

Chapter 221: Extreme Shockwave Palm

At the spot where Lu Yin had been standing, his body seemingly dissolved into nothingness. He had chosen to evade Liu Shaoqiu's First Sword, but just experiencing the technique for himself was enough to nearly startle him out of his skin. This was the Thirteen Swords.

Lu Yin stepped out of the void and stared in amazement at Liu Shaoqiu. Against that sword, every single cell in his body seemed to be trembling. It was not from fear, but rather from excitement. Lu Yin had finally met an opponent who he could battle with all his heart after overcoming death twice. He considered the situation for a moment before four-lined battle force covered his body without any further hesitation. "Again."

With a whoosh, Lu Yin's body tore through the void and appeared in front of Liu Shaoqiu after he used Flash at his top speed. He pressed down, releasing a Nine Stacks Shockwave Palm.

Liu Shaoqiu remained calm and merely shifted his heels, but then, his body suddenly vanished. Lu Yin felt his scalp tingle before instinctively dodging right as a giant crack appeared in the void where he had been standing. After Liu Shaoqiu started his attack with his iron sword, Lu Yin extended his index finger that was flickering with purple battle force and tapped at Liu Shaoqiu's forehead. The sword genius followed through with his attack, causing the two young men to essentially swap positions. Each of their attacks had landed in the same patch of empty air at the same time, and they ended with their backs to each other. One blade had sliced through the void, and one finger had pierced nothingness. Two indescribably terrifying attacks had been used at the same time, dividing the arena plains into two neat halves.

Their first exchange had taken place in a single moment, but it was already enough to amaze many. Even those who could understand what they were watching were all stunned. The power of Liu Shaoqiu's Thirteen Swords went without saying, but most of the audience members could not understand how Lu Yin had managed to avoid the First Sword.

If the Thirteen Swords were that easily avoided, then Chilian Daynight and Kuang Wang would not have died to a single move. Since Lu Yin had relied on pure speed to avoid the First Sword, then just how fast was his extreme speed?

On the high peak, Feng Shang was astonished by what he had just seen. "His speed is so high that he can actually tear through the void by just moving. His physical body is too tough. This guy really hid his abilities well."

Dao Bo marvelled, "He actually avoided the First Sword and even made Liu Shaoqiu dodge his attack in turn. This junior is much stronger than what we thought."

Starsibyl merely revealed a slight, mysterious smile as she watched on, surprised.

Not only were the academy leaders shocked, but many of the Astral Combat Academy's students were astonished as well. The most surprised out of all of them, however, were those from the Sword Sect, as they had never thought that someone here would be able to avoid the First Sword, let alone a mere Melder.

In the Sword Sect, someone yelled in disbelief, “How is this possible? How could anyone in this universe in the same realm as Liu Shaoqiu avoid his First Sword?”

“This person is very quick, and his attack was rather sharp too. Look, he concentrated all of his battle force onto his fingertip. This shows that he has a very deep comprehension of four-lined battle force. Of course that attack would be enough to make even Liu Shaoqiu afraid of receiving it head-on.”

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Under the “Yōu” flag in the dusky land, the little girl clapped her hands and cheered while Grandma Du was dumbstruck by what she had just witnessed. “A Melder actually dodged the Thirteen Swords? Such impressive speed. This fellow’s not ordinary.”

The little girl, on the other hand, was delighted. “Grandma Du, don’t brag about Liu Shaoqiu anymore. The Sword Sect has elevated the Thirteen Swords’ power too highly. In reality, it looks like there are many battle techniques in the universe that can rival or even surpass the Thirteen Swords. Our Yōu family—”

The girl was hurriedly interrupted by the old maid, whose face had paled. She stared in horror at the little girl. “Little princess, don’t spout nonsense!”

The girl pursed her lips in annoyance, but she nonetheless stopped speaking.

In the arena, Lu Yin and Liu Shaoqiu turned around at the same time to face each other. They were not even three meters apart.

“As expected, your power is astounding.” Liu Shaoqiu was the first to speak when their eyes met again. He had a burning battle intent in his eyes, clearly no longer carrying the calmness that they had held before.

Lu Yin’s lips quirked up when he sensed this intense battle intent that seemed ready to explode at any moment. He still had not had a chance to use his full strength after overcoming that calamity, and he had barely suppressed his desire to test his new limits all this while. “Come, let me experience the Second Sword.”

“As you wish.” Liu Shaoqiu had an indifferent expression as he gripped his sword hilt. “But let me give you a warning—no amount of speed will help you against the Second Sword.” He then closed his eyes. Although nobody else felt like anything had changed, in Liu Shaoqiu’s mind, the entire arena had turned into a world of swords that was centered around Liu Shaoqiu himself. This was the domain that the Thirteen Swords created. Or rather, it would be more accurate to say that to understand the Second Sword, one had to first comprehend the basics of a domain.

Lu Yin’s eyes turned grave, and he scanned his clothes, but he could not see any changes. Through the surrounding star energy, he could feel that cracks had appeared everywhere. These cracks weren’t restricted to just his clothes; they covered his body, the entire arena’s ground, and even appeared in the sky. It was as if nothing could withstand the Second Sword’s oppression.

At the same time, the energy barrier that protected the audience from the arena had actually started twisting. Before, no matter how intense a battle had been, that barrier had never shaken, but it was

actually distorting before an attack had even been launched. Many students were horrified by the sight and quickly retreated.

On the high peak, Feng Shang and the rest were watching seriously, as they also felt an acute sense of danger.

Lu Yin's eyes narrowed. He wanted to act, but there were no openings for him to take advantage of. Liu Shaoqiu was still standing with his eyes closed, motionless, but Lu Yin felt as if he could not make a move. The Thirteen Swords had no gaps, even if Liu Shaoqiu was just standing there like that.

Suddenly, Liu Shaoqiu opened his eyes, and his gaze intensified a little more as he looked at Lu Yin. "You're more interesting than I expected. You didn't even try to attack just then. Did you sense it?"

Lu Yin calmly replied with a question of his own. "Let me ask you this, how many swords have you comprehended?"

As soon as these words were spoken, everyone focused on Liu Shaoqiu. Lu Yin was not the only one curious about this; everyone was. Even those in the Sword Sect wanted to know exactly how many swords this young genius had learned.

Liu Shaoqiu's eyes brightened as he clearly answered, "Three."

Many people felt afraid, as if their dreams had been trampled upon. The First Sword was already enough to slay an academy leader. The second could at least rival the strongest moves of the top academy leaders and was enough to trample the entire Astral Combat Academy. So then just how strong was the third? The rumors that Liu Shaoqiu had travelled through space and injured an Explorer by himself must be true then.

Although a Limiteer was only one realm below an Explorer, it was still a vast difference. Many Sentinels or Melders could be Realmbreakers, but there were almost no Realmbreaker Limiteers who could crush an Explorer as the difference between the two realms was essentially twice that of any other two realms. Only the Ten Arbiters had been Limiteer Realmbreakers who could crush Explorers.

Outside the plains, Liu Xiaoyun gripped her hilt with a look of disbelief. Three swords. It's actually three swords... She had already suspected that Liu Shaoqiu had comprehended three swords, but having those suspicions verified as true was different. She felt an unbearable pressure crush her as she could at most rival the First Sword. She would be powerless against the second, and she would not even be qualified to force out Liu Shaoqiu's Third Sword.

This was the Sword Sect's monster, the Ten Arbiters candidate.

On the sidelines, Kuang Wang was in agony. As the leader of Astral-5 and the Dao of Heaven's Realm Master, he had not even been able to force Liu Shaoqiu to reveal the Second Sword. It was too humiliating to him when he realized that he could not even compare to a Melder junior.

Wu Da could hardly control his own excitement, as Lu Yin had indeed forced out Liu Shaoqiu's Second Sword and even caused such valuable information to come out. While Liu Shaoqiu may or may not have spoken the truth, it was highly likely that he had comprehended three swords. It was rumored that not even the Sword Sect member of the current Ten Arbiters had comprehended past the tenth sword.

“Three swords, what terrifying talent. In that case, I won’t shrink back. I will take the Second Sword straight on,” Lu Yin said as he raised his head and lifted his right arm. There was a gentle boom as the void rumbled ominously before rippling out and forming layers that smoothly spread out. “Nine Stack, Fifteen-Fold Shockwave Palm.”

Not too long ago, before Lu Yin had comprehended the ninth star, his strongest attack had been a fusion between his battle force and the Nine Stacks technique in the form of Nine Stacks Shockwave Palm. Today, since he was restricted and unable to use his Cosmic Palm, he had increased his Shockwave Palm to fifteen stacks. The muscles in his right arm gave out a mind-numbing ripping sound; his right arm was nearly at its limit, but the four-lined battle force’s purple color continued to darken.

Liu Shaoqiu’s eyes grew fervent when he saw Lu Yin’s movements. “Second sword.” As his words finished, the sky darkened, and an endless sword qi covered the sky. This was the Second Sword of the Thirteen Swords. It was a sword that could not be dodged even if one hid in the void.

Lu Yin’s eyes suddenly widened as he struck out with his palm.

A pressure that could crush mountains swept out in all directions and sundered the earth. The void collapsed as infinite lines of sword qi pierced through space, even affecting the high peak where the other academy leaders were seated. Feng Shang and the rest had to retreat from the high peak and appear outside the arena plains.

The initial energy barrier laid down by the mentors did not last for even five seconds before being shredded to pieces; only the second energy barrier managed to withstand the Second Sword.

No one could understand what was going on in the battle on the plains, as the void had distorted so badly that they were unable to make anything comprehensible out. On the screens, all the viewers could see was distortion spatial cracks.

Nightqueen Yanqing’s eyes were grave. The collision of the two combatants’ attacks was definitely enough to threaten her. She could accept Liu Shaoqiu being this powerful, but what was Astral-10’s leader relying on to contend against the Second Sword?

Her question was similarly shared by those in the Sword Sect. The Second Sword easily tore through the void, and every Astral Combat Academy student leader should have been instantly vanquished when struck by this sword. However, to their disbelief, the current situation on the plains was a clear indication that Astral-10’s leader was still alive.

Lu Yin had acutely sensed the power of the Second Sword even before Liu Shaoqiu struck out, and he knew that the omnipresent terrifying cutting edge would be able to rip anyone to shreds. It reminded him of what he had witnessed at the Dao of Purgatory’s Blackwater Lake inheritance, the flowing vortex. Unfortunately, Yue Xianzi could not display even one percent of that vortex’s power; otherwise, she would not have been crushed so easily by Charon. At this moment, the power of the Second Sword that Lu Yin was facing was about the same as that flowing vortex. If not for his four-lined battle force, then even his tough physical body would have suffered severe injuries. That is, if it could even withstand the attack.

As the shock waves from their attacks reverberated through the entire arena, the high peak nearby shattered as it was turned to dust. Most of the arena plains no longer existed, but Lu Yin and Liu Shaoqiu still stood facing each other, a hundred meters apart.

Liu Shaoqiu's white clothes had not been dirtied by the dust storm in the slightest. However, as he held his sword made of star energy, he stared across the arena in shock.

Lu Yin was panting heavily, his right arm trembling non-stop. The recoil force from Nine Stacks, Fifteen-Fold Shockwave Palm could only be withstood by an Explorer's body. The current Nine Stacks was something that his physical body could already barely handle with. Fortunately, this gamble had stopped the Second Sword.

Everyone fell silent as they stared at Lu Yin as if he was a monster. This person had actually managed to block Liu Shaoqin's Second Sword when Astral-5's leader had not even been able to withstand the First Sword. No one had ever thought that Lu Yin would last to this point.

Wu Da gaped blankly with an open mouth while a daring idea lit up his brain. He had just thought of the newspaper's biggest headline—The Preemptive Final Battle.

In the city floating in the sky, San Dios, Wendy Yushan and Puyu were silent as they stared at the screen in shock.

In the dusky land where the "Yōu" flag was flapping in the wind, the little girl clapped merrily. "Well done. Look, Grandma Du, he didn't lose."

The old maid was shocked beyond belief, "Some mortal actually blocked the Second Sword... But that's all he can do. The Third Sword will wipe him out."

The girl pouted unhappily.

In the arena, the plains no longer existed. The ground had been blasted into smithereens and even sunk by a dozen meters. The two students were now floating in mid-air, still staring at each other.

Liu Shaoqiu exclaimed, "You really didn't disappoint me. You're the first person in the same realm as me that's forced me to bring out the Third Sword."

Lu Yin shook his right arm. "Truthfully, your Second Sword is already absolutely terrifying—just my four-lined battle force would not have been able to receive it. It really does live up to the reputation of the Thirteen Swords. If possible, I really want to fight you in the real world."

Chapter 222: The Third Sword

Liu Shaoqiu nodded. "I also hope that we can battle in reality some day. Let's make an agreement. If you can block my Third Sword, then after we eventually break through and become Limiteers, we will challenge the Top 100 Rankings together. Sound good?"

Lu Yin laughed happily. "Sure. The hundred strongest in the universe's younger generation—I've long wanted to experience them. It will be very liberating to challenge them together with the Sword Sect's genius."

Liu Shaoqiu smiled in response. “The prerequisite to that is you can block my Third Sword.” He then turned completely calm as a strange radiance appeared in his eyes. Star energy billowed away from his body like ocean waves, but his star energy was colorless. It was as if a pure sword qi had directly manifested in the sky; its power pressed down upon the entire arena and caused the very earth to tremble. Countless tiny dust particles floated into the air before disintegrating into nothingness.

Outside the plains, many students looked down at the field below them, but they could only see a dust cloud whirling about as it rose into the skies. At this moment, everyone had a dangerous premonition that not even the mentors’ energy barrier could block Liu Shaoqiu’s killing blade. This was the Third Sword.

In the Astral Combat Academy, many mentors were shocked by what they were seeing. “I haven’t seen the Third Sword in a while. This is the end for that student.”

“It’s a pity, but the Third Sword is a domain that nearly none of these students can comprehend. Normal students won’t even be able to withstand it. Of those present, perhaps only Starsibyl might be able to.”

“There’s Nightqueen Yanqing as well. Don’t forget that the Daynight clan has many battle techniques that have more or less integrated that kind of power.”

“That’s not enough—this is the Sword Sect’s Thirteen Swords that we’re talking about. Just having comprehended the Third Sword proves that this child has a rare talent, or else he would not be able to exhibit the Third Sword. The Nightking clan is powerful, true, but that girl would still fall to this Third Sword.”

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Liu Shaoqiu’s sword fell once more, just like how the First Sword had. This time, however, no one knew what was happening. Only Lu Yin knew, as he was the one who had been struck by a viciously, formless attack. The attack contained a very familiar aspect: spiritual force oppression. The Daynight clan’s battle techniques and the second layer of the Sand Ocean had the same type of oppressive force, but there was a large disparity when they were compared to the Third Sword.

