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Book 7: Stillwater City Chapter 4: Ninestar Immortal Carriage

“Come aboard the carriage.” Northmont Baiwei pulled Ning up onto the carriage. The carriage was roughly fifteen or sixteen meters long; naturally, the insides of the carriage were extremely comfortable and spacious. Baiwei and Ning entered, then Baiwei hurriedly said, “Sit, sit.”

“This carriage is quite comfortable.” Ning couldn’t help but sigh as he spoke; there were twelve seats within the carriage, and the seats were all covered with incomparably soft furs, making sitting on them very comfortable. “Young master Baiwei, the flames that cover this carriage...?” Just now, he hadn’t sensed any particular power or presence from the flames.

“It’s just an appearance generated by an emanation of elemental energy.” Baiwei smiled as he spoke, then gave instructions to the outside: “Go to the Carefree Caverns.” “Yes, young master.” The woman outside immediately replied respectfully.

Whoosh. The flaming carriage immediately began to move forward at high speed. “Have you noticed? This female servant of mine, along with the carriage...both of them are constructs.” Baiwei smiled delightedly. “Ah?” Ning was surprised. “Constructs?” He really hadn’t noticed. After all, they were in the Northmont clan’s territory; Ning hadn’t dared to casually release his divine sense to investigate anything in depth.

“Right.” Baiwei said delightedly, “That female servant is a golem which my father bestowed upon me. It can explode forth with the combat power of a peak Wanxiang Adept...and it is completely fearless. It is the best guard one can ask for.” Ning nodded.

“As for this carriage, the carriage is named the Ninestar Immortal Carriage.” Baiwei’s face was covered with smugness. “Once it starts flying, not even a Primal Daoist can catch up to it; in addition, it also holds within it the Celestial Ninestar Flames. Once it unleashes those flames...it can incinerate anything and everything. Even some weaker Primal Daoist will be burnt to death by it!”

“What?!” Ning, hearing this, was shocked. Celestial Ninestar Flames? Capable of burning Primal Daoists to death? Even if it was ‘only’ capable of burning and killing some weaker Primal Daoists, this was still inconceivable. After all, it was nothing more than a precious construct.

“Haha.” Baiwei laughed, then said, “My father personally bestowed that female guard upon me, but I’m just temporarily borrowing this Ninestar Immortal Carriage. This Ninestar Immortal Carriage is the personal carriage of my father; even if I sold off all of my treasures, I wouldn’t be able to afford even the slightest part of it. I’m only permitted to borrow and use it within the borders of Stillwater City.”

Ning now understood. So this was the personal carriage of Northmont Blacktiger! This couldn’t help but make Ning sigh at how deep the roots of the Northmont clan were, here in Stillwater; even Northmont Blacktiger had a carriage as astonishing as this.

“A treasured construct on the level of this Ninestar Immortal Carriage actually possesses sentience.” Baiwei stroked the carriage, clearly quite fond of it. “Just now, when I gave instructions to go to the

Carefree Caverns, I was actually speaking with the Immortal Carriage itself. This Ninestar Immortal Carriage will automatically lead us there.”

Ning had to admit; this really was incredible and impressive! One did indeed gain great face when riding in this Immortal Carriage, capable of resisting even Primal Daoists. This made Ning fully understand how wealthy and luxurious a lifestyle the Northmont clan of Stillwater was.

“Look outside.” Baiwei pointed towards the outside world. Ning looked through the windows. This Ninestar Immortal Carriage moved extremely rapidly, and the streets of Stillwater City were incomparably wide; the scenes of the outside world passed by in a flash.

“The most mysterious, inscrutable part of the entire Stillwater City is the west city.” Baiwei pointed towards the outside. “After entering Stillwater City, you should’ve seen a book describing Stillwater City. Although the book has the names and signs of the various estates, have you noticed something?”

“I’ve noticed that the Northmont Blacktiger Estate is quite large,” Ning laughed. “Haha, there are a total of more than a thousand estates with the name ‘Northmont’ in front of them. All of them are the estates of members of the Northmont clan with some status. The estates are divided into three sizes; with a perimeter of ten kilometers, a perimeter of one kilometer, and a perimeter of three hundred meters.” Baiwei smiled. “But if you were to believe that these are the estates of the powerful members of our Northmont clan, you would be completely wrong.” “Eh?” Ning was puzzled.

“The book should also have quite a few estates which only have a name and no clan, such as ‘Kind Waters Estate’, ‘Universal Light Estate’, etc...” Baiwei looked at Ning, who nodded. There were indeed some estates like this. He didn’t know what the origins of these estates were.

“These are all the private estates of Primal Daoists, as well as some Immortals.” Northmont Baiwei looked at Ning. “Even some of the Immortals of our Northmont clan, due to having lived extremely long lives, no longer use the ‘Northmont’ name in titling their estates. This makes it so that it is very hard for outsiders to truly understand how many Loose Immortals and Earth Immortals our Northmont clan of Stillwater has.” Ning was secretly surprised upon hearing this.

“Many of the estates are empty.” Northmont Baiwei very calmly discussed these rather secretive matters. “In the vast, endless lands of the Grand Xia Dynasty, there are some extremely mighty powers. If they pay a visit to our Stillwater City, our Northmont clan will gift them with a private estate. Although they will come visit only very occasionally, we will always keep these estates in good condition.”

“And so...West Stillwater City is truly a place where fish and dragons swim together. The more mysterious and unknown the owners of an estate are, the less you can afford to offend them,” Baiwei said. “As for North Stillwater City, many of the estates there have been taken over by the Raindragon Guard.”

“Raindragon Guard?” Ning said in surprise, “I heard that the Raindragon Guard’s headquarters in Stillwater Commandery is atop an incomparably towering mountain.”

“Right. It isn’t too far away; its name is the Crimson Dragon Mountains.” Baiwei shook his head and laughed. “The full members of the Raindragon Guard are all quite free and unrestrained; who would be willing to remain atop that desolate mountain? Given how bustling and lively Stillwater City is, and how

they also have responsibility for maintaining oversight over the various major powers within Stillwater City, the Raindragon Guards naturally have occupied quite a large amount of land.” Ning nodded.

“Most of the north city is occupied by the Raindragon Guard. In the south city, most of the residences are occupied by the Immortal practitioners that make up the soldiers of our army.” Baiwei laughed.

“This is something of an open secret, but naturally, this won’t be recorded in those simple information pamphlets given to everyone who enters the city.”

“Only the east city has many major trading unions and guilds, along with Loose Immortals, who gather there.”

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As they continued to advance forward, Baiwei told Ning about some secrets, but only those which many people would learn upon reaching a certain level. This truly broadened Ning’s horizons.

As for the east city, there were many places for entertainment present. The most famous of those places was the Mountain of Heavenly Treasures! “The Mountain of Heavenly Treasures takes up an area of six hundred kilometers. It is a mountain located within the city itself, and the entire mountain is hollow. There are countless treasures within, along with merchants selling spirit-beasts and slaves, and all sorts of gambles and battles...in short, any sort of entertainment you can think of, the Mountain of Heavenly Treasures has it.”

Baiwei shook his head and said resignedly, “However, this Heavenly Treasures Mountain has the imperial clan of the Grand Xia Dynasty standing behind it! In this vast world, every single commandery city has a Heavenly Treasures Mountain within it. I can’t even imagine how much wealth they have accumulated for the Grand Xia Dynasty.”

“The place I’m taking you to, right now, is named ‘Carefree Cave’.” Baiwei winked towards Ning. “The two most exquisite entertainment venues in the entire Stillwater City are the Heavenly Treasures Mountain and the Carefree Cave.”

“The Heavenly Treasures Mountain is something that can be seen throughout the Grand Xia Dynasty. But the Carefree Cave is unique to our Stillwater City, and it was established by three Celestial Fox Immortals.” Baiwei chortled, “But of course, it also has the support of our Northmont clan of Stillwater. After all, we can’t let the Heavenly Treasures Mountain make all the money, right?” Ning laughed as well.

“Young master. We are here.” The voice came from outside. As it did, the speed of the Ninestar Immortal Carriage quickly dropped as well. Baiwei led Ning out of the carriage, then pointed to an incomparably vast edifice in front of them. “This is the Carefree Cavern.”

Ning instantly grew rather stunned. He saw, far away, an enormous, incomparably beautiful, dream-like edifice. It was shaped into the form of a titanic fox; this was a giant building that appeared like a fox that was hundreds of kilometers long. Its entrance was the mouth of the fox, which had its head resting against the ground. The dense natural elemental energy in the surrounding area made Ning feel incomparably comfortable.

The Whitewater Hound leapt out of the carriage as well. Staring at this alongside Ning, it too had a look of shock in its eyes.

“Young master Baiwei, please, come, come.” Instantly, a tall, muscular, ox-horned man ran over. His aura rolled out in waves, startling Ning; this monster clearly wasn’t hiding its aura at all, which allowed Ning to verify that it should be at the Wanxiang Adept level.

“Mmm.” Northmont Baiwei nodded casually. “And this one is...?” The Diremonster looked towards Ning. “This is my good friend, young master Ji Ning.” Baiwei explained. The Diremonster hurriedly nodded. “Is this your first time, young master Ji Ning?” Appearing quite courteously, he led the way forward.

Ning swept his gaze forward. He quickly discovered that there were many people who had entered the Carefree Caverns to enjoy themselves; however, most didn’t have any attendants come welcome them. Although some occasionally did, most of the attendants were at the Xiantian lifeform level, or at most at the Zifu Disciple level. Only Northmont Baiwei had a Wanxiang-level Diremonster welcome him.

Ning and the Whitewater Hound followed Northmont Baiwei forward. The wide, spacious corridor was beautiful and almost dreamlike. Soon, they exited it and arrived at an enormous hall. At the left side of the main hall was a row of individuals who were either monsters or beautiful female Immortal practitioners. To the right, there was a row of individuals who were either monsters or handsome male Immortal practitioners.

“We respectfully welcome young master Northmont and young master Ji.” In unison, the individuals all bowed with respect, their sleeves drooping to the ground.

Upon being welcomed so respectfully by so many monsters and Immortal practitioners, and especially upon hearing them all call out loudly, Ning was instantly stunned. Fortunately, his soul was very strong, and so he quickly came to his senses.

“How incredible. The Carefree Caverns really live up to their reputation as a place established by three Celestial Fox Immortals and the Marquisate of Stillwater.” Ning sighed in amazement.

There were currently many guests seated within the main hall, and amongst them were four people Ning knew quite well.

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Meng Jun, Meng Roch, and Meng Xin had been led by the uncle of their clan into the Carefree Caverns as well. That balding, middle-aged man had said, “The Carefree Caverns are the most top tier of top tier entertainment sights. In terms of sheer pleasure, it is actually superior to the Heavenly Treasures Mountain. There are delicacies here which those of you back in the clan would never be able to even imagine. You will soon enter various schools, and so today, I’ll show you around here and broaden your horizons.”

“Is this the silverpike of Jimin?” Meng Jun ate while sighing in praise. As for Xin and Roch, they were clearly also eating quite happy.

Next to them was a Xiantian monster who had transformed into a beautiful woman, who was dancing about gracefully. There were also human Xiantian maidens who were playing the zither...

“Eh?” The balding, middle-aged man suddenly turned his head. Through another corridor of the main hall, a group of beautiful women suddenly appeared, either emanating a monstrous aura or an Immortal practitioner’s aura. A similar group of men appeared as well. They divided up into two rows, as though respectfully awaiting someone’s arrival.

“A major figure has arrived.” The balding, middle-aged man said hurriedly. “What’s that?” Roch turned to look, puzzled. Xin called out in surprise, “All of them are releasing their auras. It seems they are all Zifu-level Diremonsters or Immortal practitioners.”

“Wow, what sort of a person are they here to welcome?” Meng Jun’s eyes began to shine. If he was able to make friends with this major figure, wouldn’t he instantly rise to the heavens? Suddenly...

The two rows of stunningly beautiful and handsome men and women, who lined up deep into the recesses of the corridor, all said with great courtesy, “We respectfully welcome young master Northmont and young master Ji.” Their voices echoed within the main hall.

“Young master Northmont?” The balding, middle-aged Third Uncle immediately said in a low voice, “This is someone from the Northmont clan of the Marquisate of Stillwater, and definitely someone in the main lineage with a high status. Otherwise, there is no way the Carefree Caverns would treat him with such great ceremony. But who is this young master Ji?”

“Let’s see what sort of major figure of Stillwater City this is.” Meng Jun immediately looked over carefully. In fact, quite a few people were looking towards the distant corridor.

A youngster dressed in a black uniform and a crown walked in. By his side was a youth clad in fur. Behind them was a Godbeast Whitewater Hound, along with a female servant.

“Brother Ji Ning?” Meng Jun, Meng Xin, and Meng Roch were all completely stunned.

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Book 7: Stillwater City Chapter 5: Joining A School

Wasn’t that Ji Ning, who had previously saved them? By his side was that Godbeast, the Whitewater Hound.

For a period of time, Meng Jun, Meng Roch, and Meng Xin’s hearts were filled with incomparably complex feelings. “Young master Ji Ning is this incredible?” Xin murmured to herself softly. “I knew all along that Brother Ji Ning was an extraordinary person.” Roch sighed.

As for Jun, a sunken, dark look was on his face. Previously, on their way over together with Ji Ning to Stillwater City, Jun had realized that Ning didn’t possess much worldly experience. In experience, Ning was very stingy. Thus, he ceased flattering Ning, and even went so far as to not even bother putting on a pretense of cordiality. He knew that Ning had opinions about him, but in the past he hadn’t cared about that. Now, however, he understood that it was probably too late for him to repair the relationship between himself and Ning.

“Is it so very glorious and amusing for an honorable, exalted young master to pretend to be a bumpkin?” Meng Jun felt hidden resentment in his heart. “And you dressed in those furs. You really know how to put on an act! Now look at how arrogantly you are acting today. I refuse to believe that in the future, I won’t surpass you!”

Each of the three members of the Meng clan were sighing for different reasons. By their side, their Third Uncle spoke out. "The Ji Ning we previously met at the Treasure Trading Plaza? Young master Ji?" The bald Third Uncle was shocked. He then said regretfully, "Alas, I didn't expect that young master Ji had such an incredible status. I actually missed the chance to befriend a person like him; what a pity, what a pity!"

Meng Jun's face became all the uglier to behold. Just you wait, he told himself. He would show them all!

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Ning felt extremely stunned to have been welcomed by so many beautiful women, handsome men, and Diremonsters, all of whom were at the Zifu Disciple level. For so many Diremonsters and Immortal practitioners to work here as servants...this showed how formidable those three Celestial Fox Immortals were, and also how much time and effort the Marquisate of Stillwater had expended on the Carefree Caverns.

"The Carefree Caverns are quite a relaxing, entertaining place. Even Immortals wouldn't dare act brashly here." Northmont Baiwei led Ning inwards. The two constantly advanced through the wide, winding hallways, the Whitewater Hound and the maidservants following behind them.

In the blink of an eye, they had walked more than thirty kilometers. To Immortal practitioners, this truly was a short distance. What stunned Ning the most was that the ceiling of the thirty-kilometer walkway was studded with many enormous jewels which flashed with all sorts of colors. This made the walkway appear both beautiful and dreamlike. Ning had seen some things in his life already, but jewels of such size...the Ji clan had never possessed any like them.

"These are jewels which were brought here, with great effort, from the depths of the North Sea. Every single one is a precious item that can be used to refine magic treasures, and they are also luminous by nature, being capable of drawing in elemental energy. A single one of these jewels is worth approximately as much as a single Earth-ranked magic treasure." Baiwei continued in a soft voice, "The total value of the jewels and decorations in the entire Carefree Caverns is enough to render even an Immortal speechless and stupefied."

Ning, himself, was speechless as well. Extravagant. Truly extravagant!

