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Book 6: Breaking Through the Cocoon, Becoming a Butterfly Chapter 21: [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] – Stage Seven

“Adept Xu Li?” Nong Zidao was shocked. As a valued, intensively trained disciple of Snowdragon Mountain, Nong Zidao naturally was quite familiar with Adept Xu. He knew that Adept Xu wasn’t too skilled in the Dao of formations. Actually, the vast majority of Immortal practitioners with great potential were unskilled in formations; they would focus their efforts on training, on gaining insights into the Dao, on magic treasures, and on magic spells.

“How long ago did the Adept head there?” Nong Zidao hurriedly asked.

“Just a while ago, in less than the amount of time needed to brew tea. Adept Xu left just before you arrived, senior apprentice-brother Zidao.” Dong Fanyu said hurriedly.

Nong Zidao, shocked, immediately instructed: “Remember, if there are any other Zifu Disciples who arrive here, they can go to Oxhorn Mountain, but you must warn them...they are definitely not permitted to casually enter the grand formation of Oxhorn Mountain. That is the place where senior apprentice-brother Jadechild perished.”

“I will definitely inform the other fellow disciples.” Dong Fanyu immediately said.

“Right.” Nong Zidao had no time to speak any further; he immediately boarded his flying ship and flew through the skies, heading once more to Oxhorn Mountain.

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Oxhorn Mountain.

Ji Ninefire and the others paid attention to the region outside the grand formation while simultaneously binding the magic treasures. From their viewpoint on up high, they were able to see through the thin mist to the distant, desolate wilderness.

“All of the Zifu Disciples from the earlier group, aside from Nong Zidao, have perished. Our Ji clan even ended up acquiring two additional Zifu-level spirit-beasts.” Ji Truekeep was currently working on binding a flying sword, then said with a satisfied look on his face, “The Swallow Mountain branch of Snowdragon Mountain only had a few Zifu Disciples to begin with. With so many dead, I imagine there won’t be any other formidable figures who will come.”

“Yes.” Ninefire nodded with a satisfied smile as well.

“Our Ji clan now has hope.” Granny Shadow sighed in her hoarse voice as well.

From a logical standpoint, their expectations were correct.

The Celestial Envoy of the Grand Xia Dynasty would be able to arrive in two days. The Swallow Mountain branch of Snowdragon Mountain simply wouldn’t be able to invite some more distant branches to assist in time. In addition, at most, forty or fifty Zifu Disciples could be invited over from the surrounding

areas, and amongst them, the most powerful and famous were Jadechild and Nong Zidao! One had perished, while the other had fled; who else would dare to enter?

The only choice was to report back to the main sect, but the main sect was too far away. Most likely, the Ji clan would receive protection from the Grand Xia Dynasty well before the main sect had even received word of this matter.

“We are fortunate to have Ji Ning.” Ninefire sighed as he glanced at the nearby Ji Yichuan. “Yichuan. You have a good son.”

Yichuan couldn't help but smile as well. With a son like Ning, how could he not be proud?

“Once this tribulation is over,” Granny Shadow said hoarsely, “Ji Ning will definitely leave our Ji clan and go out to adventure. Give his monstrous talents...I imagine that he should be able to take refuge within one of the great powers. By then, why would we need to fear Snowdragon Mountain?”

“Ji Ning's future is unlimited!” Ji Truekeep sighed emotionally as well.

These were all the elites of the Ji clan, but compared to Ning...they felt a vast gap between them.

“Someone is coming.” Ninefire suddenly shouted.

“What?!”

Instantly, a great commotion. All of them turned to stare through the sparse black fog, only to see a boat sail through the skies towards their direction, with quite a few Immortal practitioners gathered together atop it.

“Who is it?”

“I haven't seen any of them. Don't recognize them.”

“I recognize one of them. That short old fellow is an Immortal practitioner of the Huan clan. The two of us have met once, but I don't know his name.” Ninefire and the others could see a total of eight Zifu Disciples atop the boat, but they didn't know the names of any of them. Only Ninefire was able to recognize a single one of them.

Truekeep immediately asked, “What should we do? Should we go call for Ji Ning?”

“Ji Ning is currently training within the formation.” Ninefire shook his head. “In addition, only eight have come. No need to be impatient.”

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The flying boat descended towards the ground, then vanished. The eight figures atop the boat disembarked. Not too far away, they saw a wood golem standing atop the ground. The eyes of the wood golem flashed with a green light as it looked towards them with curiosity.

“A golem.” Lu Huang said hurriedly. “Master-uncle, I will go take a look.”

Lu Huang immediately moved forward a few steps, but before he said anything, the wood golem spoke out: “Are you disciples of Snowdragon Mountain?”

“Yes.” Lu Huang nodded as he spoke, while Adept Xu and the others walked over as well. The wood golem said, quite obediently, “Per the orders of my master, Nong Zidao, I am here awaiting the arrival of disciples of Snowdragon Mountain. I am here to let you all know that my master, Nong Zidao, along with Jadechild, eighteen other Zifu Disciples, and two Zifu-level spirit-beasts have all entered the grand formation.”

“Do you have any other information?” Adept Xu Li asked.

“I know nothing else.” The wood golem shook its head.

“Has anyone emerged?” Adept Xu Li frowned as he spoke. “Did you feel the ground shake?”

The wood golem said, “Nobody has emerged. Prior to this, I felt the ground shake multiple times, but now, I don’t feel the ground shaking whatsoever.”

The faces of Adept Xu Li and the rest of the eight all changed. Some formations were able to completely block out sound, but it was extremely hard to block out the vibrations created from a battle, which would pass through the earth and the mud to the outside world. It was unheard of, at least, for Mortal-ranked formations to be able to block out ground vibrations.

“The first few ground vibrations indicate that they battled multiple times. But for there to be no further vibrations at all...and given that based on the information we received, the life-tablets of many Zifu Disciples, including Dong Ziqi, are shattered...” Adept Xu Li said in a soft voice, “The most likely possibility is that all of them are dead.”

“Adept, what should we do?” The others all looked towards Adept Xu Li.

Of the seven, some had run into Adept Xu Li on the road, while others had been waiting at Snowdragon City.

Prior to this, nineteen Zifu Disciples and two Zifu-level spirit-beasts had silently, soundlessly disappeared within this formation.

“We can’t enter it casually.” Adept Xu Li said in a soft voice. “Nong Zidao is extremely skilled in formations. Even I am inferior to him. As for Jadechild, he has a divine ability and thus astonishingly great combat power, as well as tremendously strong lifeforce as a Fiendgod Body Refiner...the two of them joined forces to enter, and yet there is no word of them. No matter what, we cannot enter the formation casually.”

The other seven all nodded in agreement.

“Let me try to forcibly break the formation first and see if I can destroy it.” Adept Xu Li glanced at the distant Oxhorn Mountain. He waved his hand, and a large seal appeared within his palm. This large seal flew out from his palm, then rapidly increased in size, quickly becoming an enormous seal that was more than three hundred meters long. It hung there, high above Oxhorn Mountain.

“Descend!”

Adept Xu Li pointed into the distance.

Instantly, the surrounding world seemed to change colors. The brilliant sunlight seemed to instantly disappear as the surrounding world turned pitch-black. Within the pitch-black skies, there were even many flashing stars, and amongst the stars there was an enormous, brilliant moon. Within the moon, a giant palm formed from moonlight emerged, which clasped that giant, three hundred meter seal.

And then, it smashed that seal downwards to the ground!

Bang!

It smashed directly atop the black fog surrounding the base of Oxhorn Mountain. The surrounding earth trembled violently, and then the giant moonlight hand lifted up again, raising the enormous seal once more.

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When Ninefire and the others saw the world itself change through the Manifestation, the looks on their faces changed as well. The brilliant light of the sun had been transformed into a constellation of stars in the night sky. They all called out in shock, "A Wanxiang Adept!"

"How could a Wanxiang Adept be here? The Swallow Mountain branch of Snowdragon Mountain is nothing more than a branch. These branches only have Zifu Disciples. How could a Wanxiang Adept have come? Wanxiang Adepts are the core of Snowdragon Mountain. How could they have appeared here?" Truekeep stared, wide-eyed.

Every member of the Ji clan was completely shocked.

They didn't dare believe it.

"Quick, everyone, go to your locations in your sub-formations." Ninefire hurriedly ordered. "If that Wanxiang Adept thinks he can destroy our formation from outside just by using a giant seal, he is dreaming. At such a great distance...even a Wanxiang Adept is only able to at most unleash a tenth of his full power. Against power at this level, if we join forces and rely on the Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation, we can definitely fight back."

"Should we call for Ji Ning?" Granny Shadow asked.

"No need. Landwyrms, follow my orders and head towards the north." Ninefire gave the order. "For now, you will temporarily serve as the center for the Dragontail Formation of our Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation."

"Yes." The azure-armored warrior replied.

Monsters initially trained in monstrous power, but upon establishing their Zifu, the body in their energy would also become the elemental energy of the Zifu. This Landwyrms was at the peak Zifu-level...his elemental energy was even more powerful than Ji Ning's!"

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"Descend!" From far away, Adept Xu Li pointed yet again.

The giant moonlight hand, clutching that great seal, once more smashed downwards towards Oxhorn Mountain. But this time, a draconic roar suddenly rang out, and an enormous black draconic tail swept out. The draconic tail was tremendous in size as well, and as it emerged from the black fog, it clashed directly against the downwards smashing seal.

Bang!

The giant seal smashed against the giant draconic tail. The draconic tail trembled slightly, but was able to hold on.

“A black draconic tail?” Adept Xu Li frowned. “And it’s actually able to block my Manifestation...”

There were limits to the distance at which an Immortal practitioner could use magic treasures to attack. The farther away they attacked from, the lower the power would be. Wanxiang Adepts could rely on their ‘Myriad Manifestations’ to launch long-distance attacks, but naturally, the power would be much lower than if they attacked in close-quarters combat. For example, when Adept Mu Xiao had wanted to prevent Bei Zishan from escaping, he had been able to, from an extremely great distance, generate his Manifestation to capture the bug-body of Bei Zishan.

“What formation is this?” Adept Xu Li frowned. “A few mere Zifu Disciples, by relying on this formation, are able to block my Manifestation. This formation...”

Despite his knowledge, even he wasn’t able to recognize this formation.

The seven nearby Zifu Disciples had looks of confusion and nervousness on their faces. That draconic tail that had emerged from the fog...what formation was this?

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Ninefire and the others, by relying on the Netherwyrms created by the formation, had resisted the smashing blow of the giant seal. Still, they felt that doing so was quite an onerous task.

“I wonder how Ji Ning’s training is progressing. He might be at a critical moment.” Ninefire, frantic, wanted to summon Ning, but he was also worried that he would disrupt Ning’s meditations.

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Within the formation. Dark energy was flowing everywhere.

Ning sat there in the lotus position, completely absorbed in the intricate mysteries of Yin and Yang transforming. He continuously experimented, gaining a greater and greater comprehension, having reached a level of completely losing himself in his training. He didn’t even notice the tremors caused earlier by the giant seal smashing against the ground. As for Ninefire and the others, the giant Netherwyrms they were controlling was in the area surrounding Ning, protecting him.

“Yin cannot be without Yang.”

“Yang cannot be without Yin.”

“Even the most powerful of dragons has regrets. After every peak, there is a valley...”

“Only when Yin and Yang transform into each other can they endlessly engender each other in a cycle.” Ning suddenly understood.

The Divine Sun Tattoo and the Divine Moon Tattoo on his back suddenly lit up. He could sense, from an unfathomably distance, separated by untold numbers of planes, those two giant stars. The Lunar Star and the Solar Star. They each immediately sent down surges of Lunar Truewater and Solar Truefire, which pierced through countless planes and countless voids, descending directly upon Ning.

“Rumble...” “Rumble...” The surrounding area instantly became transformed into a world of fire and water.

Enormous petals of fire and water transformed into the bud of a flower, completely covering Ning within. With the Lunar Truewater and Solar Truefire as the core, a tremendous amount of fire and water appeared, forming a gigantic flower that completely surrounded Ning, who was now like the stamen within the flower.

Even the distant Adept Xu Li and his group of Zifu Disciples could see, from far away, an enormous flower emerge from within the dark fog, as the tips of the petals just barely stretched out above the black fog.

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Book 6: Breaking Through the Cocoon, Becoming a Butterfly Chapter 22: Earth-Rank Magic Treasure

“What is that?” The seven Zifu Disciples of Snowdragon Mountain stared in amazement at the tips of the flower petals, which stretched out just beyond the distant black fog. Just from the tips of the petals alone, they could imagine how enormous the entire flower was.

“What is the Ji clan doing?”

“Adept Xu, the Ji clan...” The Zifu Disciples all looked at Adept Xu Li, who frowned and replied, “It should be an enormous flower, with the petals either a fiery red color or a watery blue color. It should be formed from fire and water.”

They weren’t able to reach much of a conclusion from this distance, just by staring at the tips of the flower emerging from the black fog.

“Let me try something.” Adept Xu pointed into the distance. “Descend!”

That giant moonlight hand once more emerged from the brilliant moon that hung in the pitch-black sky. It seized the huge, three hundred meter long seal and smashed downwards towards the petal. Immediately, a dragon’s body emerged from the black fog, receiving the blow from the great seal. With a boom...the black draconic form trembled, but managed to withstand the blow.

“Hmph. They are hiding in a formation. In close quarters, I would be able to crumble that draconic body with a single seal-blow.” Adept Xu shook his head.

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Within the formation.

Ji Ninefire was extremely nervous. He sent mentally, "Ji Ning is currently at the most critical moment of his training. That Wanxiang Adept wants to attack by using his Manifestations. No matter what, we must stop him!"

As for Ji Truekeep, Granny Shadow, and the others, they all understood that Ning was the future hope for their Ji clan. How could they permit anyone to disturb Ning's training?

"He formed a flower of fire and water...what is Ji Ning doing?" Although Ninefire could sense that flower, he was still puzzled. This was because Ning already had the Waterflame Lotus technique. Was Ning currently gaining insights into the Dao? Or was he training in his techniques?

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An enormous flower of fire and water, more than three hundred meters tall, completely enveloped Ning.

The core of it was formed from Lunar Truewater and Solar Truefire, which activated and summoned a large amount of solar power and lunar power, flooding Ning's body with it. Under the guidance of Ning's divine tattoos, it caused Ning's divine body to naturally, slowly evolve. Every single tendon, muscle, bone...even every single cell of every organ was wildly devouring this power.

[Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]. Generally speaking, in order to advance by a stage, one slowly accumulated power, and then broke through. For example, from the fourth to the fifth stage, or from the fifth to the sixth stage, one had to slowly train and accumulate strength.

But from the sixth stage to the seventh stage was a giant leap between different realms!

The divine body would change on a qualitative level, and so the amount of energy that was needed was incomparably astonishing. In fact, the amount needed was even more astonishingly tremendous than the amount which Ning had acquired over the course of nearly five years, as he advanced from the fourth stage to the sixth stage. This was the most difficult-to-train Fiendgod Body Refining technique. Ning had even developed his own 'Rainwater Sword Domain' by now, and yet only today did he break through to the seventh stage!