Whether it was the Daynight clan’s battle technique or the second layer of the Sand Ocean, while they were both able to suppress something as formless as spiritual force, neither of them had reached a deadly threshold. Liu Shaoqiu’s Third Sword, on the other hand, had utilized that same concept and formed it into an invisible attack that directly attacked a person’s spiritual force, though Lu Yin was not completely sure if the attack was spiritual force itself. That elder on Driftcharge Planet had said that humans could be seen as a fusion of their physical bodies and their spirit. Lu Yin did not know if that was true, but regardless of whether a human was at rest or in motion, there was always an ethereal energy supporting the body. That energy should be spiritual force, and it was this same energy that the Third Sword targeted.

Liu Shaoqiu sheathed his blade, as in his mind, the match had already ended. Even a peak Limiteer or an Explorer might not be able to withstand this strike of his, let alone a mere Melder. He had relied on this Third Sword once to severely injure an Explorer. Starsibyl was quite possibly the only student in the entire Astral Combat Academy who he thought could withstand this attack. As Liu Shaoqiu’s thoughts drifted towards her, he looked outside the arena plains and exchanged glances with Starsibyl.

Suddenly, Liu Shaoqiu's body trembled, and his head snapped back. He saw a calm pair of eyes looking back at him, shocking him to the core. "You- you're fine?"

Lu Yin feigned ignorance. "Did you attack yet?"

Liu Shaoqiu's pupils shrank to pinpoints as he gazed at Lu Yin in astonishment. This was the first time since he had inherited the Thirteen Swords that he had ever been so flabbergasted.

It wasn't just Liu Shaoqiu; even the academy mentors were astonished, and so were the ancestors of the Sword Sect who were watching through the screens. Also, there was the old maid standing under the "Yōu" flag. Many stared in amazement at Lu Yin. They were all elite who understood the terror of the Third Sword, and it was this understanding that caused them to be so shocked. What about Lu Yin allowed him to withstand the Third Sword?!

If this was before he overcame his near-death experience on Driftcharge Planet, then Lu Yin definitely would not have been able to resist Luo Shaoqiu's Third Sword—he would have dropped dead long ago. But on Driftcharge Planet, he had spent his days memorizing those strange, ancient stone scriptures. Compared to when he had only been able to recite those scriptures for twenty minutes, he was now able to recite them for an hour before fainting. Although he was still far from being able to recite the Stonewall Scriptures in its entirety, his spirit had already become much more durable compared to before. The elder had even said that, if he could ever recite the Stonewall Scriptures in its entirety from memory, then no one beneath the Hunter realm would be able to harm his spirit.

Lu Yin had not believed his words and had just taken those words as encouragement, but now, he fully believed that elder as the Third Sword had only nudged him slightly and was far from being able to harm him. This sword of Liu Shaoqiu's was completely ineffective against Lu Yin.

Liu Shaoqiu stared at Lu Yin in disbelief. "How is this possible? You're immune to the Third Sword!?"

Lu Yin squinted before duly saying, "Your attack's ended, so it's my turn now." He then used Flash to appear before Liu Shaoqiu, pressed down with a palm, and immediately used a Nine Stacks, Fifteen-Fold Shockwave Palm. This was a terrifying attack that rivaled the Second Sword. Liu Shaoqiu had no choice but to raise his sword and directly display his Second Sword to parry it. The endless blade radiance filled the sky above the arena plains as the terrifying attack ruptured the void; the scene from before had reappeared once again.

Countless audience members stared at the stage, but they were only able to see Lu Yin using Flash to move around at extreme speed while Liu Shaoqiu followed Lu Yin's actions with his rusty sword. The two constantly collided in midair, accompanied by brilliant flashes and giant spatial cracks that reached far into the distance.

Suddenly, during one of their exchanges, two black shadows appeared before quickly charging into the distance. They were war spirits.

War spirits were created when powerhouses battled within the trial zones. Lu Yin never expected that he would one day personally witness a war spirit of himself being birthed.

Many students felt numb when they realized what had just happened. "Hurry! Take out those two war spirits, or else, anyone who meets them will die."

Lu Yin and Liu Shaoqiu's war spirit were far too terrifying for the other Astral Combat Academy students to handle. Not even the other Realm Masters were confident of defeating them. No, there was no possibility of them defeating those war spirits; only Starsibyl, Han Chong, and Nightqueen Yanqing had a chance of standing up to them.

But unfortunately, the war spirits were too fast for anyone to catch, and they both vanished into the distance.

Bang!

The two fighters in the arena collided and then separated, their movements synchronized. Liu Shaoqiu no longer seemed as confident as before, and he was panting heavily now. Even the hand gripping the hilt of his rusty sword was trembling, as Lu Yin's attacks were not easy to block.

Lu Yin was not faring much better, and traces of blood had appeared all around his body. Liu Shaoqiu had harmonized the first two swords into a singular strike against Lu Yin, which made his attacks much more difficult to defend against. Each of the two swords by themselves was already enough to kill an academy leader like Kuang Wang. Together, they were so dangerous that Lu Yin had nearly suffered severe injuries multiple times.

Nearly all of the observers throughout the universe were glued to their screens in nervous excitement. This battle was definitely this season's Astral Combat Tournament's highlight match, but they could not understand it no matter how many times or how intently they watched. Still, the viewers' lack of understanding did not stop them from appreciating the terror of this battle. Even the peak that the student leaders had been sitting upon had been destroyed, to say nothing of the first energy barrier set in place by the mentors.

The four-lined battle force on Lu Yin's body gradually dimmed, but Liu Shaoqiu was also starting to feel the aftereffects of using the Third Sword; both fighters' deterioration was evident from their pale faces and labored breathing.

However, Liu Shaoqiu smiled, and it was an exceptionally joyful one. He was a Melder who had never met a worthy opponent within the same realm as him. This was something that few would ever experience, and it was the very reason why Liu Shaoqiu had joined the Astral Combat Tournament: to find a worthy opponent. He had thought that it would be someone like Starsibyl, Han Chong, or Nightqueen Yanqing, but Lu Yin had inexplicably appeared out of nowhere, and he was even immune to the Third Sword! He was truly an opponent who was worthy of his interest.

Lu Yin, on the other hand, had a headache. He wanted to end this battle, but Liu Shaoqiu was not an easy opponent.

"It looks like I won't be able to beat you that easily. I'll have to use the Fourth Sword," Liu Shaoqiu calmly said while still smiling.

This sentence caused everyone's hearts to skip a beat. The Fourth Sword? He's already comprehended the Fourth Sword?!

Liu Xiaoyun's face turned deathly white when she heard this. Impossible! How could a Melder possibly comprehend the Fourth Sword?

Starsibyl and the other student leaders' faces also changed drastically.

Silver's eyes popped wide open. Impossible!

Xia Luo's smile vanished.

Coco covered her mouth.

Everyone was struck speechless by the terror of Liu Shaoqiu's words.

Lu Yin raised his brows questioningly. "You've comprehended the Fourth Sword?"

Liu Shaoqiu looked down at his sword. "Not yet, but I can try."

Lu Yin's eyes narrowed, and his face grew abnormally solemn. Through just the first three swords, he had been able to feel the potential of the Thirteen Swords. The Sword Sect had dominated the universe with just this Thirteen Swords technique and become emperors of the sword. Each sword was invincible, and if Liu Shaoqiu really comprehended the fourth, then Lu Yin would be finished.

A fresh gust of wind blew through the arena, swirling up the dust on the ground and obscuring the scarred plains.

Liu Shaoqiu raised his sword and slowly turned in midair, leaving behind a series of profound afterimages.

Lu Yin watched this happen in shock. These afterimages had not been created by extreme speed; rather, it was more like each image was locked to its original position and bound to that space. Lu Yin did not wait for Liu Shaoqiu to make a move and immediately appeared at Liu Shaoqiu's side with a Flash. He then raised his palm and slapped down.

Liu Shaoqiu's sword shifted to one side, and one of the phantom sword afterimages unleashed the First Sword. As Lu Yin's palm descended, he suddenly changed directions to Liu Shaoqiu's right side by turning his body and sweeping his leg out. Liu Shaoqiu had not expected Lu Yin to suddenly change his stance after exchanging more than ten moves. His sudden shift in tempo caught Liu Shaoqiu unawares, and his move was a beat blower, allowing Lu Yin's kick to squarely land in his abdomen and viciously stamp him into the ground.

Lu Yin rushed to the ground right behind Liu Shaoqiu, his two palms striking out simultaneously as he endured the intense pain in both arms. He used the Nine Stacks, Fifteen-Fold Shockwave Palm again, causing the arena floor to sink even lower. A giant fissure snaked along the ground and outside the plains. An explosive strength broiled within the spreading cracks, powered by four-lined battle force.

Below the ground's surface, Liu Shaoqiu was kneeling down on one knee as a thin stream of blood flowed from the corner of his lips. He had used the multiple sword images to block Lu Yin's attack. Then, as his sword spun around, his eyes brightened the moment the tip pointed upwards. At that instant, an indescribable sense of terror descended upon the plains. This was it—the Fourth Sword.

Everyone saw the image of a sword flying over from the west that was enough to make them all tremble in fear.

Starsibyl and the rest observed at the arena very closely, as this sword would decide the outcome of this battle.

But then, there was a sudden bang, and Liu Shaoqiu's sword of star energy shattered. His pupils constricted one last time as Lu Yin pressed down upon the Sword Sect's genius's head. The ground rumbled as Liu Shaoqiu vanished from the Lifeseek Realm.

Lu Yin had won the battle.

Everyone remained silent, as no one had ever expected that Lu Yin would actually emerge victorious from this battle. He had beaten Liu Shaoqiu, the Sword Sect's monstrous genius.

Everyone stared at Lu Yin in a daze, their minds completely empty.

In front of the giant screens on Earth, everyone was cheering wildly as Lu Yin had entered the round of the final eight.

Countless others were celebrating in a similar manner in the Great Yu Empire. Only a sparse few had been able to understand this battle in the entire Great Yu Empire, such as those powerhouses who had traveled to the Innerverse like Undying Yushan or Huo Qingshan. Only they could understand the depth of this battle and how remarkable Lu Yin's victory had been. From this day on, Lu Yin's name would shake the heavens.

Xueshan Auna was trembling with excitement as he looked at Jenny Auna as if she was a treasure. He could already see Lu Yin's future glory; it was clear to him that Lu Yin would not remain in the Outerverse. After all, he had just beaten one of the Innerverse's top geniuses.

In San Dios, the city in the sky, Wendy Yushan's lips imperceptibly curved upwards before she turned to leave the room.

Puyu remained in the same spot with both fists clenched tightly together. He stared at the screen and at the man still standing in it. This person was fated to be a thorn in his side.

Chapter 223: Nemesis Of The Daynight Clan

Within the Innerverse, in the Sword Sect, the disciple who had preemptively reported the results to the sect leader now had a deathly pale face. No one could have imagined that Liu Shaoqiu would actually lose, let alone lose even using the Third Sword. He had even been defeated by a Melder! This was just too unimaginable, as it defied what they saw as the natural order of the world.

An elder in a white gown was staring at the screen from behind everyone else. His eyes flickered with a strange light as he said, "What an interesting kid. So he was actually unaffected by Shaoqiu's Third Sword. Pass a message to Astral-10. Tell them that my Sword Sect will take on this child as a personal disciple with the same position as Shaoqiu."

Many of the Sword Sect's disciples were shocked to hear this command. Direct disciples held the highest position amongst all the disciples as they were able to command countless members of the Sword Sect. But Liu Shaoqiu's position as a personal disciple was second only to that of the Sword Sect disciple who was one of the Ten Arbiters. There were not many Flowzones in the universe, but the difference

between each one of them was stunning. This youth had just skipped past countless peaks in one step and become a lord of the Innderverse's First Flowzone.

Under the dimly lit "Yōu" banner, the little girl clapped and cheered as she excitedly looked at Lu Yin with a strange zeal. The shock in the old maid's eyes had not faded yet, as she had just seen a mortal trample over the heavens.

In Astral-10's space station, Madam Nalan was also absent-minded. She hadn't even noticed that she had spilled her wine as she stared at the screen in shock.

She recalled the first time she had met Lu Yin and when she had brought up the legendary Liu Shaoqiu to him. At that time, she had only wanted to give Lu Yin some context and prevent him from being too dispirited after he lost. That way, he would be able to focus on lockbreaking, where his talents lay. Who could have predicted that, in such a short time, that person would grow to the point of being able to defeat Liu Shaoqiu?

Lu Yin's victory over Liu Shaoqiu had created more than just a stir within the entire Human Domain. He was unaware of this, but his battle with Liu Shaoqiu had actually drawn the attention of the Ten Arbiters.

But no matter how shocked the onlookers were, it was just the end of the sixth round of battles. The top eight had been determined: Dao Bo, Liu Xiaoyun, Han Chong, Grandini Mavis, Starsibyl, Feng Shang, Nightqueen Yanqing, and Lu Yin. These eight were the strongest of the Astral Combat Academy, and the seventh round to determine the top four would begin one day later. The tournament's finale was approaching closer and closer.

What was worth mentioning was all the geniuses who had only recently joined the Astral Combat Academy had been defeated without exception.

Before the Astral Combat Tournament started, countless people had believed that the original students of the Astral Combat Academy would be swallowed by the various monsters like Liu Shaoqiu, Yue Xianzi, Chao Zhi, Calcifer, and Cang Shi. But as these various new geniuses successively appeared, they had been beaten back one by one. As the tournament progressed, the true strength of those who had hidden themselves within the Astral Combat Academy had been revealed, such as Sha, Xia Luo, Silver, Lu Yin, Grandini Mavis, Tu Bo, and others. They had firmly suppressed all of the recently joined geniuses.

These results shocked many of the powers in the universe. Although the Astral Combat Academy was also known to be the best academy, it was still just a school. Many great powers had elected to not send their elite disciples there as they felt that the Astral Combat Academy's tutelage could not possibly be better than their own. However, the results were too obvious to refute: there were many talents within the Astral Combat Academy, and they were all monstrous to the extreme. And now, even the widely acknowledged top-tier talent, Liu Shaoqiu, had been defeated.

The Astral Combat Academy was very pleased with the results of its students in this tournament. Although they had separated the academy leaders on purpose to prevent self-eliminations, it was clear to see that the leaders could crush those outside geniuses from various powers.

It was quite likely that, after this tournament, many powers would value the Astral Combat Academy more and consider sending their outstanding disciples there.

At the frontier of the Human Domain, at the border of the Erudite Flowzone, Shui Chuanxiao stared in disbelief at the screen before marvelling, "Not bad. The Astral Combat Academy's not bad at all. It actually trained up a student who managed to defeat Liu Shaoqiu. When he comes, let him be a war drummer."

Behind Shui Chuanxiao, a golden-haired girl in a military uniform immediately spoke up. "The war drummer must have a body capable of traveling through outer space, or else they won't be able to pick up the mallet much less defend against the astral beasts' assault."

"The Third Sword was completely ineffective against him. He is qualified to grasp the mallet." Shui Chuanxiao did not care about the woman's concerns.

The golden-haired woman frowned before saying, "Chief, I must remind you, the agreement that we have with the Astral Combat Academy only covers letting these students experience the cruelty of the battlefield, and does not include sending them to their deaths. During your time at the battlefield, a total of 172 powerhouses have perished while beating the war drums. This student is far from qualified to become a war drummer. You'd be sending him to an early grave."

