

Star Odyssey

Chapter 5: Cultivation

Lu Yin grew serious in the face of this unknown assailant. He hadn't even started to recover from his previous battle, so it was impossible to use Shockwave Palm to break free of the chilling grip. As the frost continued to spread and burn down his options, he quickly forced his legs to move and pushed the woman along using Roving Step. The sudden shift immediately left her vomiting uncontrollably, to the point that she nearly fell unconscious. Taking the opportunity to tear off her sleeve, he watched as a few leaves drifted to the ground and froze it.

"So you had to rely on something external; I knew you couldn't be that good," he mocked her.

"What did you just do?" the woman gritted her teeth, "Was that a battle technique?"

Lu Yin remained silent, considering whether to kill her, but all thoughts of that were thrown away as a gust filled the hilly area. The Executioner flying over made it impossible for him to make a move, but curiously enough, the woman didn't actually seem happy to see the man. Was she not from the camp?

The air billowed out from Zhou Shan as he descended majestically, his eyes sweeping across Lu Yin and the woman before settling on the white spacecraft, "Can someone give me an explanation?"

Lu Yin's mind raced as he considered his answer, "I was exploring the area when this spacecraft crashed down and a person stepped out from within. He tried to kill me, but he might have been injured from the impact so I managed to take him out."

Zhou Shan stared at Lu Yin before shifting his gaze to the girl, seemingly losing all sense of urgency as he smiled, "It's been a long time, Snow Maiden."

The woman bowed, "Zhao Yu pays her respects to the Executioner."

This revelation shocked Lu Yin. He had heard of the Snow Maidens before. They were the Water Sage's disciples from the Blue Camp in the Changbai Mountains. Why was one here at Nanjing??

"We haven't met since the Apocalypse. I never expected so much to change," Zhou Shan sighed.

Zhao Yu gathered herself and bowed, "The Water Sage sends her congratulations for gaining control of the Su District."

Zhou Shan smiled bitterly, "What is there to congratulate? I know how powerful the Three High Sages are; I can't compare to your master in any way. You alone are already stronger than all of my captains."

Zhao Yu smiled, "That's too much to say when I was just defeated by one of yours. He's quite strong."

"Him?" Zhou Shan pointed at Lu Yin with astonishment, "I don't even know him."

"Isn't he one of the Troop Leaders under you?" Zhao Yu asked with similar surprise, prompting a curious gaze from the Executioner; he couldn't see the strength needed to defeat a Snow Maiden in the youth at all.

Lu Yin stared down while considering the implications of this conversation. These two clearly knew each other from before the Apocalypse, but they hadn't met since then. This meant Zhou Shan had seen the power of the Three High Sages even before disaster had struck. It was publicly known that the Seven Sages had started cultivating even before the Apocalypse, and Lu Yin had also heard that exploring Neptune had been quite fruitful; a corpse and a warblade had been retrieved on that trip. China had eventually succumbed to global pressure and shared some items to prevent a world war, which showed just how valuable they were. He clenched a fist as he pondered; the fact that the Seven Sages were able to cultivate before the Apocalypse showed that they had relied on an object from that corpse. This validated his search; the Seven Sages couldn't possibly have known about formcast models, so if that corpse was from a supreme being, it possibly still retained the model within the body. This had been his goal all along.

It wasn't long before the soldiers from the camp arrived, led by a pretty woman with glasses. Zhou Shan ordered his troops to seal off the perimeter, allowing a group of researchers to head towards the spacecraft as he turned to Lu Yin, "Little Brother, what can you tell me about the alien?"

With Zhao Yu's gaze falling on him as well, Lu Yin took a moment to think over his answer, "I heard him talk a bit. He mentioned some academic assessment, a trial by planetary evolution."

Zhou Shan's eyes flashed, "That was all?"

Lu Yin nodded, "He really didn't say much. He called us natives, said he wanted to enslave me."

“Natives?” Zhou Shan sneered and looked at the sky, “It looks like Earth won’t remain calm much longer. There were dozens of spaceships that just landed, which means dozens of aliens. I didn’t imagine we’d make contact so soon.”

