

Resonance 121

Chapter 0121: First Mover's Advantage

Swish!

Li Luo zipped through the trees, his hands never straying far from the short swords on his waist. His entire body was tense, ready to fight at any moment.

He had no idea how many students were in the vicinity, nor how many powerful fighters there were. He could not drop his guard.

He looked up to see that his light column was indeed being partially filtered by the trees. Still, anyone close enough would be able to see it.

"The light pillar should run out eventually. I just have to survive until it does. Then the gank will be over," Li Luo thought quickly.

Still, he had to think about how to deal with the gank first.

Besides the top three, he wasn't afraid of anyone in a one-on-one fight. But two fists seldom won against four. Once surrounded, he would be screwed.

They could even tire him to death.

What to do?

He scanned his surroundings. There was nothing of use here. He could go deeper into the forest, where the spirit beasts were aplenty. Anyone trying to gank him would have to watch their own backs then. The spirit beasts would be his best bodyguards.

Before the gank materialized, he would head deeper.

Shoosh!

Increasing his speed, he broke out of the treeline ahead and spotted three figures hurtling his way. Both parties called out.

Li Luo's identity had yet to register in their minds.

Seeing their lack of response, Li Luo thought quickly. "Have you seen the shining guy yet?!" he hollered. He was taking the initiative.

The three shook their heads.

"Y'all go left! I'll go right! Don't let him get away!" he cried, then he turned and charged into another patch of jungle.

The three students were a little confused. Who was that? Why was he ordering them around?

"He's looking for someone who's lit up?" one of them asked.

"But... he was lit up too!" another exclaimed.

"Could it be that others are also lit up?"

There was a moment of quiet confusion as they worked it out. Finally, they saw the light. "Fuck! That WAS Li Luo!"

"After him!"

"Get him! How dare he toy with us!" The three turned red from embarrassment. Li Luo had taken advantage of them and tricked them. Who knew that the hunted could pretend to be the hunter.

The three turned and charged in the direction that Li Luo had gone.

While they were running full speed, a few light balls suddenly burst before their eyes, the strong flash blinding them. They fell to the floor, clutching their faces in agony.

A figure streaked out of the woods, blue resonant power cloaking it in a veil of water. He moved extremely quickly, his blades flashing out across their legs and drawing blood.

All three cried out in pain. Li Luo was making sure they wouldn't be able to walk for a while.

By the time they recovered their vision, all they saw was a figure bearing two shortwords disappearing in the distance.

They felt a chill of fear. This was a ruthless opponent.

Meanwhile, Ruthless Li had already pushed them out of his mind. After dispatching them, he continued heading deeper into the jungle.

He did not dare let up. The three he had just met indicated that many more students would be swarming the area soon.

Hopefully, he had beaten the crowd.

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A few miles away.

Puffs of smoke were rising in a rhythmic pattern as a signal from another part of the forest.

Yu Lang was perched high up on a tree branch, squinting as he tried to make out a light pillar far away in the distance.

He leaped down to Zhao Kuo, who was busy sending out the signals. The two had met by coincidence and were also in Li Luo's vicinity. They had also received the mission to hunt Li Luo.

"Li Luo is really a magnet for trouble. I wonder what he did to incur this mission," Yu Lang grumbled to Zhao Kuo.

"I told you. Handsomeness is expensive. You have to pay the price eventually."

Zhao Kuo scowled. "This is strange as hell. Which Violet Vibrance mentor is testing Brother Luo?"

"Test, your ass. This is a witch hunt!" Yu Lang snorted. "A gank of this scale, not even the first-place Qin Zhulu could get out with certainty, let alone Li Luo. They can squash him to death with sheer numbers."

"Well, the signal's sent. If Zong Fu, Chi Su, and Xiang Liang see it, they should hurry over," Zhao Kuo said.

"I don't care. I don't have high hopes for them," Yu Lang said.

"Yu Lang, stop talking about people behind their backs. You're like a woman." A shout came from behind, then three people burst out of the woods, panting heavily.

"Oh look, the circus is complete!" Yu Lang said cheerfully.

"Out with it! What's the plan?" Zong Fu said moodily.

"I'll get right to it since we're all here. Li Luo is in trouble again. Big trouble. I intend to help him," Yu Lang said.

"Look, I'm not trying to be a wet blanket here," Zong Fu said, "but a gank of this scale? We'll just end up as food."

"Do you remember what Vice Principal Su Xin said? This Choosing of the Mentors is not just about beating spirit beasts for gold and silver talismans. Our performances will determine the end result." Yu Lang smiled. He gestured at the light pillar in the distance. "A lot of people are closing in for the gank. If we go there, we'll not be of much help. Let's think a little more creatively. This position is perfect for ambushing any students that come from the southwest direction. We'll set a trap here, finish off some straggler students. By doing this, we'll take some heat off Li Luo and perhaps net ourselves some bonus points in the bargain.

"I'm sure that the Violet Vibrance mentors are all watching closely. Maybe they'll appreciate us using our brains."

The others looked around, surprised by his suggestion.

"I agree." Zhao Kuo nodded. Helping Li Luo, plus bonus points. No objections from him.

Zong Fu and the others hesitated for a long while. Finally, Zong Fu gritted his teeth. "I'll do it. But you have to tell Li Luo that the one I really want to follow is Senior Qing'e!"

Xiang Liang and Chi Su were happy enough to follow Zong Fu's lead. Given their strength, they could get gold talismans at best. Perhaps following Yu Lang's lead was a shot at a better score. It was enough to risk for.

"What do we do next?" they asked.

"Next, we put our acting skills to the test."

Right on cue, Zhao Kuo showed them a convincing idiot's stutter that impressed them all greatly.

Damn, this giant of a man was a god of acting. How had the puny Southwind Academy raised a pair of geniuses like these two?

Chapter 0122: Intercepting The Encirclement

Ding!

The clang of resonant power-charged steel echoed through the forest, sending flurries of leaves rippling outwards.

Li Luo was perched high on a tree branch, swords in hand as he warily watched the two guys charging over from his right. He could tell from their first clash that they were both Lower Clear in strength, roughly as strong as he was. They also must have been champions or close in their province.

"Stop running, Li Luo! You can't get away, just let us complete the mission!" one of them shouted, brandishing his serrated sword. A grey resonant power covered his body, making his skin look like stone.

He had a stone resonance, which was considered a variation of the earth resonance.

The other youth hefted an iron club. The vague silhouette of a red ape hovered behind his body.

"Damn, they came too fast," Li Luo thought to himself. He was starting to reach the deeper parts of the forest now, and the spirit beasts had definitely helped stave off some pursuers. Still, there were plenty who had slipped the net, and those who could repel the spirit beasts were rather strong.

"Come now, brothers, why must you force me so? Since I'm so handsome, how about we sit down for a good chat, eh? What do you say?" Li Luo said, trying to buy time to think.

"Damn, disgusting! Cut him down!"

Both shouted in disgust. Their resonant powers flew out, coming at him from both his sides as they leaped forward with weapons raised.

Teng!

Li Luo flexed his legs, bending a branch to propel himself straight forward.

"Li Luo, you're insane!"

Seeing him charge the two of them, they laughed coldly. Li Luo was a Lower Clear like themselves. One against two, what chance did he stand?

"Crimson Flame Smash!" the club-wielding youth shouted. His club glowed red with heated resonant power.

Li Luo summoned his Waterlight Demon Mirror to deal with this ferocious club attack.

Crack.

The club crashed into his Waterlight Demon Mirror, smashing it into pieces, but not before it landed a vicious counter that sent the youth flying backwards, almost losing his grip on his weapon.

With one opponent out of the picture, Li Luo turned to the stone resonant user, charging his shortswords grimly with water resonance power.

Reinforced Water Edge Art!