"We need to be able to compete with the Heavenly Treasures Mountain," Baiwei said softly. "The luxuriousness of the Carefree Caverns is definitely not inferior to that of the Heavenly Treasures Mountain."

Suddenly, a pink-clothed woman with furry ears and a fox's tail came towards them from afar. Her smile seemed to be filled with an innate charm and allure. She stepped forward, one step at a time, her fox's tail swaying along with her rear in an undulating, enticing manner. Ning was instantly stunned as well, but soon afterwards, he regained his calm.

"Eh?" The pink-clothed woman looked at Ning in astonishment, then she laughed. "This must be young master Ji. It seems this is your first time here." Northmont Baiwei laughed loudly. "This is my brother Ji Ning's first visit to Stillwater City. I brought him here to show him our Stillwater City's Carefree Caverns. It seems, Miss Ziyi, you aren't very happy by the fact that my brother wasn't bewildered by your charms."

"I wouldn't dare." Miss Ziyi laughed. "Young master Baiwei, the same place as usual?" "Naturally." Northmont Baiwei nodded.

Miss Ziyi looked carefully at Ning, then led the way forward. In front of them was an enormous hall. The entire hall had a circumference of many kilometers, and atop the hall were many jewels of different colors. The floor of the hall was covered with thirty-meter tall sea corals, along with varied other decorations. The entire hall was decorated like an abode from Immortals.

Although Ning had the benefit of his memories from his previous life, he was still stunned. This was a hall that was kilometers in size, decorated with all sorts of marvelous items. Even in his past life, he had never been as stunned as he was today.

There were tens of women who were fluttering about in a dance within the hall, as well as tens of master musicians playing the zither and other instruments.

"Young master Baiwei, young master Ji, please, this way." Miss Ziyi led them towards an arched entrance that hung in the air, then pushed the door open. Within, there was a secluded, refined private room that was more than thirty meters long.

"Arrange for the Hundred Treasures Banquet," Northmont Baiwei instructed. "Alright." Miss Ziyi immediately departed, leaving only Ning, Baiwei, the Whitewater Hound, and that female servant within the secluded room.

"This is a place that must have been sculpted with the hands of the heavens." Ning walked to the sides of the room. He stared through the completely open window, able to see straight down to the massive hall that was kilometers in size.

"This is nothing." Northmont Baiwei lowered his voice to a whisper. "The Carefree Caverns have many places for enjoyment. Some of them, even I am not permitted to enter. For example, the legendary 'Palace of Immortals'."

"Palace of Immortals?" Ning was startled. "Indeed. Only Immortals or extremely important figures are permitted to enter. Supposedly, Primal Daoists are responsible for serving them; on occasion, even one of those three Celestial Fox Immortals will personally go welcome them." Baiwei continued, "Stillwater City is the heart of the entire Stillwater Commandery. Thus, most of the Immortals are gathered here. Normally, when they hold meetings, they hold them within the Carefree Caverns. Only, when they enter the Carefree Caverns, they will directly fly in through the air, and then enter through a private, exclusive entrance."

Ning nodded. Immortals? Given how vast Stillwater Commandery was, and how long it had been in existence for, there truly were quite a few Earth Immortals and Loose Immortals present here. Thus, only a school that had an Immortal guarding it could truly be considered a supreme, top-tier school. Those which did not have any Immortals, such as Snowdragon Mountain, were clearly on a lower level.

These Immortals were truly the most supreme of individuals within the entire Stillwater Commandery. They alone would decide the fate of Stillwater Commandery, decide the fates of its countless tribes, decide who would rise and who would fall. Even the Marquisate of Stillwater had to curry favor with these Immortals.

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One platter of precious delicacies after another was brought in. They even prepared a secondary side banquet for the Whitewater Hound, and all of the foods they prepared were those which Godbeast Whitewater Hounds loved to eat. All of the food was extremely exquisitely made. They all had extraordinary pedigrees. Ning, just listening to the servants describe each of the dishes, began to grow hungry.

After they ate for quite some time...

"You can leave for now," Baiwei instructed his servant. "Yes." The maidservant left respectfully.

"Ji Ning." Baiwei lifted his beastskull goblet of wine. "Previously, you mentioned to me that you are going to enter a school. Have you made your choice?" "Not yet." Ning shook his head. "Brother Baiwei, can you introduce me to some?" Baiwei immediately asked, "What are your requirements?"

"I hope that my school will have divine abilities, top-tier Ki Refining techniques, and ideally specialize in sword techniques," Ning said. Divine abilities and Ki Refining techniques...these would be for establishing his training foundations. However, the Dao he had gained insight into and the Dao he had embarked upon was the Dao of the sword. On the path of Immortals, one's insights into the Dao was one's truest foundation.

"Oh?" Baiwei pondered momentarily, then laughed. "You want a school that has divine abilities, top-tier Ki Refining techniques, and which specializes in sword techniques...I do, in fact, have a school to recommend." Ning's eyes lit up.

"This school is named the Skysplitter Sword Sect." Baiwei said with great confidence, "This Skysplitter Sword Sect is ranked as one of the top three major sects within Stillwater Commandery. In the past, didn't you have some disputes with Snowdragon Mountain? Compared to them...well, Snowdragon Mountain simply can't compare. This Skysplitter Sword Sect has at least three Immortals! As for Primal Daoists, it has tens of them! Zifu Disciples? It has more than ten thousand!"

Ning was rendered speechless. Tens of Primal Daoists and three Immortals? This, alone, was enough to stun Ning. Generally speaking, a single Immortal was enough to make a sect a supreme sect. But at least three Immortals? No wonder it was ranked amongst the top three major sects within Stillwater Commandery!

"The Skysplitter Sword Sect is famous for its sword techniques." Baiwei continued quickly, "Just from the name 'Skysplitter Sword Sect', you should realize that they are celebrated for their swordplay. More than eighty million years has passed since the founder of the Skysplitter Sword Sect established the sect. The founder of the Skysplitter Sword Sect was a Loose Immortal who had lived for hundreds of thousands of years. He truly was an incredible figure."

"Given how much time has passed since its founding till now...the amount of sword techniques its successive generations have developed is most likely innumerable." Baiwei looked at Ning. "It is estimated that this school has at least two or three divine abilities as well, and it certainly must have many supreme Ki Refining techniques. Otherwise, there is no way it could have given rise to so many Immortals."

A look of excitement appeared on Ning's face. What a school! There was shade to be found beneath the eaves of a large tree. If he was going to rely on the power of a school to increase his own power, then naturally he had to choose a mighty school.

"This Skysplitter Sword Sect has a branch within Stillwater City. Generally speaking, it will only officially accept new students during the twelfth lunar month. Although there is one more month before then...I'll take you there tomorrow. I'll simply need to say a few things to them, and this matter will be settled in advance." Baiwei smiled as he spoke.

Ning revealed a look of excitement and joy. "Thank you, Brother Baiwei." "Haha, Ji Ning, for you to join the Skysplitter Sword Sect is their great fortune." Baiwei laughed loudly. Suddenly, his eyes lit up. He stared down through the open window to the nearby corridor it overlooked, then called out in a high voice, "Brother Zhou Li!" A white-clothed man below them raised his head, then laughed and said, "Brother Baiwei."

"Brother Zhou Li, why don't you come up for a few moments?" Baiwei called out in a loud voice. "Alright." The white-clothed man laughed, nodded, then moved towards the corridor.

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Baiwei hurriedly said to Ning, "This person, Zhou Li, is one of the disciples of the Skysplitter Sword Sect who has been sent to stay in Stillwater City. He is a Wanxiang Adept, and quite influential within the Skysplitter Sword Sect. We just need to mention this matter to him. As long as he says yes, then the matter of you entering the Skysplitter Sword Sect will be settled." Ning now understood.

A knocking sound could be heard. Baiwei hurriedly rose, personally going to open the door. Ning, naturally, followed behind him to welcome the man.

"Hahaha, Brother Zhou Li, just now, I was discussing your Skysplitter Sword Sect, and now you appear. Isn't this quite the coincidence?" Baiwei immediately said, "Let me make an introduction. This is my extremely good friend, Ji Ning!"

"Brother Ji Ning." The white-clothed Zhou Li, upon hearing Baiwei describe Ning as 'my extremely good friend', didn't dare to treat Ning lightly, immediately clasping his hands in greeting as he spoke.

"Brother Zhou Li." Ning returned the greeting. Baiwei immediately said, "Come, come in and sit." "Not now." The white-clothed Zhou Li immediately explained, "I'm here on someone's invitation, and I must go meet with them. Brother Baiwei, if there is anything you need, feel free to tell me."

Baiwei immediately said, "I'll speak frankly then. This Brother Ji Ning of mine has heard of the fame and reputation of the Skysplitter Sword Sect, and his heart was stirred. He would like to enter your Skysplitter Sword Sect, and so I wanted to let you know about this, Zhou Li. I trust that once you give the word, this matter will be settled."

"Oh?" The white-clothed man, Zhou Li, looked towards Ning. He asked Ning, "Brother Ji Ning, what level have you trained to?" Ning replied, "I'm a twin-refiner; both a Ki Refiner and a Fiendgod Body Refiner. Both are at the early Zifu stage."

"Hahaha, early Zifu stage? Good." The white-clothed Zhou Li immediately felt relieved. Laughing, he said with confidence, "When accepting new disciples, our greatest concern is that they might have trained in

some superficial, inferior techniques and destroyed their future potential. Since you are at the early Zifu stage...your foundation hasn't yet become fixed and immutable. Just let me give the word first, and when the time of the twelfth lunar month comes, you can go to our local branch of the Skysplitter Sword Sect. You will immediately be accepted."

"Excellent." Baiwei laughed, then said in praise, "Ji Ning, await the twelfth lunar month. When it comes, you will be a disciple of the Skysplitter Sword Sect."

Ning nodded gently. The Skysplitter Sword Sect? In the future, he was going to be a disciple of the Skysplitter Sword Sect!

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Book 7: Stillwater City Chapter 6: Encountering Northmont Fox

The door to the refined room closed once more.

"You can stop worrying now." Northmont Baiwei sat down, then picked up the exquisitely made wine flask and poured Ji Ning a cup of wine. "With Zhou Li's assistance, after you enter the Skysplitter Sword Sect, you won't suffer much."

"Suffer much?" Ning raised an eyebrow. Baiwei shook his head. "It's a major sect, after all, with more than ten thousand Zifu Disciples. Given how many disciples it holds, I imagine you can guess for yourself how frenetic its internal struggles can be. The disciples are all divided into various levels. As a new disciple, if there is no one there to help you, I imagine that you will be treated worse than any of the others."

Ning nodded gently. It was true. Wherever there were people, there would be competition. A major sect with more than ten thousand disciples...its internal struggles would indeed be quite fierce.

"With Zhou Li's assistance, it will be a bit easier for you to rise." Baiwei continued, "But afterwards, you'll still have to rely on yourself and to fight for yourself! Remember; opportunity comes to those who fight for them. Don't show any mercy. Although I don't know the details of the situation, this sort of major sect surely must run internal competitions so as to divide up its disciples into various levels. In these competitions, do your best to be number one and become one of the most core disciples of the Skysplitter Sword Sect."

"Definitely!" Ning understood this principle. In the Ji clan, he would be given the best of everything, but in an outside school, he would have to fight for whatever he wanted.

"When you are free, please come visit Stillwater City often. I can introduce some friends to you." Northmont Baiwei smiled. "The path of Immortals is an incomparably difficult one. With powerful friends by your side, things will become much easier. Look...take a look at this person who just came in." Ning turned to look through the window.

Miss Ziyi had personally gone to greet this person. The person she had gone to greet was an extremely handsome young lord, who had more than ten people in his entourage behind him.

"His bearing is extraordinary," Ning said with praise. "This person's name is Hun Wuji." Baiwei said solemnly, "He is a formidable fellow. As for his clan, the Hun clan, it is an enormous merchant clan."

Ning was startled. Enormous merchant clan? A merchant? Generally speaking, most of the major powers were sects, schools, or tribes; there were very few organizations solely dedicated to trade.

“The Hun clan is no ordinary merchant clan.” Baiwei continued, “Their business is spread throughout virtually the entire Grand Xia Dynasty. Although they can’t be considered to stand at the very top-tier of the Grand Xia Dynasty, here in Stillwater Commandery, they are one of the top two major merchant clans! And this clan rose to power only a few short millennia ago.”

Ning said, startled, “Just a few thousand years ago?” Baiwei smiled. “The founder of the Hun clan was named Hun Tianyou. He’s still alive. You tell me; how long ago was this clan established?”

Ning was shocked. Only a few thousand years had passed since the clan had been established, and yet it was already one of the top two major merchant clans of the entire Stillwater Commandery, and had spread its trade throughout the entire Grand Xia Dynasty. This was indeed astonishing.

“This founder and Patriarch of the Hun clan, Hun Tianyou, was originally an orphan and a gangster.” Baiwei laughed as he spoke. “He himself gave himself the surname of ‘Hun’, symbolizing his original status as a gangster. He then gave himself the name ‘Tianyou’, meaning ‘protected by heaven’, as he was born as an orphan and kept alive through the grace of the heavens.”

“This Patriarch of the Hun clan...he wasn’t that talented in the path of cultivation. He became a Zifu Disciple early on, and then began to truly focus his attention on building up his business. Who would have imagined that he truly would rise to such heights?” Baiwei sighed, moved. “Audacious yet prudent, and viciously decisive...this person truly is a towering, heroic figure. In fact, when he was merely a Wanxiang Adept, he managed to employ three Immortals to have them kill his enemies.”

“He employed three Immortals?” Ning was speechless. Baiwei continued, “This Patriarch of the Hun clan relied on his tremendous wealth to forcibly increase his power to his current level, that of a Primal Daoist. Don’t be fooled by the fact that the entire Hun clan only has a total of two Primal Daoists. The amount of wealth they possess...compared to your enemy, Snowdragon Mountain, they are unfathomably more powerful.”

Ning nodded. For someone at the Wanxiang Adept level to be able to employ three Immortals...one could imagine how wealthy he now was.

“The Hun clan is one of the most supreme clans within our Stillwater Commandery.” Baiwei continued, “For them to reach such a level in just a thousand years...how formidable! As for that Hun Wuji who just entered? He’s the most prominent person in the younger generation of the Hun clan. He is viewed with great favor by the Patriarch of the Hun clan. Naturally, we need to be friends with people like this.”

“Within the borders of our Stillwater Commandery, the Hun clan is like the embodiment of the God of Wealth.” Baiwei continued, “On the path of Immortals, wealth is very important as well.”

Ning nodded. He understood; magic treasures, unique items, and even spirit-pills were all important. “Borrow from the strengths of those around you,” Baiwei continued, “And make the strengths of others your own strengths. Only then will you be able to walk further along the path of Immortals!” Ning nodded.

“Ji Ning, I trust that in the future, you will definitely become a towering figure somewhere.” Baiwei seemed to speak with great confidence. Ning replied, “Brother Baiwei, you treat me so well that I truly don’t know how to repay you.”

Baiwei immediately waved his hand. “This is what my father taught me; when you encounter someone you view as worth making friends with, you must treat them with sincerity! As for those not worthy of being your friends? I, Northmont Baiwei, wouldn’t even glance at them.” Ning laughed.

“You must be sincere to your friends. Otherwise, you won’t be able to make any true friends. Then, when a critical time comes, none of those ‘friends’ will help you,” Baiwei said. “Well-spoken,” Ning concurred. Only when you treated others with sincerity would they treat you with sincerity.

“If you make friends everywhere, you will naturally build up your own strength. Ji Ning, make some powerful friends. Within, you will rely on your own power; without, you will have your friends to assist you. In the end, you might end up becoming the leader of the Skysplitter Sword Sect,” Baiwei laughed.