Shui Chuanxiao sighed. "En Ya, when I first recruited you, it wasn't for you to oppose me."

En Ya coldly replied, "I'm not opposing you. I just don't want to see this student die a tragic death."

Shui Chuanxiao laughed. "Fine, let me tell you then. Do you really think that the Astral Combat Academy is only rushing these students onto the battlefield for them to gain first-hand experience? The Astral Combat Academy itself is about to transform."

"Transform?" En Ya was confused.

Shui Chuanxiao's lips curled up as he explained, "The Astral Combat Academy has held the title of the best training institution for far too long. At this point, it can only fall and not rise any further. As more time passes, the ten academies will only continue to drift further apart—they might even completely separate and form completely independent institutions. The best example is of Astral-10 being targeted by those insects. So, the Astral Combat Academy has shifted focus to send its students to the battlefield and have them survive at the Human Domain's war front for as long as possible. They have already begun to transform and have made contact with the troops. The academy will become a top-notch institution that delivers geniuses to the warfront.

"Why?" En Ya could not understand why this was happening. Even if the academy wanted to increase the students' battlefield experience as quickly as possible, there was no need to send them to the warfront as soldiers.

Shui Chuanxiao sighed. "Do you know how high the current mortality rate is for the graduates of the various institutions in the universe? Let me tell you." Then, Shui Chuanxiao stared straight into En Ya's eyes as he enunciated, "Nine out of every ten graduates die at this frontier."

En Ya was shocked, as she had never heard of this statistic before.

"Now you should know why. The Astral Combat Academy has very few graduates, and regardless of if a student graduates or is expelled, they still have to go to the domain's warfront, where less than a tenth of them will survive. The other academies are no better. This is the fate of these students. Even if a

youth does not enter an academy, they still must come here and experience the Human Domain's warfront so as to gain some experience about the universe before they can grow stronger. This also includes the descendants of great powers, as this is an inviolable law of the Human Domain. The Astral Combat Academy's transformation is actually inevitable, as its purpose is to help the students preserve their lives for as long as possible. Protecting the students is akin to protecting the academy itself, so it's a must for them to make a move at the time the students arrive at the battlefield." Shui Chuanxiao then paused for a moment before patting En Ya's shoulder and saying, "Alright, that's enough. Go on and carry out your orders."

"Yes," En Ya answered respectfully as she watched Shui Chuanxiao leave. Suddenly, she felt that something wasn't quite right—the Astral Combat Academy's transformation was completely unrelated to this student being assigned to be a war drummer. This bastard had played her like a fool.

On Astral-10's trial zone mountain, Lu Yin opened his eyes and slowly stretched his body. The others immediately gathered around him, and Coco praised, "Brother Lu, you were fantastic!"

Lu Yin smiled and looked over everyone. His gaze paused on Hui Daynight's face, who turned away awkwardly.

Silver walked over to Lu Yin with a beaming expression. "Very awesome! You can force me to use about a third of my strength now."

Lu Yin indifferently replied, "I only used a fifth."

"I would only need a tenth of my strength to defeat that Thirteen Swords guy."

"I didn't even use a tenth."

The others were confused at the two's strange back-and-forth.

At this point, Liu Xiaoyun approached them, causing everyone to involuntarily make some room for her. She looked at Lu Yin seriously with a trace of disbelief still present in her eyes. "How was the First Sword?"

Lu Yin thought about it seriously before replying, "Very sharp and very swift."

"The second?" Liu Xiaoyun continued.

Lu Yin blurted out, "A large scope and a powerful attack."

"And the third?" Liu Xiaoyun stared closely at Lu Yin, but he just smiled slightly.

Liu Xiaoyun was disappointed. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have asked."

Lu Yin smiled and said, "Madam Nalan saved me once, so I don't mind telling you this. The Third Sword..." Everyone stared at him in anticipation as he spoke his next words. "...I didn't feel a thing from it."

The others were caught off guard by his response, and they simply could not understand his words. Liu Xiaoyun's disappointed expression deepened as she bitterly said, "It seems that this universe really does

have geniuses like you who are immune to the Third Sword. You might actually be a natural nemesis of the Daynight clan.”

This sentence shocked Hui Daynight, and he whirled around with a puzzled face. Why was being immune to the Sword Sect’s Third Sword indicative of being the Daynight clan’s nemesis?

Lu Yin understood what Liu Xiaoyun was saying; the Daynight clan’s battle techniques all had a similar effect to the Third Sword, which was targeting one’s spiritual force. If he was truly immune to attacks against his spiritual force, then the Daynight clan’s battle techniques would become normal battle techniques when used against him. Of course, despite Lu Yin’s understanding, he did not express it and instead looked at Liu Xiaoyun with a puzzled face, like Hui Daynight.

“Be careful of the Nightking clan,” Liu Xiaoyun said after taking a long, careful look at Lu Yin. She then turned around to leave.

Lu Yin sighed, as he realized that he might have made a mistake. He should not have revealed the fact that the Third Sword had been completely ineffective against him. If even Liu Xiaoyun believed he was the nemesis of the Daynight clan, then what about the Daynight clan itself? He involuntarily recalled what he had seen when he had entered the Daynight clan’s inheritance corridor as well as the topmost name on the stone tower outside the long corridor—Nightking Zhenwu. He had a feeling that this name was perhaps a mountain that he would inevitably have to cross one day.

Just as Lu Yin was about to go and rest, his expression changed. He briskly walked out of the trial zone mountain and to the entrance, where he respectfully bowed to the Trialmaster. “Mentor, were you looking for me?”

The Trialmaster opened his eyes, revealing a trace of shock on his wizened face. “Little brat, you caused a great deal of astonishment when you defeated an inheritor of the Thirteen Swords.”

Lu Yin remained humble. “My luck was good. He could not display the Fourth Sword.”

The Trialmaster shook his head as he smiled. “It wasn’t that he could not display it, but rather that it was ruined by you.”

A light flashed across Lu Yin’s eyes.

The mentor looked at him seriously. “You intentionally damaged but did not destroy the star energy sword that he materialized. Thus, his sword would not be able to bear his full strength at a key moment, and when his sword dissipated, his energy would spiral into chaos and allow you to unleash the fatal strike. Correct?”

Lu Yin smiled wryly. “Mentor, I can’t hide anything from you.”

The mentor smiled back in response. “Little brat, that was very smart. Even in that heated battle, you did not reveal that technique.”

Lu Yin’s heart skipped a beat. He had a feeling that these mentors had seen through his Cosmic Art. The Rainmaster and Sandmaster had vaguely mentioned it, and the crazy headmaster had even simulated the ninth star for him. However, this was the Trialmaster’s first time mentioning it. “Mentor, please give me your guidance.”

The Trialmaster looked at Lu Yin seriously. "I don't know where you obtained this technique. It doesn't matter if it's from the original source, as it's unrelated to us. However, let me give you this reminder: this technique comes from an extremely terrifying sect. That sect's power surpasses even the Sword Sect's."

Chapter 224: Cosmic Sect

Lu Yin was completely stunned by the Trialmaster's words even though he knew that his Cosmic Art was not simple. However, its origins supposedly surpassed the Sword Sect, which was the leading sect of the First Flowzone and publicly acknowledged as the strongest sect in the Human Domain. Just what kind of sect could surpass that?

"Although the average person cannot see anything when the Cosmic Art is active and in use, during the live broadcast, there will definitely be someone who will notice the origins of this technique if you use it. It's good that you have not revealed it yet, but your next few opponents will be very strong. You must make a decision before the next round—to strive for victory by revealing this technique or to continue fighting without it," the Trialmaster advised in a solemn tone.

Lu Yin's eyes flickered with indecision. He had already considered both options but had not come to a conclusion yet. "Mentor, what would happen if that sect discovers that I have learned their technique?"

The mentor's lips rose up in a faint smile. "You want to know if Astral-10 will protect you."

Lu Yin was embarrassed. The Trialmaster seriously replied "I can tell you this plainly. Astral-10 will definitely protect you. Not only will Astral-10 do so, but the entire Astral Combat Academy will work to protect you."

Lu Yin released a sigh of relief, as that was good news to hear.

"But there is no guarantee of success," the Trialmaster finished in a strange tone.

Lu Yin was stunned by this last sentence, and he looked at the Trialmaster without knowing what to say.

"That sect is called the Cosmic Sect. It is one of the strongest sects in the Human Domain. You've already experienced the power of the Cosmic Art for yourself, so you should know how terrifying it is. Who can possibly resist such a technique? Any elder from that sect can dominate the entire Outerverse with a single wave of their hand. You can't pin your hopes on our protection," the mentor spoke plainly.

Lu Yin felt helpless in this situation. "I understand, mentor. I won't reveal the technique."

But the Trialmaster looked at Lu Yin and raised a single finger. "Just the next battle. As long as you don't reveal it in the next battle, you'll be fine."

"Why?" Lu Yin was puzzled, but the Trialmaster closed his eyes and went back to rest, not bothering to reply.

Lu Yin was perplexed by what he had just learned. What's so special about the next battle? He had no clue, so he simply stopped thinking about the matter. Lu Yin then shook his head to clear his mind as he stepped back onto the trial zone mountain, awaiting the arrival of the seventh round of battles.

At the same time, in Astral-3, Nightqueen Yanqing was bowing down, not even daring to raise her face towards the young man on the screen.

“Remember, you must think of a way to deal with that Lu Yin. Someone who is immune to the Sword Sect’s Third Sword is someone who should not even exist. I have talked to those old bats of the Astral Combat Academy, and your next opponent will be him,” the man on the screen said in a deep voice.

Nightqueen Yanqing firmly replied, “I understand.”

“Are you confident?” the man asked.

Nightqueen Yanqing had a stern look on her face. “I have cultivated the Nightking’s Body. He will be defeated for sure.”

The man nodded with satisfaction. “The Sword Sect’s Third Sword is an extreme attack that focuses on the spirit while the Nightking’s Body focuses on the physical body. He may be immune to the Third Sword, but there is no chance that he’ll fend off the Nightking’s Body as easily. The next battle will be his last, and I want you to crush his soul.”

Nightqueen Yanqing clenched both her fists. “Yes.”

Before long, the seventh round was about to start.

The arena plains had been completely restored, and even the high peak had been repaired back to normal. This time, however, it was placed outside of the arena plains and not inside. The recent battles had been very intense, and the complete destruction of the plains had become commonplace; of course the sensible academy mentors would not place the high peak back inside the arena.

A student was disgruntled by this decision. “What’s with the high peak being over there? It’s irritating.”

Someone else replied, “It’s a status symbol, and only the victors can sit atop it. This is what the academy has constructed for the students and countless more in the universe to look up to.”

“So it’s basically just a big decoration,” Big Pao interjected as he popped out of nowhere.

...

On the high peak, one figure after another appeared. Of the top eight, besides Grandini Mavis, the rest were all student leaders of various academy branches. Despite so many hidden geniuses appearing since the very start of the tournament, seven out of ten students still remained atop that peak. This was something that the Astral Combat Academy was already very proud of. Of course, the unavoidable battles between the student leaders were about to begin as well.

The first match was between Starsibyl and Feng Shang.

Feng Shang’s face sank when he saw that Starsibyl was his opponent. He had rich battle experience and feared no one; he would even fight against Liu Shaoqiu if he was matched up against him. But against Starsibyl, Feng Shang really did not know where to start; this woman’s combat style was a complete mystery to everyone.

Starsibyl smiled faintly at Feng Shang. "I don't remember ever having faced off against you. This must be our first time."

Feng Shang had nothing to respond with. "If I knew that this was going to be the case, then I would have fought a hundred battles against you."

Starsibyl's eyes twinkled mysteriously. "Battle experience is no use against me. My fighting style is based on divination and seeing into the future."

Feng Shang rolled his eyes; only an idiot would believe such words.

Soon after, the battle between the two started.

Lu Yin and the rest all intently stared down towards the arena as they all focused on Starsibyl. What was the secret behind her combat style?

A moment later, they were shocked to see Feng Shang's attacks land on nothing. Even when he enveloped the entire arena with his domain, his attempts to suppress Starsibyl were all rendered futile. She really seemed as if she could divine the future as she would always dodge Feng Shang's attacks by being a single step ahead. Before long, Feng Shang's face paled. Starsibyl was still standing in front of him, but absolutely none of his attacks had connected. It was such a depressing feeling that he almost wanted to vomit blood.

"Really now. Can't you face me directly for just two moves?" Feng Shang shouted out of exasperation.

Starsibyl beamed. "Sure." She then gently floated towards Feng Shang.

Feng Shang pressed down with his palm as he shouted out, "Cyclone Strike." This was the attack that had defeated Sha. Feng Shang did not hold back at all against Starsibyl, and the wind blade edges spun out of his hand as they tore through the void. It was an overwhelming attack.

But the result was the same as before; the wind blades cleanly went past Starsibyl and landed on the ground behind her, carving out a huge crater on the arena plains. "That's not all," Feng Shang said as he revealed his other palm that was holding another Cyclone Strike.

However, Starsibyl dodged it all the same. One thing was different—this time, she did not move away to avoid it. Instead, she approached Feng Shang and flitted past him.

The audience fell silent as they watched Feng Shang's body slowly dissipate into nothingness; a chill creeping into their hearts. When did she even attack?!

Lu Yin's eyes narrowed as he still did not understand Starsibyl's fighting style at all. Starsibyl's speed was not particularly fast, but she had easily dodged Feng Shang's extremely quick attacks. Lu Yin definitely had not seen her attack, but she had still defeated Feng Shang. Just what had happened?

Han Chong and Nightqueen Yanqing similarly could not understand anything either; Starsibyl was just too mysterious.

Outside the arena plains, Liu Shaoqiu's eyes twinkled as he stared intently at Starsibyl. He was the only one out of all of the observing students who had felt even a trace of killing intent. It was because Starsibyl's attack was very similar to the Third Sword. But between the two, it was even more secretive

than the Third Sword, which was why the sect leader had cautioned Liu Shaoqiu about Starsibyl when he had left the Sword Sect. This woman would have been the best battle opponent for him to improve the Third Sword. It was a pity that he had run into Lu Yin before her.

As his thoughts churned, Liu Shaoqiu's eyes swept back up to the high peak.

Lu Yin frowned; he could feel that Liu Shaoqiu had looked at him all of a sudden, so he turned around to face him. The two exchanged glances, and at that moment, an idea occurred to Lu Yin. He looked back to Starsibyl. Is her attack similar to the Third Sword?

Starsibyl returned to the high peak, beaming as she glanced at everyone. She appeared very mysterious.

Lu Yin gathered his thoughts. It was completely possible that her attacks targeted spiritual force, as Starsibyl was definitely mysterious enough to do something like that. That kind of attack would undoubtedly be both effective and have a refined appearance. It was a pity that Lu Yin's only attack that could target spiritual force was the Daynight Punch, and it wouldn't be of much use either.

Soon after Starsibyl and Feng Shang's battle concluded, the fighters for the second round were announced—Han Chong and Liu Xiaoyun.