He clashed with his opponent head on.

This time, the stone resonant user paled. He could sense that the incoming attack was far stronger than his own resonant power.

"Impossible! He's only a Lower Clear—how can he be this strong?!" His desperate protest went unanswered as he was also sent flying, crashing into a tree trunk with such force that it snapped.

A trickle of blood ran down his mouth, and he looked completely shaken.

"See? Should have sat down and talked it out after all." Li Luo flashed him a grin and then beat it, fleeing deeper into the woods.

He was not intending to get tangled up with these two.

The club-wielder watched Li Luo go, but he did not chase. He had seen how Li Luo had thrashed his companion.

"How is Li Luo so strong?" the club-wielding youth demanded of the stone resonant user. He helped him up.

"No idea. The newcomers' information said that Li Luo should have only just broken into the Clear Seed Tier. But I feel like he's at least an Upper Clear in strength," the stone resonant user complained, wiping blood away from his mouth.

"Seems like the violet talisman is out of our reach, then," the club wielder said resignedly.

His friend nodded. Suddenly, there was movement in the trees nearby. They saw a blue-haired youth emerge.

"That's... Duze Beixuan?" Both immediately recognized the fourth-ranked newcomer.

"Did you two just tangle with Li Luo here? Seems like you couldn't stop him." He grinned at the pair.

They scowled at him.

Duze Beixuan was unfazed. "Which way did he go?" he asked.

The club-wielder pointed unwillingly. "He's very strong. Not at all like a new Clear Seed Tier cultivator."

Duze Beixuan was already swiftly moving past them. His condescending voice floated back to them.

"He's not very strong. You are very weak."

Both flushed in anger.

"Rude."

"Luckily, we gave him a random direction."

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While things were getting heavy deep in the forest, another incident was happening somewhere else.

A slim youth with narrow eyes was smiling at a girl that was in his way. "Friend Qing'er, what do you mean to do by blocking my way?"

He fanned himself with a jade fan as he spoke.

Lu Qing'er stood before him impassively. "Wang Hejiu, are you going this way to attack Li Luo?"

Wang Hejiu was ranked second on the newcomers' ranking.

Wang Hejiu smiled slightly. "Defeat Li Luo, win a violet talisman. A worthy pursuit."

"Then I cannot let you pass," Lu Qing'er said.

"Friend Qing'er, you are not my match," Wang Hejiu pointed out. "Why do this?" *novelusb.com*

"Even delaying you would be good," Lu Qing'er said mildly. She removed her ice silk gloves, revealing her dainty hands.

Li Luo could not possibly be in a good situation right now. Wang Hejiu would be a huge threat to him. She had to do what she could to delay him.

Still, the disparity between them was all too clear. If she wanted to hold him for even a minute, she would have to pull out her final trump card immediately. Fortunately, it was no longer as damaging to herself as before, now that she was at the Resonant Master Stage.

Wang Hejiu looked at her in surprise. "Friend Qing'er, if you consent to date me in the future, I can accept your request today." He smiled.

His reply was a blast of icy resonant power that left the ground frozen.

"Well, then I'll just have to show you the gap between us," he said.

BOOM!

Green resonant power plumed from his body like a mist, and the leaves beneath his feet turned black immediately, as if they had rotted.

Their resonant power shot forth and clashed.

Chapter 0123: Fishing in the Woods

Mei Feng was a Lower Clear student who had also received the Li Luo assignment. He was very happy when he got it. Although there were many others chasing Li Luo down and his odds probably weren't very good, hey, a guy could dream, right?

And what if he just happened to deliver the final blow?

As a Violet Vibrance mentor's student, he would be kicking it with the elites of the Astral Sage College. Perhaps he would even catch the eye of some pretty senior girl. That was the path to success in life.

He happily bounded on towards his target.

As he passed through a small patch of forest, he heard a rough voice calling out to him. "Whoa there, friend!"

Mei Feng looked over suspiciously. He saw an honest-looking youth walking over. Tall and sturdy, he had a face so plain, it looked like he might never have told a lie in his life.

"Yes, friend?" Mei Feng asked companionably enough, relaxing at the sight of a guy exuding honest from his every pore.

"Are you chasing Li Luo too, friend? Truth be told, I am too. I also have a few other teammates here, and we intend to team up against him. If you're interested, you could join us. We are more likely to succeed together, I say. There are too many others hunting him down. Alone, I'm afraid I can't compete." He spoke with a self-deprecating sincerity that appealed to Mei Feng.

He pondered this, then smiled back.

"Can I meet the others first?" he asked.

"Oh, of course." The earnest young man agreed, giving him an affable smile as he led him onwards into the forest.

Their brief exchange was all the earnest youth needed to get a sense of Mei Feng's strength.

Mei Feng saw the group now. They were being led by a youth with sad eyes.

"With Brother Mei Feng here, we can definitely get rid of Li Luo and win ourselves the top prize!" The leader cheered and welcomed him. He seemed to defer to Mei Feng, as if he would lead them all to victory.

Mei Feng smiled, satisfied. A decent bunch of guys—they had the foresight to see his strength and were polite as well. He could see to it that they were well looked after in the future.

"Well, I think we're good in numbers. Let's go." Mei Feng beckoned them on.

They nodded eagerly.

"Let's go."

Before they had gone far, the sad-eyed youth suddenly said, "Brother Feng, there's a mosquito on the back of your head. I'll help you get rid of it."

Mei Feng felt this was a strange thing to point out. Before he could say a word, the sad-eyed youth had produced a club out of nowhere, and he brought it crashing down on the back of his head in a flash.

Bonk!

It made a nice, clean thump.

Mei Feng felt a sharp pain, then his eyes rolled back and he passed out. "This friend is a fool," he thought as he sank down into unconsciousness. Why had he hit the mosquito so hard?

As Mei Feng keeled over, Yu Lang looked down at him. "This guy is really dim. We have to get to know him better in the future."

Zong Fu rolled his eyes. "Better not show yourself before him again, you'll make him angry."

"An angry dimwit is the scariest." Xiang Liang nodded.

"What kind of demon are you?" Chi Su demanded of him.

Yu Lang held up his hands in surrender at the vigorous protests. "Alright, alright. His loss. Missing out on a steadfast friend."

Zhao Kuo ignored him, busy dragging the snoring Mei Feng to a nearby clearing where seven or eight others were piled up.

"We've done a lot. Li Luo would be proud. One last job, then we're done here," Yu Lang said.

They nodded and got ready. Zhao Kuo wandered out of the forest, ready to lure the next target.

Before long, a streak of light could be seen in the distance, moving fast enough to whistle through the wind.

Zhao Kuo perked up. "Friend, a moment, please!"

The blur of light stopped, and Zhao Kuo saw a tall girl with short, neat hair before him. She wielded a long spear and looked at him neutrally.

Zhao Kuo gave her his friendliest smile, and at the same time screamed internally.

He recognized her. Third on the rankings, Bai Doudou!

Their fishing scheme had landed them a shark this time!

"What's the matter?" While Zhao Kuo's stomach churned, Bai Doudou regarded him coolly.

"Er, are you going after Li Luo?" He struggled to keep things convincing. "We gathered a group that's planning to go after him. If you're interested, we could go together."

Bai Doudou thought it over. The forest was vast, and it would take some time to search alone. With others to do the leg work, she could save a lot of time and effort.

She gestured forward with her chin.

"Lead the way."

Zhao Kuo sighed inwardly, but he did not hesitate to lead her on. This was a savage shark they had snared. If they let her get to Li Luo, she would pose a huge threat. They might not be able to hook her, but they could delay her as long as possible.

That was perhaps the most they could do.

Hearing the two of them approach, Yu Lang and the others hurried forward to greet them, all smiles.