Suddenly, laughter rang out from outside. “Hahaha...” The laughter was quite loud, and it echoed throughout the giant main hall of many kilometers. Upon hearing this laughter, the face of Northmont Baiwei, who had been chatting happily with Ning, immediately sank.

“Northmont Baiwei.” That deep voice echoed in the main hall, filling every corner of it. Quite a few of the guests within the various luxurious rooms at the ends of the corridors that hung in midair were listening with curiosity.

“You want for your good friend, ‘Ji Ning’, to enter the Skysplitter Sword Sect?” That deep voice continued to laugh wildly. “Hahaha, unfortunately, I can tell you something right now...and in fact, I can tell this Ji Ning kid directly. Ji Ning, kid, forget about ever being permitted into joining the Skysplitter Sword Sect!”

“Northmont Fox!” Baiwei suddenly roared out with anger. “What is it?” That deep voice let out a chuckle. “Are you upset?” Baiwei growled and cursed, “You shameless thing!”

“You do seem quite pissed.” That deep voice chuckled with delight. “Unfortunately, your good friend won’t be able to enter the Skysplitter Sword Sect.” “Hmph.” Baiwei no longer paid the outside world any attention. That deep voice said a few more mocking lines, but upon seeing that Baiwei was no longer responding, it fell silent as well.

Ning frowned, then said in a soft voice, “Brother Baiwei, who was that?” Baiwei’s face was exceedingly ugly to behold right now. He hurriedly said, “Ji Ning, I truly apologize. I didn’t expect that your affairs would be disrupted because of me. That person is named Northmont Fox. He, too, is a member of our Northmont clan.” Ning nodded.

“My father is Northmont Blacktiger. His father is Northmont Yin.” Baiwei shook his head. “His father and my father are competing to become the next Marquis of Stillwater.”

Ning sucked in a cold breath of air. The next Marquis of Stillwater? It seemed Northmont Blacktiger’s status was incredibly high. No wonder, as soon as Baiwei came to the Carefree Caverns, Wanxiang Adept-level cultivators and monsters had come to greet him in such a grand fashion.

“His father and mine have always been opposing each other. Thus, this kid always is struggling against me as well.” Baiwei let out a snicker. “His father, Northmont Yin, truly is a heroic, towering figure, as crafty as a fox. Northmont Yin gave his son the name ‘Fox’, but all his son is capable of is petty scheming.”

“I truly do have to apologize. Because of me, you won’t be able to enter the Skysplitter Sword Sect,” Baiwei said. “For Northmont Fox to proclaim it so boldly means that he definitely must be confident of being able to ensure it.”

Ning felt resignation in his heart. Just now, he was fantasizing about how viciously he would ‘compete’, but in the blink of an eye, it had all disappeared. He immediately said, “This is just a small matter. Stillwater Commandery is such a large place, and there are so many schools here. There are many different places I can choose from.”

“Right.” Baiwei continued, “How about this. Later, I’ll arrange for information regarding the various schools of Stillwater Commandery to be brought over. You can choose for yourself. When the twelfth lunar month comes, the various schools will all be accepting new disciples. You can go by yourself. If I don’t go with you, I can’t cause any problems. Given your abilities, it will be very easy for you to join a school. To be honest, my actions just now were unnecessary to begin with.”

Ning laughed, “We were just a bit unlucky to have encountered this Northmont Fox.”

So what if he didn’t enter the Skysplitter Sword Sect? Even the ancient spirit of the underwater estate, after seeing that Ning had mastered the Rainwater Sword Domain, had treated him in a markedly different way. Ning felt certain that it would definitely be simple for him to choose any other schools.

Knock, knock, knock. A knocking sound at the door. “Brother Baiwei. I am Hun Wuji.” A voice rang out from outside. “Wuji, please, come in. Why even knock?” Baiwei hurriedly called out. The door opened.

A handsome, refined young man entered. This Hun Wuji had a smile which made anyone who saw him instantly feel well-disposed towards him. He immediately said, “If you were the only one here, Baiwei, of course I would’ve just entered. But Brother Ji Ning is here as well; I didn’t wish to be discourteous.”

“Ji Ning, come, this is my good friend, Hun Wuji.” Baiwei said. “Young master Wuji.” Ning clasped his hands in salute. “Brother Ji Ning. I heard your name just now.” Hun Wuji clasped his hands in response. “Then you heard me being made a fool out of.” Baiwei felt resigned.

“Just now, shortly after I sat down nearby, I heard what was going on between you, Baiwei, and with Fox.” Wuji sat down as he spoke. “Northmont Fox truly is a fool. How many schools does Stillwater Commandery have? He has a bit of a relationship with the Skysplitter Sword Sect and might be able to prevent Brother Ji Ning from entering that sect, but what about the other sects? For a school, accepting new disciples is a major matter. There are so many schools in Stillwater Commandery that are seeking new disciples, and he’s only able to affect a few of them. In the end, Brother Ji Ning is still going to be able to enter a school.”

“Thus, as you said, he is a fool. He always jumps at any opportunity to make trouble for me.” Baiwei shook his head. “It is as though by doing so, he can demonstrate superiority over me.”

Suddenly, the extravagant music from outside changed. The sound of a zither suddenly rang out. The gentle, watery strumming sounds were soul-stirring to the extreme.

“Eh?” Ning, Baiwei, and Wuji all looked towards the outside. Ning stared down into the wide hall. He immediately saw a green-clothed woman who was seated in front of a zither, plucking at its strings. For a moment, the entire hall seemed to have grown quiet. Only the sound of the zither could be heard.

Such a beautiful zither song.

Such a beautiful person.

Ning, upon seeing the green-clothed woman, instantly felt that she must be one of the fairy maidens of legend. The sound of her zither made Ning’s soul feel incomparably comfortable. Her skill in the Dao of the zither had clearly reached a level of mastery.

After the song was finished, the hall remained quiet for quite some time.

“So it’s actually Zither Fairy.” Baiwei sighed in praise as he spoke, then instructed the servant waiting outside, “Go, have Zither Fairy come over.” “Yes.” The attendant outside replied.

“You are actually going to invite Zither Fairy to come accompany us? The price you will pay won’t be a light one.” Hun Wuji glanced towards Baiwei in surprise, but Baiwei simply said, “Earlier, because of me, Brother Ji Ning’s chance to enter the Skysplitter Sword Sect was ruined. I wish to make sure that Brother Ji Ning will be happy today.”

Ning was quite surprised as well. He was inviting Zither Fairy over, just for him? And from the sound of it, the price would be significant. “Brother Baiwei, you truly are too courteous,” Ning said hurriedly. “That was just a minor matter, not worthy of discussing.”

“Hahahaha...” That deep voice rang out yet again. “Zither Fairy’s skill in the zither is truly at an incomparably miraculous level. Zither Fairy, would you be willing to accept an invitation to come to the room of myself, Northmont Fox?” This voice echoed throughout the hall.

Within Ning’s room. Bang! Baiwei, in his anger, smashed his beaustskull goblet against the ground. Grinding his teeth, he said, “What sort of an unlucky day is this? I’m stepping in dogshit repeatedly.”

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 7: Stillwater City Chapter 7: Treasure Auction

Within the hall.

Per Northmont Baiwei’s orders, the maidservant outside had exited the corridor and had arrived within the main hall. Upon hearing the words, ‘Zither Fairy, would you be willing to accept an invitation to come to the room of myself, Northmont Fox’, she couldn’t help but be stunned. She hurriedly called out, “Mistress, young master Northmont Baiwei also wishes for Zither Fairy to go to him.”

Miss Ziyi, next to Zither Fairy, was stunned upon hearing this. Moments later, she laughed. “Young master Fox, young master Baiwei is also inviting Zither Fairy to pay a visit,” Miss Ziyi called out.

“Haha, Northmont Baiwei, you are also going to invite Zither Fairy?” That deep voice instantly grew smug. “Why were you so quiet and silent about it? I didn’t hear you say a thing. If you are going to invite someone over, you have to show some sincerity.”

“How could I be as boorish and uncouth as you?” Northmont Baiwei replied with a cold laugh. The two were in different rooms, and were both calling out to each other.

Within the other rooms were young masters of major tribes, superb figures of major clans, and Raindragon Guards. Still, they didn’t intervene, just watched with amusement. After all, Northmont Baiwei and Fox were both highly ranked young masters of the entire Stillwater Commandery. They were both descendants of the Northmont clan, and their parents, Northmont Blacktiger and Northmont Yin, were truly incredible figures. They didn’t dare to rashly intervene in a struggle between two such young masters. After all, in Stillwater Commandery, the Northmont clan was the strongest power.

“Northmont Fox?” Ning looked through the window, towards the direction of that voice. Ning could see a figure in a private room that was a few kilometers away. Northmont Fox appeared quite muscular, and he had sideburns on his face. His appearance was very different from his name. He had the frame and musculature of a dominating tyrant, but his eyes were cold, sinister, and arrogant, like those of a viper’s.

Northmont Baiwei appeared ardent and heroic. Northmont Fox, however, appeared cold and sinister. They were two diametrically different people.

“Miss Ziyi.” Northmont Fox called out in his loud voice, “This Northmont Baiwei hasn’t reserved Zither Fairy in advance, has he?” “He has not.” Miss Ziyi, standing on the ground below, shook her head. “Since there is no reservation, and since both myself and Northmont Baiwei are both inviting Zither Fairy over, let this be determined by who offers the highest price.” Northmont Fox’s voice echoed throughout the entire hall as he called out, “I’ll offer ten taels.” Instantly, every single private room within the giant hall became filled with lowered whispers.

Within Ning’s room.

Ning was puzzled. Ten taels? Ten taels of what? As for Northmont Baiwei, he said with cold fury, “I’ll offer fifty.” “Hahaha, Northmont Baiwei, you are going to compete against me? Are you able to win?” Northmont Fox called out from his distant room, with a voice filled with braggado, “I’ll offer a hundred.”

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Within Ning’s room. Ning, Wuji, and Baiwei were all seated. Wuji lowered his voice and said, “Brother Baiwei, if we are going to get into a bidding war, I can assist you.” But Northmont Baiwei just laughed and said, “No need. In terms of wealth, how could Northmont Fox compare with you, you little God of Wealth? Inviting Zither Fairy over is only a minor matter. Normally, just ‘one’ is enough. To spend too much is just foolishness. He’s now offered a hundred; as long as I raise the price again, Northmont Fox definitely won’t make another counter-offer. By then, I’d have to suffer the consequences.”

“Why aren’t I hearing anything from you?” Northmont Fox mocked from far away. Northmont Baiwei called back, “Congratulations, Northmont Fox. You have invited Zither Fairy to accompany you for the price of a hundred taels of liquefied elemental essence.”

Liquefied elemental essence? Ning was stunned upon hearing this. So the 'one', 'ten', and 'hundred' taels they were referring to...were in reference to liquefied elemental essence! Liquefied elemental essence was the refined, concentrated version of natural, elemental energy. One could rely on it to engage in training, without causing any stress to the body. Previously, Ning had acquired a very thin layer of liquefied elemental essence from the stone room in the mine, most likely just ten or fifteen kilograms worth.

He had used up only a third of the essence, less than five kilograms. This had allowed him to breakthrough to the Zifu Disciple level and also establish and stabilize as an early-stage Zifu Disciple.

"Ten or fifteen kilograms was comparable to the entire wealth of the Ji clan," Ning mused to himself. "A hundred taels of it...that's roughly equivalent to five kilograms. Just now, in order to have Zither Fairy accompany him, Northmont Fox casually tossed out a sum that is equivalent to half the total wealth of my Ji clan? He is too...too insane."

"A hundred taels of liquefied elemental essence." Hun Wuji nodded. "That's roughly equivalent to an Earth-ranked magic treasure. Given Northmont Fox's temperament...for him to throw away an Earth-ranked magic treasure for the sake of making trouble for you is his limit."

Ning, hearing this, was speechless. Well, then. After killing Adept Xu Li, he had only acquired three Earth-ranked magic treasures. He had worked so hard to accumulate that amount of wealth...but compared to exalted young masters of the Marquisate of Stillwater, he was indeed quite far off.

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Outside the room, Northmont Fox's voice continued to ring out with arrogance and smugness as Miss Ziyi was introducing Zither Fairy to him.

Within Northmont Fox's room. Northmont Fox was currently seated alongside three other men. As for their servants and followers, they had a separate room of their own.

"I didn't expect that I would run into Northmont Baiwei here, today." Northmont Fox held a beaustskull goblet in his hand, his red tongue gently lapping at the wine as he laughed sinisterly. "I just so happened to acquire a powerful retainer recently, as well as an extremely rare magic treasure. What happened just now was just the starter course. Today, I'm going to anger him so badly that he vomits blood. I'll make it so that he will never forget this day. I'll make him feel terror in his heart whenever he sees me!"

"Then let us congratulate you in advance, young master Fox." "Let's watch as Northmont Baiwei is embarrassed." The other three in the room, Zhou Li included, all cupped their hands in a salute.

"Hahaha." Northmont Fox laughed joyfully. Right at this moment, Zither Fairy came in, and Fox immediately said, "Come, Zither Fairy, come. Please come in and sit." "Thank you, young master Fox." Zither Fairy's gentle laugh made Fox feel as though even his bones had relaxed. This made him feel all the more pleased.

With a beautiful woman accompanying them, Northmont Fox's room was filled with laughter and amusement.

A long time later.

“Mm.” Northmont Fox looked down at the main hall, and at the dais that was beginning to be set up. “It should almost be time for the treasure auction.” Fox waved his hand, and a grand seal suddenly appeared within it. He handed it to the nearby Zither Fairy and said, “Zither Fairy, this grand seal is a top-grade Mortal-ranked magic treasure, ‘Grand Mountain Seal’. It was forged from an actual mountain, the ‘Grand Mountain’, which was refined into this seal. Its true value comes from the fact that it is merely a Mortal-ranked magic treasure, but in terms of power, it isn’t inferior to any ordinary Earth-ranked magic treasures. Thus, this Grand Mountain Seal is absolutely a top-grade Mortal-ranked magic treasure.”

“Top-grade Mortal-ranked?” “It is extremely rare to find a top-grade magic treasure. Young master Fox actually has a treasure like this?” Everyone nearby, Zhou Li included, was surprised. Zifu Disciples were capable of using Mortal-ranked magic treasures, while Wanxiang Adepts were able to use Earth-ranked magic treasures. But generally speaking, they only used low-grade or middle-grade treasures. It was extremely rare for someone to be in possession of a high-grade Earth-ranked magic treasure. As for top-grade...that was incomparably rare.

“I’ll deliver it over now.” Zither Fairy rose to her feet.

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The dais rose up within the main hall below. Miss Ziyi’s voice echoed throughout the entire hall: “It is now time for the treasure auction. Today, our Carefree Caverns has prepared eighteen treasures, each with extraordinary attributes. Anyone willing to purchase them can buy them. The high bidder wins the auction!”

Within Ning’s room. Ning, upon hearing this, couldn’t help but feel startled. Wasn’t this identical to auctions on Earth? So a place like this, where Immortals and Devils gathered, also had so-called ‘treasure auctions’.

“In addition, honored guests, if you have any precious treasures which you are willing to sell, you can bring them out as well and allow everyone to bid on them as well,” Miss Ziyi said with a laugh. “Just now, young master Northmont Fox has brought out a top-grade Mortal-ranked magic treasure, ‘Grand Mountain Seal’, and has made it the nineteenth magic treasure up for bidding in our treasure auction.”

“Northmont Baiwei! I wonder what sort of treasures you might have for sale?” That deep voice echoed out once more.

This was a slap in the face. He was directly striking Baiwei on the face! Within his room, Baiwei had an extremely ugly look on his face. Hun Wuji was frowning as well. “This Northmont Fox actually managed to procure a top-grade Mortal-ranked magic treasure. Things are now a bit troublesome. I can bring out quite a few Earth-ranked magic treasures, but in terms of rarity, they can’t compare with this Grand Mountain Seal.”