The most difficult technique!

The most profound, mysterious technique!

But upon breakthrough through and advancing past this stage, one would receive assistance from the Solar Star and the Lunar Star, the two exalted, supreme stars. They would send down their Solar Truefire and Lunar Truewater to draw in enormous amounts of power, so as to allow the divine body to rapidly increase in strength.

"Whoosh!"

The enormous flower of water and fire became translucent, slowly opening and revealing the nude form of a youth, whose body was incomparably jewel-like and completely untarnished. It was Ning! A layer of fur clothing quickly appeared on Ning's body, formed from his armor-type magic treasure.

A hint of a smile was on Ning's face. He had finally passed into the seventh stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]. He could sense the surging divine power within his body, and the tremendous, endless lifeforce it contained. His body could be reborn from a single drop of blood.

"Finally, I can truly use divine abilities." Ning revealed a look of joy.

A Fiendgod Body Refiner had to reach the Zifu level in order to unleash divine abilities.

The Windwing Evasion technique was more a matter of skill and technique, and so it could be used with just elemental ki energy. Still, divine abilities were 'divine' abilities, and so only when using divine power to fuel them would they truly be divine, and truly unleash their full power. Previously, Ning was only at the peak Xiantian level as a Fiendgod Body Refiner, while his elemental ki energy was beyond the peak Zifu-level within the formation. The difference was too great...which was why he had used his elemental ki to perform the Windwing Evasion.

Now, however, although he had just reached the seventh stage, he had done so by using the number one Fiendgod Body Refining technique. Ning was no weaker than a normal late-stage Zifu Disciple Fiendgod Body Refiner.

"Compared to Jadechild," Ning mused, "My current divine body is perhaps just a level weaker than his was."

"He had the divine ability, 'Heavenly Transformation', while I have the divine ability, 'Windwing Evasion.'"

"I also have my Rainwater Sword Domain, the Darknorth swords...if we were to fight again, I would still be able to kill him, even if we were to fight head-on." Ning was very confident in himself. The Windwing Evasion was a very different type of divine ability, compared to the Heavenly Transformation. Each had their own advantages; Heavenly Transformation was superlative in terms of power and speed, but lacking a bit in agility.

As for Windwing Evasion, it focused on both speed and agility!

"Ji Ning." A voice rang out by his ears.

"Patriarch?" Ning revealed a smile.

"Hurry over." Ninefire sent frantically. A corridor appeared in the black fog in front of Ning, and Ning transformed into a ray of light as he hurried through it.

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Patriarch Ninefire, Yichuan, and the Fairy Crane in the form of that white-robed maiden were all standing there.

"Patriarch." When Ning emerged from the corridor within the black fog, he had a feeling that something was wrong. He saw that the Patriarch and his father didn't look the slightest bit excited; instead, they had very somber looks on their faces.

"What is it?" Ning asked.

Ninefire said in a low voice, "I originally thought that after you killed that group of Zifu Disciples and Jadechild, that we would be able to survive this tribulation. But I didn't expect...that Snowdragon Mountain would send yet another group of Zifu Disciples over, with a Wanxiang Adept amongst them."

"Wanxiang Adept?" Ning was shocked. "How could there be a Wanxiang Adept? How could the Swallow Mountain branch of Snowdragon Mountain have managed to invite a Wanxiang Adept to come in such a short period of time? Aren't we extremely far away from the main sect of Snowdragon Mountain?"

"I don't know." Ninefire shook his head.

Yichuan said solemnly as well, "No matter what, this Wanxiang Adept has already arrived. His power is quite terrifying. Earlier, he used his Manifestation to attack with a giant seal. By relying on the Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation, we were just barely able to withstand it."

Ning's face grew solemn as well.

A Manifestation? One which the Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation was just barely able to resist?

"That Wanxiang Adept should be named Xu Li." The nearby white-robed maiden suddenly said.

"Eh?" Ning, Ninefire, and Yichuan all looked towards the Fairy Crane.

The white-robed maiden said, "I followed Nong Zidao for many years, and once encountered this Xu Li. Adept Xu Li is a formidable figure in Snowdragon Mountain; he's not someone who Jadechild could be compared to. Jadechild's status in Snowdragon Mountain was quite ordinary, and even by using his divine ability, he was only on the same level as an early Wanxiang Adept."

"Adept Xu Li became a Wanxiang Adept more than sixty years ago." The white-robed maiden said. "He is a Ki Refiner, and the technique he trains in is definitely one of the best techniques available to Snowdragon Mountain. Although his training speed is slow, his elemental ki is extremely pure. After sixty years, he must at least be at the middle stage for Wanxiang Adepts."

"In addition, as a Wanxiang Adept of Snowdragon Mountain, he definitely has an Earth-ranked magic treasure! There is a qualitative difference between Mortal-ranked magic treasures and Earth-ranked magic treasures...the difference in power is tremendous as well. In addition, his comprehension of the Dao is definitely far above that of Jadechild's as well. Although Jadechild had a divine ability, there was no way for him to use an Earth-ranked magic treasure. This is a fundamental difference between him and Adept Xu. If Adept Xu wished to kill Jadechild, it would be simplicity itself."

After speaking, the white-robed maiden no longer spoke.

Ninefire and Yichuan exchanged glances. Earlier, when they were in a state of panic, the white-robed maiden hadn't said a word. Once Ning appeared, however, the white-robed maiden had provided some information regarding Adept Xu. Clearly, this white-robed maiden felt rather subservient towards Ning, rather than towards the Ji clan as a whole.

"At least at the middle-stage Wanxiang Adept level? An Earth-ranked magic treasure? Insights into the Dao?" Ning pondered. He wasn't a foolish child who understood nothing. After having seen so many magic treasures in the aquatic estate, Ning knew very well that the difference in power between magic treasures at different levels was tremendous.

There was a fundamental difference in power between an Earth-ranked magic treasure and a Mortal-ranked magic treasure.

As the maiden had said, if Adept Xu wanted to kill Jadechild, it would be simple!

“Ji Ning.” Ninefire’s face was red with worry. He said frantically, “We have never before fought against a Wanxiang Adept; we’ve only heard legends of battling them. Wanxiang Adepts definitely vastly outstrip Zifu Disciples in power. Wanxiang Adepts are able to kill Zifu Disciples as easily as we kill Xiantian lifeforms. Earth-ranked magic treasures...we’ve only heard of them, but have never experienced their power first-hand. You absolutely must not be careless. You hold the official writ to our City of Ten Thousand Swords, and also have the Traceless Talisman. Remember. If the situation begins to turn grim, immediately flee!”

Ning was stunned.

Flee?

“As long as you escape, the Ji clan will definitely rise again, and to even greater heights.” Ninefire instructed.

Ning had a restless feeling. He could vaguely sense danger looming. His soul was so powerful that generally speaking, when encountering danger, he would feel a vague, warning sense.

“Wanxiang Adept?” Ning didn’t have any experience fighting one either.

“Remember. You are not to risk yourself.” Ninefire looked at Ning, and Yichuan looked at his son with worry as well.

“I understand.” Ning nodded gently. “This Wanxiang Adept...I will definitely be very careful. If anything goes wrong, I will immediately flee.”

“Right.” Ninefire nodded.

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Outside the formation.

The Immortal practitioners of Snowdragon Mountain stared towards the distant Oxhorn Mountain, shrouded in black fog. The tips of the flower petals had disappeared by now.

“Adept Xu, what should we do?”

“Are we just to wait and watch here?” The Zifu Disciples all looked towards Adept Xu, waiting for his orders.

Adept Xu stared into the distance, a cold look in his eyes. He said a single, cold word. “Wait!”

Both Jadechild and Nong Zidao had failed. Although there was a huge difference in power between him and them, he still had to be cautious. He knew very well that this formation was extremely strange. Even though he was very powerful, he couldn’t enter recklessly. At worst...they could just give up this elemental ore mine.

“Master-uncle Xu, master-uncle Xu.” A distant ray of light shot towards them.

Xu Li lifted his head to take a look.

There was a fur-clad man, riding atop that streak of light.

“Apprentice-nephew Zidao.” A look of surprised delight appeared on Xu Li’s face. He hurriedly went forward to greet him. Out of all the people who had entered the formation, Nong Zidao was the one which Xu Li cared about the most. Nong Zidao was also an expert in formations, and had experience with this one. He was precisely what Xu Li needed the most right now.

“Master-uncle Xu.” Nong Zidao said hurriedly. “I was afraid that you had already entered the formation. Fortunately, you didn’t.”

“What?” Xu Li frowned as he looked at Nong Zidao. “Is this formation truly so terrifying?”

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Book 6: Breaking Through the Cocoon, Becoming a Butterfly Chapter 23: Sealing

Nong Zidao said hurriedly, “This grand formation is known as the Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation. This is a legendary formation. Although the Ji clan only has the simplified, Mortal-rank version of the formation, this is definitely one of the most supreme formations at the Mortal-rank. The power of this technique cannot be underestimated; it is no lower than some Earth-rank formations. If, master-uncle Xu, you were to enter it, you would be trapped within. Fortunately, you didn’t enter...”

“It is that amazing?” Adept Xu was startled.

A supreme Mortal-rank formation that was no weaker than some Earth-rank formations? Adept Xu knew very well that the value of such a formation was probably no lower than that magic treasure of his, the giant seal he was holding.

“Senior apprentice-brother Zidao, then what should we do?”

“Just watch as the Ji clan continues to delay?”

The Zifu Disciples all began to ask questions, worried. Nong Zidao said, “If I hadn’t already entered, I wouldn’t know either. However, since I’ve already spent quite some time within the Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation, I’ve spent a good amount of time analyzing it, and have gained certain insights. Right...let’s not be impatient. Let me first break the black fog formation.”

Nong Zidao immediately walked forward, with Adept Xu right behind him. Adept Xu viewed Nong Zidao as being the most useful of this group of Zifu Disciples. He was a formations expert...naturally, he had to ensure Nong Zidao’s safety.

“The black fog bewildering formation is an ordinary formation.” Nong Zidao laughed. “Prior to this, when I entered it, I was about to break it, but just as I was going to break it, I was trapped by the Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation.”

“Right.”

Nong Zidao looked carefully at the black fog surrounding the entire Oxhorn Mountain. "If my predictions are correct, one of the formation flags should be three hundred meters in that direction." As he spoke, a flywhisk appeared in his hands. He swept it out, and its three thousand white strands immediately shot out, swirling towards the distance at high speed.

Swoosh!

Instantly, a formation flag was uprooted, and the black fog that had been covering the entire Oxhorn Mountain dissipated. Sunlight shone down upon Oxhorn Mountain, revealing an enormous black dragon that was currently coiled around it. The enormous body of the black dragon emanated a faint, dark, netherworldly aura, but the area the aura reached out to was far smaller than the area previously covered by the black fog bewildering formation.

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Atop Oxhorn Mountain.

Ning, Ninefire, and the others all had solemn looks on their faces. As soon as they saw Nong Zidao appear, they knew that the situation had just turned grim! They hadn't expected that Nong Zidao, who had clearly fled, would appear once more. Nong Zidao had entered the formation and had a great deal of experience with it. And now, he easily defeated their black fog bewildering formation from outside.

"Why has Nong Zidao returned?" Ninefire's eyes were filled with resentment and disbelief. "Without Nong Zidao present, even though this Adept Xu is powerful, as soon as he entered the Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation, he would be trapped within and unable to depart."

"Nong Zidao!"

"How could things have ended up this way!" The members of the Ji clan were all frantic and grief-stricken.

Ning felt hatred in his heart as well. Nong Zidao's arrival was akin to making Adept Xu a tiger with wings.

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Nong Zidao and Adept Xu stared at the Netherwyrms, coiling about atop the distant Oxhorn Mountain.

"That enormous black dragon is the 'Netherwyrms' formed by the Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation." Nong Zidao said.

"Netherwyrms." Adept Xu stared at the giant black dragon coiling about Oxhorn Mountain, then nodded slightly.

Nong Zidao continued, "The Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation also has a secondary, bewildering effect. The 'nether fog' that emanates from it is also a type of bewildering formation. To break the entire Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation...it is too difficult. Even I don't know how long it would take for me to break it."

Adept Xu frowned. "Even you are unable to break it?"

“However, simply breaking the nether fog is much simpler. I’m able to do that.” Nong Zidao laughed. “Master-uncle, don’t be impatient. The Netherwyrms and the nether fog are two separate parts. The Netherwyrms are used to attack, while the nether fog is used to trap enemies. Although I’m unable to break the entire Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation, if you give me a bit of time and assist me, master-uncle, I am able to make the nether fog dissipate.”

Adept Xu said in surprised delight, “Make the nether fog disappear? Without the protection of the bewildering formation, if the Ji clan is to rely on the Netherwyrms to fight head on against me, they will definitely perish.”

How could Adept Xu fear a few Zifu Disciples? The reason he didn’t dare enter earlier was because he wasn’t confident in being able to deal with the formations.

“The Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation has, in total, five component formations. The bewildering formation also has five components.” Nong Zidao said. “Previously, we entered the Dragonclaw Formation. I have already gained insight into some of the profound intricacies of the Dragonclaw Formation. However, Jadechild wasn’t strong enough...but with your power, master-uncle...as long as you use your Earth-ranked magic treasure, that giant seal, you will be able to disrupt the elemental pulse within the ground and dissipate the nether fog.”

“Haha, excellent.” Adept Xu was overjoyed.

Although he was an amateur, he still understood the principle of how formations relied on activating the power of the heavens and the earth...

If a formations expert had seen through the intricacies of the inner workings of a formation, then just by applying a few techniques to a few areas, the functioning of the entire formation could be disrupted! Nong Zidao wasn’t able to destroy the Netherwyrms, but he was able to disrupt the nether fog.

“Master-uncle.” Nong Zidao laughed. “After I break through the nether fog, the Ji clan will be forced to face us head-on. The Ji clan is very weak; I’m afraid that they will immediately flee! Our ultimate goal is to gain the official writ for the City of Ten Thousand Swords, which they carry. If they are to escape, it will be very troublesome. And so, it is best if we first set down a grand sealing formation around Oxhorn Mountain.”

Adept Xu, hearing this, nodded. “Your thoughts are meticulous.”

“Swoosh!”

Adept Xu immediately transformed into a ray of light, flying about while setting up a grand formation around the entire base of Oxhorn Mountain.

“Rumble...”

A barrier of light, appearing like the ripples of clear water, suddenly sprang into being. The enormous barrier of light covered the entire Oxhorn Mountain, like a giant dome over it! Not just the air; even the ground was sealed off by the barrier of light.

The entire world had been sealed off!

This was a grand sealing formation...

Ning, Ninefire, and the others atop Oxhorn Mountain, upon seeing the giant barrier of light appear out of nowhere, completely separating Oxhorn Mountain away from the outside world, all had exceedingly ugly looks on their faces.