But when they saw Zhao Kuo show up with Bai Doudou, their smiles froze on their faces. Yu Lang was seized with a strong desire to run away.

"Damn me, Zhao Kuo, you bastard. Why would you bring mother shark here?!"

He shot Zhao Kuo a look, but the latter gave him a small and grim nod. He had purposely brought Bai Doudou here.

Yu Lang understood, shrugging wryly to himself.

What else could they do but play it out? It felt a bit like trying to crack a rock with an egg, but if their acting went poorly, it wasn't like they were going to die.

"You again?"

Bai Doudou's eyes narrowed when she spotted Yu Lang.

He gave her a sheepish smile. "Greetings, Sister Bai. You're actually my idol," he said sincerely.

Looking at Yu Lang and the others, Bai Doudou suddenly said, "You're not looking for teammates against Li Luo. You're ambushing people here, right?"

"Sister Bai, you wound me." Yu Lang hurriedly denied it.

"Faint breathing from multiple bodies in the next clearing. They should be unconscious. Your prey from before?" she asked thinly.

Boom!

The game was up, and Zhao Kuo took the chance to swing his metal club at her back with all his might.

A short blast of green resonant power answered his attack, and Zhao Kuo was sent flying.

"Get her!"

Yu Lang yelled.

Zong Fu, Xiang Liang, and Chi Su all jumped into the fray without hesitation, burying Bai Doudou in a barrage of attacks.

She twirled her spear casually, a confident smirk on her lips.

"Like a praying mantis blocking the oxcart."

An overwhelming wind resonant power howled forth, shaking the entire forest.

Chapter 0124: Battle By the River

Deep in the jungle.

Li Luo was sitting on a moss-covered boulder by the creek, his clothes tattered as if he had just been through a war.

Which he had. Just a while ago, he had fought off a dozen people here and there. It had taken him everything he had to get away.

He was exhausted. If not for his dual resonant palaces and his two resonance seeds absorbing worldly natural energy, as well as the stamina that his water resonance gave him, he would have been crushed by that gauntlet.

Sigh.

Li Luo shut his eyes, channeling his energy cultivation arts and healing as best as he could.

His hard-won peace was short-lived. His eyes flew open as he scanned the vegetation. Sure enough, someone walked out.

"How does it feel to be hiding like a rat?" the blue-haired man asked evilly. Who else but Duze Beixuan?

Li Luo looked at him gravely. "Duze Beixuan, if you're harrying me about becoming your brother-in-law, I have to advise you not to continue. Jiang Qing'e will not accept."

A vein pulsed on his temple. "Li Luo... Stretched thin but still with a foul mouth, I see.

"I want to see if that foul mouth of yours can still yap with my foot on your head."

"Stop, stop," Li Luo cried. "I just want to cultivate quietly in school."

"Trying to buy time to recover?" Duze Beixuan sneered. "You think you're my match even at your full strength?" Duze Beixuan was not looking down on Li Luo per se. He was simply confident in his own strength.

With an eighth-grade Deepwater Kun resonance and his resonant power already at the Upper Flowering, a Lower Clear like Li Luo was far from his level.

"Then could you wait for me? If you give me half an hour, I'll concede that you're a true gentleman!"

"What do you think I should do?" Duze Beixuan smirked. A colossal kun surged up behind him.

Li Luo sighed. Damn, looks like House Duze's young lord wasn't born yesterday.

Oh well.

He stood up from his boulder and faced Duze Beixuan. A lower eighth-grade resonance and an Upper Flowering tier cultivator—he had Li Luo beat in every aspect.

Every obvious aspect.

Who knew that Li Luo had two resonant palaces and resonance seeds, for instance?

In terms of raw power, Li Luo was actually equivalent to a Flowering Seed Tier cultivator.

The difference between them was not as large as it seemed.

He had been dealt a rough hand thanks to Shen Jinxiao. Just as Shen Jinxiao had said, the other four Violet Vibrance mentors might not risk offending him just to take Li Luo as a student. After all, they had to have some mutual respect as fellow Duke experts.

After all, he was not Jiang Qing'e.

Her potential was enough for them to chase shamelessly. Li Luo? Not there yet.

But he knew that he had to win acceptance from one of them. It was not just his cultivation at stake, it was his life as well.

Jiang Qing'e had already explained it clearly to him.

What was he to do?

Simple. Demonstrate his potential.

Show that he had enough potential, that he was worth the offense to Shen Jinxiao, and impress the Violet Vibrance mentors.

How?

Duze Beixuan looked like the best stimulus.

"Well, then, if lying low won't do, I'll just have to..."

He whipped out the two shortswords from his waist, a confident smile on his handsome features.

"...blind them with my brilliance."

...

Their face-off was being displayed on the screen at the Newcomers' Hall, garnering lots of attention.

"House Duze's Duze Beixuan has cornered Li Luo."

"That's it for him, then. Duze Beixuan has a lower eighth-grade Deepwater Kun resonance, and he's an Upper Flowering, for crying out loud. Li Luo is screwed as can be."

"Still, he's held out unexpectedly long."

"It's no use, he's gonna lose to Duze Beixuan here. He'll have to settle for a Gold Gleam mentor at best. Once you start off on the wrong foot at the Astral Sage College, it's very hard to catch up later."

"Yeah, the gap only grows."

"House Luolan will have to depend on Jiang Qing'e alone."

"..."

Duze Honglian was watching grimly, her arms folded across her chest.

"Bastard, let my brother stitch that mouth of yours shut."

Thinking of how Li Luo had sullied her reputation was enough to make her itch with frustration. Even as a baseless rumor, it was spreading all the same, and there was nothing she could do about it.

On the opposite side, Jiang Qing'e was watching just as intently.

She coughed disdainfully. "Just watch, Jiang Qing'e. Watch your future husband get stomped by Beixuan."

"Duze Honglian keeps looking over with her ugly mug." Yan Lingqing whispered to Jiang Qing'e.

"She's lost to me too many times. She can't see any hope now, so she can only try to get some satisfaction out of Li Luo," Jiang Qing'e said unconcernedly.

Yan Lingqing nodded. "But that Duze Beixuan isn't easy to deal with," she added worriedly. "He's far stronger than Li Luo."

"I believe in Li Luo," Jiang Qing'e said simply, her golden eyes still fixed on the screen. "Which of you thought he would beat Shi Huang and win at the Tianshu exams?"

"That's naive," Yan Lingqing argued. "Duze Beixuan is much stronger than Shi Huang. A lower eighth-grade resonance is nothing to mess with."

"Neither are Li Luo's dual resonances."

High up on the spectator stands.

"Sis, can Li Luo win?" the little emperor whispered, his eyes glued to the screen.

He didn't like Duze Beixuan, not after their meeting at the Golden Dragon Bank. And although Li Luo had tricked him, his impression was much better. Li Luo had even given him the watersource, which had eased his pain, so he was rooting for Li Luo.

The First Princess' red, phoenix eyes were also fixed on the screen. "On the surface, Li Luo doesn't stand a chance."

"Awww..." the little emperor groaned.

"Victory is not always determined by strength." She smiled with anticipation.

She had seen information on Li Luo. She knew that he had defeated Governor Shi's son, Shi Huang, despite the disparity in strength.

She sensed that Li Luo and Jiang Qing'e were built differently. Jiang Qing'e was an omnipresent light, illuminating the four corners of the earth with her radiance. Li Luo was a fathomless swamp, unremarkable on the surface but running deep underneath.

Of course, this was just her womanly intuition.

Whether she was right depended on Li Luo now.

Hopefully, he would not let her down.

After all, he was the son of those two, and Jiang Qing'e's fiancé.

Chapter 0125: Showdown with Duze Beixuan

Shing!