Ning could tell what was going on. For these young masters, when they competed in treasures, what they cared the most about was rarity! Although Earth-ranked magic treasures were much more expensive, in terms of rarity and uniqueness, they were far inferior.

“Dogshit luck. I truly stepped into dogshit today.” Baiwei gritted his teeth. “I didn’t expect that not only would I run into this fellow, he actually came prepared. I’ll have to endure. Next time, I will get him back.”

“Brother Baiwei,” Ning said, “I also happen to have a top-grade Mortal-ranked magic treasure.” “Oh?” Baiwei and Wuji both looked towards Ning in surprise. A top-grade Mortal-ranked treasure wasn’t something you could simply buy with money; the reason why they were ranked top-grade was because they were truly few in number.

“Please take a look.” Ning waved his hand, and the dragon pearl appeared within it, along with four dragon scales. The dragon pearl had the illusory dragon swimming about in the middle of it.

“A dragon pearl!” Baiwei and Wuji were all startled. Wuji then cried out in astonishment, “A four-sided formations that matches with a dragon pearl? Judging from how complex the formation is...this is inconceivable. What formation is this?”

“Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation!” Ning gave his response.

“Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation?” Northmont Baiwei said in astonishment, “Our Northmont clan has a grand formation called the Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation, but that is a Heaven-ranked grand formation, and an extremely powerful Heaven-ranked grand formation at that. So there is actually a Mortal-ranked version of the Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation as well? It was actually simplified? This truly is unbelievable.”

Wuji quickly said, “Such a grand formation...this is far rarer than what Fox has brought out. In addition, Fox just brought a single grand seal. What you have here, Brother Ji Ning, is a formation! It is far more valuable.” The value of a formation was, indeed, higher than that of other magic treasures of the same level.

The way in which Hun Wuji looked at Ning had changed. Top-grade Mortal-ranked magic treasures weren’t so easily procured. It seemed as though this friend of Baiwei’s, Ji Ning, was quite extraordinary as well.

“Ji Ning, are you truly willing to sell it? A treasure like this...after selling it, it will be hard for you to regain it,” Baiwei said. “Yes, sell it.” Ning laughed.

The Ji clan now had the protection of the Marquis of Stillwater; naturally, it no longer had any need for the Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation. In addition, a grand formation like this one required five people controlling it in order to unleash its full combat power. The reason Ning had brought this formation to Stillwater City was because he planned to sell it, and thus acquire a large amount of Mortal-ranked flying swords, which would vastly increase the power of his [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation].

“Alright. Brother Ji Ning, I’m not going to waste too many words on effusive thanks. This time, I’m going to give Northmont Fox a good slap across the face.” Baiwei’s own face was turning ruddy with excitement.

“Northmont Baiwei, can it be that you, the young master of Northmont Blacktiger’s estate, don’t have any treasures?” That deep voice once more rang out mockingly. Baiwei laughed softly, then called out in a loud voice, “Miss Ziyi, I have a formation here. Although it is quite ordinary, it is still naturally far superior to what Northmont Fox produced.”

The atmosphere in the hall instantly changed slightly. Everyone understood that young master Northmont Baiwei was finally standing up and preparing to deliver a vicious slap to his opponent’s face.

Only, would his slap be a loud, ringing one?

That would depend on whether or not this formation treasure was superior to the Grand Mountain Seal.

The Desolate Era

Book 7: Stillwater City Chapter 8: The Boy of Universal Fire

The treasure auction had begun, amidst this strange atmosphere. One treasure after another was brought out.

“The first treasure.” Miss Ziyi held up a tri-colored stone, which then levitated into the air. “14.5 kilograms of ‘Flame Flint’ which can be used to forge magic treasures. The lowest bid must be at least 130 taels of liquefied elemental essence!”

“150 taels of liquefied elemental essence.” Wuji was the first to speak out. The other guests in the various rooms looked towards Wuji, and all of them called out warmly, “Oh, young master Wuji is present as well?” “Young master Wuji!” They all addressed him in a clearly warm and familiar manner.

“160 taels.” A clear voice rang out from a distant room. It was a rainbow-clothed maiden. “180 taels.” An icy voice from a grim, callous-looking youth.

Within Ning’s private room. Ning just sat there, listening to these people bargain. He glanced backwards towards Hun Wuji. “Brother Wuji, you aren’t going to bid any further?”

“Brother Ji Ning, this is your first time here so you don’t understand.” Wuji laughed as he explained, “The small-scale treasure auctions which the Carefree Caverns normally offer will have treasures that start off at a price which is quite a bit lower than its true value. I offered 150 taels, and that’s a price at which I can definitely make money off this transaction. But as for a price of 200 taels, that’s a bit too much; only those who truly need it would raise it to such a price. I’m a merchant; I don’t like doing business at a loss.”

Ning now understood. So the first bid Wuji had made was for the sake of earning money.

“Ji Ning, after you grow more familiar with Wuji, you’ll understand; this young God of Wealth is always thinking about how to make more money,” Northmont Baiwei said with a laugh.

“290 taels.” A hoarse voice suddenly rang out.

A long silence. “Anyone offering a higher bid?” Miss Ziyi glanced at the private rooms in every direction. “Since there are no other bids, then this Flame Flint will go to young master Qu of the Raindragon Guard.”

“Next is the second treasure...” Miss Ziyi quickly began to introduce the next treasure to the audience.

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“Young master Qu is a disciple of the Trueflower School as well as a Raindragon Guard.” Baiwei gave a quick introduction regarding the man. “He is already a peak Wanxiang Adept, and his future prospects are unlimited. Upon becoming a Primal Daoist, he will truly become a major figure here.”

Ning nodded. The others within this hall might not have statuses as exalted as that of Northmont Baiwei or Northmont Fox, but they were all extraordinary figures who were able to converse and interact with Baiwei and Fox as equals. After all, although these two young masters of the Northmont clan had exalted statuses, they were still young and didn't truly command great power yet.

The reason why the Carefree Caverns treated them so respectfully was because behind the two of them were Northmont Blacktiger and Northmont Yin, who were candidates to become the next Marquis of Stillwater.

"That person just now was Miss Leshan of the Meng clan," Baiwei said. "Within the Meng clan, she is viewed with great favor. Her training speed has been extremely fast, and in sixty short years, she has become a peak Wanxiang Adept. The Meng clan is one of the major clans within our Stillwater Commandery."

Ning nodded. The Meng clan? He glanced at the distant maiden, who appeared to only be twelve or thirteen years of age. She was one of the true, proud scions of the Meng clan. Compared to her, Meng Jun, Roch, and Xin were far inferior.

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One treasure after another was sold off, most of which were meant for Wanxiang Adepts to use. Although occasionally, there were some appropriate for Zifu Disciples, those were all extremely rare items. Of the people present, aside from Baiwei, Fox, and some other young masters with extraordinary backgrounds, most had already reached the Wanxiang Adept level.

"Of the items that our Carefree Caverns prepared, two were not bid on, while the other sixteen have all been sold. Now, the auction for the top-grade Mortal-ranked 'Grand Mountain Seal' of young master Northmont Fox will begin. This treasure is a grand seal that was forged from the peak of Grand Mountain. If it was an Earth-ranked magic treasure, it wouldn't be particularly precious; its value lies in the fact that it is a Mortal-ranked magic treasure which can be used by Zifu Disciples. When a peak Zifu Disciple uses this treasure, it can transform back into its original form of the Grand Mountain and crush downwards with astonishing force. There is no minimum price; everyone can now commence bidding on the treasure."

Miss Ziyi was laughing as she spoke. The treasures which guests occasionally brought and auction off always started off at a minimum price of zero. The amount that was bid would be the amount the guest would receive; the Carefree Caverns never asked for any commission at all.

Within Ning's private room. "I wonder how much this Grand Mountain Seal is worth?" Ning mused to himself. After having visited the Treasure Hall of the underwater estate, Ning didn't hold the Grand Mountain Seal in high regard. If it had been left in the Treasure Hall, the first master probably would've just classified as something which only barely qualified as a high-grade Mortal-ranked treasure.

"Eighty to a hundred taels of liquefied elemental essences," Wuji said. "This is the most common of all grand seal-type magic treasures. Although it is top-grade, it isn't all that precious; it can just barely reach the price of a normal Earth-ranked magic treasure."

"Fifty taels."

“Fifty five taels.”

“Sixty taels.”

The various rooms were all making their bids. Soon, a final price was reached; 110 taels of liquefied elemental essence. Ning stared through the window towards the distant Northmont Fox, who had a smile on his face. Clearly, he was pleased with this price.

“Next is a formation technique, one offered by young master Northmont Baiwei,” Miss Ziyi called out loudly, a look of joy on her face. “The Marquisate of Stillwater has a famous Heaven-ranked formation, the Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation. As for this formation, this is the simplified version of that ancient, mighty formation. Although it is simplified, our Carefree Caverns have ascertained that it was simplified in a nearly perfect way; it is at the utmost peak of Mortal-ranked magic treasures, a top-grade amongst top-grades.”

In front of Miss Ziyi, a dragon pearl and four dragon scales suddenly emerged, hovering before her. Everyone present had extraordinary eyesight, and as they stared towards these items, astonishment appeared on quite a few faces.

“Ziyi!” Northmont Fox had an extremely ugly look on his face. He barked out, “I’ve never heard of there being such a thing as a simplified Mortal-rank version of the Netherwyrms Heavenlock Formation. Are you sure you assessed it correct?”

Miss Ziyi just replied in a loud voice, “Our Carefree Caverns is willing to pay two hundred taels of liquefied elemental essence to purchase this grand formation.” Upon these words coming out, Fox’s face instantly blackened, and he no longer said a single word. The reputation of the Carefree Caverns was beyond reproach; if the Carefree Caverns was willing to make an offer, that meant that it had an extremely good opinion of this formation technique.

“I am willing to offer 210 taels.”

“230 taels.”

Right away, the price began to rise. In his own room, Ning felt his heartrate begin to quicken; this was his treasure, after all. Slowly, the price continued to tick upwards....

“360 taels!” Suddenly, the clear voice of a young child rang out. Instantly, everything fell silent.

First of all, the price had risen very slowly to 300 taels, and this had been viewed as a hard ceiling to break through. For someone to suddenly increase the price to 360 taels was surprising. And secondly, the person who had made the bid had the voice of a child...this caused quite a few people to look towards him. Even Ning couldn’t resist from turning to look. He saw that in a distant, private room, there was a child that appeared to be six or seven years of age. He had a golden necklace around his neck, and he was nibbling on a bone.

“The Boy of Universal Fire?” Baiwei was surprised. “He came today as well?” Wuji was also shocked. As for Ning, he narrowed his eyes. ‘Boy’? This was the first time he had encountered an Immortal practitioner who looked like a child.

“Brother Ji Ning, according to stories, this Boy of Universal Fire is a reincarnated Immortal,” Baiwei said in a soft voice. “He is one of the most indisputable masters of formations, and he stands at the very top of the field amongst those of us in the younger generation. He has trained for less than thirty years, but he is already a peak Wanxiang Adept. In addition, he primarily focuses his efforts on analyzing formations, and has only spent a bit of effort on training. And yet, he has already reached such a level.”

Less than thirty years of age? A peak Wanxiang Adept? Who only spent a small part of his attention on training? And was a reincarnated Immortal? Ning was truly speechless.

“Are there any higher prices?” Miss Ziyi looked towards the surrounding rooms, but unfortunately, there were no further bids. “Then this Netherwurm Heavenlock Formation will go to the young master of Universal Fire,” Miss Ziyi said in an extremely respectful manner.

The Boy of Universal Fire, gnawing on his bone, instantly began to laugh loudly. “To condense such a complicated grand formation in such a manner, yet maintain so much of its essence...it has been a long time since I’ve seen something like this. I truly am curious as to which formations master carried this out. I bought it for just a bit over three hundred taels...what a bargain, what a bargain!” The Boy of Universal Fire waved his hand, and the dragon pearl, along with the four dragon scales, flew straight towards him. At the same time, he also tossed out some black marks, sending them flying towards Miss Ziyi.

As soon as the dragon pearl and the dragon scales entered his grasp, the Boy of Universal Fire instantly began to peruse them. The distant Ning, upon seeing this, sighed to himself. Even though this person was a reincarnated Immortal, he was also insanely dedicated to what he did. If he wasn’t, could he have reached his current level of accomplishments?

“Hmph.” In the other room, Northmont Fox had an increasingly ugly look on his face. He had lost. His Grand Mountain Seal had only sold for 110 taels, while the Netherwurm Heavenlock Formation had sold for 360 taels.

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Within Ning’s room. An attendant brought in a stack of black marks, placing them on the table. The attendant then bowed respectfully and left, closing the door as he did.

“This is 360 taels,” Baiwei said, delivering the stack of black marks to Ning. Ning saw that there were three slightly larger marks and six slightly smaller marks. On the large marks, there were the words, ‘Heavenly Treasures Mountain of the Grand Xia Dynasty’ and ‘Exchangeable For 100 Taels’. On the small marks, there were the words, ‘Heavenly Treasures Mountain of the Grand Xia Dynasty’ and ‘Exchangeable For 10 Taels’.

“Every single commandery city controlled by every single Marquisate of the world has a Heavenly Treasures Mountain within,” Baiwei explained. “This elemental mark is used quite commonly. It is also a magic treasure that requires someone to be at least at the Xiantian level to bind. After binding it, you can carry it with you and use it to buy other magic treasures, or trade for liquefied elemental essence. Liquefied elemental essence is something which every single major power in the entire world delights in.”

Ning nodded. At Earth, one of the trillion Lesser Worlds, it could be said that gold was a common commodity used for trade. In this vast world, however, the refined extract of the natural elemental energy of the world was what was used as a common currency. By relying on them, one could avoid having to waste precious amounts of time in slowly, bitterly gathering in energy. However, not even Immortals could be wealthy enough to use liquefied elemental essence nonstop; at most, they would use them to help in making breakthroughs.

“I’ve caused you, Brother Ji Ning, to lose a grand formation. I truly feel ashamed,” Baiwei said quickly. “But I acquired this liquefied elemental essence,” Ning replied hurriedly. “As for the grand formation, it was of no use to me.”

Baiwei shook his head. “It’s not the same. Such a rare formation can easily be exchanged for liquefied elemental essence, but it will be very hard for you to use elemental essence to buy another such formation. Still, I have to admit, this feels excellent. Today, Northmont Fox wanted to cause trouble for me. He first ruined our plans of having you, Brother Ji Ning, enter the Skysplitter Sword Sect, and then he insisted on taking away Zither Fairy. At last, I’ve given vent to my anger.”

“Given Northmont Fox’s temperament, I imagine that he’s going wild with rage by now,” Wuji said with a laugh. “Right.” Just thinking of this made Baiwei begin to laugh even more happily.

Ning grinned as well...and in his heart, he was calculating how many flying swords he might be able to purchase with these 360 taels of liquefied elemental essence.

“When I left Swallow Mountain, I first made a trip to the underwater estate. I passed the second level of the Wargod Hall and traded for the Nine Yang Swords Formation.” Ning was pondering to himself. The Nine Yang Swords Formation was an extremely good match for the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]; although Daoist Threelives had individually ranked those nine swords as only being high-grade, in the modern era, they would all definitely be considered top-grade. In addition, all nine swords came from the same source, and they just so happened to form a formation base for the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], and so the power of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] had naturally increased significantly.

“I need to acquire some more high quality flying swords that come from the same source. I can’t hope for top-grade Mortal-ranked flying swords like these Nine Yang Swords, but I have to try and procure high-grade or at least middle-grade swords.” Ning understood that there was a direct link between the power of his [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] and the quality of his magic treasures. The higher quality those magic treasures were, the greater the power of the formation would naturally become.