Lu Yin stared at the man who didn’t seem all that surprised, but they were soon interrupted by the woman who came up to report, “Executioner, we plan to take the spacecraft back to Nanjing for analysis. Unfortunately, the alien’s heart was destroyed. The traces make it seem like he should have had a weapon on hand, but we weren’t able to find anything.”

Lu Yin had ruined the surroundings after he had searched Vesta’s corpse, so they were simply unable to restore the scene to its original state. Zhou Shan looked over, “Little Brother, could you hand over anything that you took from the alien’s body to help us with research? Rest assured, we will return it once our investigation is complete.”

“This is his weapon, I didn’t take anything else,” Lu Yin pulled out the dagger after some muttering, opening his shirt up to show Zhou Shan and the rest. It was impossible for anyone here to recognize the cosmic ring; the people of this planet wouldn’t even think of a ring that acted as a storage space.

Zhou Shan took the knife and waved it around, a careless slash splitting the earth open in front of him. “Sharp, this material truly isn’t from Earth,” he said as he handed the weapon to the spectacled woman, stern gaze focusing on Lu Yin to confirm that nothing else had been concealed. He stepped forward and patted Lu Yin’s shoulder, complimenting him, “You’ve killed an alien and defeated a Snow Maiden, Little Brother, that’s quite good. What’s your name? Would you be interested in joining my camp as a captain?”

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Lu Yin agreed without any hesitation, but in reality, he had no other choice. The Executioner seemed gentle for now, but he knew that he was currently under suspicion. Almost anyone would believe that he’d hidden some of the alien’s possessions away, so he couldn’t be allowed to leave. It was better to just agree and avoid conflict; he didn’t currently have the power to handle someone in the Realm of Sky in a fair fight. Vesta had only died to carelessness, something Zhou Shan would certainly avoid. Besides, there were numerous other cultivators around as well; Zhao Yu alone would be difficult to deal with.

Said girl suddenly frowned from the side, turning to Zhou Shan, “I can’t contact the Water Sage. All forms of communication were cut off when they descended.”

Zhou Shan nodded solemnly, “The pulse from their descent took out communication lines. I’ll send out emergency repair teams shortly; rest assured that the Blue Camp is fine for now. The Water Sage is powerful.”

Zhao Yu nodded in silent agreement.

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One couldn't unlock all the secrets of the alien spacecraft overnight, but fortunately it was small enough to be transported back into Zhongshan with ease. Zhou Shan stood at the highest point of Nanjing, looking towards the south. The woman with glasses approached him, "Executioner, we finished searching the area surrounding the crater. There was nothing hidden; that man isn't lying."

Zhou Shan sighed, "I understand. You may leave."

"There is another thing I must report. We found evidence of a battle being covered up around the pit. This Lu Yin may not be as simple as he seems. He may be very strong."

Zhou Shan smiled, "I know. He defeated a Snow Maiden even with injuries to his right palm and leg; his true strength is at the peak of the Realm of Earth. He also doesn't seem to have absorbed energy crystals a single time in his life; he's really interesting."

"Should we continue to monitor him?"

"No need. We should be as united as possible right now. Besides, so what if he hid his strength? He's only in the Realm of Earth, he can't reach the next level."

"Understood."

Meanwhile, Lu Yin was in his new captain's residence near the middle of the camp. While none of the 80,000 soldiers truly served this so-called fourteenth captain, he himself was only concerned with using the formcast model to become a true cultivator. Sitting down cross-legged on his bed, he took ten minutes to slow his breathing before opening his eyes and calmly retrieving the formcast model from his cosmic ring. He grew excited as he bit his index finger hard enough to draw blood, pressing the crystal into the wound.

The formcast model slowly vanished underneath his skin, and it wasn't long before the excruciating pain he was waiting for arrived. His gaze defocused and he clenched his teeth as he endured the mind-numbing pain, waves of agony crashing into his body and tearing everything apart. This was the feeling of his cells developing and re-organizing, his very organs and blood vessels writhing as they warped. It felt like a burning hand was squeezing his entire being.

After what seemed like forever, Lu Yin finally felt a huge surge in his power. He spat out a mouthful of blood, his eyes brightening once more as his body expelled numerous impurities. The energy emitted from the event incinerated this filth, distorting the air around him.