Duze Beixuan loosened the heavy battleaxe from where it was slung on his back. He seemed like a soft and cunning character, but his weapon was savage and straightforward.

His mighty resonant power was already swirling around him, a deep, blue light that formed a vague, whale-like shape behind him.

A giant kun.

The Deepwater Kun resonance was a beast resonance. The legendary beast possessed ferocious strength that came from its bulk. One twist of its body in the ocean was enough to raise tidal waves that reached the skies.

This particular beast resonance could also control water volume. In other words, it was similar to a water resonance, although not as pure in form. For example, a Deepwater Kun resonance could not refine spirit liquids and purifying lights.

Still, it had its advantages, namely an overwhelming physical strength that would enhance one's fighting strength when complemented with resonant power.

"A lower eighth-grade resonance is really quite something."

Li Luo gawked at it. By his reckoning, his sixth-grade waterlight resonance might be able to match an upper seventh-grade resonance, but a lower eighth was something else entirely.

Shing!

Still marveling, he unsheathed his shortswords, and their blue resonant power flared to life. He leaped forward, taking the initiative in the fight.

Weng!

A reinforced Water Edge Art made the air hum as his water resonance power spun at supersonic speeds.

"Shoo!"

Duze Beixuan scoffed at Li Luo's attack. His lumbering battleaxe swung out, unleashing a huge wave of energy accompanied by a deafening boom.

Ding!

Sword and axe clashed in a terrific wave of energy that blew away the leaves around them.

Li Luo leaped back, one hand going to cup his mouth. Pew! Pew! Pew!

A volley of water arrows rained down on Duze Beixuan.

He flung his battleaxe up, summoning a thin curtain of water that nullified the water arrows. At the same time, his hand clawed at Li Luo.

"Swallow!" Duze Beixuan yelled. The resonant power on his clawing hand suddenly exploded, then it reversed. A powerful sucking force yanked Li Luo towards his opponent.

This was the devouring ability of the Deepwater Kun resonance. In the sea, a single gulp from the kun's maw could create giant whirlpools that destroyed all.

Li Luo frowned in concentration as he planted his feet firmly on the ground. A dull, yellow light shone around them, and suddenly he was anchored to the ground.

As the suction force howled around him, he remained unmoving.

He was stealthily using his earth resonance.

Duze Beixuan was shocked that Li Luo was immune to his sucking attack. Water propelling his feet forth, he surfed toward Li Luo.

Cold fury in his eyes, he brought his battleaxe down in a savage blow.

"High-grade resonance art, Flowing Wave!"

In the wake of his swing, waves backed his axe, further amplifying his already brutal strength. This was a nasty blow.

Li Luo lifted a palm, summoning his Waterlight Demon Mirror.

Peng!

The battleaxe broke the mirror, but Duze Beixuan was unprepared to deal with the blowback from his own attack. Still, he was competent enough to quickly counter it with a burst of pure resonant power that nullified it.

The battleaxe again thrust out towards Li Luo's chest.

Li Luo blocked it, his twin shortswords crossing defensively before his chest.

Tang, tang, tang!

Parrying desperately, Li Luo was forced back. Duze Beixuan gave him no breathing room, his battleaxe's point extending out like a spearhead that lanced at him threateningly.

Cornered like a rat.

The furious exchange continued for dozens of rounds.

Li Luo was constantly being forced back, and Duze Beixuan was constantly pushing forward.

The advantage of Duze Beixuan's lower eighth-grade resonance and Upper Flowering cultivation shone brightly in battle.

"Li Luo, where's that glib tongue of yours now? Stick it out, then! C'mon!" Duze Beixuan taunted him, attacking him with both words and steel.

"Li Luo, I'll have my foot on your face today. See how—

"Oh, fuck!"

Suddenly, his foot sank deep into the ground, as though there was a swamp there. He lost balance and pitched forward.

Chortling in glee, Li Luo responded with a stomping kick that left a fat footprint on Duze Beixuan's face.

He was just about to follow stomp with steel when Duze Beixuan roared and sliced out with his battleaxe. Li Luo hurriedly retreated.

Duze Beixuan got to his feet, his expression ugly. When had the ground here become a swamp?

"You used water resonance power to make this patch a swamp? No. How could your water resonance power do that?" Duze Beixuan muttered.

When poured into the ground, water resonance power could indeed create a swamp. But the amount of resonant power needed was immense. Li Luo should not be able to pull it off at his current level.

Li Luo gave him a smile that very clearly said: none of your damn business.

Of course, he was able to do it not because of his water resonance power, but because he had used earth resonance power as well.

Still, the effect was modest. It was just enough to trip Duze Beixuan.

Wiping away the footprint on his face, Duze Beixuan turned to Li Luo again, who sensed that Duze Beixuan's resonant power had gotten even more untamed now.

Li Luo had managed to make him lose his cool.

Peng!

Duze Beixuan firmly planted his battleaxe in front of him and crossed his hands. Wave after wave of intense resonant power pulsed out from within his body.

Duze Beixuan's skin rippled with deep, blue light and turned coarse. His fingers bloated up, then his entire person swelled.

Li Luo had a sense that this was going to be something big.

Duze Beixuan shouted in an almost inhuman voice.

"Tiger-general resonance art, Bulk Up!"

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Who, who!

A fearsome wind picked up, howling through the forest.

Even the thickest of trees groaned and creaked, in danger of being uprooted. Such was the power of the wind.

They were in complete disorder.

Zhao Kuo, Zong Fu, and the others were all lying flat on the ground, staring up fearfully at the young woman.

"You want to get me? With that measly bit of power? Ball-less rats." Bai Doudou scoffed at them.

Zhao Kuo yelled as he scrambled to his feet, throwing a handful of ash at the same time.

Hu!

The wild wind screamed, and the puff of dust was gone. Bai Doudou's spear struck Zhao Kuo squarely on his chest, sending him flying. He crashed against a tree and did not get up again.

"Out of my way. I've no time to waste playing with you," she said dismissively. If she lingered here any longer, someone else would finish Li Luo off first.

Swish!

A figure shot past her. Eyes flinty, Bai Doudou flicked a finger. A blade shaped itself out of wind and sliced across the figure's chest.

Shing!

A long line of blood was drawn.

"Ah!"

The person cried out. He tumbled to the ground, ungainly as a rolling gourd. As he rolled past Bai Doudou, he snatched a jade ornament at her waist.

Covered in mud, Yu Lang grinned triumphantly at the jade ornament he now clutched.

Bai Doudou's hand flew to her waist, then she whirled on him. "Give it back, or taste pain."

Yu Lang pursed his lips thoughtfully. "This jade ornament seems quite important. I saw that your sister has one too."

Gripping her spear tightly, she was already advancing on him.

"If you want it, come and get it! If you can catch me, I'll give it to you! Heeheehee!"

Yu Lang hooted gleefully, turning to flee like the wind.

"Filthy thief!" Bai Doudou shrieked. Li Luo forgotten, she shot after him, eyes ablaze.

Meanwhile, Zhao Kuo, Zong Fu, and the others lay on the floor in a daze. They slowly got up and stared in the direction that the two had gone towards. They prayed that Bai Doudou would not beat him to death.

They looked back towards the deep forest.

Brother Luo, we've done our mediocre best. The rest is up to you now.

Chapter 0126: The Showdown Continues

Duze Beixuan's Bulk Up tiger-general resonance art was nothing new to Li Luo. He had studied it before—it was the best compliment for beast resonances. With their already superior bodies, any further strength synergized well to create an even greater advantage. This tiger-general resonance art was almost mandatory for all beast resonance cultivators.

Which was why Li Luo knew exactly how much trouble he was in when Duze Beixuan's chest started to swell up in size.

Boom!

Duze Beixuan stomped the ground with godly strength, propelling himself forward. His battleaxe was raised, going straight for Li Luo's head.