Han Chong was also a very mysterious competitor, especially after his battle with Xia Ye that had left many audience members puzzled. His painting attacks were obviously a gentle battle style, but it was also deep beyond measure. Many looked at Liu Xiaoyun and wondered how far she could force Han Chong.

"At this stage of the competition, everyone's baseline has more or less already been revealed. You are not my opponent," Han Chong said faintly out on the arena plains.

Liu Xiaoyun clenched her sword hilt. "At the very least, the gap between us must be shown."

Han Chong casually waved his hand. "Everyone calls me the Art Sage. I'll draw a vast mountain and sea for you to destroy."

At that moment, a painting made from star energy appeared in front of Han Chong. Mountains, rivers, forests, cottages, and other classical subjects all came together in a picturesque landscape painting that used star energy as its ink.

Liu Xiaoyun gripped her sword hilt tightly as the air beneath her roiled and spread out in all directions. Those fluctuations gradually extended across the entire arena plains. This was her domain, Sword's World, and its attack range had extended to cover the entire arena plains.

Han Chong's landscape painting expanded until it covered the entire arena plains as well.

Within the endless rain of falling swords, the void was torn into countless cracks that clashed against the harmonious aura of the landscape painting. The scene before the audience's eyes became obviously distorted within the void's shattered frame. And yet, despite the rain of swords, the landscape painting forcibly withstood the countless spatial cracks encroaching upon it.

It was a rather magnificent sight, as Liu Xiaoyun's attack that covered the entire arena plains could easily crush an Area Master. At that instant, the newly restored arena plains had been destroyed once again.

On the high peak overlooking the arena, Lu Yin frowned. Liu Xiaoyun had widened her attack scope too much in an attempt to compensate for the difference between their speeds, and her thoughts had been too optimistic. The strength of her attack was not even close to comparable to Liu Shaoqiu's First Sword; it was no wonder why she had distanced herself from the Sword Sect. Since she was Liu Shaoqiu's older sister, everyone in the Sword Sect would compare her to Liu Shaoqiu to form a relative judgement.

Liu Shaoqiu frowned as well. This endless rain of swords made him feel somewhat uncomfortable. His big sister was walking down the wrong path.

Suddenly, Liu Xiaoyun chopped down with her sword towards Han Chong. Many remembered Tu Bo and how he had been instantly wiped out by this strike. It was an attack that imitated the Thirteen Swords.

Han Chong's eyes gleamed with interest as he extended one hand. A mountain was summoned from within the landscape painting. Although it instantly fell apart, it was still enough to counter Liu Xiaoyun's sword strike.

"It's not a bad sword strike, but it's useless against me," Han Chong confidently stated.

Liu Xiaoyun sheathed her sword. "I've lost."

She then left the Lifeseek Realm. She had given the fight her all, but it seemed like Han Chong had not used much of his strength. The difference between the two was glaringly obvious.

Two battles had already seen the defeat of two academy leaders. The third match was set to be between Grandini Mavis and Dao Bo.

Many looked towards the high peak and the two remaining leaders—Lu Yin and Nightqueen Yanqing.

The scene felt strangely similar to the previous round where Lu Yin had also participated in the last battle of the round.

Nightqueen Yanqing did not feel surprised, as she had been informed of this matchup beforehand. She had simulated this battle multiple times after analyzing Lu Yin's power in his match against Liu Shaoqiu. She was sure of victory.

Lu Yin glanced at Nightqueen Yanqing. Is this a coincidence? He was actually facing off against the Nightking clan right after Liu Xiaoyun warned him to be careful of the Nightking clan. Were they testing him?

Chapter 225: Lu Yin vs. Nightqueen Yanqing

Out on the arena plains, Grandini Mavis clenched her fists as a very obvious green aura covered her from head to toe.

Dao Bo felt helpless. Of all the possible opponents he could have run into during this tournament, the ones who he wanted to avoid the most were the Mavis family members. He was a Lockbreaker, which meant that his control and understanding of star energy naturally surpassed all others'. He was confident in his chances even against Han Chong, but the Mavis family members were an exception. This

clan focused purely on strength, and even he had no way of dealing with their abnormal physical strength.

Outside the plains, many of the academy's Lockbreakers sighed. There was no doubt about Dao Bo's power; he had even defeated Mira once. He was definitely a powerhouse, but he had run into the wrong opponent in this match as the Mavis clan could be considered the nemesis of Lockbreakers.

"Bring it on!" Grandini shouted fiercely as she punched out at Dao Bo.

Dao Bo was speechless. He did not enjoy verbal sparring while he fought, and he would much rather be fighting against Xia Luo right now. In his opinion, that fight had been a contest between two civilized humans and was much more elegant. This woman gave him an impression that they had regressed back to a barbaric age.

He hurriedly dodged to the side as the spot where he had been standing was blasted into a giant pit. Several successive booms sounded out as the diameter of the pit increased and a shock wave rippled towards him.

Dao Bo sighed. When both of his feet touched the ground again, heaven and earth changed, turning a silver-grey color as another terrifying shock wave swept over the arena plains. Dao Bo was using his domain to suppress Grandini.

Now that she was within the domain, Grandini's every action was under Dao Bo's observation. The power behind her moves, their trajectory, and even the direction that she was dodging in was all revealed to Dao Bo as long as she was inside his domain. Grandini would not be able to beat Dao Bo with her current strength, but she still had her battle force.

Right after Dao Bo activated his domain, a dominating purple battle force soared into the sky, shocking everyone. Another four-lined battle force had appeared in this tournament.

Dao Bo looked at Grandini's eyes which were filled with battle intent. He didn't have much of a choice, so he calmly raised his hand and directly admitted defeat.

Grandini was just about to charge over and rush into battle, but she froze when she saw Dao Bo's action. She was furious. "Are you a man?! How can you admit defeat so quickly?!"

Dao Bo sighed lamentably. "My attacks cannot break through the defense of a Mavis clan member who has four-lined battle force. However, you can't win either, as your attacks simply cannot hit me."

"Then why did you admit defeat?" Grandini was not at all satisfied by Dao Bo's answer and was still eager for battle.

Dao Bo begrudgingly replied, "Since neither of us can win, and a real man will not fight a woman, I admitted defeat."

"Are you looking down upon women? Go and die!" Grandini charged over again with a raised fist.

Lu Yin lifted his head; this scene was very familiar to him. Back during Astral-10's new student competition, Lulu had trashed Schutz in a similar manner and then forced him apologize to her.

Dao Bo, however, very quickly left the Lifeseek Realm, causing Grandini's fist to land on thin air. She was unhappy about what had just happened. Although she seemed more refined than Lulu on the surface, it seemed that the Mavis family could never shake off certain bad habits, such as being too eager for a fight.

While she stewed in her thoughts, Grandini's eyes swept up to those on the high peak, and she especially focused on Lu Yin as her purple battle force soared even higher.

Lu Yin laughed when he noticed Grandini's aggressive gaze. Instead of responding to her, he got up and looked at Nightqueen Yanqing. "It's our turn."

Nightqueen Yanqing got up as well and shot Lu Yin an arrogant look. "I'll warn you beforehand—you better not admit defeat. Otherwise, my Nightking clan will show you what true desperation is."

Lu Yin's smile faded until he responded with a cold tone, "Is that so? It seems to me that you're targeting me."

"The Nightking clan has no need to target anyone. In fact, it would be difficult to find someone who is qualified to be crushed by me. I simply don't want it to end too quickly." Nightqueen Yanqing then stepped forward and appeared on the plains.

Lu Yin had a depressed look on his face. It felt as if he had been entangled with the Nightking clan from the very start. On Earth, there had been Qingyu. In the Umbral Butterfly Weave, there had been Zhuo Daynight. In Astral-10, there was Hui Daynight. And now, Nightqueen Yanqing had appeared as well. It was as if fate enjoyed throwing him together with this clan.

"Brother Lu, don't mind her. That's just her personality. Women are bound to act irrationally on certain days." Feng Shang had reappeared and shamelessly returned to the high peak. He was the only defeated student leader who had thick enough skin to return.

Starsibyl turned to Feng Shang. "What did you say?"

Feng Shang quickly turned embarrassed. "That- I did not say anything, haha."

Starsibyl looked at Lu Yin but did not say anything.

Lu Yin stepped forward and appeared onto the plains to face Nightqueen Yanqing. Many people thought that this Astral Combat Tournament would have a special event for the last few battles between the top contestants. But in reality, only a few knew that this was the last match that would be publicly broadcast.

If Liu Shaoqiu's Sword Sect was not very well-known, then the Nightking clan was the exact opposite. Their trademark characteristic was long, black-and-white hair with a single strand of grey in the center. In some sense, this had become the symbol of the Nightking clan, the strongest clan of the entire universe.

Be it the Outerverse or the Innerverse, the Nightkings of the Daynight clan represented unparalleled terror with their clan's countless geniuses.

In the Great Yu Empire, Huo Xiaoling, Jenny Auna, Jeraldine, Gerlaine, Eddy, and everyone who had battled against Qingyu watched on with wide eyes. They could still vividly recall the final battle during

Earth's trial and Qingyu's stunning power. Back then, it had Lu Yin who defeated Qingyu, and even though he had arduously climbed to his current level, Lu Yin now had to face this clan once again.

Nightqueen Yanqing was not the same as Qingyu. Qingyu had only entered the Nightking clan after awakening the power of a Nightking as a Daynight clan member. Nightqueen Yanqing, on the other hand, had been born into the Nightking clan. The resources that were available to her for cultivation and battle techniques were incomparable to Qingyu's.

The battle between Liu Shaoqiu and Lu Yin had not emotionally impacted the audience, but this one with Nightqueen Yanqing brought an inner chill that crept into all their hearts. The Nightking clan's fame made all the difference.

The two stood in the arena, facing each other on the plains without making a move. Lu Yin stared intently at Nightqueen Yanqing's eyes; he still had not forgotten the scene of Charon being instantly petrified in her previous battle. That was Nightqueen Yanqing's innate gift, and if Lu Yin could not break through that innate gift, then there was no chance of him being able to withstand Nightqueen Yanqing.

Nightqueen Yanqing's lips curled up enticingly as she maintained her ever-present haughty expression. A purple color flickered within her pupils, and Lu Yin felt as if his scalp was about to catch on fire. He covered his body with four-lined battle force as a sense of imminent danger filled his heart. Right after, a strange wave of force was blocked by the battle force shrouding his body. But even so, his four-lined battle force had a layer stripped off, causing it to dim.

Many were shocked by what they had just seen; Nightqueen Yanqing's terrifying innate gift alone was enough to make them tremble. Just one look from her could weaken four-lined battle force.

"Let's see how long you can last," Nightqueen Yanqing tauntingly said to Lu Yin. She had gone over how she would battle against him multiple times. Although he was strong and fast enough to dodge the First Sword of the Thirteen Swords, could he possibly move faster than her eyes? Her innate gift of purple pupils was the nemesis towards fast fighters, and this person had zero chances of defeating her.

Lu Yin frowned as he vanished with Flash. He pierced the void and directly charged towards Nightqueen Yanqing.

But Nightqueen Yanqing's purple eyes never left Lu Yin as they continuously scanned back and forth across the battlefield. His four-lined battle force was constantly being weakened. Once it vanished, he would be petrified and suffer the same fate as Charon.

This was a battle with no escape. Lu Yin's only option was to strike swiftly and defeat Nightqueen Yanqing before his four-lined battle force ran out. Otherwise, he could only wait to be petrified.

Thus, Lu Yin went with the first option and charged towards Nightqueen Yanqing while forcefully enduring the effect of her innate gift of purple eyes. He struck out with a Nine Stacks, Fifteen-Fold Shockwave Palm that caused the void to crumble. His palm pressed down with an indomitable strength that could rival the Second Sword of the Thirteen Swords. He did not believe that Nightqueen Yanqing would block it easily.

But Nightqueen Yanqing's arrogant look never left her face. Her purple seductive eyes flickered as she stood in the same spot before suddenly raising her head. Then, from beneath her, a purple battle force erupted upwards. "Nightking Punch."

Lu Yin's pupils shrank. Four-lined battle force?

Boom!

The ground sank as a terrifying shock wave coursed through their surroundings, instantly tearing through the first energy barrier that sealed off the arena plains. Fortunately, the second energy barrier that the mentors had installed managed to block it; otherwise, just the remnant shock waves would have killed many of the students in the audience.

A dark night descended as the Nightking Punch had even changed the sky's color. At this moment, Lu Yin's vision was filled with a single punch.

He closely watched the Nightking Punch approach; it was familiar, very familiar. When he had touched the Daynight clan's stone of inheritance, he had seen this very punch, from which he had comprehended the Daynight Punch. And now, Nightqueen Yanqing had just displayed an even stronger Nightking Punch.

Day and night alternated in a perpetual cycle, tearing apart his spiritual force. This was the most powerful punch that Nightqueen Yanqing could unleash with her four-lined battle force. Even though this punch could not compare to the Third Sword of the Thirteen Swords, it was very close to reaching that level, and even Liu Shaoqiu was moved by it.

Thump thump thump...

More than ten explosions rang out in the arena as the Nine Stacks, Fifteen-Fold Shockwave Palm collided against the Nightking Punch, causing heaven and earth to explode. The sheer impact caused the surrounding void to collapse while spatial cracks appeared and swallowed the stirred up smoke and dust. Lu Yin and Nightqueen Yanqing easily navigated through the cracks with their extreme speed before directly colliding.

Lu Yin had originally assumed that Nightqueen Yanqing would use a combination of the Daynight clan's battle techniques and her innate gift to deal with him. However, he had not expected her to actually also be adept at battle force or for her physical body to be terrifyingly tough, to the point where it surpassed even Chao Zhi's.

Bang!

There was another loud boom as Lu Yin tightly grabbed both of Nightqueen Yanqing's fists. The two were hurled deep into the ground as they grappled each other. Nightqueen Yanqing stared at him with her purple eyes, continuously sapping away his four-lined battle force. "You really are immune to my Daynight clan's battle techniques. Tell me, what's your innate gift?"

Lu Yin's knee rushed at Nightqueen Yanqing's abdomen while her pure white thigh raised itself to calmly block Lu Yin's strike. "Your battle force won't last for much longer. You're dead meat."

“Is that so? Then let’s try again,” Lu Yin barked intensely as he released his grip on Nightqueen Yanqing’s hands. He pulled back his right hand as his muscles clenched like iron rings. Intense pain wracked his nerves as he howled through gritted teeth. “Nine Stacks, Seventeen-Fold Shockwave Palm!”

Nightqueen Yanqing was overcome with horror as she barely had time to say, “Impossible.”

Boom!

The shockwave just from Lu Yin’s right elbow moving shattered the void as he struck forward and shoved his palm into Nightqueen Yanqing, forcing her body deeper into the earth. Seventeen loud booms exploded within her body and nearly broke through her four-lined battle force. Nightqueen Yanqing spat out a mouthful of blood and her face had a deathly white palor as she flew into the sky.