Given the current power of his divine sense, his [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] would be capable of unleashing tremendous combat power. His true killer attack, the [Starseizing Hand], was something he would only use at the most critical moments; under ordinary circumstances, he would rely on the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] to make his way through the world.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 7: Stillwater City Chapter 9: Ji Ning Reveals His Fierceness

After having vented their anger through the treasure auction, Northmont Baiwei, Hun Wuji, and Ji Ning were now chatting and laughing amongst themselves. They were in quite a good mood. Time passed on slowly, and night began to approach.

“Midnight comes, and the time for the betting arena comes as well.” From outside the window, the voice of Miss Ziyi could be heard. Ning looked out through the window, only to see that the hall had now become completely empty. There were two jewels placed in a corner of the room, and Miss Ziyi was standing in one of the corners while speaking.

“The betting arena duels are absolutely berserk,” Baiwei said as he looked out the window. “Most of the people here are Wanxiang Adepts, and astonishingly talented ones at that. They will send some of their Zifu Disciple followers or retainers to engage in battle against other Zifu Disciples and Zifu-level Diremonsters. The masters on each side will engage in a gamble on the duel.” Ning sighed to himself as he listened. What a tragic sight!

“The Immortal cultivators and monsters who engage in the betting arena duels participate for the sake of survival or for the sake of acquiring treasures,” Baiwei said. “However, a duel must be between two competitors at the same level; there absolutely would never be, for example, a Wanxiang Adept battling a Zifu Disciple.”

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Ning stared down at the hall below. An Immortal practitioner with a sword on his back had entered the hall, and a red-haired man had entered as well. The two stared at each other, their eyes filled with murderous intents.

They first walked to stand before the two jewels at the two opposite corners of the hall, filling them with their elemental energy and causing each to radiate light.

“The Immortal cultivator under the command of young master Qu is a peak Zifu Disciple.”

“The Diremonster under the command of Miss Leshan is also at the peak Zifu level.”

Miss Ziyi called out in a loud voice, “Activate the grand sealing formation.” Whoosh! Instantly, a watery, rippling layer of light that was nearly a kilometer in circumference suddenly appeared within the hall, covering the Immortal practitioner and the red-haired man within it.

“Qu Yihang, I think you had best admit defeat obediently. Otherwise, not only will you lose your money, you will also lose your man!”

“Hmph. Just wait and you’ll see.”

Voices rang out from the two private rooms...and the battle below them instantly began. The red-haired Diremonster instantly transformed into a strange, four-hooved monster of fire. Its body was covered with armored scales, and it howled as it charged towards the Immortal practitioner while belching forth fiery light from its mouth.

“Vermin, accept death.” The sword-wielding Immortal practitioner let out a cold laugh. Swish! The sword on his back instantly flew out, and as it slashed through the air, it left a rainbow-colored scar through the air...

Ning watched the battle progress beneath him. He nodded to himself. "The Immortal practitioner should be the winner." After having battled for some time, the Diremonster let out a grief-stricken bellow, then collapsed. The Immortal practitioner's face was ashen as well; he had been forced to execute a forbidden technique in order to achieve this victory. However, in the end, he had won. Previously, his master-uncle, Qu Yihang had told him that so long as he won, he would help him become an inner disciple.

"Success." The Immortal practitioner had excitement in his eyes. Although he had used a forbidden technique, he hadn't used it for very long. In a year or so, he would be fully recovered.

"Hahaha...." Young master Qu immediately began to laugh. As for Meng Leshan, she had an ugly look on her face.

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In Ning's private room. Baiwei said with a laugh, "Meng Leshan and Qu Yihang are both dazzling, outstanding talents. Both of them have joined the Raindragon Guard as well. Rumor said that while on a mission for the Raindragon Guard, the two formed a grudge against each other. Outside Stillwater City, the two would most likely be plotting each other's deaths. Within the city itself, they are still going all out to harm each other."

"Much like you and Northmont Fox, actually," Wuji said with a laugh. "Hahaha, yes, just like me and Northmont Fox," Baiwei replied with a loud laugh.

Wuji looked towards Ning. "Brother Ji Ning, although these betting duels appear casual, in truth, many mysteries hide within. You have to select a particularly astonishing individual at the Zifu Disciple level...but the more talented an expert is, the less willing they will be to risk their lives. Thus, it's actually quite difficult to arrange for these betting duels. Both sides have to come up with a way to recruit someone, and if they lose, not only will they lose money and their fighter, they will also lose face. Sometimes, if they grow desperate due to their losses, they might even personally join the field of battle."

"Personally join the field of battle?" Ning was surprised. These Immortal practitioners all had extraordinary statuses; they would personally join and fight?

"What's so surprising about this? These geniuses rose to prominence through combat to begin with. When enraged, they will personally join the field of battle. Every year or two, there will be Wanxiang Adepts, unparalleled geniuses all, who will fight a duel to the death here in the Carefree Caverns. If someone dies, no one can be blamed for it!" Baiwei continued, "But of course, aside from those who have grudges against each other, most are just trying to win some money through using the servants and retainers under their command."

"For example, myself," Wuji said with a laugh. "I have quite a few servants and retainers. I can send them down to engage in betting duels, and the stakes for each duel must be at least two hundred taels of liquefied elemental essence. I can make quite a bit of money in this manner." Ning nodded.

Ning now understood that although Hun Wuji and Northmont Baiwei were two of the more amiable figures amongst these exalted young masters...they were still figures of high status. They had high standards. It was precisely because they thought well of Ning that they were willing to treat him as an

equal and as a friend. To them, ordinary Zifu Disciples were nothing more than retainers or servants; why would they care about their deaths?

Some time later. More than ten betting duels had already been carried out, and the atmosphere of the entire hall had become noticeably more heated and wild. There was currently a very tall and muscular Fiendgod Body Refiner standing in the middle of the hall. As a Zifu-level Fiendgod Body Refiner with a divine ability, he possessed astonishing combat power.

“Hahaha, everyone, I’ve won six rounds in a row. It seems that the ‘spiritfruit wine’ for today’s betting duels will be mine for the drinking.” A chubby-faced, big-eared youth in a private room was laughing merrily. “Is there anyone else? As long as you can beat my subordinate, you will gain three hundred taels.”

“Su-Su! You’ve won enough. Have your man go down.” A deep voice rang out. Instantly, Ning turned to look; the speaker was Northmont Fox. Fox flashed a fierce glance towards Ning, giving him a long stare, then grinning with a clearly wicked idea in mind.

Ning laughed as well. He had overheard quite a few things today, and now understood that these young masters couldn’t quite be considered the movers-and-shakers of the Commandery. The truly top-tier figures of Stillwater Commandery were the likes of Northmont Blacktiger. Northmont Fox? Ning didn’t fear him at all.

“Bang!” The hall suddenly trembled. A two-meter tall horned man with massive muscles and azure skin strode into the hall, his every footstep causing it to shake. His eyes radiated with azure light as well. Upon seeing him, every single person understood...that this was a Diremonster! Normal people could rarely reach the height of six meters, much less be horned.

The giant, muscular, horned Diremonster strode to the two jewels in the corner, then filled them with his elemental ki and his divine power. “Fiendgod Body Refiner, Ki Refiner. A dual refiner.” Miss Ziyi, standing in the corner, immediately made this report. “Both are at the peak Zifu level. A Diremonster under the control of young master Fox.”

Whoosh. The grand sealing formation once more lit up, and the Diremonster stared directly towards that Fiendgod Body Refiner cultivator. “Die, then.” The azure-skinned, horned Diremonster let out a loud roar, transforming into a rhinoceros with a single horn that was more than thirty meters tall. Its entire body then radiated with light, and the body of the Monoceros once more swelled, transforming to sixty meters in height. The enormous Monoceros...it stared at its opponent as though he were an ant.

Bang! The Monoceros moved as fast as lightning, intending to trample its opponent. Whap! Whap! Whap! After three exchanges of blows, the Fiendgod cultivator had been trampled to the point of having only half his body left. He immediately called out in a high voice, “I admit defeat!” Only then did the azure-skinned Monoceros come to a halt.

If one side perished or admitted defeat, that represented the end of the battle! If one insisted on forcibly killing someone who had surrendered, one would be punished with a fine equal to ten times the stakes of the bet.

“Grrr...” The Monoceros raised its head, letting out a growl, then transformed into mist before recondensing into that azure-skinned, horned man who was six meters tall.

“Northmont Baiwei. Three hundred taels. Dare you engage in a betting duel with me?” The distant Northmont Fox pointed from his window towards Baiwei. “I know that you are as cowardly as a mouse, and won’t possibly dare to engage in a betting duel. Hahaha...as cowardly as a rat!”

The sound of his laughter was so repugnant and vile. Ning now finally understood why some people would personally go enter the arena.

“I didn’t expect that Northmont Fox would be here today. If I did...I would never have allowed him to act so arrogantly for so long.” Baiwei gritted his teeth, so hard that they were at the point of splintering. He was an incomparably proud person; how could he not be enraged after being mocked repeatedly?

“Brother Wuji, do you have any powerful retainers present?” Baiwei looked towards Wuji. Wuji was like a young God of Wealth; he often relied on betting duels to earn money. Naturally, he had some formidable retainers under his command. Nodding, he said, “I do have a powerful retainer amongst the servants I brought today. However, I truly do not feel confident in his chances. That Diremonster retainer which Northmont Fox brought out is a Fiendgod Body Refiner with a divine ability; he truly is extraordinary.”

Ning nodded as well. Monsters were powerful to begin with, and those who trained as Fiendgod Body Refiners were even tougher to deal with, much less those who also had divine abilities. Their combat power was at a level higher than even Jadechild had been at. Generally speaking, those with such a great level of power would disdain from serving as retainers and engaging in betting duels. However, this person was a Diremonster who had definitely been captured and tamed; thus, he must have been forced to obey the order to go take part in a betting duel.

“No matter what, let’s give it a try,” Baiwei said. “Alright,” Wuji nodded. “Attend me.” Baiwei called towards the servant outside, then waved his hand and produced three hundred taels worth of marks, then tossed them over. “Let’s bet on a duel.” The servant nodded.

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Soon, a black-robed cultivator entered the hall. He stared coldly towards his opponent, underwent the test, and was verified to also be at the peak Zifu level in power. “Kill him!” From far away, Northmont Fox let out a roar.

That six-meter tall, azure-skinned and horned man stared at the black-robed cultivator, then roared, “You are dead.” And then, it once more transformed into a towering, massive Monoceros, then executed its Heavenly Transformation divine ability and increased in size yet again, to sixty meters in height! Its entire body filled the area with a savage aura, causing the corners of the eyes of the black-robed cultivator to crease.

“A stupid cow.” The black-robed cultivator let out a cold laugh. Whoosh! A black fog appeared out of nowhere in the area around them, filling the entire area, including that Monoceros. The only thing that could be seen within the black fog was an enormous, rainbow-colored serpentine phantom.

“Die, die, die!” The enormous Monoceros wildly charged and trampled about. The black fog swirled around it, and the massive phantom serpent also coiled around the Monoceros, causing its body to crackle and pop. Its body was beginning to rot, and its bones quickly became visible.

“Bangbangbang...” The Monoceros rampaged about, its power seemingly great enough to shatter the skies and overturn the mountains.

“No, I...” Suddenly, a miserable scream rang out. BANG! An explosive sound...and the black fog dispersed, along with the illusion of a serpent. The enormous Monoceros stood there in the hall, vestiges of blood and gore visible beneath its feet. Its body was completely rotted away, and thick white bones could be seen on its back. Still, quite soon, in just a few breaths, its body completely healed.

“Northmont Baiwei. Is that all you have to show?” Northmont Fox arrogantly mocked him yet again. “I’m so very sorry...but your three hundred taels of liquefied essence is now mine. I would now like to propose a challenge of six hundred taels of liquefied essence...dare you accept?”

Silence. Complete silence. The entire hall had fallen silent, and nobody said a thing. Although they weren’t afraid of Northmont Fox, they truly didn’t have any Zifu-level experts who were capable of battling that Monoceros monster. Everyone was waiting to see how Baiwei would respond.

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Within Ning’s private room. Baiwei stared towards the outside, his gaze narrowing. “Nine hundred taels! I’ll wager nine hundred taels on a bet with you. Dare you accept it?” Northmont Fox was continuing to shout provocatively. He wanted to seize this opportunity to deeply humiliate his old foe. His father, Northmont Yin, strongly encouraged him to suppress Northmont Baiwei whenever Fox had the chance.

Silence.

Wuji didn’t say anything. He didn’t have any retainers who were more powerful than the monster. Baiwei’s veins began to protrude from his face, and he muttered to himself, “Endure, endure, endure...”

“Let me go.” Ning suddenly rose to his feet. “I will go kill that rhinoceros monster.” “You?” Wuji and Baiwei both stared towards Ning in astonishment.

“No way. Ji Ning, if you train for a few more years, it will be simple for you to kill him, but you’ve only trained for ten or so years to date,” Baiwei said, shaking his head hurriedly. “You can’t take this risk.” But in his heart, he couldn’t help but feel slightly moved; he understood that Ning simply couldn’t watch any longer, and wanted to fight on his behalf.

Ning glanced at the outside. Nine hundred taels of liquefied elemental essence? What he lacked the most right now was liquefied elemental essence; upon killing the rhinoceros monster, he should acquire quite a bit of it.

“Don’t worry. Killing him?” Ning let out a chuckle. “That will be as easy as killing a chicken.”

Wuji and Baiwei were both stunned. These words were simply too dominating!

“Fine. Then I’ll bet against him. If we win, the liquefied elemental essence will be yours, Brother Ji Ning!” Northmont Baiwei felt incomparably excited.

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Book 7: Stillwater City Chapter 10: The Monstrous Ji Ning

“Brother Ji Ning, you are willing to risk yourself for me. I truly don’t know what I...” Northmont Baiwei looked at Ning, then said hesitatingly, “You know, let’s just forget it. Although Northmont Fox is going too far, it’s not a big deal if we just endure it for a time. In the future, I’ll just seek out an opportunity to avenge myself.” When he recollected how savage that rhinoceros Diremonster was, Baiwei was worried for Ning.

“No need to say anything further. The liquefied essence will go to me upon winning, right? That’s enough,” Ning said with a laugh. Baiwei opened his mouth, wanting to say something, but nothing came out.

“Don’t worry. I’m completely confident.” Ning cracked his lips into a wide grin. “Excellent!” The nearby Hun Wuji looked at Ning. “Brother Ji Ning, we will wait here for you to drink with us when you return.” Ning nodded, a fierce light flashing through his eyes.

This time...would be the first time he would reveal his power in Stillwater City. Since he had come to Stillwater City, then it was time for him to truly show off what a ‘monstrous talent’ he was.

Since he had already decided to join a school, and since there were so many elite members from many schools present, Ning had come to his decision. He was no longer going to hide himself and conceal his power. He had trained in seclusion in the Swallow Mountain region for ten-plus years; he had concealed enough. In Stillwater City, what he needed was reveal as much of his prowess and talent as he could; he needed for the various schools to view him as a priceless treasure! To make the various powers all view him as someone tremendously important! Only then would he be able to ascend beyond the clouds in the azure sky!

If he was to embark on this path, then he would embark on this path as a genius. The path of a monstrous genius!

“A rhinoceros monster?” Ning looked through the window towards that savage, massive rhinoceros Diremonster. “Nothing more than a stepping stone for me.”

“Attend me.” Baiwei once more summoned the servant, then handed over nine hundred taels. At the same time, he instructed her to take Ning to engage that Monoceros in a duel.

The maid looked in astonishment towards Ning. Within the hallway outside the room, she had seen for herself how savage and mighty that rhinoceros monster was. This delicate, handsome youth in front of her was going to battle against that rhinoceros monster?