“A grand sealing formation.” Ninefire said hoarsely. “In addition, Adept Xu personally established it. To break through this grand sealing formation....most likely, only someone with power equivalent to Adept Xu is capable of it.”

“Right.” Granny Shadow had a hint of despair in her eyes as well.

“We won’t be able to leave.” Truekeep said softly. “With our power, there is no way for us to break the sealing formation. There’s nowhere to run...so, let’s fight. Let’s have a fight with this Wanxiang Adept!”

Yichuan nodded as well. “Originally, I had thought that we had survived this tribulation. But a Wanxiang Adept has come! Our Ji clan should feel proud; we have forced a Wanxiang Adept to come deal with us.”

“Ji Ning, remember, if you have a bad feeling when fighting with Adept Xu, you must immediately leave.” Ninefire looked at Ning.

“You are the future hope of our Ji clan. Remember this.” Granny Shadow looked at Ning.

Truekeep and Ah Xing also looked towards Ning.

His father, Yichuan, gave him instructions as well. “Don’t do anything foolish.”

At this moment...

Ning could feel the despair his elders felt. When the grand sealing formation had appeared, it represented the fact that there was nowhere for the Ji clan to retreat to. Only he, who had the Traceless Talisman, was able to escape. There was no way for the others to escape.

“Right.” Ning nodded solemnly.

“Xu Li!” Ning looked downwards, staring through the nether fog towards the distant Adept Xu and Nong Zidao, his gaze filled with a killing intent. “A Wanxiang Adept? I want to see exactly how powerful a Wanxiang Adept is.” Ning’s heart was now filled with a desire to kill this Wanxiang Adept, who posed a great threat to the Ji clan!

Kill! Kill! Kill!

.....

At the base of Oxhorn Mountain.

Adept Xu, Nong Zidao, and the others were all within the grand sealing barrier.

“There is another thing I must warn you of, master-uncle.” Nong Zidao said.

“Oh?” Adept Xu looked at him.

Nong Zidao continued, “The Ji clan only has a few Zifu Disciples, most of whom are not worthy of concern. There is only one person we must be careful of! He is the monstrous genius of the Ji clan, ‘Ji Ning’, who is only sixteen years old.”

“Sixteen? We have to be careful of him?” Adept Xu was shocked, and the other Zifu Disciples were incomparably surprised as well.

“Yes.” Nong Zidao said solemnly. “His power is quite terrifying. Earlier, nineteen of us Zifu Disciples entered, along with two Zifu-level spirit-beasts...actually, by relying on our own formation, we were able to fight against that Netherwurm. The Ji clan wasn’t able to harm us at all, but in the end, Ji Ning attacked. He was simply too strong.”

“All of our fellow disciples, including senior apprentice-brother Jadechild, died in Ji Ning’s hands.” Nong Zidao said.

“He is only sixteen! He killed Jadechild?” Adept Xu stared.

There was no monster like this in the entirety of Snowdragon Mountain!

The other Zifu Disciples were all dazed as well.

How could such a monstrous talent have appeared in a local clan like this Ji clan?

“You’ll know once you see him.” Nong Zidao said heavily. “Ji Ning dual-trains as a Ki Refiner and as a Fiendgod Body Refiner. In addition, he is exceedingly skilled in swordplay, to the point of even having comprehended a ‘Dao Domain’.”

“Dao Domain!” Adept Xu’s heart clenched, hard.

He, a mighty Wanxiang Adept, had yet to reach the ‘Dao Domain’ level in his insights regarding the Dao. The other Zifu Disciples were completely stupefied. Dao Domain? This was a concept that was too distant for them. Sixteen? A sixteen year old who gained a Dao Domain? This...was this real?

“His Dao Domain is a Rainwater Domain.” Nong Zidao said. “Once the rain begins to fall, you must be careful. It represents that Ji Ning is about to attack at any moment.”

“Right.” Adept Xu nodded.

He felt that as a Wanxiang Adept with an Earth-ranked magic treasure and a high level of insight into the Dao...that he would absolutely be able to overcome this genius. However, the enemy did have a Dao Domain. This made it so that that he would definitely pay careful attention to this foe.

“Also. Prior to this, I had to rely on a Lesser Teleportation Dao-seal in order to flee.” Nong Zidao said.

“This Ji Ning of the Ji clan makes me uneasy. If he begins to battle with you, master-uncle...if they use some techniques against me, it will be very dangerous. Thus, master-uncle, I would like to borrow a Lesser Teleportation Dao-seal from you, so as to preserve my own life. Only then would I feel confident in entering the Netherwurm Heavenlock Formation once more and calmly investigate the nether fog, as well as how to disrupt the flow of elemental ki.”

Adept Xu hesitated for a moment.

Lesser Teleportation Dao-seal?

This sort of Dao-seal was a life-saving item and exceedingly precious. Although he was a Wanxiang Adept, the main sect had only bestowed upon him a single such Dao-seal. Afterwards, by trading some

of his own treasures, he acquired two more. Each Lesser Teleportation Dao-seal was exceedingly precious. But of course, if one encountered a particularly dangerous foe or a unique location, the Lesser Teleportation Dao-seal would be of no use either.

However, for battles at the normal Wanxiang Adept level, this Dao-seal was generally enough for one to flee.

“Fine. I will loan you one.” Adept Xu nodded. He understood that if he didn’t loan it to Nong Zidao, then Zidao, who had just avoided calamity, wouldn’t be willing to enter again.

After accepting the Lesser Teleportation Dao-seal, Nong Zidao instantly felt more confident, and he said with assuredness, “Master-uncle, please don’t worry. Ji Ning battled against Jadechild for quite some time, and was only able to kill Jadechild after exhausting his divine power. Master-uncle, when you go in person, you will definitely annihilate the entire Ji clan and acquire the official writ.”

“Excellent.” Adept Xu nodded and laughed.

“Come, let us enter together.” Adept Xu swept the other Zifu Disciples with his gaze.

The other seven Zifu Disciples glanced at each other, afraid to refuse. They all followed Adept Xu and Nong Zidao towards that distant, enormous Netherwurm, and the nether fog it emanated. Soon, all of them entered the region of nether fog.

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Book 6: Breaking Through the Cocoon, Becoming a Butterfly Chapter 24: Ji Ning Battles Myriad Manifestations!

As soon as Adept Xu, Nong Zidao, and the rest of the nine entered the Netherwurm Heavenlock Formation, Adept Xu barked, “Flood Dragon Formation!”

As soon as his words rang out, above the heads of Nong Zidao, Wu Qi, Lu Huang, and the other Zifu Disciples appeared the mirage of a Flood Dragon. The eight Flood Dragon mirages flew rapidly towards Adept Xu. Above him appeared an enormous Flood Dragon Phantom, which hovered there, waiting to join together with the other eight Flood Dragons.

As they joined together, instantly, a Flood Dragon with visible, snow-white scales appeared, circling around the nine.

Snowdragon Mountain was most famous for the ‘Soaring Snowdragon Formation’. This was a grand formation that protected the entire sect. It could be led by a Primal Daoist, who would lead a group of Wanxiang Adepts and thousands of Zifu Disciples to form a massive formation that would transform into a white divine dragon, with the power to annihilate the heavens. The power was great enough to give Immortals a good fight!

Aside from this supreme ‘Soaring Snowdragon Formation’, it also had various simplified versions of the formation, all of which would be referred to as ‘Flood Dragon Formations’.

All the simplified versions could only be referred to as creating a ‘Flood Dragon’; only the supreme formation of the sect was referred to as creating a ‘Snowdragon’. Adept Xu and the rest of the nine were currently using one of the simplified Flood Dragon Formations.

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The snowy white Flood Dragon swirled about them, emanating a powerful presence.

Adept Xu and the rest of the nine constantly advanced.

“Halt.” Nong Zidao ordered, while pointing to the front. “Master-uncle, please act. Make your grand seal transform to a length of thirty meters, and smash down at that mountain over there, lowering it by thirty meters.”

Adept Xu nodded. The grand seal flew out from his hand, which transformed to a large size, roughly thirty meters or so. Below the grand seal was a dense earthen yellow aura. He pointed downwards, and the grand seal, with a rumbling sound, crushed downwards, completely crumbling the trees and rocks beneath as he carved out a thirty meter deep crater.

“In this location, smash out another thirty meter deep crater.” Nong Zidao continued to walk forward while giving guidance.

Bang! Bang ! Bang! As the grand seal smashed down time and time again, one giant crater after another appeared, forming a strange diagram.

More than a hundred deep craters were created.

“Success.” Nong Zidao revealed a smile. Part of the elemental ki that had been flowing through the earth had begun to change directions. Instantly, the nether fog around them began to rapidly dissipate, as the surrounding area once more became clear.

“Formidable.”

“Senior apprentice-brother Zidao is truly formidable.”

The various Zifu Disciples were all overjoyed. Everything around them was very clear now. Part of the entire Oxhorn Mountain was now revealed, and the trees and forests there could be clearly seen with the naked eye. Even the distant, gigantic black claws of the dragon could be seen. Immediately afterwards, the body of the coiling dragon atop Oxhorn Mountain suddenly began to move, and the location of the dragon claw changed as the claw moved to hide in a different part of the nether fog.

Nong Zidao laughed. “The nether fog of the Dragonclaw Formation has been dissipated. Now, only the Dragonpearl Formation, the Dragonhead Formation, the Dragontail Formation, and the Dragonbody Formation still emanate that nether fog.”

“Which sub-formation shall we enter next?” Adept Xu already had a smile on his face.

“The reason why I was able to break the formation so quickly was because I already pondered on this formation for quite some time, previously.” Nong Zidao said. “As for the other four sub-formations...I imagine I will need a bit more time.”

Adept Xu said, worried, “How much longer?”

Nong Zidao let out a confident laugh. “Now that I have some experience from breaking the Dragonclaw Formation, the other four will be fast. I will need at most an hour for each of the others.”

“Excellent.” Adept Xu was instantly overjoyed.

At most an hour?

The remaining four formations, all combined, would only need four hours or so! As long as the nether fog was destroyed, there would be no place for the Ji clan to hide. They would have to fight head on...

“The Ji clan is doomed!” Adept Xu’s eyes were filled with anticipation. If they truly were to acquire this elemental ore mine, he would have rendered the most merits, and would naturally be granted great rewards.

“Let’s go!”

Adept Xu gave the order. The nine of them, surrounded by the protective snowy white Flood Dragon, entered the Dragonbody Formation.

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“The nether fog around the Dragonclaw Formation was broken!” Every member of the Ji clan was filled with dread.

It was the nether fog that allowed them to hold an advantage, in that they could fight when they wanted to, and flee when they wanted to! As for the enemy, they could only passively be attacked, and wouldn’t have any place to flee!

“We can’t let this continue.” Ji Ning, watching this, grew anxious. He understood the Netherwurm Heavenlock Formation quite well, and also had a good grasp of formations in general. He hurriedly said, “The power of the Netherwurm Heavenlock Formation is extremely great, and it also has an auxiliary nether fog effect. To break the entire Netherwurm Heavenlock Formation is very hard, but it is comparatively easier to break through the bewildering nether fog formation. Nong Zidao...since he was able to break the Dragonclaw Formation’s fog, he will be able to break the others quite quickly as well, because they are all linked and similar.”

The controller of the formation, Ji Ninefire, nodded as well. “Right. We can’t just watch as they destroy the nether fog. We have to stop them.”

“We have to stop them.”

Frantic looks were on the faces of Granny Shadow and the others as well.

“Ji Ning, you’ll have to be the one to go.” Ninefire looked towards Ji Ning. “You are our only hope for stopping them. If even you are unable to stop them...then, the rest of us will have no choice but to try and delay, to try and hold on as long as possible.”

Ning nodded slightly. “Alright.”

This tribulation...it came in waves! After killing Jadechild, they had thought that they had won for sure, but then Adept Xu had arrived. This caused the Ji clan to once more face a terrifying danger.

“This battle...I must win.” Ning’s heart billowed with a boundless desire for battle.

He had to win!

He was the only one who could stop Snowdragon Mountain!

If even he were to fail, then he would be forced to flee, while his Patriarch, his father, and the others would remain trapped here by the grand sealing formation. They would only be able to rely on using their lives to battle for as long as possible.

“Xu Li, I will make sure you die!”

“All of you will die!”

Ning had only one thought – to kill his enemies. For the sake of survival. For the sake of the Ji clan. For the sake of his family. For the sake of not having to leave, grief-stricken, by himself.

He had to kill the enemy!

“Careful.” Yichuan looked at his son.

“Stopping them is important, but staying alive is more important.” Granny Shadow instructed in her hoarse voice.

All of them looked at Ning.

Ning nodded gently. Before him, a corridor in the black fog appeared. He dashed through it, moving like a blur at high speed towards the enemy.

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Moments later.

Ning stood next to an old, gnarled, crooked tree. The area around him was filled with a dense cluster of more than seven hundred flying swords, forty five of which were Mortal-ranked flying swords. After killing Jadechild’s group of Zifu Disciples, Ning’s collection of Mortal-ranked flying swords had increased to forty six, enough to create five formation bases.

“Rumble...” The flying swords around him all began to emit a blurry aura.

Ning frowned, sweat beginning to form on his forehead. He was struggling to control them, and the flying swords around him constantly rose and fell.

“No. I still can’t do it.” Ning shook his head. “Last time, when I fought Jadechild, I had twenty seven Mortal-ranked flying swords...I was only able to just barely use the ninth level of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]. But now, I have forty five Mortal-ranked flying swords...no matter what I try, I’m unable to execute the ninth level of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation].”

“Level eight, then!”

Ning gave it a try.

The flying swords around him all rose into the air, flashing with a white light, but it was still quite difficult.

“Arise!” Ning gritted his teeth. His head hurt to the point of splitting, but he was just able to manifest a flying sword, glowing with white light, in front of himself.

“Disperse.” With a thought, Ning collected the flying swords hovering about him.

Ning pondered to himself, “I am, at most, able to execute the eighth level of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], and it is quite difficult. I imagine that executing three sword flashes using the eighth level of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]...that is my limit.”

Although he was only able to activate the eighth level, in terms of power, the strength of his attack was 30%-40% greater than in the past, when he had used the ninth level of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] to kill Jadechild.

“Patriarch, where are they?” Ning said. “I am prepared.”

“Right ahead of you. I will guide you.” Ninefire sent mentally.

“Alright.”

Ning wielded a pair of the Darknorth swords in his hands, his eyes filled with a killing intent. He rapidly advanced forward.

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The snowy white Flood Dragon roved about, its draconic scales glistening with snowy white light. It was shockingly, breathtakingly beautiful. As for Adept Xu, Nong Zidao, and the others, they were protected and surrounded by the snowy white Flood Dragon. Nong Zidao was focused on analyzing the formation; he had to understand the intricate secrets of the nether fog generated by the Dragonbody Formation.

Suddenly...

“Rustle...”