Li Luo's swords flared blue in response.

Ding!

Li Luo parried, but the sheer brute strength made Duze Beixuan's weapon more bat than battleaxe. The mighty swing sent Li Luo flying, his arms trembling from the impact.

He was completely outclassed this time.

Despite his knowledge, he had underestimated his opponent's strength.

The wind had whooshed out of Li Luo, and he was bleeding in a few places. Duze Beixuan came at him again, raining down blows again and again.

Li Luo parried desperately, his Water Edge a blur as his sword danced swiftly.

Ding! Ding!

They exchanged a few dozen more blows, and Li Luo was fully on the retreat. With one final Waterlight Demon Mirror to stave him off, Li Luo leaped up on top of a tree.

He put his swords together, the beaks on the hilts biting against each other to form a bow of blue silver. He drew, and an arrow of fluid light appeared.

"Plenty of parlor tricks... and no game!" Duze Beixuan sneered, leaping at Li Luo.

He calmly locked on to the charging Duze Beixuan and let fly.

Dewlight Skystream Arrow!

Weng!

It streaked out with blistering speed.

Duze Beixuan's eyes widened slightly, caught off guard by the speed.

Still, he was not Shi Huang. He was far beyond Shi Huang in all aspects, and so he dealt with Li Luo's unconventional attack calmly.

Waves of resonant power started to pulse from the tip of his battleaxe, overlapping with each other until they formed a robust shield.

He spun the battleaxe like a windmill, forming a solid barrier.

Ding!

The Skystream Arrow drew sparks as it scraped and shrieked against the axe, stirring up waves in the nearby creek.

Duze Beixuan was as shaken as his barrier. That attack had managed to break his rhythm, forcing him back.

The penetrative power of that arrow was astounding.

"A tiger-general resonance art?" Duze Beixuan thought, staggered. It had the penetrative power of a tiger-general resonance art, yet it seemed to lack a certain amount of punch at the back.

He looked up warily, only to see Li Luo already drawing his next arrow.

The Dewlight Skystream Arrow was a combination of two advanced resonance arts, but it was far less draining than a true tiger-general resonance art. With his Resonant Master power, he could use a few more.

If one was not enough to break Duze Beixuan's defense, then he would shoot two! Three!

Weng! Weng!

Two more shots exploded forth with a boom, as if they had broken the sound barrier. Two more Skystream arrows lanced towards Duze Beixuan's face and chest.

Duze Beixuan hurriedly began to spin his battleaxe again.

Ding! Ding!

Two more shots landed on the battleaxe barrier, the force enough to make it falter. A gap opened up in his defense.

Weng!

Another Skystream Arrow broke past the defense, aimed straight at the soft spot between Duze Beixuan's legs.

Duze Beixuan felt an instinctive shrinking of said parts in fear, and he hurriedly brought his battleaxe down to alter the arrow's course slightly.

It passed between his legs, but the rifling wind behind it was enough to score blood on both his legs. Fresh blood running down both his legs was a scary sight.

Duze Beixuan wiped cold sweat off his brow as he glared up at Li Luo, more furious than ever.

"Are you alright? Need me to help you with some healing? I have a water resonance, it's very good at healing," Li Luo said.

At the same time, he was drawing his bow again, sending another Skystream Arrow headed straight for Duze Beixuan.

"Li Luo, I'll kill you!"

Duze Beixuan howled and struck out at it with his battleaxe. He was red in the face now, and he suddenly pointed at Li Luo, opening his mouth. "AWWWGH!"

A deafening sonic blast boomed like the roar of a beast.

The blast of the sound made Li Luo falter, and his Skystream Arrow's power was lessened significantly.

Although Li Luo quickly recovered, he immediately gave up his arrow attack. Instead, he sent out a hail of Waterlight Bullets and retreated hastily.

Just in time. The battleaxe slammed down right where he was standing a moment ago.

Duze Beixuan had capitalized on his momentary reprieve to counterattack.

He had seen Li Luo's strongest move now—that light arrow with supernatural speed and penetrating power. He would not let himself become the target again.

Li Luo's own quick reactions confounded Duze Beixuan briefly with his Waterlight Bullets. He landed in the creek, water resonance power swirling at his feet.

In a flash, he was drawing again, aiming another light arrow at Duze Beixuan.

He had fallen back smoothly, with the practiced moves of an experienced fighter.

Duze Beixuan was growing more and more frustrated at Li Luo's slipperiness. He was only a Lower Clear, but those strange arrows, that damned reflecting mirror, and those confounded Waterlight Bullets had foiled him time and again.

"Let's see how many more you can shoot!"

Duze Beixuan snarled. Li Luo was only a Lower Clear, so his resonant power should be far inferior to Duze Beixuan's own. If the battle dragged on, an opening would appear eventually, and he would pounce then.

And so the two continued fighting, from the bank to the creek. Using the flowing water to his advantage, Li Luo continued to keep his distance, sending a relentless stream of light arrows. Duze Beixuan pursued him endlessly, trying to close the distance while he fended off the attacks.

On a nearby mountain, Shen Jinxiao stood with his arms crossed, watching the heated battle in the creek. Li Luo was holding out a lot better than he had expected.

Still, Li Luo had yet to show any miraculous potential, which was comforting to him.

Even though he was the young lord of House Luolan, a barely above average student like himself would not warrant a Violet Vibrance mentor going out on a limb for him.

"Just you wait, Li Luo. When you find out you're left scrambling for a Gold Gleam mentor, you'll come begging for the precious violet talisman I offered you..."

And once Li Luo was in his grasp, the bait would make Jiang Qing'e cooperative.

He let a small smile show, his eyes blazing with a mad obsession.

"Qing'e, you will not escape me."

Chapter 0127: The Iron Blooded Yu Lang

Somewhere outside the jungle, away from the intense Duze Beixuan-Li Luo fight.

Half of the clearing was covered in frost, the other half completely devoid of life as all of the vegetation had withered.

In the center, two people were facing off.

Lu Qing'er looked down at her hands. They were covered in a viridescent green, poison gas, that was rapidly eating away at the resonant power within her.

She accepted this calmly. It was within her expectations.

She looked up calmly at Wang Hejiu, who was frowning at her. He himself was encased in ice up to his shoulders.

Obviously, he wasn't going to be able to move for a while.

"Must you do this, Friend Qing'er?" he asked mildly.

"Your Glacial Prison is very impressive, but it will only hold me for a while. My poison resonance in you will wreak far greater damage through your body."

"Delaying you this long is enough," Lu Qing'er said serenely.

He looked closely at her. "Was it worth it?"

"The school might help you nullify the poison, but you will be in great pain for a long while. All to hold me up for a few moments."

"I'm happy to," she said simply.

He regarded her anew, then burst into laughter. "Friend Qing'er, my interest in you just deepened again.

"Will you really not consider getting together with me?"

"Whether in background, talent, or potential, I think I'm better than Li Luo."

Lu Qing'er looked at him indifferently. "Not as handsome, though."

His smile froze.

Really? So shallow?

...

"Aaahhhh!"

Yu Lang was pitched to his feet yet again, tumbling like a gourd. He crawled to his feet again, his face covered in bruises.

But the wind howled from behind him, and another gust smacked him in the back, sending him tumbling forth another few meters.

"Give me back the jade ornament!"

Bai Doudou's voice rang out from behind.

Yu Lang was completely exhausted, but he still clutched firmly on to the jade ornament. "Nope! Kill me if you dare!"

Bai Doudou was furious. She cocked a fist and punched him in the head.

"AHHH! SHE'S KILLING MEE!" Yu Lang wailed.

"You shameless little—!" Bai Doudou choked in her anger. She had never seen such a shameless person, and she started to beat him even harder.