Lu Yin also slowly rose into the sky, panting heavily. Fresh blood dripped down his right arm as the Nine Stacks, Seventeen-Fold Shockwave Palm was his right arm’s absolute limit. It would be very difficult for him to unleash it again in his current state.

Everyone stared at their screens silently, unable to tear their eyes away. This battle had been a rollercoaster of fiery exchanges from the very start, and there was even a collision between four-lined battle force. Who held the advantage now?

In the Innerverses, within a dark room, a young man swirled his wine glass and looked at the screen with a tepid expression. His long, black-and-white hair and a single strand of grey hair resting on his shoulders could shock one’s soul.

Behind the young man, Liu Shaoge stood attentively, similarly watching the screen that contained Lu Yin’s figure. His eyes flashed as a miniscule trace of astonishment could be seen within them.

Above the arena plains, Nightqueen Yanqing wiped away the thin trail of blood from the corner of her lips. Her originally enticing purple eyes had turned frosty cold as she looked at Lu Yin now. “Your physical body is stronger than I expected. Seventeen-Fold Shockwave Palm—even an average Explorer wouldn’t be able to unleash such an attack.”

Lu Yin solemnly replied, “You’re not too bad either. You actually took it without dying.”

Chapter 226: The Strongest, Lu Yin

Nightqueen Yanqing quirked her lips up and smiled as she arrogantly looked down at Lu Yin. “‘Took it?’ You miserable ant, where did you find the audacity to speak like that? I thought that I would easily dispose of you, but it seems that I have no other choice but to use that move. Open your eyes, you pathetic ant, and see what it means to be a Nightking, as only a Nightking can understand this battle technique. Nightking’s Body!” With a low growl, the grey air circulating around Nightqueen Yanqing’s body extended before gradually merging with her four-lined battle force. Soon after, a strong gale swept out in all four directions, crushing the earth and distorting the void. This time, even the second energy barrier installed by the academy tutors flickered.

Many watched on nervously. What is this battle technique? Is it another Nightking clan battle technique?

Outside the arena plains, Chilian Daynight had a fiery gaze as he stared at Nightqueen Yanqing. Nightking's Body was a superb battle technique that only the Nightking of the Daynight clan could comprehend. The technique brought the physical body's power to the next level and was equivalent to unconditionally increasing one's battle force by a whole line. Essentially, Nightqueen Yanqing now had five-lined battle force.

Many gasped in surprise when they realized just what effect Nightking's Body had. Clearly, every one of the Nightking clan's battle techniques could shock the entire crowd. Nightking's Body was rather well-known, although there had only ever been a few individuals who had managed to successfully cultivate it. Who here could have expected Nightqueen Yanqing to actually succeed.

In the Sword Sect, the white-clothed elder exclaimed, "I never would have thought that a female child could actually successfully cultivate the Nightking's Body. That technique can even rival the Third Sword of the Thirteen Swords. Every Nightking battle technique has an overwhelmingly suppressive force. That little brat is immune to the Third Sword, but I wonder if he can also block the Nightking's Body which is just as strong as the Third Sword."

At this time, Starsibyl, Han Chong, and Grandini all had ugly expressions when they saw the current Nightqueen Yanqing's true terror. She had hidden herself very deeply.

From the moment Nightqueen Yanqing revealed her Nightking's Body, she had ascended to the same level as Starsibyl, Han Chong, and Liu Shaoqiu. From the perspective of the elites who understood the Thirteen Swords, Lu Yin had only triumphed over Liu Shaoqiu because of his special constitution that rendered him immune to the Third Sword, which had no physical offensive capabilities. It could even be said that Lu Yin's power had not been accepted by many of the audience members, much like how Grandini Mavis had not been accepted either. To them, the ones who were truly at the pinnacle were Starsibyl, Han Chong, Nightqueen Yanqing, and Liu Shaoqiu.

Lu Yin also had an ugly expression, as he could feel Nightqueen Yanqing's power rising rapidly. Her strength was as deep as the ocean, and also as immovable as a mountain.

"Don't be so scared that you admit defeat. Then, I'd have to personally go to Astral-10 and crush you there," Nightqueen Yanqing declared in an icy voice. Her body suddenly disappeared from view, and a moment later, Lu Yin felt an intense pain blossom in his abdomen. The scene in front of his eyes flew away from him at a terrifying speed. He had been struck by an overpowering strength that slammed his body into the ground. The power of that blow had shattered his four-lined battle force, causing him to cough up blood.

Nightqueen Yanqing stood above the plains and looked down at where Lu Yin had been blasted an unknown depth into the ground. She raised her head and looked around outside the plains, where she saw Liu Shaoqiu, Starsibyl, Han Chong, and all the other peak combatants. She smiled slightly. This was the strength of her Nightking's Body. It pushed her physical strength to the level of five-lined battle force and allowed her to crush all her opponents like ants.

Watching his screen, Undying Yushan sighed. The Nightking clan was just too terrifying.

On Earth, Zhou Shan and the rest all clenched their fists and nervously stared at the screen. Lu Yin had actually been smashed into the ground by a single strike. At this rate, everything was pointing toward disaster.

Over a billion Earthlings fell silent in unison as they nervously watched the screens.

On San Dios, the floating city, Wendy Yushan's eyes flickered as she unconsciously clenched her sword hilt. Nightqueen Yanqing's arrogant demeanor was too much for her—it was just unsightly.

At Astral-10's space station, Madam Nalan calmly set down her wine glass. "But can the Nightking's Body give one the ability to survive in outer space?"

A shadow appeared behind her and answered her question. "If one is not an Explorer, then they cannot survive in space. The Nightking's Body can at most raise Nightqueen Yanqing's battle force to the level of five lines, but even that will only increase how long she can survive in outer space by a small amount, which is already very short. Thus, she still would not be able to survive in outer space."

"Are there absolutely no cases of someone beneath the realm of Explorer surviving in outer space?" Madam Nalan was curious.

"It's rumored that, when the Ten Arbiters were Limiteers, they could kill Explorers while in space, but rumors are rumors. Those stories were never verified."

Madam Nalan frowned: the Ten Arbiters, it's always the Ten Arbiters. After the universe's transformation, the Ten Arbiters had become the standard against which every youth was measured. Every single past move and action of theirs was something to be compared to, but no one could actually measure up.

If even Nightqueen Yanqing could not survive in space with her current physique, then what did that signify about Lu Yin? Madam Nalan still had not forgotten the shock that had struck her when she realized that Lu Yin had not perished even after floating through outer space.

Above the arena plains, Nightqueen Yanqing stood in the sky, alone and arrogant. She then gently stepped down. Her pure white thighs flashed with a gleam as a shock wave rippled out before the ground suddenly exploded as she attempted to force Lu Yin out. "Get out here!"

Everyone watched on nervously. They could feel that the match was about to be decided.

Deep in the ground, Lu Yin released a slow breath with a grimace. He did not want to expose this so soon, as it was a stage that only the Ten Arbiters had ever stepped on while at the Melder realm. No one else had ever done what he was about to do in the entire history of the Astral Combat Tournament. However, the current situation was out of Lu Yin's control, especially since he could not use his Cosmic Palm. Otherwise, a nine-stars Cosmic Palm powered by with four-lined battle force would be able to contest Nightqueen Yanqing's Nightking's Body. After a moment of consideration, Lu Yin decided to throw caution to the wind. He would end this season's tournament with a shocking reveal. Lu Yin focused his thoughts, and his eyes trembled. The four-lined battle force that had crumbled away reappeared around his body before then seeping through the cracks in the ground to form a purple halo that distorted the void.

Nightqueen Yanqing felt contempt for Lu Yin's struggles, as his four-lined battle force was unable to withstand a single strike from her.

Countless audience members frowned as they watched on; was he still going to try to use four-lined battle force? In previous tournaments, a four-lined battle force user would have for all intents and purposes been the strongest competitor, but the bar in this tournament was wildly higher. Four-lined battle force was actually somewhat common.

But then, a stunning sliver of a dark-gold radiance flickered within the purple aura before shooting into the horizon, dying the entire sky the same dark gold color even as the purple was wiped away.

Everyone was amazed by what they were seeing. Is that... five-lined battle force?

Starsibyl and the rest of the peak fighters narrowed their eyes and unconsciously stepped forward, only to look into the ground in disbelief. How was this possible? Five-lined battle force was something that only the Ten Arbiters had ever achieved while still in the Astral Combat Academy.

Nightqueen Yanqing's body trembled, and she involuntarily retreated several steps in shock. Beneath the earth's surface, the dark gold radiance had accumulated into a breathtaking, dazzling brilliance.

In the sky, a dozen mentors appeared, including Astral-10's Sandmaster. They all stared at the scene on the ground in shock. "Other than the Ten Arbiters, another five-lined battle force user has actually appeared in the academy. This person's talent is no weaker than the Ten Arbiters."

"Another Ten Arbiters candidate."

...

Countless viewers were shocked as they stared at their screens, even space-exploring powerhouses. Battle force was very difficult to comprehend, and only the top-notch institutions such as the Astral Combat Academy could consistently churn out battle force users. In the Outerverse, any battle force user could stand above all others, while five-lined battle force was so difficult to comprehend that even space-exploring individuals could not do so easily. Five lines was considered to be the sign of a powerhouse.

Anyone who could cultivate five-lined battle force was destined to become a space-exploring powerhouse who can easily crush anyone in their realm. But now, a lowly Melder had actually comprehended five-lined battle force, shocking the heavens.

Step by step, Lu Yin pulled himself out of the ground with a calm expression. He had survived two calamities at Driftcharge Planet. After involuntarily activating the Technique of Life and Death, he had survived his first encounter with death and upgraded his battle force to three lines. After his second brush with death, the technique had upgraded his battle force to five lines. Even now, Lu Yin still found it hard to believe that he had reached such a step, but that technique was just too mysterious. His current strength was all thanks to that elder back on Driftcharge Planet. Without him, the two unavoidable disasters that had struck Lu Yin would have merely resulted in his death. Lu Yin was only able to climb up to this point because of that mysterious Technique of Life and Death.

Unfortunately, this sort of technique could not be cultivated. Lu Yin had no clue how he had survived his first life and death ordeal when he had almost become white meat. But during his second life and death calamity, he would have definitely died if the Nalan family's spacecraft hadn't coincidentally passed by. Both of these experiences were things that he never wanted to go through again.

He clenched his right fist, causing the purple battle force to form a mark that covered his body. Outside of this imprint was a dark-gold circle. His entire body was lined with a thin layer of dark-gold aura. Lu Yin could feel an incomparably terrifying strength coursing through him. This was the strength that he had obtained after risking life and death. He was now going to use this strength at the very end of this season's Astral Combat Tournament.

Not far away from him, Nightqueen Yanqing's eyes grew huge as she stared at Lu Yin in shock. As he slowly walked out from the ground, her face turned deathly white. "Impossible, how could you reach five-lined battle force? That's something that only the Ten Arbiters can do. It's impossible for you to do the same."

Lu Yin looked at his arm as he stood in front of her. Her innate gift of purple pupils no longer had any effect on him. "Impossible? Then try it yourself. I hope that you can take it." He suddenly vanished only to reappear right before Nightqueen Yanqing. His right hand had already stretched out in front of her forehead, and Lu Yin lightly tapped it, causing a soft thump to resound through the arena. A shock wave tore through the void as Nightqueen Yanqing was sent flying. Her mind was still blank even as her surroundings blurred into an indistinguishable blur.

Lu Yin raised his lips into a sly smile before vanishing and reappearing next to the still-flying Nightqueen Yanqing. He slapped down with a palm, and there was a loud, rumbling tremor as the earth was pulverized into dust. Nightqueen Yanqing had been viciously slapped deep into the ground, where she spat out a mouthful of blood. Her clothes had been torn, and her smooth belly was exposed.

"Don't forget—you still have the Nightking's Body that can rival five-lined battle force," Lu Yin reminded her in a cheerful tone.

From her position in the ground, Nightqueen Yanqing suddenly opened her eyes and revealed a fierce look. She roared out loudly and forcefully endured her injuries as she charged out, only to spit out another mouthful of blood. She stared fiercely at Lu Yin. "That's right! I still have the Nightking's Body that can rival five-lined battle force. The outcome hasn't been decided yet!" She then charged ferociously at Lu Yin as she roared out, "Nightking Punch!"

Lu Yin stretched his neck, as this was exactly the reaction that he wanted. How could he improve his five-lined battle force if he didn't have an opponent to fight against? It was not easy to upgrade one's battle force, and one naturally had to experience many battles to do so. Nightqueen Yanqing was simply his first suitable battle target.

Bang!

Bang, bang, bang!

Bang!

Bang, bang!

...

The glaring radiance illuminated the void as the two figures collided at a speed that couldn't be followed. Most of the audience could only see their phantom images slowly dissipating in the air and only Starsibyl and a few others could make out the two's real bodies. Even then, all they could see was blurry shadows.

Regardless of whether it was Nightqueen Yanqing or Lu Yin, they were both clearly at the same level as Starsibyl and Han Chong in terms of strength. No one dared to say who was the strongest out of the four, but Starsibyl's and Han Chong's battle styles leaned towards domains and spiritual force while Lu Yin and Nightqueen Yanqing tended towards utilizing their physical body and battle force; these were two entirely different styles.

Boom!

A giant crack extended into the sky and tore straight through the second energy barrier that had been placed by the mentors. Fortunately, a mentor appeared right in time to block the shock wave. Otherwise, it would have killed many of the spectating students.

Chapter 227: The Forbidden Names Of The Ten Arbiters

Shock waves pulsed through the sky and reached deep underground, where a deep pit had already formed. All of a sudden, a black figure rushed out from the hole in the ground and attacked two people.

Nobody could have foreseen this. There had been a war spirit hidden deep underground. During the previous battles, it had not been affected at all, but during Lu Yin and Nightqueen Yanqing's, the ground had been damaged too much, freeing it.

The black war spirit used its star energy to materialize a long staff that it grasped in its hands. As it swept out, the staff thrust the entire area into shadow even as more black shadows emanated out from the staff. This move was both a domain and a battle technique.

Up in the sky, one of the academy mentors was shocked. "That's the battle technique of Astral-2's leader from centuries ago."

With the shrill sound of howling wind, Lu Yin and Nightqueen Yanqing's figures flitted past the war spirit, which froze before crumbling apart. Even the shadows from its staff had vanished.

Quite a few of the spectators felt their scalps go numb. The war spirit of the former Astral-2 leader couldn't even last for a second! The disparity between it and Lu Yin and Nightqueen Yanqing was just too large.

Thud thud!

Two dull sounds rang out in the arena as Lu Yin blocked Nightqueen Yanqing's punch with his left arm while grabbing her elbow with his right hand. "So is this the Nightking's Body that's supposed to be comparable to five-lined battle force?"

Nightqueen Yanqing's breathing was labored, and a line of blood was flowing from the corner of her mouth as she glared at Lu Yin. He ruthlessly mocked, "So, is this all the Nightking clan amounts to?"

Nightqueen Yanqing bellowed in rage and tried to kick him, but Lu Yin didn't even bother dodging. With a flick of his wrist, he slammed her into the ground and stared into her eyes. "Nightking Zhenwu."