Within the nether fog, a drizzling rain suddenly appeared out of nowhere. The drizzling rain drifted downwards, cool and comfortable. This was an enjoyable, pleasurable drizzle, but the faces of the nine Immortal practitioners of Snowdragon Mountain all changed.

“Rainwater!”

“Rainwater! Ji Ning’s rainwater!”

“Rainwater Sword Domain. Ji Ning has unleashed his Rainwater Sword Domain. He is about to attack.” The Zifu Disciples were all extremely nervous. Even Nong Zidao temporarily paused his musings, a hint of concern on his face.

The descent of the rainwater was like a call from the Deathgod. The last time it came, Dong Ziqi, Jadechild, and the other Zifu Disciples had all perished. And now, the rain had come again.

“Rainwater Sword Domain?” Adept Xu, dressed in a beautiful black robe, swept the surrounding area with his gaze, his pupils contracting to slits, like that of a venomous viper. He was the calmest of the group, but he was still extremely cautious and wary. After all, he was still some distance away from being able to comprehend a Dao Domain.

“Hmph.” A cold snort rang out.

Within the nether fog, one dazzling star after another began to appear. Amongst the dazzling stars was a brilliant moon. The watery glow of the moon shone down upon Adept Xu and the other Zifu Disciples, covering the entire region of the snowy white Flood Dragon. The moonlight completely, forcibly blocked off the rainwater.

“Ji Ning, you lurk and sneak about. This really makes one look down on you.” Adept Xu stood there in the moonlight, the snowy white Flood Dragon swirling around him as he spoke in a cold voice. “If you want to fight, then come and fight.”

“As you desire!”

A thunderous shout, like a spring thunderbolt, exploded forth.

Boom!

From far away, a bolt of light suddenly shot out from within the nether fog. A giant, fiery winged Roc suddenly surged forth, surrounded by a Waterflame Lotus. In but an instant, the fiery Roc appeared before Adept Xu, moving so quickly as to astonish even him.

“Rumble...” The draconic tail of the snowy white Flood Dragon Phantom slapped towards the giant fiery Roc.

But the giant fiery Roc was simply too fast; the tail slap of the Flood Dragon actually missed!

“This is...” Adept Xu could instantly tell that this was no Roc; it was a youth! This youth’s entire body emanated a fiery light, like that of a Fiendgod’s, while on his back was a set of wings that fluttered agilely. The wing-type magic treasure was also covered with a fiery light, allowing him to move so quickly as to cause fear.

Divine ability – Windwing Evasion!

Once a Fiendgod Body Refiner learned a divine ability, he would be able to fight enemies of a higher power level. Although Ning was only at the seventh stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], he already had the combat ability of an ordinary late-stage Fiendgod Body Refiner. Now that he was also using the exquisitely agile divine ability, ‘Windwing Evasion’, his speed had instantly risen by several levels, to the point of being even faster than Adept Xu.

“Ji Ning?” Adept Xu’s face finally changed as he stared at this fur-clad youth, who wielded two swords, was bathed by the Crimsonbright divine power, and who was so fast as to astonish even him. “He is Ji Ning? Supposedly on par with Jadechild? What sort of joke is this? Jadechild was nowhere near this strong!”

“Die!”

A fierce shout!

Sword light flashed!

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Book 6: Breaking Through the Cocoon, Becoming a Butterfly Chapter 25: 72 Flying Swords

Adept Xu stretched out his hand, and the giant seal suddenly expanded, sweeping towards Ji Ning like a gigantic rampart.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Ning, bathed in fiery light, fluttered the wings on his back, sending himself arcing out in a line, dodging the grand seal and continuing to charge towards Adept Xu.

“Go.” Adept Xu controlled the giant seal, sending the giant seal, glowing with that earthen yellow light, to curve and turn towards Ning once more! The grand seal struck at Ning repeatedly; it was, after all, an Earth-ranked magic treasure, and so it moved in a straight line at tremendous speeds. Only, in terms of agility, it was significantly inferior to Ning.

Crackle!

Ning’s swords flashed, transforming into lines of rainwater that ‘scraped’ by the edges of the grand seal. The grand seal spun out of control to one side, while Ning once more swept out in an arc, charging straight towards Adept Xu.

“He’s too fast. His speed is too fast, and he’s too nimble.” Adept Xu was completely stunned. Just now, in that short period of time, his Earth-ranked magic treasure had clashed against Ning several times, but even his Earth-ranked magic treasure had been thrown off by Ning’s movement techniques.

“Go.”

Adept Xu let out a loud shout, and a black rope appeared in his hands. The black rope was covered with a layer of black energy, and as Adept Xu waved his hands, the black rope quickly expanded until it was the size of a giant python that was more than three hundred meters long, then swept entanglingly towards Ning.

Earth-ranked magic treasure, ‘Earth Garrison Seal’.

Earth-ranked magic treasure, ‘Black Serpent Cord’.

These were the two mighty Earth-ranked magic treasures which Adept Xu relied on as he roamed the world. One was hard, while the other was soft; the two paired together perfectly. Generally speaking, upon encountering those weaker than him, he would use the ‘Earth Garrison Seal’ to viciously smash them to death! Unexpectedly, he hadn’t been able to smash Ning at all, and was forced to bring out the second of his two killing techniques.

“A cord?” Ning stared at the giant black cord, over three hundred meters in length, and his face changed slightly.

“This is troublesome. This giant seal moves in straight lines and isn’t able to do anything to me, but that cord is perfectly suited for locking opponents.” Many thoughts flashed through Ning’s mind. “I definitely cannot permit myself to be constricted by that cord. Once it captures me, I will lose for sure.”

In this battle, Ning had immediately used the Windwing Evasion at full power from the very start. He wanted to rely on his far superior speed and agility to kill his foe!

However...

Adept Xu stood there, unmoving; all he had done was unleash two powerful Earth-ranked magic treasures, and Ning already felt shaken.

“Water Rampart!”

“Waterflame Lotus!” Ning, with a thought, instantly summoned one swirling curtain of water after another in the area around him. These curtains of water, as thin as the wing of a cicada, were all incomparably sharp. They directly chopped apart the moonlight barrier, forming multiple layers of watery curtains.

At the same time, in the air around him, one Waterflame Lotus after another appeared and stabilized. A total of nine lotuses appeared, locked into various locations in the rainwater that perfectly entangled and blocked the rope.

“Hmph, with simple techniques like this, you wish to block my magic treasure?” Adept Xu let out a cold laugh.

The Black Serpent Cord began to wildly wave about and dance. Bangbangbang! One curtain of water was forcibly shattered after the other. Whapwhapwhap! The Waterflame Lotuses were also crushed to bits. How could these water curtains and Waterflame Lotuses possibly block the power of an Earth-ranked magic treasure, when unleashed by a Wanxiang Adept?

But Ning didn’t need to actually block them; what he needed to do was to slow down the speed of the cord, just a bit. Given his ‘Windwing Evasion’ divine ability, his speed would then naturally result in him moving beyond the cord.

“Swish!” “Swish!”

Rainwater filled the skies. Curtains of water swirled around him. Lotus petals of fire and water.

The Black Serpent Cord and the Earth Garrison Seal all strove to slay Ning...but Ning arced out in jagged lines, flashing about like a crooked bolt of lightning, charging straight towards Adept Xu.

“I want to see how many Earth-ranked magic treasures you have.” Ning swiped out with the Darknorth swords in his hands, chopping straight towards Adept Xu.

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Nong Zidao and the others, watching from the side, were completely stupefied. They didn’t even dare to breathe. They had no idea at all that this monstrous genius of the Ji clan would actually be able to fight head on against Adept Xu! Adept Xu had already activated two Earth-ranked magic treasures, but still hadn’t been able to do anything to Ji Ning.

“Clearly...he clearly was just at Jadechild’s level.” Nong Zidao couldn’t believe what he was seeing. “How could Ji Ning’s speed have suddenly risen by so much? Even two mighty Earth-ranked magic treasures, under the influence of his Rainwater Sword Domain and his Waterflame Lotuses, are unable to touch him.”

His speed was simply too fast!

"If he had moved this fast in his earlier battle against Jadechild, Jadechild probably would have lost in their first exchange of blows." Nong Zidao's eyes were filled with disbelief. "Can it be that he just made some sort of a breakthrough?"

Monster.

What a monster!

"Adept Xu will definitely win."

"Definitely win."

Lu Huang and the other Zifu Adepts all prayed quietly. Once Adept Xu lost, Adept Xu could leave through his Lesser Teleportation Dao-seal, but they wouldn't be able to escape.

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"Ji Ning will definitely win." On the other side, Ji Ninefire and the others were praying as well.

"Ji Ning and Adept Xu are fighting to a standstill." Ninefire, as the controller of the Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation, was able to watch this battle. As he did, he spoke with the nearby Yichuan.

"Adept Xu is using two Earth-ranked magic treasures; his power is indeed exceedingly great. However, Ji Ning's speed is astonishing; he's simply inconceivably fast."

As Ninefire spoke, Yichuan, by his side, was holding his breath.

He was nervous.

This was the critical battle!

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Seeing that even two Earth-ranked magic treasures hadn't been enough to stop Ning, Adept Xu suddenly let out an explosive shout: "Formation!"

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

In the air around him, seventy two flying swords suddenly appeared out of nowhere. Every single flying sword glowed with black light, and the seventy two flying swords formed into a circle around Adept Xu, providing him with layers of protections.

"What?!" Ning, just about to display his swordplay and kill Adept Xu, stared in astonishment at the flying swords which had suddenly appeared in front of him. These flying swords all transformed into rays of flowing black light, stabbing straight towards him.

"Clang!" "Clang!" "Clang!" Ning wielded a Darknorth sword in each hand, and in the blink of an eye, he used them to block nine attacks from flying swords. He was knocked flying backwards by the force of the collision, and from behind, the Black Serpent Cord and the Earth Garrison Seal came flying towards him once more.

The wings on Ning's back trembled violently, and he immediately arced away, dodging the attacks.

The layers of Waterflame Lotus and curtains of rainwater around him continued to hinder everything.

“How could it be like this!” Ning’s face changed. He stared at the distant Adept Xu, securely protected by those seventy two flying swords.

“Seventy two flying swords, each of which strikes with power no weaker than a full-force attack from one of my Darknorth swords.” Just now, Ning had attacked with full force. Although his swordplay was intricate, Adept Xu’s flying swords were still filled with middle-stage Wanxiang-level power, and in terms of technique, they were only slightly inferior.

Every single flying sword was indeed no less than a full-force blow from Ning’s Darknorth swords.

“Hahaha...”

The distant Adept Xu began to laugh. “Ji Ning, I’ve already discovered your weakness. For me to use these two Earth-ranked treasures against you is using my weakness against your strength!”

“Although your speed is astonishing, you are still a Zifu Disciple. There’s no need for me to use Earth-ranked magic treasures; these Mortal-ranked flying swords are already enough to deal with you.” Adept Xu laughed. “In addition, to deal with your fast speed, I should use large amounts of magic treasures to attack you in unison.”

“With many magic treasures at hand, I will just so happen to perfectly counter your speed.” Adept Xu laughed.

When fighting against different foes, naturally one had to use different measures. Adept Xu normally battled against other Wanxiang Adepts...and against them, the power of these flyings words would be considered too low. They would generally only be able to achieve victory through the use of Earth-ranked magic treasures. But against Ji Ning, these Mortal-ranked flying swords were enough to deal with him.

“Return.” Adept Xu laughed softly, and the giant seal and black cord that had been chasing after Ning returned to him, swirling about him.

“Go.” Adept Xu pointed towards the distance.

Swoosh!

Instantly, thirty-six flying swords pierced through the skies, attacking Ji Ning.

Although those blossoms of Waterflame Lotuses and layers of watery curtains strove to block the flying swords, the Mortal-ranked flying swords of Adept Xu were no weaker than the full-force blows of Jadechild. Naturally, these flying swords were able to peirce straight through, and although they slowed down a bit, they were simply too numerous. They surrounded Ning from every direction.

It was as though thirty-six people were simultaneously attacking Ning.

“Against you, the path to victory is through sheer numbers.” Adept Xu was extremely confident.

.....

Ning, seeing the thirty-six flying swords attack, had a dramatically changed look on his face. He hurriedly used his Windwing Evasion, urgently attempting to pull away from them. At the same time, six hundred-plus flying swords appeared out of nowhere in the area around Ning.

“Go!” Ning had a savage look on his face, pouring almost all of his concentration into his sword-formation. For the moment, the surrounding layers of watery curtains and blossoms of Waterflame Lotuses all vanished. He had completely focused his concentrating on executing the eighth level of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], and there was nothing left for him to spare on controlling the Waterflame Lotuses and the watery curtains.

Swish!

A ray of sword light suddenly transformed into a drop of rain, instantly howling and charging towards Adept Xu.

“Clang.” The distant Adept Xu, with but a thought, controlled the thirty-six flying swords in pursuit of Ning to block that line of rainwater...

BOOM!

Three of the flying swords managed to intercept the line of rainwater, and the three flying swords were all blasted away, with that line of rainwater continuing to charge towards Adept Xu.

“Oh?” The distant Adept Xu revealed a smile. “It seems the power is quite formidable.”

“Go.” Nine of the thirty-six flying swords protecting him instantly flew out. Clangclangclang! Repeated collision sounds...and the line of rainwater finally vanished.

Adept Xu stared at the distant Ning and laughed softly. “The power of this sword-formation technique of yours is indeed quite significant. However...it still isn’t at the power of my Earth-ranked magic treasures. Even if I just control these Mortal-ranked flying swords to block, I only need six flying swords in order to completely block the sword light generated by your sword-formation.”

“You are dead.” Adept Xu let out a confident laugh. “Die.”

The thirty-six flying swords that had been by his side all flew out as well, joining together with the thirty-six flying swords that were attacking Ning already.

“Eight-By-Nine Sword Formation! Kill!” A hint of a fierce light flashed through Adept Xu’s eyes.

BANG!

The seventy two flying swords transformed into an enormous circular arc. Like an orderly army in a formation, all of the tips of the swords pointed towards Ji Ning.

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Book 6: Breaking Through the Cocoon, Becoming a Butterfly Chapter 26: A Disastrous Defeat

The curtains of water continued to rise up, and the Waterflame Lotuses continued to bloom.

The seventy two flying swords, in the shape of a giant circular arc, pierced through the multiple curtains of water, pierced through the Waterflame Lotuses, and stabbed towards Ning.

“Clang!” “Clang!” “Clang!” “Clang!” “Clang!” “Clang!”

One sound rang out after another. Ji Ning, the Darknorth swords in his hands, hurriedly executed his swordplay, a curtain of water formed from sword light. Ning allowed those flying swords to attack as they pleased, focusing on defense and relying on his two swords to block those seventy two flying swords.

Whoosh!

A flying sword slashed past Ning’s thigh, sending blood flying.

Chop!

A flying sword pierced past Ning’s flank.

“Ning, quick, return, return.” The controller of the Netherwurm Heavenlock Formation, Patriarch Ji Ninefire, sent frantically.

