a Lockbreaker combined with a domain was witnessed by countless people.

Charon then easily stepped into the vortex and walked in front of Yue Xianzi. "Are we going to continue this?"

Many could not understand what had just happened. How had Charon broken through Yue Xianzi's battle technique so easily?

Yue Xianzi was initially stunned, but her shock quickly turned to disappointment. "It seems that my battle technique cannot compare to yours. Thank you, senior, for showing me mercy." Her figure then vanished as she left the Lifeseek Realm.

Charon and Yue Xianzi's battle had been one of the simplest in the entire tournament, as they had not exchanged any blows. Only a very select few could understand what had transpired during their battle.

A domain contained a very mysterious strength; not only could it help one merge into their surroundings, but it could also forcibly affect those surroundings and increase one's power almost limitlessly. It could form a visible forcefield, alter one's heartbeat rate, enhance their five senses, and other abstruse effects. Every person's understanding of a domain was different.

Sha's domain had altered his surroundings to turn everything to ice, while Charon's focused on enhancing his five senses as he was a Lockbreaker. Within the range of Charon's domain, he was able to clearly sense the activity of every single strand of star energy. This was the reason behind Yue Xianzi's defeat. Even though her battle technique was very strong, it was nonetheless still powered by star energy. As long as he was facing someone on the same level as him, there was almost no star energy activity that Charon could not see through.

Absolute mastery within the domain's region of space for the wielder—this was a domain. Not all Lockbreakers could comprehend a domain, but any Lockbreaker who did would undoubtedly be very powerful.

Up on the peak overlooking the field, Dao Bo's lips curved upwards; Charon was qualified to battle against him.

Not far from Lu Yin, an "18" appeared in front of Astral-1's leader.

Everyone looked at her; it was finally time for the most unfathomable and mysterious Realm Master of them all to battle.

Lu Yin was naturally curious as well, since the ten academies and their respective student leaders were all ranked by strength. This woman had to be able to suppress Nightqueen Yanqing, Dao Bo, Feng Shang, and other such super powerhouses for her to take the position of first. Lu Yin was eager to see her power.

However, the battle did not even take place as the opponent readily admitted defeat.

None of the Astral Combat Academy's students found this strange. This student had been matched up against Astral-1's leader, the person who could be considered the strongest within the entire Astral Combat Academy. Not even most Area Masters would be qualified to exchange blows with her.

Lu Yin was disappointed, but his spirits were quickly refreshed because the next battle was nearly as exciting as the previous one. It was Chilian Daynight. Countless people had seen his powerful moves during the Three Academies Guarding the Gate stage, especially his amazing crowd control abilities. It would be difficult for anyone weaker than him to defend against his attacks. And his opponent for this nineteenth match would be Liu Shaoqiu.

Liu Xiaoyun shivered when she saw Liu Shaoqiu appear in the middle of the arena plains.

She wasn't the only one who was excited. Before countless screens, especially within the First Flowzone of the Innerverse, many experts from great powers watched this upcoming battle intently. There was not much information readily available about Liu Shaoqiu, but everything that had been found out was shocking to the extreme. He was the second person in the current generation of the Sword Sect to have received the Thirteen Swords inheritance, and he was also an abnormally strong genius who had once injured an Explorer at the Melder realm.

In the First Flowzone, on a dusky land, countless people were kneeling down. The crowd extended far into the horizon, and they were all facing towards the north. There, a tall flag fluttered in the wind, emitting an iron-scented bloodlust. There was one word on the flag—"Yōu."

Below the flag sat a girl with an exquisite face. She was wearing a dark-colored gown as she looked at the screen that displayed Liu Shaoqiu calmly standing in the arena plains.

Behind the girl, an old maid knelt down deferentially. "Princess, he is your fiancé, a genius of the Sword Sect's current generation, Liu Shaoqiu."

The girl continued to look at the screen as curiosity filled her large, resplendent eyes. Her gaze seemed calm, but her eyes had a strange glint within them.

Many around the arena field looked at Chilian Daynight with uncontrollable excitement. They did not recognize Liu Shaoqiu and only saw Chilian Daynight. He was a top-tier powerhouse from Astral-3 who was qualified to represent his academy during the Three Academies Guarding the Gate stage, and that wasn't even mentioning the fact that he was an expert from the Daynight clan.