Nightqueen Yanqing's pupils shrank to the size of pinholes. "You've heard of the Ten Arbiters' names?"

Lu Yin was startled by this unexpected response. "He's one of the Ten Arbiters?"

Nightqueen Yanqing looked at Lu Yin in confusion before snickering. "So you didn't know? Nightking Zhenwu is a genius beyond any we've ever seen. He's one of the Ten Arbiters and my older brother as well."

Lu Yin narrowed his eyes. It did make sense that the strongest family in the universe, the Nightking clan, would produce a member of the Ten Arbiters. He had only asked about this person out of curiosity, but he had unexpectedly managed to find out that he was one of the Ten Arbiters.

"Do you have the guts to kill me? Can you even win? I'm the princess of the Nightking clan and Nightking Zhenwu's younger sister—the younger sister of one of the Ten Arbiters," Nightqueen Yanqing provokingly said.

Lu Yin shot her a look of contempt. "And here I thought that you were strong. I never expected that you would have such a pathetic side. Regardless, it's over."

After saying that, he used Nine Stacks, Seventeen-Fold Shockwave Palm with a single hand to crush both the ground and the girl into dust.

Everyone went silent as they watched Lu Yin slowly rise into the air. He had won the match.

Then, everyone from Astral-10 started cheering.

Wu Da was so excited that he nearly started jumping out of joy. There was now hope for his academy newspaper to reach an unprecedented level of sales! He watched Lu Yin with passionate eyes. This was a person who he needed to keep following, as Lu Yin would definitely be the subject of more shocking news in the future.

Starsibyl and a few others gave Lu Yin meaningful looks. Only now did they truly acknowledge and treat him as an equal with the same level of strength as them.

Up in the sky, a dozen mentors exchanged glances, the shock in their gazes still present. This Astral Combat Tournament had completely exceeded all of their expectations. Thankfully, a decision had already been made that the tournament would end before the semifinals. It wouldn't be good for the Human Domain if the final four's true abilities were exposed.

In front of their screens, numerous people stared at Lu Yin's figure in shock. He was a Melder from Astral-10 who had cultivated five lines of battle force. He was incredibly powerful, but at the same time, he was merely a nobody from the Outerverse who had managed to achieve something that even people from the Inniverse's most powerful organizations were incapable of accomplishing. Who ever said that miracles don't exist in space?

The entire population of Earth was cheering ecstatically. The people might not understand the full implications of what had happened, but even they could tell that this last battle had been on a whole

other level. After all, it had been a fierce battle between two people who were both qualified to enter the final four.

On Saint Dios, Wendy Yushan was just as shocked as everyone else. Lu Yin was merely a Melder, but once he became a Limiteer, or better yet, an Explorer, he would definitely rise into the heavens and be qualified to challenge the Top 100 Rankings.

In the Innerverse, within a dark room, a wine glass shattered into tiny shards. "What a piece of trash."

Behind the young man, Liu Shaoge kept his eyes trained on Lu Yin's figure on the screen as a dark glint flickered across them.

In the Lifeseek Realm, outside the arena plains, all of the students looked into the sky. This was the first time that an Astral Combat Academy mentor had come out and made an appearance.

Studying in the Astral Combat Academy came with a lot of freedom. For example, the battles in the teleportation arena and the trial zones took place without any guidance or supervision. The mentors would generally only give a small bit of guidance to the students, and many students might not even have the chance to ever interact with any of the mentors. Rather than calling them mentors, they were more like the Astral Combat Academy's guardians.

"All students, listen up! This is a joint decision that was made by the Mentor Association of the Astral Combat Academy and the Ten Arbiter's Council. The tournament will go on a hiatus until further notice. Additionally, the Astral Combat Academy's students must respond to a summons and go to the Human Domain's warfront. The final four will be the leaders of this team, and they will also oversee these teams at the Human Domain's border while accumulating contributions for humanity. The dates of the final matches will be announced later." The mentor then repeated himself. "The tournament will go on a hiatus until further notice. Additionally, the Astral Combat Academy's students must respond to a summons and go to the Human Domain's warfront. The final four will be the leaders of this team, and they will also oversee these teams at the Human Domain's border while accumulating contributions for humanity. The dates of the final matches will be announced later."

The students were astonished by what they had just heard; the tournament was going to end just like that?!

In front of their screens, countless people were swearing and cursing. They had just found out who the final four were before the tournament was indefinitely postponed! This was terrible news.

Lu Yin sighed. It was over. The Trialmaster had already hinted to him that this would be the last round of the tournament. As for when the tournament's semifinals and finals would really be held, it depended on what the higher-ups decided. However, what would happen to the rewards from the sponsors? He remembered that the Nalan family had donated a harmless sourcebox that was suitable for a medium-ranked Lockbreaker to unlock. It was also rumored that there were also many powerful battle techniques available. Many people had joined the tournament and even the academies just for these rewards.

Starsibyl, Han Chong, and Grandini appeared on the arena plains and approached Lu Yin.

“The date for the final battle hasn’t been decided yet, so let’s get as strong as we can in the meantime,” Starsibyl said with a slight smile. She was very gentle and her voice caused people to unconsciously relax when they heard it.

Lu Yin swung his arms around. “I’m pretty beat from fighting so much over the past few days. I’ll probably use this time to relax a bit.”

Grandini snickered. “Relax? It seems that you’ve never been to the Human Domain’s warfront before. People at the Explorer realm and above die there everyday, and you want to relax there?”

Lu Yin was shocked. “We’re actually going to the warfront?”

“Who knows? With our strength, it’s very possible. At the very least, we won’t lose easily, even to Explorers,” Han Chong added on.

Starsibyl looked at Lu Yin and smiled. “Here’s a word of advice. Nightqueen Yanqing is a very petty woman. You beat her, so you should be careful of her from now on.” After that, she waved her hand and exited the Lifeseek Realm.

Han Chong nodded in agreement. “Yeah, she’s very petty.” He also left after saying those words.

Grandini Mavis stared at Lu Yin with a serious expression. Lu Yin was a bit puzzled and asked, “Are you going to warn me as well?”

Grandini shook her head. “No, I want to ask you something.”

“Ok.”

“What’s your relationship like with Lulu?”

Lu Yin was confused. “What do you mean? Are you asking whether we’re classmates or friends?”

Grandini was rather disappointed by Lu Yin’s answer. “I thought that you two were a couple. What a pity—I don’t get to rip you apart.”

Lu Yin was rendered speechless by her shocking words. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

Grandini snorted. “It’s hard for a Mavis family member to marry outside the family, so what do you think I meant?”

Lu Yin rolled his eyes before leaving the Liveseek Realm as well. When he opened his eyes again, he saw that Xia Luo and the rest had already left the trial zone mountain. Hui Daynight was the only one who had stayed behind, and he was looking at Lu Yin with a complicated expression on his face.

Lu Yin returned the look and asked rather detachedly, “What’s up?”

Hui Daynight shook his head before leaving the mountain as well.

Lu Yin suddenly remembered something, quickly left the mountain, and headed straight for Astral-10’s space station. Unfortunately, the Nalan spacecraft had already left, and he wasn’t able to bid farewell to Madam Nalan.

Then, he received a message from his gadget telling him to go to the treasury to meet Old Cai.

“Old Cai.” Lu Yin respectfully bowed to the mentor when he reached the treasury.

Old Cai looked Lu Yin up and down with evident surprise. “You’re quite something, kiddo.”

Lu Yin smiled. “I just got lucky.”

Old Cai nodded and did not prod any further. “There’s been a summoning from the warfront. The final four of the tournament are to lead the rest. Get some rest and head out tomorrow.”

Lu Yin was surprised. “This soon?”

Old Cai rolled his eyes in annoyance. “It’s a summoning from the warfront, so it’s obviously going to happen soon. Did you think that this was just another mission?”

“So where am I going?” Lu Yin asked.

Old Cai answered, “To the battlefront at the border of the Erudite Flowzone, Planet Conan.” Then, he seemed to remember something and tossed a cosmic ring to Lu Yin. “This is your reward for reaching the final four. You’re quite lucky.”

Lu Yin’s eyes lit up. He was actually just about to ask about the reward.

“Don’t bother checking it. There’s five hundred thousand star crystals and a harmless sourcebox inside,” Old Cai said with a slightly envious and annoyed tone.

Five hundred thousand star crystals wasn’t much, but Lu Yin was quite surprised by the sourcebox.

“Old Cai, who provided this sourcebox?” Lu Yin asked even though he had his guesses.

Old Cai snickered. “It’s from the Nalan family. By the way, kid, since when did you become friends with that rich Nalan widow? This reward is meant for the winner, but she gave it to you now.”

Madam Nalan’s face appeared in Lu Yin’s mind and his heartbeat sped up. But after seeing Old Cai’s thick beard, he replied, “She’s my benefactor. It’s all thanks to her that I managed to return here.”

“Is that so? Well, whatever, your personal issues have nothing to do with the academy. Though I do need to remind you that she has connections with the Sword Sect, so don’t overdo it,” Old Cai said.

Lu Yin didn’t really care since he had known about this since a long time ago. That was the only way Madam Nalan would have known about Liu Shaoqiu, and she most likely wouldn’t have given Liu Xiaoyun a ride if she didn’t have a good relationship with the Sword Sect. However, this had nothing to do with Lu Yin.

“By the way, speaking of the Sword Sect, a letter arrived yesterday from them. Apparently, the sect leader is willing to take you in as a personal disciple. What do you think? Do you want to go there?” Old Cai asked.

Lu Yin was startled. “The Sword Sect’s leader? Become his personal disciple?”

Old Cai nodded and grinned as he stroked his beard. “Yes, you’d be a personal disciple of the sect leader. That would mean that you’d have the same status as Liu Shaoqiu.”

Lu Yin was shocked. The Sword Sect was a very powerful organization in the Inniverse that controlled the First Flowzone and was far more powerful than Myriad Swords Peak. The moment he became a personal disciple of the Sword Sect, his status would surpass even Wendy Yushan's, who was from the Myriad Swords Peak. This was an extremely tempting offer.

Old Cai continued stroking his beard as he observed Lu Yin's reaction.

Lu Yin pondered over it for quite a while, but then, he sighed. "Forget it. The Sword Sect isn't for me."

Old Cai was surprised to hear this response. "Think it through, kiddo. That's the Sword Sect you're talking about! The Sword Sect from the First Flowzone. If you agree, you'd instantly become a part of the rich and powerful in the Inniverse. With one word, you'd be able to make the master of any Outerverse territory bow down to you, and your status would vastly eclipse what you currently have as King Zishan. Are you sure that you don't want this?"

Lu Yin laughed wryly before responding, "Please stop tempting me, Old Cai. It's not that easy to say 'no.'"

Old Cai sized him up before seriously asking, "Tell me why."

"It's very simple. The Sword Sect just isn't suitable for me. The reason why they value me is probably because they saw that I was immune to Liu Shaoqiu's Third Sword. In reality, other than that, I'm worth nothing to the Sword Sect even though I have five-lined battle force. They're an organization that has even raised a disciple who became one of the Ten Arbiters. If I go, I'll just be someone for them to study. Besides, their training environment doesn't fit me," Lu Yin honestly answered.

Chapter 228: Five-Stage Formcast Model

Old Cai praised Lu Yin, saying, "Not bad, you're not bad at all to resist this tempting offer. You've improved, kiddo. Go on and get some rest. Someone will eventually come over to bring you to the Erudite Flowzone. Once there, you'll get a better understanding of the Inniverse. It's completely different from the Outerverse."

Lu Yin left soon after. He was feeling rather annoyed as he felt like he was missing out on a great opportunity. He really did want to enter the Sword Sect for no other reason than to obtain a better status. However, it wasn't appropriate for him to go there right now, and it would have to wait until he had the ability to protect himself. Since the Sword Sect was willing to take him in, this wouldn't be his only opportunity, and he would definitely go once he was stronger.

Right after leaving the treasury, Lu Yin was stopped by Michelle. "When are you going to fulfill your promise to me?"

Lu Yin was put in a rather awkward position. He had asked Michelle to help him snatch a training ground, and in return, he had promised to help her comprehend battle force. However, he still hadn't done so. "I'm sorry, but I have to go to the warfront tomorrow. Can you wait until I get back?"

Michelle gave him a long stare, obviously annoyed by his response.

Lu Yin sighed helplessly. "I'm really not doing this on purpose. It's just that I'm leaving tomorrow."

Michelle turned around and left without saying another word.

Lu Yin had no interest in chatting with the other Astral-10 students. He found a quiet place for himself and began to roll his die. He actually wanted to wait a bit more before doing this, but he was about to leave, and he had no idea if anyone would be observing him once he got on the spacecraft. Thus, he had no choice but to roll the die now.

Quite a bit of time had passed since the last time he had rolled the die. Taking it out now gave him a minor sense of nostalgia. Lu Yin had actually tried to use the die in the trial zones once. Most people were able to use their innate gifts in the trial zone, but for some reason, his hadn't activated. It was rather odd.

He had 597,500 or so star crystals on hand right now, so it was enough for a few rolls.

He rolled the die and watched it spin. It felt slightly odd to Lu Yin, which was understandable as he hadn't rolled the die once since leaving Astral-10.

When it stopped rolling, it revealed three pips.

Lu Yin was very excited to see that he had rolled Enhance! It was a very uncommon roll; besides this one, it had only ever appeared twice. It was quite a surprise that he'd roll it on his first try this session.

Wait a second... Lu Yin hesitated. Do the chances of getting the number that I want increase the longer I wait before each roll of the die?

It had been nearly impossible to roll a three last time. He had rolled the die so many times, but he rarely ever obtained the result that he wanted. When he was in the Great Yu Empire's palace desperately trying to roll a three, he had only succeeded after using Time Stop. Even now, he could still remember the fatigue that he had gone through to succeed. It seemed that the longer he waited between each roll, the better his chances of getting the number he wanted were. This was a clear pattern.

As he looked at the two planes of light, one at the top and one at the bottom, Lu Yin did not think twice. He immediately took out his formcast model and threw it inside the topmost plane. He had already used over ten thousand star crystals to start upgrading it, so the amount needed to fully upgrade it had gone down a bit. This time, Lu Yin tossed 290,000 crystals in right away. The crystals were quickly absorbed as the formcast model fell down until it reached the bottom plane of light. It then released a brilliant, dazzling radiance.

Lu Yin grabbed it with trembling hands as he looked at the transformed formcast model with excitement. This was a five-stage formcast model! He had actually managed to obtain a five-stage formcast model! This model could help him become an Explorer. Formcast models like these were incredibly expensive, and he'd never imagined that he would one day get his hands on one.

Although upgrading the formcast model to this stage had cost him 300,000 crystals, what he had received was actually invaluable. A five-stage formcast model was something that money alone might not be able to buy.

He excitedly stored the formcast model away and looked at the two planes of light as he thought about what he should do next. He didn't have anything else that he wanted to upgrade at this moment, but he still had 300,000 crystals left. If he rolled the die again, would he be able to get six pips, Possession? The

thought of that made Lu Yin grow excited again, and after using a star crystal to refresh the die, he rolled again.