“No.” Ning was unwilling.

“Quick. Your life is more important than ours. Stop fighting. Quick, return.” Ninefire’s voice was filled with urgency and pain.

Ning gritted his teeth, ignoring the Patriarch. He had to go all out and do his best, because...he truly didn’t want to fail.

He didn’t want to fail.

He didn’t want to see them die!

He didn’t want to!

.....

Adept Xu watched from afar, the look on his face having changed. “He lives up to his reputation as someone who has gained insight into a Dao Domain. His swordplay truly is formidable. When defending, his defense can be described as airtight. Even though I’m occasionally able to wound him, it’s under his control.”

After all, the pressure of being attacked by seventy two flying swords was simply too great. Even Ning had to occasionally use his body parts or the magic wings on his back to block those flying swords...

“Kill!” Ning was struggling to block those seventy two flying swords, but suddenly, a fierce light flashed through his eyes.

Of the six hundred-plus flying swords hovering behind him, five hundred-plus suddenly lit up. A sword light began to form in front of Ning, emanating a fierce, sharp aura.

“Swish!” The sword light suddenly pierced through the skies.

This was the seventh level of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]. Despite maintaining the Waterflame Lotus, the curtains of water, and executing his swordplay...Ning was simultaneously able

to divide his mind enough to control the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], but only the seventh level of it.

“Kill, kill, kill!” Ning was in a berserk state. One sword flash after another appeared emerged, transforming into lines of rain and striking out.

“Kill him!” Ning’s eyes were filled with both hope and terror. Terror from the deepest recesses of his heart; terror of being defeated! When the seventy two flying swords had attacked him, causing him to be unable to move closer to Adept Xu, Ning understood...that he would probably lose this time. His greatest advantage in battling Adept Xu was in his movements and agility!

But now, he couldn’t even draw near his opponent. How could he win?

Was he about to lose?

If even he were defeated, then the Ji clan would be unable to stop the enemies. They would have to spend their lives to battle and stop them.

By then, his father, Ji Yichuan, along with Patriarch Ninefire, Granny Shadow...they would all give up their lives.

“Die, die, die!” Ning’s eyes were filled with a killing urge.

He had to go all out!

Go all out, one last time!

One flash of sword light after another transformed into lines of rain, striking towards Adept Xu.

Adept Xu just stood there, laughing coldly. “He really is relentless.” In the area around him, that black cord quickly looped around him multiple times. With the thick cord wrapped about him...the majority of the space was blocked off, and when the lines of rain struck at him, the black cord simply trembled slightly, then shattered the lines of rain.

Boom! Boom! Boom! The cords simply trembled and moved very slightly as they dispersed each attacking line of rain.

The power of this Earth-ranked magic treasure, ‘Black Serpent Cord’, was simply too great. It was able to easily disperse the blows of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation].

“Go.”

The remaining, final drop of rain struck out in a solitary arc, actually striking towards Nong Zidao, protected by multiple people.

“If I kill Nong Zidao, I still win!” Ning’s eyes were filled with savagery.

“Roaaaaar!”

That snowy white Flood Dragon gently descended over the bodies of Adept Xu, Nong Zidao, Lu Huang, and the rest of the nine Immortal practitioners. In but an instant...Adept Xu, Nong Zidao, and the others all entered the ‘body’ of the snowy white Flood Dragon.

It was much like how Ning and the others were within the body of the Netherwurm; Adept Xu and the others were also able to enter the body of their Flood Dragon.

“Bang!” The line of rainwater wildly pierced towards the snowy white Flood Dragon.

The draconic scales of the snowy white Flood Dragon trembled, but the line of rainwater was completely shattered.

Defeat.

“Hahaha.” Nong Zidao, within the body of the snowy white Flood Dragon, began to laugh. “This Flood Dragon Formation was jointly set up by master-uncle, myself, and seven others. Even if you had master-uncle’s level of power, it would still be hard for you to break through it. And your strength is far inferior to master-uncle’s.”

The Flood Dragon simply coiled there.

All of them were within the body of the Flood Dragon, with Adept Xu standing at the Flood Dragon’s head, staring at the distant Ning.

“Our Snowdragon Mountain’s famous ‘Soaring Snowdragon Formation’ is legendary in countless lands.” Adept Xu’s eyes were filled with arrogance. “Although this Flood Dragon Formation is merely a simplified version of the ‘Soaring Snowdragon Formation’, once it has been established with the nine of us within it...even I, using all my power, wouldn’t be able to do anything to this formation, much less you.”

.....

The distant Nong Zidao and Adept Xu spoke smugly. Although Ning was listening, in his heart, he was musing to himself.

“Can it be...can it be that I truly have been forced to take the last step?”

Swish!

Suddenly, a ripple of power surged close to him. Ning was in control of his Rainwater Sword Domain, and so although he couldn’t see anything visibly, he could sense a strange, needle-shaped item pierce towards him.

“Not good.” Ning immediately came to his senses. The magic wings behind his back trembled, and he immediately sought to use the Windwing Evasion to pull away from it. Although the Darknorth swords remained in his hands...they were currently being used to block the seventy two attacking flying swords. If he were to relax against them, the seventy two flying swords would chop his body into mincemeat.

Slash!

As Ning was frantically dodging, the sharp needle, as though consciously controlled, pierced straight through Ning’s flank.

“Bang!”

The elemental ki exploded!

Ning's incomparably tough Fiendgod body still had a giant hole blasted through it, even larger than the size of his head. The left part of his waist was completely shattered, leaving behind only a few scraps of muscle and flesh.

"Grow." While using the Windwing Evasion to hurriedly pull away, Ning also controlled his divine power to instantly cause new flesh and blood to grow out at high speed. The giant hole in his side was rapidly healing.

"Quick, come back." Ninefire howled furiously. "Ji Ning, if you don't come back, all of us will die with our eyes open and filled with resentment!!!"

He was frantic. Patriarch Ninefire was now truly frantic. He had asked Ning to come back earlier, but Ning insisted on struggling. If this continued...Ning would very likely perish.

Ning gritted his teeth in agony.

He would leave!

"Swoosh." His wings fluttered, and he instantly charged into the nearby nether fog. The nether fog was filled with darkness, and Adept Xu and the others only watched him enter, not daring to follow in.

"Ji Ning! You've already been struck by my Divine Blackblood Needle!" Adept Xu called out in a high voice. "I can already sense your location. Once you draw near me, forget about leaving with your life!"

.....

Halfway up Oxhorn Mountain.

One figure after another was making haste towards this location, moving like streaks of light. Ji Truekeep, Granny Shadow, and the others were all gathering here.

Swoosh

Ning arrived as well.

"Ji Ning." Ninefire looked at the youth. It was this youth who had risked his life, time and time again. He let out a long sigh. "Ji Ning, our Ji clan has let you down."

"Patriarch." Ning's eyes were red.

"You've done enough things. Done well enough." Ninefire gently patted Ning on the shoulders. "In a slightly larger clan, a slightly more powerful clan...how could a supreme genius like yourself be forced to risk your life repeatedly like this? It is our Ji clan which has let you down. You killed Jadechild and that group of Zifu Disciples; you have done enough."

"If we truly are not able to endure this, then it will simply be the will of the heavens, that our Ji clan is not to survive this tribulation." Ninefire said softly. "There is no need to feel anger. No need to feel grief. All clans will have a time to flourish, and a time to fall. What we can do is to fight with all our power. That is enough. For the heavens to allow a genius like you to arrive within our Ji clan is already an incomparable kindness."

Ninefire looked at Ning. "I know that with you alive, our Ji clan will definitely flourish. It definitely will!"

Ning gritted his teeth. His heart was shaking!

“Given how the situation has progressed...” Ninefire swept his gaze towards the nearby Granny Shadow, Ah Xing, Truekeep, and Yichuan, along with the Landwyrms and the Fairy Crane. “Everyone, you should all know that the situation is very grim. There is also a giant sealing formation outside; there is nowhere for us to run.”

“This time, our only choice is to fight to the death!” Ninefire was very calm, but his gaze was blazing.

“Fight to the death!”

Yichuan, Truekeep, and the others all had the same resolve in their eyes.

None of them would cower!

None of them were afraid!

If they were afraid, they wouldn’t have come here, to Oxhorn Mountain.

“Obey my commands.” Ninefire said. “All of us must fight with full force, making it so that Nong Zidao is unable to completely concentrate on breaking the formation. We need to delay as much as we can. Thus, Landwyrms, you will be the first to go and delay them. Once you die, the Fairy Crane will go!”

The Landwyrms and the Fairy Crane, the two Zifu-level spirit-beasts, were in the form of the azure-armored man and the white-robed maiden. They glanced at each other, their eyes filled with bitterness.

“The two of you can only blame your poor luck. Fight at full power.” Ninefire said. “If you die in battle for the sake of our Ji clan, you can still enter the cycle of reincarnation. If you resist, then I will shatter your souls!”

“We will obey.”

The azure-armored warrior and the white-robed maiden both lowered their heads.

Once the soul-bond was set, they absolutely had to obey the orders of their owner. Otherwise, their owner could easily destroy their souls.

“After the Fairy Crane dies, Yichuan, you will go next.” Ninefire looked at Yichuan.

“Right.” Yichuan nodded.

He was only able to fight at the Zifu Disciple level for an hour. He was of the least use to the Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation; naturally, he would be the first member of the Ji clan to charge forward.

“Once Yichuan dies, Liu Xing, you go.” Ninefire looked towards the old servant, Ah Xing.

Ah Xing nodded.

“Once Liu Xing dies, Ji Shadow, you go.” Ninefire looked at his little sister.

Granny Shadow nodded.

“After Granny Shadow dies, Truekeep, you go.” NInefire looked towards Truekeep. “I will immediately follow!”

Not a single voice was raised in dissent.

Ning, watching this, felt great pain in his heart. He hurriedly said, “Patriarch, I am the strongest, and I’m able to delay them as well. If I ambush them repeatedly...I can make it so that Nong Zidao is distracted and unable to focus on breaking the formation.”

“Didn’t you hear what Adept Xu just said?” NInefire barked. “You were hit by his Divine Blackblood Needle. He can sense your location. Once you draw near him, he will definitely prepare a heavy counter-attack for you. It doesn’t matter if we die, but if you die, you would have let down the entire Ji clan, not just yourself, understood?”

Ning gritted his teeth.

“Ji Ning.” Granny Shadow said hoarsely. “If you dare to come again, I will immediately commit suicide in front of you.”

“Granny Shadow...” Ning’s heart trembled.

“Ji Ning.” Yichuan looked at his son, then gave him his instructions. “Don’t make our deaths meaningless.”

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Book 6: Breaking Through the Cocoon, Becoming a Butterfly Chapter 27: Ji Ning’s Departure

Ji Ning nodded gently. “I won’t go fight.”

“Good.” Ji NInefire swept them with his gaze. “Everyone, return to your positions. Landwyrn, for now, you will assume Ji Ning’s position in the center of the Dragontail Formation. We will control the Netherwyrn and attack!”

“Yes.”

The Landwyrn, Granny Shadow, Ah Xing, and Truekeep all immediately left to their own positions.

.....

The nether fog billowed.

A sinuous, coiling, snowy white Flood Dragon lay there, with Adept Xu and the others within the dragon’s body, clearly quite cautious. Quite obviously, Ning’s earlier prowess had caused Adept Xu to privately feel surprised. Still, the other Zifu Disciples were quite relaxed.

“Although Ji Ning is a monster, he’s still just a Zifu Disciple. He’s no match for the Adept.”

“Compared to master-uncle, Ji Ning is far weaker.”

“The Ji clan is doomed.”

All of the Zifu Disciples chatted amongst each other in quite a relaxed manner.

As for Nong Zidao, his eyes were closed as he focused on analyzing the formation. Suddenly, amidst the distant, dense nether fog, a massive thunderclap could be heard!

“Whoosh!” An enormous draconic tail, covered with black draconic scales, came sweeping towards them.

Bang!

The sweeping attack landed on the coiled body of the snowy white Flood Dragon, causing the entire dragon to be knocked backwards by the blow. Adept Xu, Nong Zidao, and the others, however, naturally remained within the dragon’s body.

“Ambushed.”

“Yet another ambush.”

“Even Ji Ning lost. The Ji clan dares to ambush us again?” All of them were enraged. Given how even the Flood Dragon had been knocked flying, Nong Zidao, who had been focused on analyzing the formation, naturally was startled awake as well.

Adept Xu stood there at the draconic head of the snowy white Flood Dragon. He shouted loudly, “You are asking for death!”

Whoosh!

The grand seal in his hands suddenly flew into the air, rapidly expanding to a size of three hundred meters, smashing directly against that impudent, enormous draconic tail.

“Boom...” An enormous, explosive sound. Draconic scales blew apart, and the draconic tail itself was torn apart, with the dispersed energy quickly vanishing into the nether fog.

“Master-uncle.” Nong Zidao frowned as he stared towards the distant nether fog. “Even Ji Ning was no match for you, master-uncle. The Ji clan has already run out of options. Thus, all they are trying to do now is to waste time and impede me from breaking their formation.”

Adept Xu nodded. “Zidao, just focus on analyzing how to break the formation. Just now, I was caught offguard. Now that I am prepared, I definitely won’t let the Ji clan’s ambushes affect you.”

Whoosh.

Adept Xu waved his hand, and a black cord rapidly expanded to a length of hundreds of meters. It swirled around the snowy white Flood Dragon, while the grand seal returned to Adept Xu.

“As long as that Netherwurm dares to appear, I will instantly shatter it.” Adept Xu said.

Just moments later.

Whoosh!

A blur suddenly appeared. It was the draconic tail, once more striking.

“Boom...” The black cord suddenly lashed out. The whipping strike from an Earth-ranked magic treasure that a Wanxiang Adept was personally directing was enough to cause the draconic tail to instantly crumble.

Nong Zidao, within the snowy white Flood Dragon, finally let out a relieved sigh. He closed his eyes, once more focusing on analyzing the formation. The simple sounds and ruckuses of the outside battles didn't have much of an impact on him.

.....

Halfway up the mountain.

Ninefire, Ning, Yichuan, the Fairy Crane, and the Whitewater Hound were all present.

“Just relying on the Netherwyrms won't do.” Ninefire shook his head. “Adept Xu, by himself, is enough to cause the Netherwyrms to disperse. There's no way to impact Nong Zidao. We still have to rely on everyone going all out.”

The Netherwyrms were just an energy construct, after all. As for monsters and humans, they were living creatures; they could use certain tricks, such as releasing Dao-seals, etc...

“Landwyrms!”

Ninefire sent mentally. “Go!”

.....

The Landwyrms, in the shape of that azure-armored man, glanced at the corridor that had appeared in the nether fog before him. A hint of bitterness was in his eyes.

“Alas, alas...”

When he thought back to what he had experienced in his life, his heart was filled with grief.

Upon becoming tamed as a spirit-beast, one's only hope was to encounter a kind owner. Otherwise, life would be miserable. For example, after Jadechild died, he had been forced to submit yet again, and now he was being forced to go to his death.