“Yes.” The maidservant didn’t dare say anything; she immediately led Ning towards the outside.

“Brother Ji Ning, we shall wait here for your victorious return!” Baiwei and Wuji both rose to their feet, watching as Ning left.

“Be careful.” The Whitewater Hound, resting on the ground, rose to his feet as well as he looked at Ning. Still, the Whitewater Hound knew very well...that Ning had killed Adept Xu Li with but a single stroke. Kill this rhinoceros monster? Ning shouldn’t have any problems at all.

Ning turned his head, glancing back towards him, then nodded. And then, Ning departed. Ning headed out through the hallway, following after the maidservant. There were some other attendants in the hallway as well. They all looked towards Ning, a mixture of curiosity, grief, sympathy, and pity in their

eyes. As they saw it...this handsome, delicate youth was probably a retainer who was being sent to his certain death.

“Baiwei, are you quivering in fear?” That deep voice once more called out mockingly. “Northmont Fox, have that Diremonster under your command prepare for death!” Another voice, a clear one, rang out from the other room. “In addition, Northmont Fox, let me tell you something. Even if you occasionally acquire a powerful retainer, you should be modest. The more arrogant you are, the more miserable your defeat will be!”

“Bullshit!” Northmont Fox instantly grew enraged. Northmont Baiwei just snickered. “Shortly afterwards, you’ll have to swallow your own pile of crap.” The voices of the two young masters of the Northmont clan echoed in the air.

As for Ning, he had already departed his corridor and arrived within the main hall.

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“Oh, Northmont Baiwei actually has a subordinate he can send out? Can it be that he feels confident that his subordinate will be able to overcome that rhinoceros monster?” A rainbow-clothed maiden looked downwards from her window.

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“Someone dares to battle against that rhinoceros monster? Who is it?” A white-robed young master looked downwards as well.

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“Hm.” The Boy of Universal Fire, still gnawing on that bone, looked downwards as well. Although he had earlier been focusing on analyzing his new formation, the betting duels was the most lively part of the night, and they didn’t go on for too long. Naturally, he elected to watch them as well.

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“Who is it? I refuse to believe that he has a subordinate that can kill my rhinoceros monster.” Northmont Fox stared downwards as well. All of them were staring towards that corridor, and soon, they all saw a youth dressed in fur enter the main hall, under the guidance of that maidservant. The youth had a smile on his face, as though this was naught but a game.

“He is Ji Ning.” Zhou Li, next to Fox, spoke out. “That good friend of Northmont Baiwei’s.” “Good friend?” Fox instantly began to roar with laughter, and his voice filled the entire hall.

“Northmont Baiwei, do you truly have no subordinates left? You actually asked your good friend to personally enter the fray? As I recall, this friend of yours wanted to join the Skysplitter Sword Sect. A young fellow who is just about to enter a sword sect...has actually come out to battle against this rhinoceros Diremonster, who is in possession of a divine ability? He’s throwing his life away. I’m so very sorry, but it seems your 900 taels will be mine, yet again.”

“You laugh quite loudly, but you’ll be crying soon enough,” Baiwei said with a cold laugh of his own, off in the distance.

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The formidable figures within the private rooms all stared down at Ji Ning. Upon hearing that Ning was Baiwei's friend, they all mused to themselves that given Baiwei accepted him as a friend, he must certainly have some extraordinary attributes. Although he appeared to be a youth, the younger one appeared to be, the more one needed to be wary of that person.

"Please come." Miss Ziyi looked at Ning. "This jewel is for testing your divine strength, while this one is for testing your elemental ki. Prior to the betting duel, you must have your basic level of power tested. It is absolutely forbidden for a Wanxiang Adept to battle against a Zifu Disciple, or something similar. If it does happen, then the Carefree Caverns will take the life of the cheater."

Ning nodded. He immediately filled those two jewels with his Crimsonbright divine power, as well as his elemental ki. The two jewels radiated with light which was far weaker than the previous opponents had generated. The light that emanated from the elemental ki test was particularly dim.

"Eh?" Miss Ziyi looked towards Ning in surprise, then called out in high voice, "The Immortal practitioner who Northmont Baiwei has sent out is a dual refiner, both a Ki Refiner and a Fiendgod Body Refiner. As a Fiendgod Body Refiner, he is at the late Zifu stage. As a Ki Refiner, he is at the early Zifu stage."

An uproar in the audience! "Elemental ki at the early Zifu stage?" "Only a late stage Fiendgod Body Refiner?" "Not even at the peak of the Zifu stage; is he suicidal? This is insane." "No wonder he wishes to enter a school; his elemental ki is only at the early Zifu stage. He is indeed a highly suitable candidate."

The formidable figures seated above, upon hearing Ning's level of power in these two aspects, all began to shake their head and sigh. Prior to this, they had felt hopeful regarding Ning's chances of victories, but now, it seemed clear that the youth beneath them was throwing his life away.

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"Activate the sealing formation." Miss Ziyi gave the order. Around them appeared that giant barrier of light. Ning gave the light barrier a glance, then at Northmont Fox, who was watching far away, up above them.

"Kid, you are dead for sure! Even if you have a slightly stronger Fiendgod Body Refining technique, you are only at the late Zifu stage. You actually want to compete against the rhinoceros monster I command? You are committing suicide. You probably won't even have the chance to beg for mercy!" Fox was incomparably brash right now.

"Just prepare your second opponent for me," Ning said with a laugh. Northmont Fox was startled momentarily, but then he bellowed with rage, "Such audacity. Monoceros, go and kill this punk!"

The atmosphere instantly grew tense. In the private rooms above them, Wuji and Baiwei were feeling concern for Ning, while Fox was hoping for Ning's death. Others were all watching this play out with amusement. Still, in their hearts...they felt that Ning's chances for survival were simply too slim.

"Bang!" The six-meter tall, azure-skinned, horned man instantly transformed into an enormous Monoceros. Immediately afterwards, its entire body began to emit a blurry light as it once more transformed, this time into a sixty meter tall colossus. It had already completely executed its Heavenly

Transformation technique to the utmost; its current level of power and speed could be described as incomparably astonishing.

“Prepare to die.” The rhinoceros monster galloped forward, its enormous legs causing the hall to tremble with each step. As for Ning, two Darknorth swords appeared out of nowhere into his hands.

Bang!

The giant rhinoceros monster instantly charged towards Ning, its enormous hooves slamming and crushing down towards Ning, but missing each time. “Whoosh!” The Darknorth swords in Ning’s hands transformed into lines of rainwater, slashing past one of the giant hooves. Instantly, blood splattered out, falling down like the rain. One of the rear hooves of the rhinoceros had been completely severed. It had been charging at high speed forward, and it instantly collapsed to the ground, its momentum carrying it to roll forward and slam directly against the grand sealing formation.

Rumble....

A colossal, mountain-shaking collision. Even the grand sealing formation trembled, a few ripples appear as it blocked the Monoceros monster which had lost a leg. The female attendants outside the grand sealing formation, along with Miss Ziyi, had been badly startled upon seeing the Monoceros charge towards them. They knew, rationally, that it couldn’t touch them, but they still took a few steps back.

The rear hoof of the Monoceros flew straight towards it, once more connecting with the trunk. “Growl....” The Monoceros rose to its feet, staring at Ning, a hint of dread and nervousness in its eyes.

Silence! All of the private rooms above them had fallen silent. Fox’s eyes were wide as he stared downwards. Everyone could easily tell who held the advantage.

Given how massive the Monoceros monster was, its hooves were enormous, yet tremendously quick. It was actually extremely hard to dodge its trampling attacks...but Ning had done so easily. Clearly, Ning’s agility was exceptionally formidable, far above that of the Monoceros. In addition, and more importantly, Ning’s swordplay was particularly powerful as well.

In addition to the magic treasure protecting the body of the Monoceros, after using the Heavenly Transformation technique, the body of the Monoceros was incomparably tough. And yet, its rear hoof had been chopped out with one blow? The power of this sword technique...was absolutely...

What no one realized was that Ning’s divine will was controlling his Darknorth sword. At this point in time, Ning’s divine will was actually a bit more stronger than even that the power of a peak Zifu-stage Fiendgod Body Refiner. When matched with the ‘Dao Domain’ level of swordplay and executed with the Darknorth swords, which were more powerful than ordinary Mortal-ranked magic treasures to begin with, how could the power of the blows not be astonishing?

“Aren’t you going to admit defeat yet?” Ning glanced at the distant, towering figure of the Monoceros. There was a huge difference in size between the two, but at this point in time, the Monoceros’ aura was clearly far feebler.

“Admit defeat? It isn’t so easy to kill a Fiendgod Body Refiner. Even if you chopped me a hundred times, I wouldn’t die.” The Monoceros was entering a berserk state. “Kill him, kill him!” Northmount Fox roared

from above, and the Monoceros raised its head, glancing at him. "Don't worry, Master." The Monoceros stared straight at Ning, its eyes seeming to emit flames.

"Since this is the case...then I will send you on your way." Ning held his Darknorth swords in his hands, leisurely strolling forward. "Growl..." The Monoceros bellowed, once more charging towards Ning, its savage aura filling the heavens and seeming to contain the power to topple the mountains. As long as he could step on, strike, or even brush against Ning, Ning's body would probably explode.

Unfortunately...in terms of technique and comprehension, the difference between the two was simply too great. "Die," Ning said. His entire body transformed into a line of rainwater and slashed outwards. Whoosh...the thick neck of the Monoceros monster was slashed through. Ning flew upwards past him as blood sprayed wildly everywhere. The body and the head of the Monoceros had been completely cut into two pieces.

"Waterflame Lotuses." Ning willed it. BOOM!

After having reached a new level of power as a Fiendgod Refiner, the amount of fire and water Ning could control had clearly increased significantly. If he was to reach the Celestial Fiendgod level, then most likely his control over fire and water alone would be enough for him to easily slaughter a Primal Daoist, without him needing to use any other techniques.

One Waterflame Lotus after another appeared out of nowhere in the surrounding area, slowly swiveling. Each one of them were at least thirty meters in diameter. In total, twelve Waterflame Lotuses had bloomed!

As for the Monoceros which had just been decapitated by Ning, its body and its head were still in two locations. Its head fell between two Waterflame Lotuses and was instantly ground down by them. The Waterflame Lotuses continuously swiveled, crushing and destroying its body. The completely defenseless head was completely crushed into smithereens, but even after transforming into dust, it continued to be assaulted.

As for the other ten loti, they surrounded the entire enormous body of the Monoceros. Although there were parts of it that weren't completely surrounded, there was no way for the remaining parts of it to reform into a whole in this situation.

"Grind!" Ning stood there, within the enormous hall. His twelve giant Waterflame Lotuses bloomed, and the petals of the lotuses swiveled, wildly grinding down the enormous body of the Monoceros, slaughtering it and preventing it from reforming. Naturally, this meant it didn't have a chance to admit defeat either.

This scene, both bloody and beautiful, caused the entire hall to fall silent. Ning just stood there...and then, he raised his head to look towards Northmont Fox.

"I told you to prepare a second subordinate." Ning laughed calmly, as casual and as relaxed as he had been when he first entered the hall.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 7: Stillwater City Chapter 11: The Battle Which Brought Fame

“Excellent!” Back in the private room, Northmont Baiwei’s face was red from excitement. By his side was Hun Wuji, and his eyes were also filled with shock and delight. “I truly didn’t expect that Brother Ji Ning would be able to execute that rhinoceros monster with such ease,” Wuji said. “Those movements...that swordplay...he is truly inconceivable.”

Baiwei nodded hurriedly. “Formidable.” Baiwei was grinning so widely that his face threatened to split apart. He immediately shouted loudly, “Northmont Fox, I told you earlier that you were spouting crap. Now, you’ll have to swallow your crap back down!”

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Northmont Fox’s face was ashen. Both the actions of the seemingly ordinary youth below him as well as the words of Baiwei caused his heart to clench. He felt extremely miserable!

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“How formidable. What formidable swordplay!” Young master Qu stared downwards.

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“He was able to effortlessly execute that rhinoceros monster? Was that a divine ability? Or pure swordplay?” A black-robed youth frowned as he stared down towards the hall.

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The Boy of Universal Fire, that child who appeared six or seven years old and who had a golden necklace around his neck, had a look of deep contemplation on his face. He stared downwards at Ning, in the hall beneath him. “That sword technique...such power. It shouldn’t be a divine ability! Given how miraculous his swordcraft is...can it be that he has already reached the Dao Domain realm? That seems unlikely; he’s merely a Zifu Disciple. It’s rather unlikely that he could’ve reached such a high level of comprehension. But that sword...? Can it be that I was seeing things?”

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Although there were quite a few formidable figures present, Ning had executed his sword technique too quickly. Only the Boy of Universal Fire had been able to just get a vague sense that perhaps Ning had reached the ‘Dao Domain’ level in swordplay...but even he didn’t dare to feel confident about it.

The grand sealing formation vanished.

“The Immortal practitioner which Northmont Baiwei sent out...was victorious!” Miss Ziyi called out in a clear voice, and then she looked towards Baiwei. “Are you willing to continue accepting further betting duels?”

“Yes.” Ning, standing near her, spoke out instead of Baiwei. Baiwei, within his private room up above, was startled. He hurriedly sent to Ning, “Brother Ji Ning, you wish to continue?” Ning sent back, “As long as Northmont Fox is willing to send someone out, then we’ll keep betting against him. Don’t worry. It’s already quite incredible that he was able to send out a rhinoceros monster. I imagine it will be quite hard for him to send out anything more powerful. And, even if he does...I am confident in being able to kill it. As for the stakes...you can add the 900 taels of liquefied elemental essence I won on top of the stakes as well.”

Ning's mentally transmitted voice was filled with absolute confidence. He himself had already actively told Fox to prepare a second person; how could he choose to retreat now? "Fine." Baiwei's eyes lit up.

"Northmont Fox, my good brother, Ji Ning, is down there awaiting your challenge. Weren't you bragging quite fiercely earlier? As for the stakes...I'm willing to accept 900 taels, or even 1800 taels! I'm just afraid that you aren't!" Baiwei snickered as he spoke, his eyes filled with disdain and contempt. The words Baiwei had said, as well as the manner in which he had said them, when matched with that look in his eyes...these things instantly caused the distant Fox to be utterly enraged. His face turned red and swollen.

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Northmont Fox's face looked ghastly. He glanced at several of his nearby friends, then said in a low growl, "I've suffered such humiliation...I am definitely going to slaughter that one named Ji Ning." Zhou Li shook his head and said, "To kill Ji Ning...that will be hard. This person's agility techniques are shocking, and his swordplay is exceedingly formidable. Even the rhinoceros monster who had used a divine ability was executed..."

"He isn't completely flawless." Another person nearby, a blue-robed, middle-aged man spoke out. "His divine ability is merely at the late Zifu stage, and his elemental ki is only at the early Zifu stage. His abilities as a Ki Refiner are so weak as to be negligible; he's only able to bring out his close-quarters-combat techniques in a fight. Thus, as long as you prevent him from drawing nearby, you'll have won half the battle."

Northmont Fox's eyes lit up. Right. This Ji Ning was only skilled in close combat. As long as one didn't let him draw near, then his defeat would be nigh. "Attend me," Northmont Fox immediately commanded. "Have the Whitewitch come."

Fox said to his nearby friends said, "This Whitewitch was offered to me by the White Warlock Sect. I had planned on enjoying her slowly, but after suffering such humiliation...I can't be bothered with personal enjoyment. Although this Whitewitch is somewhat weaker than the rhinoceros monster, she perfectly counters this Ji Ning."

"The White Warlock Sect?" Everyone nearby, Zhou Li included, was stunned. The White Warlock Sect...this wasn't a sect that was located within Stillwater Commandery. It currently desired to be permitted into Stillwater Commandery, and it had offered a witch to Northmont Fox as a tactic. Zhou Li and the others naturally didn't dare to say too much about this matter.