The triangular planes of light vanished, and the die quickly spun before finally stopping on four pips: Time Stop.

The scenery around him changed, and Lu Yin once again found himself in a familiar space. He took a deep breath and tossed out a sizable sum of star crystals to change the appearance of his surroundings. It immediately turned into a picturesque view of mountains and flowing water. Although none of this was real, it was much more pleasing to the eye.

He then took out another hundred thousand star crystals, crushed them, and began to absorb the energy. He was going to cultivate to the peak Melder realm.

In the past, he had once spent seven days absorbing a hundred thousand star crystals, but that hadn't been quite enough for him to become a peak Melder. However, that cultivation session had boosted his energy by quite a bit. By his current estimates, it would only take around a hundred thousand more crystals to reach the peak Melder realm.

When his Cosmic Art was at only seven stars, it had taken him about seven days to absorb a hundred thousand crystals. Now, with nine stars, the efficiency was nearly double that of before. He needed less than two hours to finish absorbing all of the energy from the star crystals. With this in mind, he manifested nine stars around his body, forming a perfect galaxy that absorbed the star energy surrounding him at a crazy rate. While absorbing it, he also constantly filtered out the impurities.

Two hours quickly passed by, at the end of which all hundred thousand star crystals had been absorbed. However, it still wasn't enough for him to reach the peak Melder stage.

Lu Yin took a deep breath. His star energy storage capacity seemed to be much greater than anyone else at the same realm as him. This is still fine, he thought to himself as he crushed another hundred thousand star crystals.

Another two hours passed by, after which Lu Yin's star energy was surging crazily, almost to the point where it was about to go out of control. He could feel that he had become a peak Melder. Although there wasn't much of a difference compared to before, when battling against powerhouses, even a tiny advantage could sometimes spiral into a huge difference. If he'd been a peak Melder when he fought against Nightqueen Yanqing, then his Nine Stacks, Seventeen-Fold Shockwave Palm would have been even more destructive. He might have even been able to kill her with a single strike.

But he had only reached the peak Melder realm from an outside perspective; there were still too many impurities within his energy for him to be satisfied. Lu Yin closed his eyes and began refining his energy and ridding himself of the impurities.

The uncontrollable, surging star energy on the surface of his body slowly dissipated over the course of two days. At the end, he opened his eyes, took out another hundred thousand crystals, and crushed them. This time, he was definitely going to become a peak Melder.

One day later, Lu Yin left the Time Stop Space. During the time he had spent cultivating, only a second had passed for the rest of the universe.

He looked at his hands. He had finally become a peak Melder after consuming around 400,000 star crystals. If it weren't for his Cosmic Art and supply of star crystals, then it would have taken him forever to fill up his energy capacity through just absorbing the stray star energy wandering about in the universe.

Cultivation was something that required both resources and talent. Many people said that having resources was even more important than having talent, and Lu Yin was beginning to understand what they meant by that now.

It generally took around 150,000 or so star crystals to push an ordinary person to the Melder realm in a short period of time. This was a huge amount of money, or at least, that was how it was seen in the Outerverse. Even though the Outerverse consisted of numerous planets that had star crystal mines, it was still difficult for the large organizations to support such a high rate of consumption. It was no wonder why so many soldiers were merely at the Sentinel or even Seeker realm.

150,000 star crystals was the amount required to raise a mere Melder. To raise a Limiteer, that amount was ten times higher, and the resources required to raise an Explorer was even higher beyond that.

There were two main obstacles towards becoming an Explorer. One was the star energy requirement, and the other was actually breaking through. Lu Yin had once asked Uncle Reuben about the difference between an Explorer and a Limiteer. Uncle Reuben had vaguely mentioned that the body of an Explorer was qualitatively different from that of a regular human and that there was also a state of "Exhaustion." He hadn't really explained much, but it was enough for Lu Yin to realize that it was not easy to become an Explorer.

Of course, within the scope of the entire universe, there was a large number of Explorers despite the vast amount of resources that it took to raise each one. Even if each Explorer consumed all of the resources of an entire planet, there would still be countless Explorers within the Human Domain.

It was true that there were numerous Explorers throughout the entire Human Domain, but the majority of them were undoubtedly at the warfront.

Lu Yin switched his gadget on and started to browse through it, searching for reports on the Human Domain's warfront. Besides some general news, there wasn't much else available, though he did manage to find some recent pictures. Through them, he saw how merciless the situation at the warfront was. Many of the pictures had captions explaining that the dead people in the pictures were all Explorers or even Cruisers.

He then searched for Planet Conan, but there were no results.

Lu Yin set his gadget down and retrieved the harmless sourcebox from his cosmic ring. He activated his Cosmic Art and took out the Emperor Giant's third eye as well. He then focused intently on the sourcebox, causing his senses to sink into an entirely different world filled with complicated structures.

This was a world composed of star energy with all sorts of other energy mixed in. Lu Yin had Charon's lockbreaking experience, so he was already qualified to try unlocking this sourcebox, but he didn't have enough time. It took a long time to unlock every sourcebox, and there were too many uncertainties in

the process. Master Wusheng had told him that there was no such thing as a harmless sourcebox and that every one of them could potentially kill a Lockbreaker. Lu Yin was planning to take things one step at a time with this sourcebox, so there was no need to be overly ambitious. The most important thing to do right now was to get some rest and wait to leave for the Erudite Flowzone.

Beep beep beep!

His gadget beeped a couple hours later, prompting Lu Yin to open his eyes. It was time.

When Lu Yin arrived at Astral-10's space station, he saw a large warship docked there. It was massive and covered with fierce-looking weapons that exuded an intimidating aura. The spacecraft had an emblem of a bloodstained book on it, which was the symbol of the Human Domain's Erudite Flowzone Border Allied Troops and proof that this warship belonged to the Erudite Flowzone's troops.

Nobody came to welcome him, and Lu Yin entered as soon as the doors opened. The first thing he saw was Silver's smiling face.

Lu Yin narrowed his eyes. "You're also going to Erudite Flowzone's allied army?"

Silver smiled as he replied, "Yes. You're my captain now."

Lu Yin loosened up his shoulders. "We're just foot soldiers in the army. Did you really think that I'll be a captain?"

"You can be a small captain," Silver joked with a bright grin, as if he was delighted with their circumstances.

Lu Yin checked out the spacecraft's interior. The decorations were simple without any excess luxury. The troops who were patrolling around inside had a stern look and emanated a subdued bloodlust. Lu Yin realized that every person here had spilled blood before.

The two of them were led by a soldier to a cabin at the bottommost level. "Before we arrive at the warfront, this will be your room. The two of you will share it." After saying that, the soldier left.

Lu Yin opened the door and entered the room. Despite both of them being assigned to a single room, it was very small. After looking around a bit, he chose one of the beds and sat down on it. It wasn't too bad, all things considered.

At this point, the warship jolted as it started to depart, leaving Astral-10 and heading straight into space.

Silver lay on his bed and smiled at Lu Yin. "Are you disappointed, captain?"

"Disappointed about what?" Lu Yin asked curiously.

Silver smiled. "Even though you're one of the final four fighters in the Astral Combat Tournament and one of the top students in the Astral Combat Academy, you were still assigned to a cabin on the bottom floor and have to squeeze in together with a footsoldier like me. Aren't you disappointed? Don't you feel like you're not getting the treatment you deserve?"

Lu Yin burst into laughter. "We're just students and not anybody famous. Why should they give us any special treatment? Besides, in the eyes of soldiers, only the strong are worthy of respect."

“Aren’t you one of the strong? On this spacecraft, I would think that only the Explorers stand a chance of defeating you. And how many Explorers do you think there are on this spacecraft?” Silver asked with a grin.

For some reason, Lu Yin was suddenly reminded of the betrayal that had happened when he had travelled from Earth to the Great Yu Empire’s capital star. He stared intently at Silver. “What are you planning?”

Silver chuckled. “You’re looking nervous, captain.”

Lu Yin suddenly grabbed Silver, causing the grinning youth’s eyes to go wide. Those wide eyes held an endless cold edge, and his butterfly knife suddenly swung towards Lu Yin’s neck. Lu Yin easily dodged the blade as four-lined battle force covered his hand that was holding Silver. Lu Yin then said in an icy tone, “I’m warning you. Don’t try anything funny.”

Chapter 229: The Tragedy Of Civilization

Silver put away his butterfly knife and innocently spread his hands. “What are you saying, captain?”

Lu Yin stared deep into Silver’s eyes. “I know who you are and how easy it’d be for you to take care of a bunch of Explorers if you really wanted to. However, you should know the consequences of those actions. If anything happens to this spacecraft, then numerous powerhouses of the Human Domain will focus their attention here. Everything about you will be exposed in that case.”

Silver smirked. “So what?”

“You worked so hard to get into Astral-10 from the Great Yu Empire. I’m assuming that it’s not just to destroy this warship,” Lu Yin said icily.

Silver’s eyes gleamed. “Since you know that, then why attack me? Are you afraid?”

Lu Yin did not answer. He was indeed fearful of the Neohuman Alliance’s methods as well as their incredible power.

“You shouldn’t be worried about this warship, captain. Instead, focus on yourself,” Silver suddenly said with a teasing glint in his eye. “Your experience at the pirate port must have traumatized you—you’re afraid that there’ll be trouble on this spacecraft and that you’ll have to experience the same thing all over again.” Lu Yin did not reply, so Silver continued rambling. “You’re also afraid that we’ve set our sights on your innate gift and that we might even try to steal it from you.”

Lu Yin looked at him, released his hold on Silver, and then sat down on his bed.

Silver was surprised. “You’re not going to say anything?”

Lu Yin looked up. “What exactly are you after in the Great Yu Empire?”

Silver’s eyes flashed. “You’re changing the subject.”

“You’re right, but I’m still very curious. You’re way too focused on the Great Yu Empire, or to put it in other words, you’re putting too much effort into infiltrating it. Your organization is huge, but even for them, it would take a lot to raise someone like you. You’re definitely not some bottom feeder in the

Neohuman Alliance. I'm very curious as to what exactly attracted so much of their attention that they sent you to a fringe region like the Great Yu Empire."

Silver stretched a bit and then laid down. "There's a lot of things that we like. For one, the food there is delicious, and as I've said before, I'm a gourmet."

Lu Yin chuckled. Silver actually had a very conspicuous tell—whenever someone saw through him, he'd unwittingly start talking about food. Perhaps food really was something tempting for him and was the only thing that could calm him down. However, Lu Yin knew that the moment Silver mentioned food, it meant that he had guessed right; there was indeed something special about the Great Yu Empire.

The two stopped talking as they both heard a noise from behind the door.

Not much later, Lu Yin left the cabin and entered the corridor. He stared at the starry expanse surrounding him while deep in thought.

The allied troops of the Human Domain came from all parts of the universe, including both the Inniverse and the Outerverse. To help speed up troop movements, there were well-established routes through wormholes in both the Inniverse and the Outerverse. This was the quickest route for the military to travel, and only border troops had the right to use it.

With this special passageway, it only took the warship two days to arrive at the border between the Inner and Outerverse, the Astral River.

This was not Lu Yin's first time seeing the Astral River, but he was still blown away by the majestic sight. The Astral River was unbelievably vast, like a wide ribbon dividing the Inniverse and Outerverse. Its currents were composed of all kinds of violent, liquid energies as well as indescribably strange creatures. Of the entire Human Domain, there was only a single, massive vessel that could traverse the Astral River.

This huge vessel was necessary if one wanted to cross the Astral River, and the person who managed the vessel was the Astral River Envoy, Elder Gu De.

Lu Yin still remembered Ge Er, whom he had killed in the Dao of Purgatory. He was Elder Gu De's son.

As Lu Yin watched the Astral River Ark draw closer and closer to them, Lu Yin's eyes grew cold. He would never forget what had happened in the past. The situation back then had been quite similar to today. The Astral River Boat had drawn closer, but then suddenly stopped. That was when the endless cries of despair as well as that unforgettable scarlet color had filled the skies.

If Elder Gu De had not intentionally decided to stall for time, then they would not have been forced into such a pitiful state. Lu Yin would definitely take revenge one day.

The Erudite Flowzone Border Troops' warship had priority and was the first to enter the vessel. Behind them, there was a whole line of floating spacecraft, waiting to enter.

The vessel was huge, so huge that Lu Yin could not understand how it had been constructed by human hands.

However, he did not give it a second look and immediately turned away. If he spent too much time looking at the vessel, he was afraid that he would do something stupid. This was not the time yet.

After crossing the Astral River and entering the Innerverse, Lu Yin could sense the clear difference between the Innerverse and the Outerverse.

It was often said that, the further one went in the universe, the greater the chances of encountering a powerhouse. While there was no definitive way to prove this, it was true that the Innerverse's general level was much higher than the Outerverse. Hence, a lot of powerhouses from the Outerverse wanted to enter the Innerverse.

The Astral River surrounded the entire Innerverse and its tributaries flowed throughout the Innerverse. These tributaries were the borders that demarcated the eight largest flowzones of the Innerverse. Currently, their warship was in the Blazing Mist Flowzone and travelling to the Erudite Flowzone.

Not much later, right when the warship was about to leave the Blazing Mist Flowzone, Lu Yin sensed an invisible wave of energy ripple through space at the front of the spacecraft. The energy wave had come from a rather antique looking spacecraft, and outside of the ripple was a huge spacecraft. This antiquated spacecraft must have been made by some civilization that was entering the universe for the first time. Within that spacecraft, numerous people stared outside and studied the universe curiously.

Spacecraft like these would not be able to land on nearby planets, much less dock on the huge spacecraft that could detect such primitive ships with such ripples.

This was the tragedy of coming from a tiny civilization. From their point of view, the universe only contained a single sapient race, themselves. They believed that they were the heart of the universe, but in reality, there were huge civilizations watching them from just a few meters away. They were like pets trapped in a cage who didn't even know they were being observed by the truly powerful for entertainment. To the small civilizations, the powerful people and organizations were invisible and untouchable, and even the space that they saw in front of them was not real.

"Do you think that we're just like them? Trapped in an unseen cage by even more powerful civilizations while being observed, captain?" Silver suddenly walked to Lu Yin's side while still smiling at him.

There was no real answer to this question: perhaps, perhaps not. Lu Yin looked up and thought to himself, Right, could there be a pair of eyes staring at me while right in front of me that I can't see? The universe is huge. Who can know for certain if they are the most powerful being around? That civilization trapped within those ripples had left their world and were convinced that they were the most powerful and intelligent lifeforms in the universe, but the further they explored, the closer they inched towards a calamity.

"This civilization is in danger. Once they realize the truth, it won't be long before their planet is turned into a trial zone," Silver said. For once, he was not smiling.

Lu Yin's eyes shone as he watched the archaic spacecraft draw further and further away from them. The people inside were still looking around curiously, but everything that they saw was fake.