But even though he was being sent to his death, he didn't dare to resist at all. This was because, if he died here, he would still go to the Netherworld Kingdom. Given the power of his soul, as a Zifu-level Diremonster, he would definitely be a powerful ghost that would find it easy to join the army of ghosts. But if he were to resist...his soul would be destroyed.

“How hateful!”

The azure-armored man immediately transformed into his true form, an enormous, clawed Landwyrms. The enormous body of the Landwyrms moved across the mountain, rapidly passing through the corridor within the nether fog and moving towards Adept Xu.

Moments later.

The Landwurm could vaguely see, through the corridor, the faint contours of a snowy white Flood Dragon, as well as the figures within the Flood Dragon's body.

"Swoosh!"

The Landwurm suddenly flew forwards.

Whoosh!

He instantly charged forward. Nong Zidao was within the snowy white Flood Dragon, analyzing the formation. The other Zifu Disciples were staring at the surrounding areas, while Adept Xu was riding atop his magic treasure, prepared to attack at any moment.

"The Landwurm."

"Landwurm?"

The Zifu Disciples all immediately recognized it.

"Roaaaaaar!" The Landwurm charged forward, but before Adept Xu even had a chance to attack with his magic treasure, it raised its head, letting out a grieving, furious howl which shook the heavens.

And immediately afterwards, a terrifyingly powerful energy blast exploded forth from the body of the Landwurm, causing Adept Xu's face to change.

"Careful!"

Rumble...

As a peak Zifu-level Godbeast, its Zifu lake was far vaster than the Zifu lake of a human Zifu-level practitioner. The amount of elemental ki it contained was also boundless and deep. In terms of amount of elemental ki, this Godbeast's Zifu lake was not inferior to an early Wanxiang Adept's.

All of the elemental ki that it had accumulated over so many years suddenly exploded, causing an incomparably powerful blast to instantly ripped out, tearing the Landwurm's body to pieces and wildly shooting in every direction.

"Block." Adept Xu hurriedly controlled that grand seal to serve like a rampart, blocking in front of him.

Rumble...

The terrifying explosion blasted out in every direction, blowing aside that Earth-ranked magic treasure, 'Earth Garrison Seal'. But after it sent the seal flying, the remaining amount that struck against the 'body' of the snowy white Flood Dragon was greatly reduced, causing the snowy white dragon to roll over a few times, but be completely undamaged.

"What's going on?" Nong Zidao opened his eyes.

"Self-explosion."

"It was a Landwurm which blew itself up." The Zifu Disciples said.

Nong Zidao said, astonished, "Landwurm? That was senior apprentice-brother Jadechild's Landwurm."

Adept Xu's eyes narrowed as he stared at the enormous crater in the ground. HE said in a low voice, "This Landwurm was a Godbeast amongst monsters. The amount of elemental ki in its Zifu lake was incomparably vast. This self-detonation...truly was astonishingly powerful."

.....

Halfway up the mountain. Ninfire looked at the Fairy Crane, currently in the form of a white-robed maiden. "The Landwurm is dead. Fairy Crane, your turn."

"Yes."

The Fairy Crane didn't hesitate at all, immediately departing towards the tunnel through the nether fog that had appeared in front of her.

But just a few moments after she had left...

BOOM!

A rumbling explosion which they seemed to be able to feel.

"That fast?" Yichuan frowned.

"She didn't go to Adept Xu." Ninfire growled. "That Fairy Crane...she was formerly the mount for Nong Zidao. Most likely, she had a deep relationship with Nong Zidao. I forced her to go blow herself up, and so she blew herself up midway, not disturbing Nong Zidao in the slightest."

Ning shook his head gently.

Upon accepting an owner...

In the spirit-beast's heart, it would naturally feel very obedient to its owner. For the Fairy Crane to act in such a way was a testament to how deep the affection she bore for Nong Zidao was.

"Nong Zidao." Ninfire bellowed loudly. "Your former spirit-beast mount, the Fairy Crane. I ordered her to go attack you, but she actually blew herself up midway, before she had even reached out. It seems as though the relationship between you and the spirit-beast was quite close."

.....

His voice transmitted far away.

Adept Xu and the others all fell silent. They looked towards Nong Zidao, who opened his eyes, staring into the distance with a pained look. "Crane...child...Crane..."

Previously, when he chose to flee, he had only a single Lesser Teleportation Dao-seal, and so he hadn't taken his Fairy Crane.

He had released her from his bond, in the hopes that the Fairy Crane would be able to continue to live...but now, his Crane had actually blown herself up in the distance, for the sake of not disturbing him.

"Crane..."

“Crane.” Nong Zidao wanted to forget about her, but images from the past welled up, causing his mind to be unable to calm down.

“Apprentice-nephew Zidao.” Adept Xu barked. “This is a psychological ploy of the Ji clan. You cannot be affected by it. Hurry up and focus on breaking the formation; that’s what matters.”

Nong Zidao nodded. “Right.”

Although he understood this principle, how could he so easily discard and forget about the hundreds of years of friendship between him and the Fairy Crane? How could he truly calm down? The impact the Fairy Crane’s self-detonation had on him was far greater than the impact which Ji Ning had when he had attacked earlier.

.....

Halfway up Oxhorn Mountain.

Ning was incomparably nervous. He stared at his father. Based on the Patriarch’s original plan, after the Landwyrms and the Fairy Crane perished, it would be his father who would go!

“The amount of time needed to brew a pot of tea has passed.” Ninefire suddenly said. “The Fairy Crane’s self-detonation had a major impact on Nong Zidao. But now that some time has passed, I imagine that Nong Zidao has calmed down. Yichuan...your turn now.”

Yichuan nodded.

“You need to come up with a way to disturb Nong Zidao and prevent him from concentrating on analyzing of the formation.” Ninefire said. “The Landwyrms and the Fairy Crane were only recently tamed, after all; they weren’t fully loyal to our Ji clan. Thus, both of them were used to self-detonate, the simplest, fastest method to disturb the enemy. There was a limit to how long those two were able to delay. In the end, we mainly have to rely on our own people, of the Ji clan.”

“I know.” Yichuan nodded. “Leave it to me. But before this. Ji Ning!”

Yichuan looked at his son.

Ning raised his head, looking at his father.

“You can leave now.” Yichuan looked at his son, then said, “You are useless here. If you wait too long, more variables might come into place. Leave, now.”

“I should leave now?” Ning stared, wide-eyed. His father was about to go risk his life in battle. He was supposed to leave now?

“Go.” Yichuan barked.

Ning, looking at his father’s facial expressions, understood. His father, in his heart, had always been a proud, arrogant person. Even as he went to welcome death, he wouldn’t want to let his son see it.

“Ji Ning.” The nearby Ninefire understood Yichuan’s intent as well. He immediately said, “Go, hurry and go.”

The nearby Whitewater Hound walked over as well, raising its head and looking towards Ji Ning, eyes filled with longing and love.

“Uncle White.” Ning moved forward to embrace the Whitewater Hound.

This time...

The others, including Uncle White, were unable to leave. This was because there was a grand sealing formation outside! Only Ning would be able to escape.

“Father. Uncle White.” Ning held Uncle White, looking at his father, his eyes filled with rare tears.

“Go!!!” Yichuan barked furiously.

Ning was in agony.

He didn’t want to go! He truly didn’t want to go!

He wanted to stay, to battle to the death by their sides!

“It takes courage to fight to the death.” Ninefire looked towards Ning. “But to choose to leave on one’s own requires even greater courage! Ji Ning...don’t disappoint us!”

The Whitewater Hound gently raised its head to look at Ning as well, also urging Ning to leave.

Ning looked at his father, looked at the Whitewater Hound, looked at his Patriarch...

“I’ll go!” Ning said hoarsely.

He turned and walked out through a corridor that had appeared through the nether fog.

In his heart, he was howling to himself that he truly didn’t want to leave. That he wanted to stay here with his father, with his Uncle White, and fight with them.

But his rationale mind told him that he had to go. Otherwise, the Patriarch and the others would all die with their eyes open, filled with resentment.

.....

The light of the sealing formation was everywhere, and it rippled like water, locking the entire region in.

“Break.”

“Break.”

Ning utilized his [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] and his Darknorth swords, but wasn’t able to damage the sealing formation at all.

“Why. Why.” Ning was howling in agony in his heart. If he was able to break this grand sealing formation, he would be able to lead his father, the Patriarch, and the Whitewater Hound in a retreat! But there was some distance between the Netherwurm Heavenlock Formation and this sealing formation; Ning was without the assistance of the Netherwurm Heavenlock Formation, and so the power of his [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] immediately decreased to a lower level. He wouldn’t even be able to fight against Jadechild right now.

Although the Darknorth swords were somewhat more powerful, they were still far from being able to break through this grand sealing formation.

“Xu Li! Nong Zidao! Snowdragon Mountain!” Ning turned to look at the coiling Netherwurm, hidden within the vast, endless nether fog. “I, Ji Ning, swear that in my lifetime, I will eradicate you all!”

The Traceless Talisman appeared in Ji Ning’s hands.

Whoosh.

The space around him rippled, and Ji Ning disappeared, having gone far away.

The Desolate Era

Book 6: Breaking Through the Cocoon, Becoming a Butterfly Chapter 28: The Seven Great Divine Abilities of the Divine Abilities Hall

“Eh?” Adept Xu Li, standing within the draconic head of the snowy white Flood Dragon, frowned. The grand sealing formation was under his control, and thus, he could clearly sense...

“Someone is attacking my grand sealing formation from within? It seems as though someone from the Ji clan wishes to flee. Unfortunately, without the assistance of the Netherwurm Heavenlock Formation, even Ji Ning, the most powerful of them, wouldn’t be able to break through the formation!”

“They need to just obediently wait for death.”

Adept Xu’s cold, insidious gaze held a hint of a killing intent.

Although he had used his Earth-ranked magic treasure, ‘Divine Blackblood Needle’, to wound Ning, in reality, he wasn’t able to sense Ning’s location at all. Previously, when he had loudly said that he could sense Ning’s location, he was completely bluffing! After all, he wouldn’t feel much pressure if other members of the Ji clan came and attacked, but an ambush from Ning put him under great pressure. He trusted that the Ji clan definitely treasured Ning, and so intentionally put on an act, shouting loudly...

And the effect was excellent. The elders of the Ji clan, no matter what, refused to let Ning go risk himself again.

.....

Serpentwing Lake. Within the icy waters of the lake.

Rustle...

Deep within the waters of the lake, space rippled and Ning appeared out of nowhere.

“This is...?” Ning looked at the boundless lakewater above him. He could sense the presence of the aquatic estate. “This is Serpentwing Lake?”

Previously, he had completely relied on a general sense and feeling to activate the Traceless Talisman to teleport him towards the general direction of Serpentwing Lake. Serpentwing Lake was a hundred kilometers in circumference, and so Ning’s teleportation had resulted him being thrown deep into the waters of the lake.

“The aquatic estate. Inwards!” Ning willed it.

As long as he could sense the presence of the aquatic manor, he would be able to enter it.

The enormous phantom of a grizzly’s head appeared in the lakewaters around him, swallowing Ning within its maw.

.....

Within the ancient aquatic estate. The enormous prayer mats lay scattered in the main hall. Everything was just as Ning had left it.

“Eh?” Ning appeared out of nowhere within the main hall. He immediately saw the old black bull and giant yellow bear in the distance.

“I can sense that you have already broken through, as a Fiendgod Body Refiner, to the ‘Blood Drop Rebirth’ level. Have you come to enter the Divine Abilities Hall?” The giant yellow bear looked at Ning, a hint of doubt suddenly appearing within its eyes. “Ji Ning, I can sense that your heart is filled with boundless rage, panic, and a murderous intent. What did you encounter, exactly?”

Ning’s heart was still filled with concern for his father, Uncle White, the Patriarch, and the others on Oxhorn Mountain, who were at the brink of death. Upon hearing the words from the giant yellow bear, a light suddenly flashed in his mind!

Right!

The spirit of the aquatic estate!

The old black bull was the spirit of an Immortal-ranked magic treasure, while the giant yellow bear was even more unfathomable; it didn’t even pay much attention to Immortal Juhua. In addition, the giant yellow bear seemed to carry with it an aura of eternity, very similar to the eternal, unextinguishable aura that the image of Lady Nuwa which Ning visualized had.

This aquatic estate, even without his active control, could allow him to go through spatial teleportation? This sort of ability...was simply inconceivable.

“Senior.” Ning gave a brief explanation. “My Ji clan is currently facing a great tribulation. We face a powerful foe, roughly at the early Wanxiang Adept level of power, who has at least three Earth-ranked magic treasures! By relying on my Windwing Evasion, I was able to fight against him, but in the end, I was still defeated by him and forced to flee...senior, dare I ask, can you suggest any method by which I can defeat this Wanxiang Adept, and save my family?”

The giant yellow bear glanced at Ning. “Although you have the Windwing Evasion ability, that’s simply a very crude divine ability which has undergone a simplification process. It only allows your speed and agility to increase! Your actual power, however, is not increased...and so, your flaw is quite evident. If a Wanxiang Adept were to use a large number of magic treasures to attack you and limit your agility, you would definitely be defeated.”

Ning nodded. “Senior, your words are correct. But what should I do to defeat him? If I go to the Divine Abilities Hall and acquire a divine ability, would I be able to defeat that Wanxiang Adept?”

“The Divine Abilities Hall has many divine abilities.” The giant yellow bear said. “If you are able to learn a high-class divine ability, it would be simplicity itself for you to kill even a middle-stage Wanxiang Adept.”

A look of unconcealable excitement appeared on Ning’s face.

The panic and pain in his heart immediately became transformed into hope!

He had to acquire a divine ability!

And then, he would go save his father, Uncle White, the Patriarch, and the others!

“I have reached the Blood Drop Rebirth level as a Fiendgod Body Refiner. I can acquire a Mortal-ranked magic treasure from the Treasure Hall.” Ning hurriedly said. “Senior, please let me choose. I will make a quick selection. I’ll choose a powerful magic treasure, so that I can go attempt the Divine Abilities Hall.”

The more powerful he was, the greater his chances would be in challenging the Divine Abilities Hall.

“No need.” The giant yellow bear shook its head. “The Divine Abilities Hall is a test for Fiendgods of later generations. It forbids one from using elemental ki and any magic treasures! You have to use your power as a Fiendgod...and even your weapons will be provided to you by the Divine Abilities Hall.”

“I’m forbidden from using elemental ki and magic treasures?” Ning hesitated slightly, but then he understood.

This was a test. A test of his abilities as a Fiendgod Body Refiner. It made sense that all Ki Refiner things were forbidden.

“You are only five years old.” The giant yellow bear looked at Ning. “You can wait until you are ten. By then, your power will be far greater. I imagine that if you go to the Divine Abilities Hall at that point, you will acquire even more powerful divine abilities. This Divine Abilities Hall is a place you will only be able to enter once. Are you sure you are going to enter now?”