"Pfffft!"

A spray of blood spurted from Yu Lang's mouth, enough blood to stain the entire ground around him red.

Bai Doudou immediately stopped. She was hitting him hard, but surely it wasn't enough to cause this.

"You—are you alright?" She frowned, prodding the bleeding Yu Lang with her spear.

He lay there unmoving as a dead fish.

She bent down to check his breathing.

Just as she stooped over, the dead fish miraculously came back to life, wrapping himself around her like an octopus. The two lost their balance and tumbled to the ground.

Boom!

A heroic burst of green resonant power from Bai Doudou sent Yu Lang flying again. He crashed into a big rock, and his face paled. More blood leaked from his mouth.

He was sprawled on the ground. He felt like he had been dismembered.

Bai Doudou was green in the face as she inspected her bloody clothes. Gross. Yu Lang was truly gross.

"I'll kill you!" Bai Doudou shouted furiously, her spear flashing out towards Yu Lang.

"Kill me, then," Yu Lang said tearfully. "I might have an 80 year-old mother at home and ten younger siblings who depend on me, but I'm not afraid to die."

The spear stopped at his brow. "What a virile mother she is." She snorted. The spear shaft struck Yu Lang painfully on the wrist. With a cry, he dropped the jade ornament.

Bai Doudou snatched it up, carefully wiping it clean before hanging it on her waist again.

"Stay away from my sister," she warned the limp Yu Lang. "Or I will feed you to the dogs."

She turned to leave.

Pa!

She felt a hand clutching her ankle. Yu Lang summoned up the last of his strength. "Who gave you permission to leave?"

She turned and looked at Yu Lang properly. Covered in ugly wounds and bleeding out, he was still trying to stop her. It stirred something within her.

He was shameless and spineless, but his tenacity was admirable.

"What's your name?" she asked.

"Yu Lang."

"Yu Lang, you're a fool. If this was not in school, I might have killed you.

"The difference between us is ridiculous. You think you're smart to test my patience again and again?"

"Is this for Li Luo's sake? Is he worth it? He is the young lord of House Luolan. You might think of him as a brother, but he probably just thinks of you as a disposable pawn."

Yu Lang was silent for a while. Then he smiled at her, showing her his bloody teeth. "Little girl, what do you know? You think a man of my experience knows less than a pampered princess like you?"

"Back in the day, my parents broke the family bank to send me to Southwind Academy. I didn't know a thing then, not even the resonance arts the teachers were teaching. It was Li Luo who taught me everything, starting from my first resonance art. He gave me the courage to keep going to school!"

"Sure, it might be nothing to him. But I will forever remember that grace. He is my friend forever!"

"What does it matter what he thinks? And so, Bai Doudou, if you dare walk away today, I'll..."

Yu Lang took a dramatic breath. "I'll die on you!"

"..."

"Is this guy nuts? What would I care if you died?"

"Get away."

She kicked him away, but lightly. She didn't want to really kill him.

Yu Lang crawled forward and grabbed her foot again. "Bai Doudou, you she-devil, remember this well. You caused the death of an innocent student the day you entered the Astral Sage College!"

"If I die, I will become a ghost and haunt you."

"Shut up!" She started to stalk away, then she suddenly sat down on a boulder nearby. "No damn point in going now. Li Luo must have been finished off already."

"No guarantees."

Yu Lang smiled weakly. "Well, I tried my best. I managed to stop Miss Number 3 of the newcomers. Hehe. That will make a good story."

"If it were anyone else, you wouldn't even have an unbroken bone left in your body." She rolled her eyes.

"What's with you acting all kind? You think all I need is unbroken bones?" he said indignantly.

Bai Doudou had such an adorable sister. But why was she so fierce?

She shook her head and ignored him.

Yu Lang prattled on a little more, but suddenly Bai Doudou noticed that the chattering had stopped. She looked over to see him unconscious in the pool of blood.

She sniffed.

"Ignorant bastard."

Chapter 0128: Dual Resonances Revealed

Splash! Roar!

The serene, bubbling brook had been stirred up by the intense fight.

Li Luo skated backwards on the water, his bow of blue silver sending Skystream Arrows at Duze Beixuan in a relentless stream, keeping him at bay.

But Li Luo was starting to feel uneasy. His opponent was being too passive.

That didn't make sense, unless he was charging up something terrifying.

Just then, Duze Beixuan gave a loud grunt of exertion, and Li Luo felt his strength surge forth.

"Kun Rising!" he roared.

Shoosh!

The Skystream Arrow vanished. Li Luo blinked. It was gone!

And Duze Beixuan had vanished as well.

Peng!

An earsplitting boom sounded from his side, and he saw a battleaxe hurtling towards him like an angry dragon. It shot towards him with incredible strength, locked in on Li Luo's weak point.

Li Luo was given a huge fright, and he hastily parried with his bow.

Ding!

This one was enough to wound Li Luo. His shoulders were aching from the impact, and he was flung backwards.

"His speed, strength, and defenses have increased again?" Li Luo said to himself, shaken. Duze Beixuan had outdone himself yet again.

Still reeling, a figure dashed towards him fast enough to split the waters of the creek.

Another cold glint of battleaxe came for him.

Li Luo hurriedly parried it again, but this time even a few blocks were enough to wear him out. He was sent flying again, this time landing in the woods.

Duze Beixuan appeared in front of him, dragging his heavy battleaxe. He looked like an unstoppable juggernaut.

He was staring at the woods, his battleaxe dragging along the ground.

"Li Luo, are we done with the monkey tricks? Time to end it? I was just playing with you. You think a Lower Clear like you can match an Upper Flowering like me?"

"My resonance grade is higher. My resonant power is greater. How are you gonna compete?"

He taunted Li Luo, walking into the forest. He looked at Li Luo, who was under a tree, with snake-like eyes. "Done running, rat?"

He lifted the battleaxe lazily, pointing it at Li Luo and gathering his resonant power.

"Let's end it, then."

Li Luo rubbed his numb shoulder gingerly as he grinned. "You think you're cool? The slow walk and the big talk? Maybe you think it makes you look like a hero.

"I think it's very foolish.

"You see, with all that time you've bought me, I've almost finished building your coffin already."

"Still trying to act tough?" Duze Beixuan said acidly.

He took one powerful step forward, his battleaxe coming up in a dangerous arc toward Li Luo.

Li Luo remained where he was, not moving an inch.

The battleaxe grew larger and larger in his eyes.

When it was a mere few feet from his face, the tree behind Li Luo suddenly shook. With a flash of green light, thick tree vines suddenly sprouted, coiling around the battleaxe like pythons. It could not move.

"Wood resonance?"

"Who else is interfering in our battle?" Duze Beixuan shouted, shocked at the sudden development.

Li Luo grinned. "Who else is here but you and me?"

Duze Beixuan stared at him with narrow eyes. "What are you talking about? Are you trying to tell me the wood resonance was you? You're obviously a water resonance user, idiot. You can't possibly evoke a wood resonance!"

Li Luo chortled. "Didn't you ask me how I was going to deal with you? Let me show you something really cool."

He smashed his hands together, and both his resonant palaces flared to life. Two different resonant powers burst out of his body.

Blue resonant power, languid as the wave.

Green resonant power, vital and alive.

The two elements mixed all around Li Luo's body. There was no disharmony between the two.

Duze Beixuan's eyes grew wide as saucers.

Li Luo's mocking voice came at him.

"Water resonance, mine.

"Wood resonance, also mine.

"Sorry, but there's nothing wrong with your eyes. I am indeed... the legendary double resonant palace cultivator!"

.....

Whoosh!

The revelation did not just stun Duze Beixuan, but also everyone else within Newcomers' Hall.

Many were on their feet, staring at the youth on the screen.

Double resonance?!