The Blazing Mist Flowzone was one of the eight largest flowzones in the Innerverse. It covered a total area that was as large as numerous filaments of the Outerverse. The most powerful organizations here were the Blaze Realm, the Ross Empire, and the Sylvan Dragons. As the gatekeepers to the Innerverse, these three great organizations seemed to be the most powerful to the Outerverse.

The Blazing Mist Flowzone was huge, but they passed through it after just a day of travel. The ultra-efficient route had saved them a huge amount of time.

Lu Yin stopped staring at the stars passing them by and went to the training area. Battles in the trial zones only took place virtually, so he still needed to temper his real body and become accustomed to five-lined battle force as soon as possible.

The training area on the warship was huge. Within this single warship, nearly half of the thousands of troops onboard were training at any given time. There was all kinds of equipment here as well as a special training area meant to simulate various unique environments.

Lu Yin went straight to the gravity training zone, where there were dozens of gravity training rooms. These were different from the gravity training rooms on the ultra-large spacecraft that had brought him from Earth to the Great Yu Empire. Here, the gravitational intensity differed by room and was not adjustable. This way, the troops could choose the room that was most suitable for them to train in.

As Lu Yin walked towards the gravity training zone, quite a few people started to converse amongst themselves after noticing him.

“He’s a genius from the Astral Combat Academy! That’s Lu Yin, one of the final four participants of the Astral Combat Tournament. He’s already cultivated five-lined battle force. He’s terrifying.”

“Someone like him can easily tear apart the void on an ordinary planet. In fact, he might even be able to sunder the stable space in the Innerverse. He’s so strong.”

“Have a go at him, Fatso. See who’s stronger.”

“Shut up! Once he activates his battle force, even a full force blow from you will be nothing to him.”

...

Lu Yin burst out in a fit of laughter. He liked soldiers because the genuine and solid relationship that they had was something that could only be found among soldiers. The battlefield was the best place to cultivate trust.

“110! Look, he’s already heading to the room that has 110 times gravity. Regular Melders have a limit of sixty times and regular Limiteers have a limit of a hundred times. He’s actually able to withstand more force than a Limiteer! And he’s still walking forward!” Some soldiers were startled by what they were seeing.

“There’s no need to make such a big fuss. Didn’t you watch the tournament? The students who reached the round of the final thirty two could all easily tear space apart. Their bodies are far more powerful than an ordinary cultivator’s, and as for those with high leveled battle force... My guess is that he might be able to withstand the 120 times gravity room already,” a tall and sturdy soldier said quietly.

The soldiers around him all took in a deep breath. “No wonder so many people are doing everything they can to enter the Astral Combat Academy. Those students really aren’t on the same level as us; any of them can kill all of us.”

“We’re actually pretty lucky already! All of the soldiers on this warship were able to train with formcast models. We’re way better off than those grunts who weren’t even able to get that much. They’ll just be cannon fodder on the battlefield.”

...

After attracting everyone’s admiring gazes, Lu Yin headed to the gravity training room at the end of the corridor. The number 130 was displayed on the door.

In the Time Stop Space, he had once increased the gravitational force to 100 times the normal level before feeling anything. If he was right, then the limit of what he could currently endure should be 110 times, but that was just his physical body’s limits. If he activated his five-lined battle force, then he should be able to withstand up to 150 times gravity. However, since the room with the highest force was 130, he stepped in without a moment’s hesitation.

“Hey, I think that there’s somebody in there already.”

“The pilot’s inside.”

...

The moment he entered the room, Lu Yin felt like the ceiling was collapsing and the ground sinking as his innards were nearly crushed to pulp. At the same moment, a hand smacked towards him and Lu Yin immediately activated his five-lined battle force. A golden aura covered his hand as he counterattacked, and his palm collided with the palm rushing towards him.

With a boom, the walls of the training room were reduced to dust as cracks appeared on the floor. A warning sounded out from the training room, and Lu Yin took a step backwards. He looked up to see a middle-aged man with an extremely shocked expression.

The 130 times gravity suddenly vanished, and the door opened as a group of soldiers rushed in.

“What the hell are you all doing? Get out!” the middle-aged man shouted.

Chapter 230: The Ten Arbiters’ War King

All the soldiers immediately bowed and shouted out, “Yes, sir.” The troops then pulled back like a tide as the increased gravity in the room quickly returned. Just like before, Lu Yin felt a stifling restriction cover his body.

With the help of his five-lined battle force, Lu Yin managed to endure the 130 times gravity and politely greeted the middle-aged man. “My name is Lu Yin. Nice to meet you, sir.”

The middle-aged man looked at Lu Yin with fascination in his eyes. “I watched you on the live broadcast. You’re very powerful. Comprehending five-lined battle force at your age is incredible compared to others in the universe.”

“You’re being too kind, sir,” Lu Yin remained polite.

The middle-aged man gently knocked Lu Yin's decorum aside. "I'm not being kind. The fact that you can still speak proves that you can withstand more than 130 times gravity, although your limit should be close. Don't overdo it."

Lu Yin nodded, agreeing with what the man had just said. Thankfully, he had tried entering this room first. If he had directly entered a room with 150 times gravity, then he might have been seriously injured. The higher the gravitational force, the greater the pressure that every part of his body would have to endure. He'd underestimated the toll this pressure took on his internal organs.

"Can you still walk?" The middle-aged man smiled as he observed Lu Yin's condition.

Lu Yin grinned and took a few steps forwards. The 130 times gravity was difficult to bear, but not enough to cause any major problems for him.

The middle-aged man smiled. "130 times gravity is something that even Explorers find difficult to endure. The fact that you can do so as a Melder is astonishing! I now understand why the Ten Arbiters are so terrifying even though they are so young. With how quickly you're improving, it looks like you won't be any weaker than the Ten Arbiters in the future."

"I hope so too. By the way, I trust that I'm not bothering you, sir," Lu Yin said.

The middle-aged man shook his head. "I was just warming up, so there's no need to worry. I thought that you just came in because of a mistake or something, so I was trying to push you out earlier. I assumed that no one else on this warship could endure this level of gravity, but I forgot that you were onboard."

Lu Yin smiled, but did not respond.

The middle-aged man also stopped talking and continued warming up his body. Lu Yin looked at the man enviously. If he could move around freely under this amount of pressure, then that meant that this man was no ordinary Explorer. At the very least, he must have transformed his body four times already.

Over the next few days, Lu Yin went to the 130 times gravity training room multiple times to train. Gradually, he became able to endure the gravity with just four-lined battle force. During these times, he would chat with the pilot every once in a while, but most of the time, he listened on while the pilot talked about the astral wars.

Lu Yin was very eager to learn more about this topic. The Human Domain's border wars were humanity's most important battlefield, and the fighting there had never stopped. For countless years, far too many powerhouses had fallen here.

"I remember once chatting with a genius ten years ago. He also came from the Astral Combat Academy. We didn't meet in the training room with 130 times gravity, but rather the room with 110 times gravity. He was very powerful and was a student leader at the Astral Combat Academy, but he never managed to return from the battlefield. He died there.

"There was also a pretty girl who talked to me. She told me that she was going to the battlefield for experience as she was going to marry the man she loved when she returned. Unfortunately, she was ripped to shreds when a giant beast tore through the void. I nearly died at that time, too.

“The frontier wars are very cruel. Regardless of how talented and powerful you are, there are still millions of ways that you could die. So many geniuses have died there that I’ve long lost count. Truthfully, I don’t agree with your academy sending you all here. Commander Shui agreed to this for some reason, but he didn’t account for it in his plans. Of all the expelled students who come to the warfront, about a third of them end up dying. Of the graduates, about a fifth of them die at the warfront.”

...

“The person who I remember the most vividly is a young man who I met around ten years ago or so. He was very excited to fight in the war and was very kind. I sent him to the frontier, and then...” The middle-aged man hesitated at that point.

Lu Yin was balancing his body on just a single finger, but when he heard the pilot pause, he asked, “Did he die, too?”

The middle-aged man shook his head. “No, he became one of the Ten Arbiters.”

Upon hearing that, Lu Yin nearly fell to the ground out of shock. He looked at the middle-aged man in surprise. “You’ve met one of the Ten Arbiters?”

The middle-aged man smiled. “Of course! This warship frequently transports guests. That young man really was terrifying. Even in a training room with 150 times gravity, he was still able to move around like normal. He was a bit too tall for his frame, though he was very sturdy. And loud! It was so hard on my ears.”

“What’s his name? And his race?” Lu Yin asked curiously. All of the Ten Arbiters were shrouded in mystery, and even now, he only knew that, among them, there was someone from the Sword Sect who had inherited the Thirteen Swords and Nightking Zhenwu. Right, and there was also someone from the Phoenix Family. From what Big Pao had told Lu Yin, Hart was the younger brother of the Phoenix Family’s Ten Arbiter member. Other than those three people, he knew nothing at all about the rest.

Nobody dared to openly talk about the Ten Arbiters, which made Lu Yin even more curious as to their identities. Unfortunately, he had been dragged to the Human Domain’s warfront right after the Astral Combat Tournament. Otherwise, he definitely would have gone to the Council of Astral Academy to find out more about them.

The middle-aged man said, “I can’t tell you his name, because that’s forbidden. I don’t know what his race is, but I do know that he’s absolutely terrifying beyond a shadow of a doubt. I met him when I just became an Explorer, but even then, I felt my heart thumping whenever I sparred with him. Right, many people call him the War King.”

Lu Yin frowned. The War King? He’s someone who could even make an Explorer’s heart palpitate? “What was his cultivation level back then?”

“He was a Limiteer,” the pilot answered.

Lu Yin sighed in relief. Good, good. Lu Yin was already a peak Melder. If the Ten Arbiters had been stronger than his current level when they were at the Melder realm, then he really would have no idea of how he could possibly surpass them.

“Actually, I don’t really know how to deal with you either. Having five-lined battle force at your cultivation really is amazing,” the middle-aged man said while eyeing at Lu Yin.

Lu Yin shrugged. “Tell me more about the warfront. What do I need to take note of?”

“There’s nothing much you need to do, mostly because no matter what you do, the beasts will still appear all the same. Just fight as hard as you can and do your best to stay alive,” the middle-aged man answered nonchalantly. His words sounded relaxed, but Lu Yin could hear the bitterness and misery implicit in his tone.

There were many ways to wage war, but against the astral beasts, the humans didn’t have many options. There were just too many of the beasts, and they also had numerous species with strange innate gifts. No matter how powerful their technology became, the beasts could never be fully stopped. The only way to hold them back was by paying the price with human lives. This was also the cruelest method. The command center for the warfront wasn’t safe either, because there were many beasts that could tear through the void or even crush planets.

“Tell me about Planet Conan, sir,” Lu Yin suddenly asked. After all, his destination was Planet Conan.

The middle-aged man nodded before explaining, “Planet Conan is one of the thirty seven protector planets to the right of the Erudite Flowzone. It was originally a very ordinary planet, but all of the native humans were forcefully transported away to fight in the Human Domain’s border war, so all of them have since left. All that remains behind are the local creatures that have no intelligence, so that planet is basically destroyed. The zone’s most powerful guardian there is Mentor Qu Ao from the Erudite Flowzone’s Yihuang Academy. He’s the director of that academy and is also a Hunter. Planet Conan’s guardian is Nappa, who’s a very valiant Explorer...”

With the pilot’s explanation, Lu Yin developed a basic understanding of Planet Conan as well as the general situation surrounding the Erudite Flowzone’s frontier. Planet Conan was one of the thirty seven planets on the right side of the frontier, and there were another thirty seven on the left and a hundred or so in the middle. These planets were linked together into a huge net that acted as the Human Domain’s main line of defense against the Beast Region, and each planet had an Explorer guardian protecting them. Additionally, each zone in this defensive net had a Cruiser, or sometimes, even a Hunter protecting them.

These powerhouses had either joined of their own will or been forcefully drafted. Of course, there were also prisoners on death row and other similar captives. The troops on each planet were also split into two groups: rangers and ordinary soldiers. There was also the cannon fodder, who were even lower ranked than rangers, and they mostly came from planets that were undergoing their evolutionary trial.

If Earth had not been protected by Lu Yin with his status as King Zishan, then Earth’s cultivators would have suffered the fate of being conscripted into a battlefield as cannon fodder. It would have been either a battle between the Great Yu Empire and other organizations or the even crueler Human Domain’s warfront.

Multiple days passed. Then, one day, the pilot told Lu Yin, “In front of us is the intersection between the Tempest Flowzone and the Erudite Flowzone. After we pass through this flowzone, the warship will stop

at a space station for maintenance before entering the Erudite Flowzone. We'll be at the warfront in no more than a day and a half."

Lu Yin suddenly had a thought occur to him. "Is there a Mavis Bank at the space station, sir?"

He shook his head in response. "Not at the space station, no, but there is one on a planet that's not too far away from it. Places like this flowzone intersection usually have Mavis Banks. What's up? Do you need to withdraw some money?"

Lu Yin nodded. "I used up all of my star crystals when I became a peak Melder, so I wanted to withdraw some."

The pilot said, "I'll have someone take you there."

"Thank you so much, sir," Lu Yin said gratefully.

Not long after that conversation, Lu Yin boarded a small spacecraft and left the space station. He was headed towards a planet nearby while guided by a Limiteer.

The Mavis Bank was always overt about flaunting their wealth. They casually hung universal currency bills in front of their banks that anyone could pick up, treating it like waste paper. However, in Lu Yin's eyes, that was exactly what the bills were.

After entering the bank, Lu Yin initially wanted to withdraw all of the star crystals available to him, but then, he suddenly remembered that he might not have enough space in his cosmic ring for it all. The largest one that he had on him was the one with 500,000 star crystals in it, which was his reward for doing well in the tournament. That ring only had enough space for those 500,000 star crystals while Lu Yin still had a total of 711,000 star crystals that he could withdraw. It seemed that he would need to keep his crystals in more than one cosmic ring.

At this moment, a girl with an elegant appearance walked over to Lu Yin, offered him a drink, and greeted, "Hello, Mr. Lu."

Lu Yin was confused. "You know me?"

"You've become a celebrity throughout the entire universe! We all saw the Astral Combat Tournament. It was very exciting!" She then smiled. She gave off a very refined aura, and she had a pleasant fragrance about her. One could not help but view her favorably.

"And you are?" Lu Yin enquired.

The girl reached out a hand and said, "My name's Mandy, and I'm the manager of this branch."

Lu Yin extended his hand and shook hers. "I'm Lu Yin. Is there anything that you need from me, Manager Mandy?"

Mandy produced a purple crystal card and handed it to him. "This is for an account that our Mavis Bank has opened for you. Please accept it."

"It's purple?" Lu Yin was surprised. He'd never seen a purple bank card before.

“The purple represents a star essence account. We don’t give them out in the Outerverse and only do so in the Innerverse,” she explained.

Lu Yin now understood. Star essence was formed when star crystals were compressed to a certain degree. After being compressed, the resulting star energy would be purified before condensing into star essence. In terms of purity and quality, they were far superior to star crystals. The two could even be said to be incomparable. It was like comparing a common metal to gold, and the exchange rate between them was astounding.

“Manager Mandy, I don’t have any star essence stored in my account,” Lu Yin remarked with a wry smile.