Soon, a barefoot woman walked in. She was dressed in a white robe that was hemmed with flowery patterns, and had long black hair that fell to her buttocks. She had a pair of dazzling, bewitching eyes, and she exuded an indescribable magnetism. Her gaze was fixed upon Northmont Fox's figure, and Fox felt a fire build in his loins as well.

"What an exceptional specimen." Fox ground his teeth, then said, "Whitewitch, your White Warlock Sect gave you to me. Your life, your everything...it all belongs to me."

"Your slave understands. Your slave belongs entirely to you, Lord." The Whitewitch responded in a soft voice, so gentle it seemed to be caressing his heart.

Fox nodded. "That kid named Ji Ning, standing there in the hall below us, killed that rhinoceros monster under my command. Now, I have a feeling of rage that I must give vent to. I order you...to go kill this Ji Ning."

"Your slave is to go kill Ji Ning?" The Whitewitch, who had been calm this entire time, was instantly stunned. Previously, she had been with the other servants in the other private room. Through the window, they had watched everything happen below them. She knew exactly how formidable this Ji Ning was! She knew that in terms of power, she was quite a bit weaker than even the Monoceros. As for Ji Ning...she had no confidence in being able to defeat him at all.

When the White Warlock Sect had sent her here, they had done so in order for her to entice and mesmerize Northmont Fox!

"Hrm?" Fox frowned. "Are you not going to go? Then what's the point of keeping you!" "No." In her heart, the Whitewitch secretly cursed this man, who was of the primary lineage of the Northmont clan, for his viciousness. She hurriedly said, "Young master, it isn't that your slave isn't willing. It is that your slave doesn't feel there is any chance of killing this Ji Ning. Your slave personally witnessed him killing the rhinoceros monster."

Fox shook his head. "You don't need to worry about this. This Ji Ning is extremely weak as a Ki Refiner; his only strength lies in his close combat abilities! So long as you can make him unable to draw near you, you will definitely win. As I recall, you have a secret binding skill that is extremely formidable."

The Whitewitch gritted her teeth. That was a technique that was meant for pleasure on the bed. When she and Northmont Fox had been making love, she had once made it so that her hair had rapidly lengthened, then tied herself up with it. At that time, while they were lovemaking, Northmont Fox had even asked her about her technique, and she had naturally bragged about it. Who would have imagined that the end result was this?

"You are skilled in constricting your foes. In addition, your White Warlock Sect is most famous for your venomous bugs. Amongst them, your technique of 'Body-Birthing Bugs' are particularly famous," Northmont Fox said.

The Whitewitch's face turned ashen. The Body-Birthing Bugs? This was indeed a technique of the White Warlock Sect that made others terrified upon hearing of it, but if she were to execute it...if she was lucky, she would only suffer severe damage to her elemental ki, but if she was slightly less lucky, she would die.

The Whitewitch stared at Northmont Fox...she understood that this Northmont Fox fully intended to have her fight to her death, if that was what was needed to kill Ji Ning.

"You can choose to go. Or, you can choose death." Northmont Fox's voice was cold. The Whitewitch gritted her teeth. "Your slave shall go." "Good." Fox nodded. "The skills of your White Warlock Sect perfectly counter him. You still have a chance at surviving. Go to the hall and kill Ji Ning."

"Alright." The Whitewitch immediately turned and left, her body swaying. As Northmont Fox watched her depart, a lecherous light flashed through his eyes. He let out a low sigh. "What a waste of a beauty. Still, there are plenty of beauties in the world. This Ji Ning, however, must die. I have to give vent to my rage." He turned to stare through the window towards Ning, his eyes filled with savagery now.

“Northmont Baiwei. You just won 900 taels, but now you are going to give them back to me? Fine. I’ll bet against you again and have you send me those 900 taels back to me.”

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Within the hall. Ning stood there by himself, a hint of a faint smile on his face. He was calm and unflappable. Since he had already decided to reveal his fierceness...how could a single battle be enough?

“Eh?” Ning looked forward. From a staircase up ahead, a barefoot, white-robed woman came striding down, her long black hair falling to her buttocks. Her swaying motion as she walked was filled with allure. “She has come to fight me?” Ning frowned, puzzled. “This woman seems to be more suited for seduction.”

The Whitewitch walked to the jewels in the corner, filling them with her elemental ki. Miss Ziyi called out in a high voice, “The Immortal practitioner which young master Fox has sent out is a peak Zifu-level Ki Refiner.”

“Just a Ki Refiner? A Ki Refiner is at a disadvantage to begin with when facing a Fiendgod Body Refiner. She actually dares to come?” Ning pondered for a moment. “She must have a special technique.” Although he was merely at the seventh stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] as a Ki Refiner, the jewels served as a test for the purity and density of the divine power within his body, then determined his level.

Since ancient times to the present day, the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] had always been the number one Fiendgod Body Refining technique. Although Ning was only at the seventh stage, the purity of his divine power truly was comparable to a late Fiendgod Refiner.

“Boom!” The grand sealing formation once more lit up. Within the enormous barrier of light, only Ning and the Whitewitch remained.

A lady of a sect of warlocks, filled with allure. A handsome, delicate-looking fur-clad youth.

“I was forced to come. Please show mercy.” The Whitewitch bowed slightly.

Ning just smiled. He didn’t say anything.

Whoosh! Suddenly, every single strand of the Whitewitch’s long black hair, previously waist-long, emanated with a devilish red light. Instantly, that long hair began to grow rapidly...and an instant later, it filled the air. Countless strands of black hair swept all-encompassingly towards Ning.

“Not good.” Baiwei, in the private room above, was shocked. “If Ji Ning is caught and bound, he will be in trouble.” Wuji was nervous as well. “Ji Ning is skilled in close combat. His elemental ki is only at the early Zifu stage; the power with which he can control magic treasures is simply too weak.”

Ning stared at the all-encompassing strands of hair, but just revealed a smile. He knew what his opponent’s ability was, now. “So she wants to bind me.”

Rustle rustle rustle...

In the area around them, rainwater appeared out of nowhere. The rain was very light. When landing on someone, it felt cool, refreshing, and comfortable. The countless drops of rainwater instantly filled the entire grand sealing formation.

“Layered Water Walls.” Ning’s gaze was focused on the black hair sweeping towards him. Instantly, one layer after another of incomparably sturdy curtains of water began to condense. In the past half year, Ning had developed the [Rainwater Sutra], and he had indeed risen quite a bit in terms of comprehension and insight. The power of the ‘rainwater’ of his Rainwater Sword Domain had risen the most, and Ning had furthermore spent a great deal of time focusing on these curtains of water.

In fact, he had focused on developing this ‘Layered Watered Walls’ technique, and in terms of intricacy, it was nearly comparable to the ‘Rain Line’ technique, except it was meant to pressure and bind his foes.

“Slash slash slash...” The countless strands of black hair strove to draw close to Ning, but the layers of watery curtains were incomparably durable and entangling. This technique of the Whitewitch’s was meant to be used for pleasure on the bed; while it was exceptionally strong in terms of binding power, in terms of the innate penetrating power of those strands of hair, it was very weak. There was no way it could pass through the Layered Water Walls.

Those countless strands of hair flailed in midair, effortlessly blocked by the Layered Water Walls.

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“Rainwater Sword Domain!” The Boy of Universal Fire rose to his feet as well. He tossed that bone to the side of the table, staring down at Ji Ning.

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“Dao Domain. Rainwater. Rainwater Sword Domain...a Zifu Disciple who has a Dao Domain?” All of the formidable figures who had been calmly watching this battle were now shocked. For someone who was merely at the Zifu Disciple level to have reached the Dao Domain level, this...this was something out of the legends! None of them had been this powerful at the Zifu Disciple level.

“A Zifu Disciple capable of comprehending a Dao Domain? Oh no...oh no! So many people are watching here today. When word of this spreads...if the sect learns that a monstrous genius such as him was refused entrance because of me...I will be in trouble.” Zhou Li, next to Northmont Fox, had an ugly look on his face.

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The emergence of the Rainwater Sword Domain had shocked everyone. As for Ning, he stood in the hall, as calm as ever.

“Admit defeat. I’ll give you a path to survival.” Ning stood there, surrounded by rainwater. He glanced at the distant Whitewitch.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 7: Stillwater City Chapter 12: The Pebble That Aroused a Thousand-Story Wave

The Whitewitch, upon seeing Ji Ning display the might of his Rainwater Sword Domain, felt her heart instantly turn icy cold. “A path to survival? What path to survival do I have?” She immediately began to

activate the secret technique of her sect within her body. All of the elemental ki in her blood, flesh, and essence began to condense, and her entire body began to emit a bloody glow.

Deep within her Zifu, twelve Gu-Bugs that were hidden there began to move about. The bugs within the bug nest she kept on her also began to move.

“Alas.” The distant Ning shook his head. It seemed as though this woman was being forced by Northmont Fox to fight to the death. Ning immediately prepared to execute his Waterflame Lotus, planning to send this woman directly to the Yellow Springs.

But suddenly...

“We admit defeat!” A deep voice rang out. “Eh?” Ning raised his head, glancing over in astonishment. Northmont Fox, up in his private room, appeared very calm. He even grinned towards Ning. “I didn’t expect that today, I would have the chance to see a genius such as young master Ji Ning. You are merely an early-stage Zifu Disciple, and yet you’ve already comprehended a Dao Domain...admirable, admirable. I, Northmont Fox, am wholeheartedly convinced by my defeat at the hands of young master Ji Ning.”

The Whitewitch stared in astonishment towards Northmont Fox as well. She knew exactly how savage and wild Fox had been previously; he had insisted on her going all out to kill Ji Ning. But now, in the blink of an eye, before she had even lost, Fox had admitted defeat? In this battle, she represented Fox, and Fox was the one doing the betting. Thus, upon his admission of defeat, the battle ended.

Whoooosh. The long black hair of the Whitewitch quickly retracted, changing from three hundred meters to its normal waist-high length.

“Young master Ji Ning was victorious,” Miss Ziyi instantly called out in a high voice. The way in which she had referred to Ning had changed; previously, she had referred to him as ‘the Immortal practitioner who Northmont Baiwei sent out’, but now, she directly referred to him as young master Ji Ning. This was because she knew very well what it meant for a Zifu Disciple to gain insight into a Dao Domain.

The Dao Domain was a level which only Primal Daoists were generally able to reach. For a Zifu Disciple to be able to comprehend a Dao Domain...anyone capable of this was a truly monstrous talent, or perhaps even a major power who had reincarnated. Based on what she had heard regarding people like this, so long as they survived, they would train in the finest of Ki Refining techniques, and there was no question that they would become Primal Daoists!

If it was said that she treated Northmont Baiwei and Northmont Fox with care, due to their family background, she now treated this Ji Ning with the same care due to his innate, terrifying talent.

It must be understood... Primal Daoists were truly influential figures. If one then ascended to become an Immortal, even the Marquisate of Stillwater would actively reach out to befriend that person. Such a person would be capable of influencing the major powers of Stillwater Commandery. A monstrous talent like Ning...so long as he survived, he would have a 100% chance of becoming a Primal Daoist. As for becoming an Immortal? The chances for that were extremely high as well.

“Young master Ji Ning, are you going to continue with another betting duel?” Miss Ziyi smiled towards Ning, and as a fox-spirit, her smile was dazzlingly bewitching.

“Hahaha, after young master Ji Ning revealed his Dao Domain, who would dare battle him?”

“There’s no way for us to find another Zifu Disciple who has comprehended a Dao Domain. Anyone we send would definitely lose.”

“Let the betting duels come to an end.”

“The spiritfruit wine for this series of betting duels shall go to young master Baiwei and young master Ji Ning.”

Laughter rang out from each of the private rooms. Since they didn’t have any grudge against Ning, why would they wish to offend a monstrous talent like him? Although these people were elites amongst their various sects, and although many were Wanxiang Adepts, it was still quite hard for Wanxiang Adepts to leap to the Primal Daoist level. Actually, they still weren’t even aware that Ning’s soul had already reached the ‘divine sense’ level. If they did, they probably would be completely speechless.

It must be understood that by relying on his Rainwater Sword Domain and divine sense, Ning had passed even the ‘divine abilities trial’ left behind by Daoist Threelives, once of the most ancient of individuals who had been born when the Cosmos were first created. Thus, he had acquired the [Starseizing Hand].

But of course, Ning knew that the amount of talent he had displayed today was enough. The divine ability [Starseizing Hand]...he definitely couldn’t reveal it to anyone. If he did, he would be courting death! Of course, he could still use it; after all, given the monstrous talent he had already revealed, even if he unleashed an attack that exceeded the expectations of others, onlookers would come up with their own explanations, such as Ning having learnt some sort of a special divine ability, or being in possession of a very unique magic treasure, or that his level of comprehension was very high. In short, it was normal for a monstrous talent like him to reveal monstrous levels of power.

“Young master Ji Ning.” Northmont Fox was in his distant room, a smile on his face. He called out in high voice, “Northmont Baiwei and I have always been at loggerheads. Previously, I offended you, but it wasn’t because of you, young master Ji Ning; what I did, I did to take aim at Northmont Baiwei. Still, I did offend you, and I hope you will pardon me for that. At the same time, I would like to warn you, young master Ji Ning, that Northmont Baiwei is a two-faced tiger. He’s quite the faker! Don’t be fooled by him.”

Ning raised his head, giving him a glance. What a Northmont Fox! Formidable! Previously, he had acted with such red-eyed bravado and arrogance, but now, after seeing Ning display his Rainwater Sword Domain, it was as though a bucket of ice water had been poured over his head, waking him up. He thus immediately stated that his earlier actions were directed towards Northmont Baiwei, so as to ease the tensions between him and Ning. At the same time, he also tried to disrupt the relationship between Ning and Baiwei.

“And, young master Ji Ning, if you wish to enter the Skysplitter Sword Sect...there will be absolutely no problems at all.” Fox laughed as he spoke. Just moments ago, he had arrogantly stated that Ning could forget about ever joining the Skysplitter Sword Sect, but in the blink of an eye, he had changed his tune. Ning mused to himself that one truly couldn’t underestimate any of the young masters of the Marquisate.

“Northmont Fox, you truly are shamelessly thick-faced. As for entering a school? Given the talents of my brother, Ji Ning, he can enter any school he wishes.” Baiwei immediately began to laugh. “As for you trying to stir up strife between us, everyone in Stillwater City knows of your reputation, and everyone also knows what sort of a person I, Northmont Baiwei, am.”

“Only after spending much time with a person will you understand their heart. You two-faced tiger, do you think I can’t see straight through your façade?” Fox let out a cold laugh. Baiwei shook his head. “Oh? Then I’ll just wait for you to see through.”

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Suddenly, a figure shot out from one of the private rooms through the window, moving as fast as a streak of light. The grand sealing formation had already been dispersed, and the figure flew directly towards Ning.

“Eh?” Ning glanced at this woman. She seemed to be roughly ten years old, and was innately endowed with a noble grace. “Young master Ji Ning, my name is Hu Shui. My grandfather is the leader of the Thousand Rivers School. Given your talent, young master Ji Ning...as long as you are willing to enter our Thousand Rivers School, I imagine that even the Immortal ancestor of our Thousand Rivers School would be willing to accept you as a disciple.” The beautiful, lithe maiden with hairpins in her hair laughed as she spoke, and her voice was so pleasant to the ear.

Ning glanced in surprise at this young woman named Hu Shui. Thousand Rivers School? What school was this? He had never heard of it before. He had to admit, though, the number of schools within Stillwater Commandery that he knew of could be counted on one hand. He came from Swallow Mountain, and his experience was rather lacking.