Could he have been that one-in-a-million who had managed to open their second resonant palace when he broke through to the Resonant Master Stage?!

How incredibly rare was that?!

Although everyone knew that there was a fraction of a chance that a second resonant palace would appear with the breakthrough, the chances were astronomically low. It was about as rare as Jiang Qing'e's ninth-grade light resonance!

And now they had seen the miracle actually happen!

Forget the grade of Li Luo's second resonance, just its existence alone was enough to mark him as special.

He would have an advantage that no one else could access. Double resonance power—the domain of Duke experts!

Although with his strength, his mastery might only call forth puny versions of both resonances, but it was still extremely beneficial.

The crowd was busy reevaluating him. When they first heard that the son of Li Taixuan and Tan Tailan was mediocre, they all secretly felt comforted. Those two were too brilliant, and they even had the ninth-grade light resonance user Jiang Qing'e in the house. The ordinary Li Luo seemed fairer.

But now they realized that they had celebrated too early.

Li Luo did not have a high-grade resonance, but the rare double resonance was enough to make up for the difference.

"Water resonance? Wood resonance?! He has both?" Duze Honglian was staring at the screen with a mix of horror and disbelief.

"I don't believe it!" she shouted angrily. How could House Luolan be so blessed? They weren't going to stop at a ninth-grade light resonance with Jiang Qing'e? Now a dual resonance young lord to boot?!

"Wow, dual resonances! That's awesome!" Yan Lingqing squealed, clapping her hands in delight. She turned to hug Jiang Qing'e in celebration. "You knew already? That's why you sat there calm like a fisherman!"

Jiang Qing'e smiled back. "He is of the bloodline of the House Lords. How could he ever be mediocre?"

On the highest spectator platform.

Vice Principal Su Xin had been watching quietly up till now, and now clear surprise was showing on her face.

"Dual resonances... A rare sight indeed," she said.

The First Princess inclined her head as well, also surprised. "Congratulations, Vice Principal. I see that the Astral Sage College is about to produce another rare talent."

Vice Principal Su Xin smiled. "Dual resonances are certainly rare. But this talent does not guarantee one's performance in the future. Everything still depends on his nature and transformations."

"Still... potential indeed. The Astral Sage College will definitely show him favor and attention."

The First Princess understood that the Astral Sage College's love of talent had taken a fancy to Li Luo's dual resonances. Vice Principal Su Xin's words meant that Li Luo would be saved much unnecessary trouble and prejudice in the future.

Her red, phoenix eyes turned back to watch the handsome youth with his dual resonances.

Although House Luolan had lost two Duke stage experts, their progeny and disciple were glowing with the same light.

Perhaps in time they would indeed raise House Luolan up from the ashes, blazing again in its former glory.

Chapter 0129: Layering Resonance Arts

"Dual resonances..."

Duze Beixuan struggled to control his emotions. He was a mess inside—confused, angry, jealous...

He had always looked down on Li Luo. They were both young lords of their houses, but Li Luo had spent his whole life in the lowly Tianshu Province, plus he used to be a blank palace cultivator. By everything Duze Beixuan knew, Li Luo was a mediocre man through and through.

Li Luo might have suddenly risen to take first place at the Tianshu Province exams, but he had not taken it too seriously. After all, the Tianshu Province was a middle-of-the-pack kind of province. So what if Li Luo had won?

He himself was a lower eighth-grade resonance user. He outclassed Li Luo in both talent and potential, and had the sense of superiority to accompany the reality.

Li Luo's parents were special, he could not deny that. His own father had been beaten by Li Taixuan 18 times. It was not common knowledge in the Xia Kingdom, but neither was it a secret.

For him, none of that mattered. The last generation's business stayed with them. As long as he could crush Li Luo like a bug, then everyone would understand that each generation started afresh.

He, the young lord of House Duze, was fit to crush the young lord of House Luolan.

And all had gone as he had planned, until Li Luo revealed his double resonances... It was bizarre, unexpected, and stressful.

"No way!" Duze Beixuan shouted. He swung his battleaxe wildly with a volatile burst of resonant power. It smashed the tree branches into pieces, then he turned to attack Li Luo again.

Li Luo was quicker.

"Tiger-general resonance art, Arboreal Bindings!"

All the trees in their vicinity shuddered to life, glowing green. A ferocious, howling wind picked up, and giant tree branches shot towards Duze Beixuan, binding him.

Duze Beixuan howled dementedly. His battleaxe chopped left and right as he spent both physical and resonant power with wild abandon.

He cut all of the coiling branches cleanly with each cut.

Duze Beixuan realized that the resonant power behind them was not particularly strong, which meant that Li Luo's resonance grade should not be very high.

That at least was a consolation.

"Trying to bind me with this pathetic thing? You wish!" He sneered as he chopped away in a frenzy. He started to inch towards Li Luo.

Li Luo was not at all surprised by this outcome. His woodearth resonance was only a fourth-grade. Even with a tiger-general resonance art, it was hard to pose any real threat to Duze Beixuan.

Except this was just the beginning.

Putting his hands together, he called forth his water resonance power. "Tiger-general resonance art, Heavy Water Art!"

His water resonance power flowed forth in navy-blue streams. They landed on the flying branches.

Whoosh.

Green and blue melded, and the tree branches lashed out at Duze Beixuan with renewed vengeance. Duze Beixuan leaped to meet them again.

But this time, he felt a pang of fear. He found that his battleaxe could no longer cut through them. The vines and branches were much stronger now.

Drip, drop.

Water dripped from the branches, and each drop that landed on his battleaxe made it heavier and heavier.

"Heavy Water Art?"

Duze Beixuan was scared now. Li Luo had fused the Arboreal Bindings with the Heavy Water Art. This made the Arboreal Bindings much stronger, just like how a water-soaked whip would lash out with much greater force.

Whoosh.

More heavy branches flew at him from behind. This time, he did not dodge in time, taking a painful lashing across his shoulders.

His clothing split immediately, as did the skin beneath, exposing fresh blood.

Duze Beixuan saw red. With a demented bellow, his battleaxe moved again, a scything dance of steel that put up a flawless defense.

Peng! Peng! Peng!

The tree branches were snake-like whips, lashing out at him with punishment. Even though his defense was solid, it was gradually worn down.

Li Luo watched the harangued Duze Beixuan cheerfully, using the back of his bow to whittle some branches down into wooden arrows.

He nocked one, drew, and fired.

It flew through the gaps of the branches with a shrill whistling sound and buried itself in Duze Beixuan.

It was not a particularly deadly move—about half a finger's depth was not going to kill anyone. Still... the humiliation was incredible.

Li Luo did not even enter the fight directly. He stood outside, firing wooden arrows one after another until Duze Beixuan was starting to look like a porcupine.

Duze Beixuan was going mad with anger. These wooden arrows weren't too threatening, but the humiliation was eating away at him from the inside.

"Li Luo, you rat! Are you too afraid to face me in a man-to-man fight?!" he howled.

At the same time, he was starting to panic. The waterlogged branches were wearing down his resonant power reserves very quickly.

He could feel himself growing weaker by the moment.

Along with Li Luo's constant harassment, he was really in a bad situation.

He raved on, trying to goad Li Luo into a close-combat fight. That way, he would stand a slim chance of turning the tables. But Li Luo was too shrewd to fall for this. He responded to each verbal insult with a physical stinging instead.

Son of a bitch!

Peng!

Finally, Duze Beixuan's knees buckled. Several branches sent the battleaxe flying, while several more trussed up his hands and feet.

In the blink of an eye, all that was left exposed was his head.

Duze Beixuan struggled furiously, but his heart sank. There was no way he was getting out of these branches reinforced by the Heavy Water Art.