“Yes.” Ning nodded. “I am going to enter the Divine Abilities Hall immediately.”

Perhaps, in five years, he would receive an even more powerful divine ability when he challenged the Divine Abilities Hall.

But his father, Uncle White, and the others wouldn’t be able to wait.

His father, by now, had most likely begun to execute a forbidden technique to delay Snowdragon Mountain. This was very possibly his father’s final hour of life.

“If I can return to Oxhorn Mountain within an hour, perhaps I will be able to save Father.” Ning was filled with hope.

He was fighting for every moment right now.

“Since you’ve decided, then come.” The giant yellow bear strode directly towards a nearby corridor, with Ning hurriedly following from behind. The nearby old black bull mumbled, “What a waste. If you waited five more years, you would definitely acquire an even more powerful divine ability from the Divine Abilities Hall.”

.....

The bronze door to the Divine Abilities Hall was shut. The surface of the door was covered with the carving of a single giant hand. The hand seemed to be omnipotent, as though it blocked out the skies and covered the earth, filled with boundless power.

The giant yellow bear only needed to take three steps to travel from the gate of the main hall to the gate of the Divine Abilities Hall. Upon arriving, as though it knew that Ning was currently very nervous, it turned to look at Ning, who was hurrying over like a flash of light.

“Follow me in.” The giant yellow bear said.

Rumble...

The bronze door opened. The insides of the hall were bathed with boundless amounts of gray light. When the gray light fell upon the giant yellow bear and Ning’s bodies, they disappeared without a trace.

“Rumble.” The door to the hall once more swung shut.

The old black bull remained outside the hall. The old black bull raised its head, staring at the gate, then sighed. “Given Ji Ning’s talents, he is even more of a monster than Immortal Juhua. In addition, he entered this aquatic estate at a very young age...his situation is much better than Immortal Juhua’s was. In the past, when Immortal Juhua entered the aquatic estate, he was far older than simply ten years. There was no way he could enter the Divine Abilities Hall at all.”

“If Immortal Juhua had the chance to challenge the Divine Abilities Hall and acquire a powerful divine ability, he probably wouldn’t have ended up becoming a Loose Immortal.” The old black bull sighed. “I wonder what sort of divine ability this Ji Ning will acquire.”

Not even the old black bull knew which divine abilities this Divine Abilities Hall contained.

.....

The blurry, gray area seemed to be an empty void.

Ning and the giant yellow bear appeared out of nowhere within this location. Ning looked around himself, but could see nothing at all.

“This can be said to be the most important part of the entire estate.” The giant yellow bear looked at Niing, then sighed. “I know that your family members are currently in mortal danger, but you only have a single chance to challenge this Divine Abilities Hall. I advise you, wait five more years. Five more years later, when you are more powerful, come and challenge this hall.”

“I’ve made my decision!” Ning said.

“Even the deaths of your family members aren’t as important as this opportunity.” The giant yellow bear said. “You still don’t understand what the divine abilities within this Divine Abilities Hall represent! This Divine Abilities Hall has seven mighty divine abilities; if you are able to acquire the most powerful of them, then in the future, you will even have the potential to dominate the Three Realms. By then, you can even locate your reincarnated family members. Even granting them their memories of their former lives won’t be too hard.”

The giant yellow bear looked at Ning, then said frantically, "Your talent is the best I have seen out of the successors to this estate, ever since Master created it. Don't squander your talent. I can tell you this...the number one divine ability within the seven divine abilities of the Divine Abilities Hall was personally left here by Master."

"The other six divine abilities were left behind by Master's six mighty disciples."

"If you were to acquire Master's divine ability..."

"In the future, you have a chance of escaping the Three Realms and becoming a Celestial Immortal, and perhaps even of dominating the Three Realms." The giant yellow bear said frantically. "In the future, it wouldn't even be difficult for you to erect an enormous dynasty like the Grand Xia Dynasty, which would exist for untold years."

Ning, hearing this, was stunned.

At first, the giant yellow bear hadn't paid him much attention, but ever since he had gained insight into the Rainwater Sword Domain, the giant yellow bear's attitude towards him had markedly changed.

And now, the giant yellow bear clearly didn't even want to let him waste this chance to challenge the Divine Abilities Hall.

"I wonder what the first master's background was?" Ning asked.

"Countless years ago, after Pangu established the universe, but before the Three Realms of the Heaven, Netherworld, and the Mortal Realms were established, and before the three thousand great worlds, and countless minor worlds were created..." The giant yellow bear looked at Ning. "...as far back as then, the first master had already left behind this estate, for the sake of ensuring that his divine abilities would be passed down. Although Master had six mighty disciples, none of them lived up to Master's requirements, and thus they did not acquire that mighty divine ability."

"After leaving down this estate, Master departed. To whence, I know not."

"After his departure, countless years passed. The War of the Primordial Fiendgods. The birth of the three thousand major worlds and the trillions of minor worlds..." The giant yellow bear looked towards Ning. "It was only due to luck and fate that this estate ended up in this world, one of the major worlds."

The giant yellow bear said solemnly, "I can tell you this. Given your power, you would at most be able to acquire the third divine ability. As for Master's divine ability, the chances of you acquiring it are less than one in ten thousand."

Ning was stunned.

He had guessed long ago that the first owner of the aquatic estate had an extraordinary history to him; he even had left quite a few 'Pure Yang' magic treasures in the Treasure Hall, which were above Immortal-ranked magic treasures in power. From this alone, one could tell how powerful the first master had been...but now, it seemed, this person was most likely an incredibly powerful figure of the Three Realms. The giant yellow bear's words were correct. There was only one chance to challenge the Divine Abilities Hall...and only a single chance to acquire such a powerful divine ability.

The giant yellow bear said, "If you miss this opportunity...you will most likely have to wait until you become a Celestial Immortal before you will have the chance to encounter such a powerful figure and gain another opportunity."

Ning hesitated slightly, then asked, "Senior, dare I ask, what sort of divine ability do I need to acquire in order to kill a middle-stage Wanxiang Adept?"

"Any of the top three will suffice."

The giant yellow bear said, "If you are able to acquire the most powerful divine ability which Master left behind, then given how you already have the power of an ordinary late-stage Zifu Disciple Fiendgod, you can use that powerful divine ability to annihilate a middle-stage Wanxiang Adept with a single technique. However, you don't even have a one-in-ten-thousand chance to acquire that divine ability, at your current level of power. Are you still going to make the attempt? This is your one and only chance to challenge the hall."

"I will." Ning didn't hesitate.

Perhaps, after five years, he would be able to acquire that powerful divine ability, resulting in his future accomplishments being so great that he would be able to dominate the Three Realms, and even find his reincarnated parents and restore their previous memories to them.

But...

Even after his reincarnated parents received their memories back, would 'they' still truly be 'themselves'?

Once they were gone, they would be truly gone!

"Even if I'm not able to acquire that powerful divine ability, I, Ji Ning, can still dominate the Three Realms in the future. I am still planning on meeting with Judge Cui once more." Ning's eyes were filled with boundless determination. "What's more...who says I won't be able to acquire that powerful divine ability? The chance might be less than one in ten thousand, but that's still better than zero!"

"Alas! Once you miss this chance, it will be forever gone!" The giant yellow bear shook its head, then disappeared into the void.

Ning was left there by himself, with the empty, gray void.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 6: Breaking Through the Cocoon, Becoming a Butterfly Chapter 29: Strongman

This gray, blurry space had nothing within it, but as Ji Ning stepped on and walked through the gray, misty space, it was as though he was stepping on solid ground.

"Where is the test of the Divine Abilities Hall?" Ning swept his gaze across the area. Suddenly, with a 'whoosh' sound, an enormous, pitch-black tablet landed on the ground before him, covered with a dense cluster of more than a hundred Fiendgod characters.

"Use your strength as a Fiendgod! Choose freely from the weapons next to you. Go forth and battle! Divine abilities are consummate skills meant for slaughter. The more strongmen you kill, the more

powerful a divine ability you will require. If you kill too few, you might not even receive the seventh divine ability. The seven great divine abilities...they are right there. Kill as wildly as you can. In the instant when you collapse and your body is smashed, the test of the Divine Abilities Hall will conclude.”

He looked at the Fiendgod characters carved atop the giant tablet. Not too far away from the pitch-black tablet, an enormous table suddenly appeared, covered with a large number of weapons. There were hundreds of swords, hundreds of sabers, hundreds of spears, staffs...countless weapons lay densely clustered atop the table.

“So I really can choose as I please.” Ning was surprised by the number of weapons that had appeared. He didn’t dare hesitate at all.

Swish! Swish! He hurriedly picked up two longswords that were comparable to his Darknorth swords.

“Eh?” Ning hesitated slightly. “Just using swordplay and the Rainwater Sword Domain won’t use up too much of my concentration.” Instantly, a large number of small, thin longswords flew up from the table. In total, nine flying swords flew out. The giant yellow bear had only said that for this trial, the participant was not permitted to use any Ki Refiner techniques. As for his divine will...this was the divine will that he had gained through possessing an incredibly powerful soul. Naturally, it couldn’t be considered a Ki Refiner technique.

“If I use my divine will to control these nine swords, although the power will be a bit weak, it will still serve in supporting me.” Ning mused to himself.

This battle...he had to exert all of his strength within it, so as to acquire a more powerful divine ability. If he only received the sixth or seventh divine ability, even with it, he still probably would find it difficult to kill Adept Xu. The worst part of it was, neither the giant yellow bear nor the pitch-black tablet had informed him as to how many he had to kill to acquire the third divine ability or first divine ability.

.....

Immediately after Ning selected his swords, the gray mist in the void around him rapidly began to condense, forming one human-shaped figure after another.

“This is!” Ning’s heart clenched. These human-shaped figures were all extremely muscular. They each had three savage eyes in their heads, and their entire bodies were virtually completely naked. The only thing they wore was something akin to a loincloth at their waists. All of their bodies bunched with muscles, and they held various weapons in their hands, such as axes, staffs, and warhammers.

Their breaths rang out like thunder, and their steps caused the earth to shake. Their bodies were filled with a sky-shaking, savage aura. And in an instant, the area around Ning became completely filled with hundreds of these human-shaped freaks.

“These are the ‘strongmen’ which the tablet spoke of?” Ning was startled. He had seen many books, and according to some of the legends recorded in the books, some of the great powers had ‘strongmen’ under their command. The so-called ‘strongmen’ were used to work as coolies to do physical labor. There were many different kinds of them, such as gateguard strongmen, cauldron-bearing strongmen, mountain-guarding strongmen, or even mountain-bearing strongmen and seastriding strongmen...

They had different missions, different names, and naturally different levels of power as well.

Strongmen, according to the legends, generally weren't living creatures. They were servants with simple intelligences that were created by some of the great powers. But of course, there were some powerful experts who would serve some of the great powers, and willingly take on the title of 'strongman'; this occurred as well. However, ordinary and extremely numerous strongmen such as these weren't actual living creatures.

"Kill!" "Kill!" The hundreds of savage, weapon-bearing strongmen rushed forward like the wind, charging towards Ning while running across the foggy 'ground'. They roared the Fiendgod word for 'kill', and their savage triple eyes were locked on Ning. They moved so quickly that in the blink of an eye, they arrived next to Ning, who was three hundred meters away.

"Die!" Rainwater slowly began to fall, encompassing an area of hundreds of square meters.

The rainwater instantly became as sharp as knives. Instantly, it was as though thousands of knives fell down and chopped towards those strongmen. The rainwater, carrying the profoundness of the Dao within them, contained astonishing power. The strongmen all let out savage howls, but were chopped into pieces, and then transformed into fog which once more dissipated into the heavens.

From far away, many strongmen continued to materialize, in even greater numbers than before.

"Kill!" Ning didn't hesitate at all. Controlling his rainwater, he began to attack those strongmen. The Rainwater Sword Domain was a Dao Domain, and was based off the insights he had gained into the Dao. As for the rainwater, it was formed from the energy of the world itself. These, too, could not be considered Ki Refiner techniques.

"Eh?" Ning's face changed slightly. "The strongmen are growing more powerful and becoming faster. Their bodies are growing sturdy as well. Even their axe and hammer techniques are increasing in power." It was clearly becoming a bit harder for him to kill them through his Rainwater Sword Domain.

.....

This region of dreary gray space was producing strongmen nonstop. Ning, by relying on his Rainwater Sword Domain, was able to massacre them on a large scale, and so he was able to kill them quite quickly. In just the amount of time needed for five breaths, Ning was able to execute more than ten rounds of thousands of strongmen.

"Slashslashslash..."

The rainwater continued to chop down, leaving scars on the muscular bodies of the strongmen, but were unable to kill them now. "It's no longer enough to rely on the Rainwater Sword Domain." A fierce light flashed through Ning's eyes. First, he condensed the nearby rainwater into swiveling petals of Waterflame Lotuses, and using this enormous petals of fire and water, he began to wildly crush and grind down the strongmen. The strongmen relied on their weapons to block and to dodge, but in the end, some still perished.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Nine sword flashed pierced through the skies. These were the nine swords which Ning controlled through his divine will. Under Ning's control, they all unleashed Ning's most powerful sword attack...Rain Line! The reason why Ning had previously selected just nine swords was because he

wanted to unleash his most powerful sword attacks. Ning's divine will wasn't able to control too many of them in doing so.

"Cutcutcut..." It was like chopping vegetables. The divine will controlled the swords at merely the early Zifu Adept stage of power, but under the power of the Rainwater Sword Domain...the strength of the blows was absolutely astonishing. Sword light flew everywhere, and many warriors were chopped into two halves and dissipated into mist.

By relying on his Rainwater Sword Domain, Waterflame Lotuses, and swords controlled by divine will...Ning was able to slaughter the strongmen at an astonishing speed. The amount of time Ning had spent after using the Traceless Talisman to teleport to Serpentwing Lake, then entering the underwater estate was actually quite low. The only place he spent a little extra time was in conversation with the giant yellow bear, but that was far from even being as much time as it took to boil a kettle of tea.

As Ning was engaging in a wild battle against the strongmen in the Divine Abilities Hall...

Oxhorn Mountain. Halfway up the mountain.

"Yichuan. You must be careful in this mission." Ji Ninfire looked at Ji Yichuan. "Delay as much as you can. There are only five of us left, but we need to try to delay for nearly two days. Although you are ill, delay them as long as you can."

"I understand." Yichuan nodded. He looked at the Whitewater Hound by his side, who used its head to gently nudge Yichuan, clearly unwilling to part from him. "Little White." Yichuan gently stroked the Whitewater Hound's head.

Yichuan's parents had died long ago. In his heart, the three who held the most paramount positions were his wife, his son, and his lifelong brother, 'Little White'. The amount of time Little White had been by his side far surpassed the amount of time his wife and his son had been by his side. Only Little White had always accompanied him. They had adventured together...and even though death was in front of them, neither would retreat in the slightest.