“Miss Hu Shui, your Thousand Rivers School, in our Stillwater Commandery, isn’t even ranked in the top ten. You wish for young master Ji Ning to join your Thousand Rivers School? Haha...aren’t you being a bit presumptuous?” A black-robed man flew down as well.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! One figure after another immediately flew down, and even Northmont Baiwei and Hun Wuji flew down as well. Baiwei hurriedly sent to Ning, “Ji Ning, for now, don’t agree to enter any of these schools.”

“Alright.” Ning also understood the principle of not acting impetuously or with haste. Stillwater Commandery had many schools, and the relationships between the various alliances and schools could be very complex. Choosing a school, for him, was a major affair. Naturally, he had to be cautious.

Ning immediately looked at all of the powerful figures. Only some of them were from branches of major schools; others included members of tribes and sects. Some just wanted to make friends with Ning. A heroic figure like him...why wouldn’t they want to befriend him? As for being jealous? Perhaps in their hearts, they felt a hint of jealousy towards him, but they all understand that Stillwater Commandery was filled with countless geniuses. If they kept on feeling jealous of this one or that one, then they might as well not bother training to becoming Immortals at all.

“Everyone,” Ning said hurriedly, “I’ve just arrived at Stillwater Commandery a short time ago. Joining a school is a major affair, and I must consider it carefully. I’m unable to come to a clear decision in such a short period of time.”

“Ah, true. One cannot be rash with regards to such a major affair.” “Young master Ji Ning, I am Meng Shan of the Meng clan.” “Young master Ji Ning...”

All of them began to chat conversationally. Immortal practitioners had astonishingly good memories, and so Ning quickly learned and memorized everyone’s names. In truth, there were many figures who hadn’t revealed themselves prior to this. Ning now met them one by one, and only now did he truly understand that Stillwater Commandery was a place of crouching tigers and hidden dragons.

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“Ji Ning? Swordplay?” The Boy of Universal Fire said a few words with Ning as well, then departed. While leading his servant to leave the Carefree Caverns, he furrowed his brows, pondering to himself about Ning. “Since he chose to reincarnate in Stillwater Commandery...if he is the reincarnation of a major power, then in his previous life, he should’ve been living within Stillwater Commandery as well. But in the past few decades, I haven’t heard of any major powers who were skilled in swordplay who entered the cycle of reincarnation. Even if they reincarnated, their Immortal friends should be here to welcome them. Why would they voluntarily wish to join a school?”

“Can it be that an error occurred in the reincarnation process, and that in his past life, he didn’t live in our Stillwater Commandery? Or is there some other reason?” The Boy of Universal Fire continued to ponder this question.

As a reincarnated Immortal, he hadn’t been living for particularly long in this life. His recollections of his previous life were still hazy and indistinct. Every so often, a memory would flash past his mind, or he might suddenly feel that something was very familiar to him! Although his memories from his past life had yet to completely awaken, his ability to comprehend formations and understand the Dao had risen at an astonishing speed. Clearly, he was benefiting from the hidden memories from his past life. As his strength grew, his memories would become increasingly clear, until one day, he would completely regain his past memories.

But of course, there were also some truly major powers who would directly awaken their memories, but that was extremely, extremely difficult.

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Northmont Fox also went up to say a few words to Ning. He verbally sparred with Baiwei as well, and then led his group of servants to depart.

Within his carriage. Fox sat there by himself. He was frowning. He was thinking back to everything that had happened within the Carefree Caverns, starting from the very first words he exchanged with Baiwei. He thought very, very carefully...

“Fighting against Northmont Baiwei is one thing. How did this Ji Ning get involved? It seems as though this person has tremendous potential; in the future, he might be influential enough to affect the major powers of Stillwater Commandery, and even the question of whether or not my father will be able to become the Marquis of Stillwater.” Fox frowned as he continued to ponder this matter. There were actually quite a few potential candidates within the Northmont clan for the position of the next Marquis.

The more powerful one was, the more supporters one would have. Naturally, the greater one's chances would then be of becoming the next Marquis of Stillwater.

"Ugh! Northmont Baiwei actually encountered a monster like him. His luck is too damn good." Fox gritted his teeth, then shook his head.

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Ning bade Hun Wuji farewell, then followed Northmont Baiwei to the Ninestar Immortal Carriage once more.

Within the carriage. The Whitewater Hound was lying to the side, while Baiwei and Ning were both seated. Baiwei's face was all smiles, and he was incomparably delighted. He hurriedly said, "Ji Ning, the Rainwater Sword Domain you displayed this time truly stunned everyone present. You didn't see the way Northmont Fox's face instantly changed. I understand this punk quite well. Although he's vicious and arrogant, he can also change his attitude very quickly. This is one of his rare strengths."

"For now, stay with me. My estate has many places reserved for guests. This time, you've truly made a name for yourself. There were many people there within the Carefree Caverns, and news of this battle of yours will quickly spread to quite a few schools and sects. There will definitely also be many who will wish for a genius such as yourself to join them. If you stay in my place, you won't be disturb. Tomorrow, I'll prepare an intelligence report for you which will introduce you to all of the larger powers within Stillwater Commandery. Naturally, this will also include information on the various schools. You can make a good choice based on it."

Ning nodded and smiled. "Then I'll have to trouble you for that, Brother Baiwei."

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 7: Stillwater City Chapter 13: Northmont Blacktiger

It was already late at night. The light of the crescent moon shone down upon this giant, ancient city. Within it was a Ninestar Immortal Carriage, wreathed in fiery flames, which was entering the Northmont Blacktiger Estate.

"Young master." "Young master." The late night guards all called out towards the carriage respectfully. Northmont Baiwei led Ji Ning, the Whitewater Hound, and his maidservant out of the carriage, and then the Ninestar Immortal Carriage, without anyone controlling it, entered the estate on its own.

"Let's go," Baiwei said with a smile, leading them forward. Ning looked around carefully. The door they were entering was a side door.

"How large." As they moved forward, the scenery continuously changed, and there were pavilions and buildings everywhere. Everything was unspeakably beautiful. "An estate more than ten kilometers in circumference...this can compare with some of the cities I saw in my past life on Earth."

"Come into this garden. This place is where all of our guests stay." Baiwei was striding forward atop a series of lotus petals which formed a path over a large pool of water. There were also all sorts of fishes around them, and beneath the water there were some luminous pearls. The light from them caused the entire pool to seem like a jade lake for Immortals.

Within one of the quiet, private courtyards. "Brother Ji Ning, you can rest here for a period of time. Generally speaking, schools take on new students in the twelfth lunar month," Baiwei said with a laugh. "Tomorrow, I will arrange for a book detailing the various major powers of Stillwater Commandery to be brought to you. You can choose carefully, and you can also often come out for a stroll and listen to the conversations going on in the outside world. Only then should you decide which school to join."

Laughing, Ning nodded. Baiwei continued, "Alright, it is quite late, and I won't disturb you any further. If there is anything you need, just instruct the servants. I will leave now."

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This residence was clearly meant for entertaining guests. It was quite large and quite roomy, and there were five buildings within this residence itself, along with twelve servants that could be summoned at any time, all of them beautiful, flower-like women.

"Young master." The twelve maidservants all bowed. Their leader was a tall, willowy Xiantian lifeform. "Prepare my bath for me," Ning instructed. "When bathing, I do not wish to be disturbed." "Yes." The tall, willowy woman acknowledged his commands.

Almost all Immortal cultivators possessed extremely good self-control. Even those who were lustful would only view women as a form of enjoyment. For example, even someone like Northmont Fox would order the Whitewitch to her death when he felt it was necessary.

A short time later. Within the room. Within an enormous bathtub made from slick, polished rock. Hot air steamed everywhere. Ning lay there within the bathtub, head resting against a pillow. By his hands was a tray of fruit and wine.

"Ning, son." The Whitewater Hound, resting next to the bathtub, glanced at Ning. "You shocked everyone today with your exploits, and did so in the Carefree Caverns, one of the top entertainment venues of the entire Stillwater Commandery. This news will surely spread quickly. Did you do this with the intention of...?"

"Right. I intended to shock everyone today," Ning said. "The only people I truly have grudges against belong to Snowdragon Mountain. There are no problems between myself and the various other major powers. A monstrously talented youth whom they have no grudges against, who had just reached the early Zifu stage who wishes to join a sect...they will do anything they can to get me to join their schools, or to befriend me."

"As for my sole enemy, Snowdragon Mountain, I don't know if they are still paying attention to me. Even if they are...I am currently within the Northmont Blacktiger Estate. There is nothing they can do to me," Ning said.

"Right." The Whitewater Hound nodded. "If my predictions are correct," Ning said solemnly, "Perhaps tomorrow, Baiwei's father, Northmont Blacktiger, will come to pay a personal visit to me."

Ning's divine sense was exceptionally sensitive. He knew right away that there weren't any eavesdropping tools or monitoring tools here. This was a place for receiving guests; if guests were to discover that they were being monitored, then it would cause tremendous problems. Northmont Blacktiger naturally wouldn't act in such a manner.

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Within a dark space. A tall, muscular, bald man dressed in a black uniform was seated in the lotus position atop a fiery red boulder.

“Slither...” A giant black serpent, more than three hundred meters long, coiled around this dark region. This giant black creature looked like a serpent, but upon taking a closer glance...one would find that it was completely formed from black flames. Its scales, fangs, and body were all formed from countless black flames.

The black flames swirled around this area, and the head of the serpent was close to that of the bald man. “Eh?” The black-uniformed bald man frowned, then opened his eyes. His gaze was like thunder, striking fear into the hearts of men.

“Whoosh!” He exhaled, and instantly, the black flaming serpent around him transformed into countless black flames, wildly surged into his mouth. He swallowed it all into his stomach. “Baiwei. Come in.” The bald, black-uniformed man gave the order.

Creeaaaak. A door appeared in this dark space, and Baiwei walked in. He said respectfully, “Father, I have news.”

This person was the awe-inspiring potential candidate to be the next Marquis of Stillwater – Northmont Blacktiger. Someone whose power was truly capable of shaking the heavens. “Speak,” Northmont Blacktiger glanced disdainfully out of the corner of his eyes at his son.

Baiwei instantly recounted with great clarity today's events at the Carefree Caverns. Blacktiger, hearing this, frowned. “The reincarnation of a major power?” Blacktiger mused to himself, “If he is a reincarnated Immortal, he should've been received by his friends from his former life long ago. Why would he choose to enter a school?” Baiwei just waited to the side quietly.

“Baiwei,” Blacktiger nodded lightly. “It is good that you can make a friend like him. Tomorrow, I will go visit him. It's late. Go get some rest.” “Yes,” Baiwei said, then immediately left this dark space.

Within the darkness, Blacktiger continued to ponder, a considering look in his eyes. “The various schools, clans, sects, and Fiendgods...I haven't heard of anyone entering the cycle of reincarnation in the past twenty or so years. However, for this person to have reached such a level at such a young age...even if he isn't the reincarnation of a major figure, he must have encountered some sort of incredible stroke of karmic luck.”

“Whoosh.” Blacktiger no longer considered this matter. He opened his mouth, and countless flames charged out from it, quickly forming that enormous serpent of black flames around him once more. This giant serpent seemed to be quite comfortable within this dark region.

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The next morning.

The Golden Crow hung high in the sky, its light covering the entire Stillwater City. Within Stillwater City's Northmont Blacktiger Estate. Within the residence where Ning was currently located. He was seated in

front of a table which was covered with fruits and wine. Ning's fingers were outstretched in a plucking manner, and between them was hanging a Waterflame Lotus that was constantly swiveling.

"Water, fire, wind," Ning mused softly to himself. "Waterflame Lotus...this is formed from three different types of the True Meaning of the Dao; that of fire, water, and wind. They condense and form it. With regards to water, I have comprehended my Rainwater Sword Domain, but am somewhat weaker in fire and wind."

Ning stared at his fingers and the Waterflame Lotus swiveling between them. He focused on the mysteries contained within, slowly gaining greater insight into them. At his current level of insight, with but a thought, he could begin to touch the Dao.

Suddenly, a maidservant ran over from far away. "Hm?" The Waterflame Lotus between Ning's fingers disappeared into thin air. "Young master, young master Baiwei sends word. He will immediately come to visit you, along with the master of the estate." The maidservant's face was filled with nervousness.

The master of the estate? Ning frowned, then immediately rose to his feet. "Alright. I understand. You can leave now." "Yes." The maidservant immediately left.

"The master of the estate? Northmont Blacktiger? So he really did come." Although Ning's will and resolve was firm, in the face of this potential next Marquis of Stillwater, he still felt an invisible pressure.

The Whitewater Hound that had been lying next to him stood up as well. "Come," Ning said. "Let's go welcome him." He immediately led the Whitewater Hound towards the doorway. But as soon as he arrived at the doorway, he saw three figures appear in the distance.

The person walking in the center was a bald man in a black uniform who appeared extremely heroic and imposing. This bald man's eyes seemed to be as deep as the abyss, and as he slowly walked over, it seemed as though he was one with the surrounding universe. An invisible, majestic presence swept towards Ning, making Ning feel as though he couldn't even breathe.

"Dangerous, dangerous, dangerous!" Ning looked at this person, but in his heart, he had an inexplicable feeling of tremendous danger impending.

Ning could tell that it wasn't because he was in imminent danger; rather, it was that the person before him simply posed far too great of a threat to him, and was most likely capable of instantly killing him without giving him the chance to resist at all.

"So he is Northmont Blacktiger? How could his aura be so powerful and so dominating?" Ning was secretly shocked. Baiwei was a graceful, handsome young master. But his father, Blacktiger, was like an ancient Fiendgod who had been lying hidden for countless ages, filled with inexhaustible savageness and dominance. The look in his eyes...the way he walked...it was all filled with 'savagery'. As he walked over, it was as though an ancient, primordial beast was walking over.

One's aura was built up over the course of many years. The fact that the two of them, father and son, had such completely different auras made Ning feel puzzled.

"The two by his side..." Ning glanced at them. To one side of Blacktiger was his son, Baiwei. To his other side was a pale-faced, beardless old man. This old man had a pair of triangular-pupiled eyes. Even when

smiling, he gave others a sinister, cold feeling. Upon noticing this old man, Ning immediately realized how terrifying he was as well.

If Blacktiger could be described as an ancient, primordial beast, then this old man was like an icy, sinister viper. If one didn't focus on him, one might not even notice his presence, but upon focusing on him carefully, one would discover how frightening he was.

"Dangerous!" Ning sensed how terrifying this old man was as well.

Northmont Blacktiger. The triangular-pupiled old man. The sense of danger these two made Ning feel...was incredibly strong. Even that Xue Hongyi who he had encountered was like nothing more than a weak ant before these two.

"Such power. They are too strong, too powerful. No wonder he is someone capable of becoming the next Marquis of Stillwater," Ning said to himself. But of course, Ning's soul was extremely powerful, and so he was superficially able to maintain his calm.

"Hahaha..." Blacktiger laughed loudly, and his heroic, noble laughter caused the surrounding space itself to tremble. "I heard Baiwei praise his friend endlessly, but I didn't believe him. Now that I have had a chance to see him for myself...he truly is extraordinary. A Zifu Disciple who stands before me without batting an eye? I can count such figures on a single hand."

"I came here to take a look at you. Not bad, not bad," Blacktiger laughed. "Today, I have other matters to attend to, so I won't tarry. In the future, after you join a school, you must often come and visit my estate. Baiwei is lucky to have a friend such as yourself."

"Making friends with Brother Baiwei is also the good fortune of myself, Ji Ning." Ning acted and spoke with modesty and respect. Blacktiger laughed loudly, then departed with the triangle-pupiled old man. The old man gave Ning a long look, then nodded slightly as well.

The two of them left.

"Whew." Baiwei let out a long breath. He half-turned, first verifying that his father had departed. Only then did he completely relax. "It's been so many years, but I'm still so nervous whenever I am in front of my father."