Li Luo picked up the battleaxe and pointed it at his face. "Well, here I am now," he said seriously.

"Come on, then. Let's fight a fair mat-achh! Ugh!"

Mid-shout, one tree branch lunged into his mouth and stuffed it for him.

Li Luo shook his head with disappointment.

"The first match between the young lords of House Duze and House Luolan, ending in a no-show by the cowardly Duze Beixuan."

Duze Beixuan was so angry that he fainted on the spot.

When his eyes rolled back into his head, Li Luo sighed with relief. He himself was getting pale, and he quickly dispelled the branches.

He sat down on the ground to catch his breath.

If Duze Beixuan had held on any longer, he would have crumbled too. A fourth-grade wood resonance was a little too weak. The wood resonant power was a little too thin for his needs.

Still, it had tided him over this one.

His head perked up again. Shen Jinxiao had appeared before him.

The Violet Vibrance mentor stared at him with an odd look.

"Oh, Mentor Shen, here again?"

Li Luo welcomed him with a smile. "Have you had lunch?" he asked cheerfully.

Shen Jinxiao looked at him. "Li Luo," he said slowly, "who would have thought that you were hiding a dual resonance... I have underestimated you."

Li Luo laughed. "Who goes out into the world without a few trump cards?"

Shen Jinxiao nodded. "You truly are the son of Li Taixuan and Tan Tailan."

"Mentor Shen, what have you got planned next?" Li Luo asked.

Shen Jinxiao did not reply, but a deadly look flashed in his eyes. He quelled it. Not even a Violet Vibrance mentor could break the rules of the Astral Sage College. If he did, no other place would accept him, even though he was a Duke Stage expert.

"If you've got nothing planned... I guess it's my turn?" Li Luo beamed at him.

Shen Jinxiao said nothing, his eyes narrowing.

Li Luo sat on the ground and looked up to the sky. He took a deep, deep breath, then shouted, "HEY VIOLET VIBRANCE MENTORS! AM I NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOU?!" His shout echoed through the forest.

Silence. A few moments later, the sky shook, and suddenly four Violet Vibrance mentors descended from the sky.

Boom, boom, boom!

Four pillars of violet light landed around Li Luo. In each was a violet talisman, shining with light.

It was the epitome of luxury.

Evidently, all four other Violet Vibrance mentors had been awaiting this moment. No longer caring about Shen Jinxiao, they had extended themselves to Li Luo directly.

Chapter 0130: Li Luo's Choosing of the Mentors

The scene of Li Luo being surrounded by four violet light columns was shown on the screen at Newcomers' Hall, where the crowd was murmuring excitedly.

Clearly, the potential of Li Luo's dual resonances was enough to move the other four Violet Vibrance mentors.

Far more tempting than any desire to avoid stepping on the toes of a Duke expert like Shen Jinxiao.

Hence, they had all extended talismans to Li Luo.

He only needed to pick one of them, and he would be accepted as a disciple to that Violet Vibrance mentor.

The older students, free of the other considerations the adults had on their minds, simply marveled at the sight.

After all, having Violet Vibrance mentors fighting over him was testament to Li Luo's excellence and potential.

It was a rousing sight indeed.

"Wow, that Li Luo's something special. He flipped the whole game, and now the Violet Vibrance mentors are fighting over him," the little emperor exclaimed.

He had watched Li Luo fight and then win, with eyes shining all along. It had been a close one—who would have thought that he would manage to flip things around?

"Vice Principal," the First Princess asked excitedly, "who do you think he'll choose?"

"I wouldn't know." Su Xin laughed.

"Although, looking at Li Luo's Arboreal Bindings, I guess his second resonance's grade is not very high. His combined strength might be stronger than a lower eighth-grade but weaker than an upper eighth-grade.

"The four mentors must be intrigued because dual resonances are just so uncommon."

The First Princess inclined her head. "Rare indeed. After all, these are dual resonances, the sort of strength that only Duke experts can touch. Even a shallow dabbling in that strength will be a considerable advantage for Li Luo."

"It will definitely be helpful when he shoots for the Duke Stage himself in the future."

She paused and then added, "Still, Li Luo is quite a.... unique person."

When she recalled how he had snuck around and peppered Duze Beixuan with arrows, she fought a smile. Li Luo was the complete opposite of Jiang Qing'e.

Jiang Qing'e was prim and proper, defeating her opponents with a clear advantage of strength that left them with no reprisal. As for Li Luo, he lacked this completely, preferring words and cunning to save himself the trouble.

I don't need you convinced. If you die of anger, that's still a win for me.

Truly an... exception.

.....

While the VIPs in Newcomers' Hall were cooing over Li Luo, the man in question was looking around at the four pillars, a big fat smile slowly spreading on his face.

"Well, Mentor Shen, looks like this Li Luo has some value after all..."

Shen Jinxiao ignored him. He knew that the moment Li Luo revealed his dual resonances, his plans to target him had failed.

If Li Luo were only a passably good student, then none of the Violet Vibrance mentors besides that woman would cross him for Li Luo. They were all colleagues at the Astral Sage College, so they would show some mutual respect.

But Li Luo was not just a passably good student. He was a pass-with-flying-colors student with phenomenal dual resonances.

Shen Jinxiao's reputation had just taken a hit.

Dual resonances were not that far below a ninth-grade resonance. Whoever accepted Li Luo would stand a great chance at producing a Duke Stage expert in the future.

He had lost this round.

From the moment the four violet talismans appeared, he had cut his losses and stood coldly at the side.

Li Luo did not aggravate him further, instead turning to the four violet talismans with some consideration.

Now overwhelmed with choice, he had no idea how to proceed.

"Esteemed mentors, how am I supposed to choose?" Li Luo asked sheepishly.

He knew that all four were watching from somewhere.

There was a short silence, then a woman's voice came calmly. "My name is Chi Chan. All four here will do well by you, but I have an edge over them. I show Shen Jinxiao no courtesy at all. I was watching you even before you revealed your dual resonances. Although, in truth, if you had lost to Duze Beixuan, I would not have chosen you. Not because of Shen Jinxiao, but because you would be unqualified."

There was no response from the other three offers. Although Li Luo's dual resonances were rare, as mighty Duke experts themselves, they had their own pride. They were not going to squabble like housewives here.

Now that someone had spoken up, they remained silent. Apparently, what Chi Chan had said was true enough.

She and Shen Jinxiao had some bad blood between them.

Li Luo considered the words of this female mentor named Chi Chan. He found no down sides, and so turned to the other three violet talismans. "Many thanks to the three mentors for your favor," he said respectfully.

They understood his choice, and they disappeared without a word, light columns and talismans vanishing as one.

Li Luo looked at the last violet talisman and put his hands together, bowing deeply and respectfully to it. His first greeting and acknowledgment of a new teacher.

"Student Li Luo greets the mentor."

With that, he had chosen his mentor at the Astral Sage College.

Their relationship would continue until Li Luo entered the Three or Four Star Hall.

The violet talisman landed silently and gracefully in Li Luo's hands.

"Shen Jinxiao, you can go now if you've nothing else to do," an unfriendly voice stated.

He gave a thin smile and turned. In a whirl of resonant power, both he and an unconscious Duze Beixuan vanished.

After he left, silence fell again. Chi Chan did not speak again, and Li Luo rose.

He looked at the violet talisman in his hand. In its center was the character "Chi", exquisitely carved.

"Chi Chan, huh..."

Li Luo smiled to himself. With a Violet Vibrance mentor, he had backing now. He would have to treat her well in the future.

He stowed the violet talisman carefully, then he sat down cross-legged to rest. With this talisman in hand, his part in the Choosing of the Mentors was over. Next, he just had to wait to be summoned out.

"I wonder how things are for Qing'er, Yu Lang, Zhao Kuo, and the rest..."