"I'm going now." Yichuan lowered his head and gently kissed the Whitewater Hound on the forehead. The Whitewater Hound's eyes became moist. As for Yichuan, he turned his head and charged into a corridor that had just opened within the nether fog. The Whitewater Hound escorted Yichuan into the fog...he truly wished to accompany Yichuan, but as soon as Yichuan used his forbidden techniques, his power would immediately rise. In addition, with the support of the Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation, his power would become truly astonishing. As for the Whitewater Hound, as he was merely a peak Xiantian spirit-beast, he would be nothing more than a burden.

He knew very well that he would only be a burden. That it would be dangerous. He still wanted to go...because he knew that his most beloved, important elder brother, 'Ji Yichuan', was probably going to die. How could he not go?

"Whitewater Hound." Ninfire spoke out. The Whitewater Hound turned to look at Patriarch Ninfire. "My Ji clan has only five members remaining here; we will only just be able to maintain the Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation." Ninfire said. "After Yichuan dies, only four will remain, and the Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation will no longer be at peak power. I have here a portion of 'liquefied elemental

essence' that you can use to try and make a breakthrough. If you are able to break through to become a Zifu-level Diremonster, after Yichuan dies, you can take his place."

Because none of them would be able to escape from the grand sealing formation...even if they died, they had to make their deaths more spectacular.

"Woof." The Whitewater Hound nodded gently, then opened his mouth and accepted the jade flask. Originally, Ning had used up a third of the liquefied elemental essence, breaking through to the Zifu Disciple and establishing his Zifu as an early-stage Disciple! Ning didn't waste the remaining amount of liquefied elemental essence, leaving it behind for the Patriarch.

The Whitewater Hound's eyes were filled with hope. He wanted to breakthrough and help his master once again. Help his elder brother. The person he was closest to in the entire world.

.....

The underwater estate. Outside the Divine Abilities Hall. The old black bull and the giant yellow bear were present. "Alas!" The giant yellow bear sighed. "Big Brother, what is it?" The old black bull said hurriedly.

"It is as I expected." The giant yellow bear sighed. "I have waited here for countless years. This Ji Ning is the only person I have encountered who truly has a chance at acquiring the divine ability which Master left behind. His soul is so powerful that he is capable of using his divine will, and his understanding of the Dao is quite deep as well, at the Dao Domain realm. By relying on his Rainwater Sword Domain and using divine will...he has been slaughtering and massacring countless strongmen. But now that the strongmen are growing more and more powerful, he is finding it more and more difficult. Even though he himself is also using two swords to battle, he still finds it quite difficult."

"If he were to wait five more years...his [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] would probably reach the eighth or ninth stage. Given how quickly he gains insight into the Dao, in five years, he will have made astonishing improvements in this regard as well."

"His divine body will be stronger, and his insights into the Dao greater. By then, he absolutely would be capable of acquiring the divine ability which Master left behind. What a pity, what a pity." The giant yellow bear sighed.

"Then he...?" The old black bull said, worried. "His killing speed is quite fast. In the time it takes to brew tea, he killed tens of thousands of strongmen. But I can tell from his strength that it would be hard for him to obtain even the third divine ability." The giant yellow bear shook his head. "As for the first divine ability, that's unfathomably far away. What a pity, what a pity. If he waited five more years..."

"Yes...but he wasn't willing to wait five more years." The old black bull sighed as well.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 6: Breaking Through the Cocoon, Becoming a Butterfly Chapter 30: Whitewater Hound Transforms

One strongman after another continued to condense from within the gray, misty void. These strongmen were all incomparably savage and fearless. Wielding their warhammers, spears, axes, and other weapons, they charged forth, bellowing that ancient Fiengod word for 'kill'.

The rain fell down like sheets of curtains. One layer of watery walls swirled through these strongmen. The 'rainwater' of the Rainwater Sword Domain was no longer capable of killing these strongmen. All Ji Ning could do with it was to use the rainwater to slow them down as much as possible.

"Slash!" "Chop!" "Pierce!" Nine sword flashes danced in the skies. Some strongmen died after their heads were pierced through. Others died through bisection. Still others died through decapitation...

"Die, all of you." Ning wielded two swords in his hands, executing his divine ability, 'Windwing Evasion', while on his back, a pair of wings created from the Crimsonbright divine power had manifested. This was the true face of the Windwing Evasion! Originally, the Yuchi clan had wanted to hide the fact that their clan had a divine ability, and so they had ordered their descendants to always use wing-type magic treasures when executing the technique.

How could a true divine ability require the supporting help of a magic treasure?

"Swoosh!" Ning moved as fast a ghost, curving through the masses in a solitary line, and wherever he passed, the two swords in his hands accompanied him, transforming into two arcing sword flashes.

Slash! Two rows of strongmen were instantly chopped into two pieces. They died, and then dissipated into mist once more. "Kill." Ning swept out with his swords, and wherever he struck, strongmen fell and perished.

"Difficult. Starting to grow difficult." A hint of worry had appeared on Ji Ning's face. "The Rainwater Sword Domain and the Waterflame Lotuses are now unable to kill them. I have to rely on the nine swords that I am controlling through my divine will, and every single sword is only able to kill one of them at once."

At the very beginning, those nine swords controlled through divine sense were able to sweep through many strongmen at once. But now, clearly, every single sword had to focus on a single strongman. Only the two swords he personally wielded were capable of killing a row of enemies at once!

.....

Strongmen continued to die, but the gray, misty void continued to constantly generated even more strongmen. The newly born strongmen had even more savage auras, and wielded even greater might.

Chop! Chop! Chop! The nine flying swords left behind wounds on the bellowing strongmen, but they continued to charge towards Ning.

"It's finally come to this. This moment has finally come. These newly born strongmen can no longer be killed by the swords controlled through divine will alone." Ning gritted his teeth, transforming himself into a streak of light repeatedly, and his the swords in his hands howled out, chopping through swathes of strongmen. Only the sharp swords he personally wielded were able to kill these strongmen now.

After all, the power of the swords he controlled through divine will was merely at the early Zifu stage. But Ning's physical strength as a Fiendgod refiner was at the late Zifu level...he was two levels higher than he should have been at, thanks to the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], and so it was only natural that the two sharp swords he personally wielded would be more powerful.

“Kill.” Ning continued to kill with all his strength...and the giant yellow bear, outside of the Divine Abilities Hall, could see exactly what was going on within.

“These are his last death-struggles.” The giant yellow bear sighed. “Ji Ning is about to admit defeat.” “Admit defeat?” The old black bull asked. “Will he be able to receive the third divine ability?”

The giant yellow bear shook his head. “He’s still a bit off. His current Rainwater Sword Domain and his divine will are now completely useless. He can only rely on the two swords in his hands to kill. His sword technique is exceptional, especially given the fact that his dual swords are able to reinforce each other...and thus, he will be able to hold on for a bit longer. However, it will be quite difficult and hard to say if he will successfully acquire the third divine ability.”

“Alas.” The old black bull was resigned as well. “Soon. He will come out soon.” The giant yellow bear shook his head. “What a pity. He truly did have a chance at acquiring Master’s divine ability.”

.....

Oxhorn Mountain. Halfway up the mountain.

Ji Ninefire could sense everything which was going on within the grand formation. He was currently focused on two things; the first was Ji Yichuan’s sneak attacks on the forces of Snowdragon Mountain, and the other was the Whitewater Hound’s breakthrough.

“Yichuan truly is wise.” Ninefire’s eyes held amusement within them, but there was a hint of grief hidden within the laughter. “His natural talent is far greater than Truekeep’s. In the past, when he went to roam the Darknorth Seas, he was already at the middle Zifu stage. If he hadn’t suffered that disaster on the way back, he probably would be close to the peak Zifu stage by now.”

If it hadn’t been for a monster like Ji Ning appearing, Yichuan would have definitely been acknowledged as the number one genius of the Ji clan.

“This battle will be the final battle of Yichuan’s life.” Ninefire watched, watched Yichuan’s final, most glorious moment. But suddenly...

A powerful, mysterious aura appeared nearby him, but soon, that aura then dissipated. “The Whitewater Hound!” A look of surprised joy appeared in Ninefire’s eyes. “He made a breakthrough? He made it?”

The Whitewater Hound was a Godbeast that was legendary for its intelligence. Yichuan had mentioned before to Ninefire that this brother of his, the Whitewater Hound, was an extremely high level of comprehension, and had surpassed the Zifu level in that regard long ago. Only, as a Godbeast, the amount of energy that he needed to accumulate to break through was significant. Thus, Ninefire had given the jade bottle to the Whitewater Hound on a gamble. Who would’ve thought that he’d truly succeed?

“Coming.” Ninefire turned his head to look. A white-robed man walked over. This man had a head of long, snowy white hair that fell to his waist. His face was strikingly similar to Yichuan’s, but his eyes held a hint of kindness within them...if Yichuan was described as a glacier that had been existing for ten thousand years, then this man was like the spring wind that brought a sense of warmth.

“Whitewater Hound?” Ninefire looked at the white-robed man, calling out in surprise. Naturally, he knew that this man in front of him was the human transformation of the Godbeast ‘Whitewater Hound’. Only, he was surprised at the Whitewater Hound’s appearance. It must be understood that one’s appearance stemmed from one’s heart; the appearance which some Diremonsters took on after transforming wasn’t based purely on their own choice. Their appearance after transforming wasn’t up to their control.

Everything was determined by their heart! Some monsters, in human form, would appear cold and sinister. Some would appear tyrannous and overbearing. Others would look ugly and crooked, while still others would be devilish and enchanting...everything was determined by their hearts.

“His appearance is striking similar to Yichuan’s; those who didn’t know him might take him to be Yichuan’s sibling. From this, one can tell how important Yichuan is to him.” Ninefire murmured to himself. “In addition, there isn’t a hint of the foul, evil aura which usually emanates from foreheads of monsters. The opposite; he gives off a calm aura...he makes others feel as though they were facing the moist spring wind. It seems the Dao-heart of this Whitewater Hound is extraordinary.

This type of Godbeast, the Whitewater Hound, was legendary for its wisdom, and was very kind-hearted. According to legend, they had a hint of the bloodline of the primordial Fiendgod, ‘Whitemarsh’.

Godbeasts generally had their own unique innate divine abilities. For example, the Azure Skysnake was capable of the Void Blink technique. As for the Whitewater Hound...although it didn’t have any special innate abilities, its innate characteristics was its wisdom and kindness.

“Patriarch.” The Whitewater Hound looked at Ninefire. “Whitewater Hound.” Ninefire said. “Everyone says that Whitewater Hounds are incomparably wise. Our Ji clan currently faces a great disaster; do you have anything you can do?”

Although this type of Godbeast, Whitewater Hounds, were extremely common, very few were able to break through to the Zifu level. This was the first which Ninefire had ever seen.

“Upon being locked within this grand sealing formation, what could I possibly do?” The Whitewater Hound gently shook his head. “The only choice is to fight!”

Ninefire then asked, “What are you skilled in?” “I like to analyze formations.” The Whitewater Hound said softly. “Elder Brother Yichuan, in the past, helped me collect some books on formations. Elder Sister Snow also gifted me with some books on formations. I normally focus on analyzing formations, and have gained significant insights into them.”

Ninefire was a bit disappointed. Formation? The Ji clan had established the Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation; even if the Whitewater Hound was skilled in formations, what use would it be?

“I also have some unranked formation flags which I used in the past when developing formations.” The Whitewater Hound said. “By using these formation flags and setting them up around Snowdragon Mountain’s forces, I should be able to make the local elemental pulses and ley lines more complicated, making it harder for Nong Zidao to analyze and break through them.”

“What!” Ninefire was shocked. “You...you are able to...” Ninefire was completely stunned. An amateur might not understand what the Whitewater Hound’s words meant, but Ninefire was a formations expert

as well. It must be understood that different formations had different ways of activating the energy of the world; there were different levels and methods. For example, although the Netherwurm Heavenlock Formation and the bewildering black fog illusion formation were able to link together, when it came to time spent analyzing, the black bewildering fog formation wasn't able to do anything to Nong Zidao.

The two formations had different mechanisms for using the power of the world. Naturally, they wouldn't be able to impact each other. To impact each other...that meant one formation had to be able to guide the natural energy of the world in a way which was very similar to the nether fog's, to the point of becoming one. The difficulty of doing this was no less than breaking the nether fog formation itself!

"You?" Ninefire stared at the Whitewater Hound, stunned, then said with absolute excitement, "If you are able to do this, that will make the nether fog even more difficult to break. Perhaps we'll be able to delay for two days."

The Whitewater Hound's gaze turned distant. "Given the speed by which Nong Zidao defeated the nether energy surrounding the Dragonclaw Formation...even with my influence, we will be lucky if we are able to delay by two days."

"I have some additional formation flags here. Would you need them?" Ninefire hurriedly said. "I'm only using them to affect the local elemental energy ley lines, not to engage in battle. These unranked formation flags are sufficient." The Whitewater Hound said. "In addition, I've spent a long period of time practicing with these unranked formation flags. I am very familiar with them."

"Fine. Hurry and go." Ninefire said excitedly. The Whitewater Hound, in the shape of a man, walked towards a corridor that had appeared within the nether fog, and then his body turned into a mist which reformed into the Godbeast, Whitewater Hound. Generally speaking, monsters were more accustomed to their own, original form.

"Formidable, formidable." Excitement was in Ninefire's eyes. "Everyone says that Whitewater Hounds are Godbeasts legendary for their fame. Who would have imagined that they could reach such heights in analyzing formations as well..."

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"Little White!" Yichuan was holding a Dao-seal in his hand, but he stared, astonished, as a snowy white hound appeared by his side. This snowy white hound quickly transformed into a white-robed, white-haired man.

"You broke through?" Yichuan was both surprised and delighted. He stared at the man who appeared so similar to him, and yet who had a softer, gentler aura. Yichuan felt a sense of closeness from deep in his heart...because this was his brother, his lifelong friend.

The Whitewater Hound looked at Yichuan, a hint of moisture in his eyes. "This will be the last battle that I shall undergo with you, Elder Brother. In this battle, we shall fight side by side."

"Alright." Yichuan slung his arm around the Whitewater Hound's shoulders, unable to keep the tears from coming out of his eyes as well. "Let's fight, shoulder to shoulder."

The Whitewater Hound laughed. To battle to the death alongside his elder brother, one last time...it was enough.

Within the underwater estate's Divine Abilities Hall. Within that gray, blurry void.

Slash!

Blood spray outwards. In this place, only Ji Ning would shed blood; these strongmen, upon being killed, would transform into mist. "Argh." Ning clenched his two swords, continuing to fight with all his strength. They blocked a warhammer blow from a strongman, and then struck forward, piercing through the fat strongman's skull. The hammer-wielding, battle-armored fat strongman dispersed into mist.

"Kill! Kill!" Ning's eyes were filled with flame, the flame of stubbornness. But strongmen began to cluster tightly around him, each of them no weaker than Dong Ziqi in power. Ning was now only able to kill one strongman at a time, and as they continuously charged forward, clustering attacks against him, Ning was about to be crushed beneath their tide...