

## Desolate 181

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### Book 8: Raindragon Guard Chapter 2: Northmont Blacktiger's Style

The flying boat soared through the skies, entering the Darknorth Peak's estate.

"Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning." Forgard, Cloudship, and Cloudjade, the three Zifu Disciples, all called out with respect. The Whitewater Hound next to them looked towards Ning as well, and Ning grinned towards him. "Uncle White, I'm going to go into my private training room to engage in some closed-door training. Only call me if there is something extremely important."

The Whitewater Hound nodded. Ning then went directly into his private training room.

Cloudjade nibbled on her lips as she stared at Ning. "He just glanced at me. He didn't even give me a good look. Hmph. Back in the tribe, there were so many people who wanted to become Dao-Companions with me. But this senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning hasn't even engaged in a proper conversation with me."

Cloudjade's alluring charm was indeed tremendous. The fox spirits and other beautiful maidservants which Ning had seen in the Carefree Caverns were all inferior to her. Even Ninelotus was slightly inferior to her. The only one comparable to her was that reincarnated Immortal, the Rainbowflame Fairy, Yu Wei. No wonder Cloudjade had always been self-confident!

She naturally wanted to reel in this disciples of the Black-White College. This Ji Ning, in her mind, truly was the best selection for her to become Dao-Companions with. But unfortunately...up till now, Ji Ning had never said a word to her.

"I refuse to believe it!" Cloudjade mused to herself silently.

"I wonder how the battles at the Dao Debate Palace went." Cloudship, by her side, had a look of anticipation in his shining eyes. "None of us know," Forgard said gravely. Cloudship glanced at Forgard, then pursed his lips.

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Within the private training room. Ning sat there in the lotus position, streaks of sword energy flying around him, occasionally chopping, occasionally stabbing, occasionally blocking. One stance after another came out...they appeared ordinary, but they contained a truly heart-shaking fierceness to them.

Suddenly, all of the sword energies around him vanished. "Whew." A hint of a smile appeared on Ning's face. "I've spent an entire night training, and I have indeed made further gains, as well as solidified my previous insights."

"The Grand Dao of the Sword? Sword Immortal?" A look of anticipation was in Ning's eyes. Whoosh. Ning rose to his feet, and the stone door opened with a rumble. Soon, he arrived outside the courtyard.

There was a hint of light in the skies. Ning stood there in the courtyard, and as he took in a deep breath of air, filled with dense amounts of natural, elemental energy, he felt all the happier.

“Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.” A soft voice suddenly rang out nearby. Ning turned to look. It was Cloudjade, dressed in a light pink Daoist robe. Although the robe was rather loose and large, on her incomparably ravishing body, it gave an alluring feeling that was both faint and bone-deep. Her long black hair was simply combed, but it also gave off a natural, magnetic aura.

“She truly is a lovely person. Why in the world did Baiwei have her come and be my retainer?” Ning mused to himself. Although Cloudjade was indeed exquisite in her appearance, what Ning wanted was to be truly carefree and unbound. How could he so casually select a Dao-Companion? Even if he were to choose one, it would be an incomparably major affair. For now, at least, this Cloudjade hadn’t moved Ning’s heart in the slightest.

“I haven’t had a chance to thank you yet, senior apprentice-brother, for giving me the chance to enter your service and join the Black-White College.” Cloudjade’s willowy, graceful body curtsied in a show of respect.

Ning nodded gently. Suddenly, a figure ran over from outside. It was a young servant. The young servant couldn’t help but glance towards that exalted, unsurpassably seductive Immortal practitioner, Cloudjade, but then he hurriedly said in a nervous manner, “Master, someone is outside, and he claims to be your senior apprentice-brother. He’s right at the door. He’s already been waiting for the amount of time needed to boil a kettle of tea.”

“Oh?” Ning nodded, then laughed and said in clear voice, “Which senior apprentice-brother is it, might I ask? I’ve neglected you by making you wait here for so long, senior apprentice-brother. Please, come in, quickly.”

“Hurry and go prepare refreshments,” Ning said, looking at the nearby Cloudjade. “Alright.” Cloudjade hurriedly bowed, then quickly departed.

The ordinary, mortal youth had cold sweat rolling down his back. He hurriedly left as well. Just now, when he had taken a secret glance at that unsurpassingly alluring beauty, Cloudjade, he felt as though he had seen one of the legendary fairies. At the same time, he sighed to himself, “If I could have a fairy like her as my woman, even if I could only live for an hour, I would be satisfied. And yet, Master doesn’t even care about a maiden like her at all.”

“Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.” A youth dressed in a black Daoist robe came walking in. His eyes seemed to contain the stars in them, and a smile was on his face. “I previously met you both during the grand entrance ceremony as well as the Dao Debate Palace, but I hadn’t had the chance to say anything to you. My name is Hu Yongchun, and my Daoist title is the same as my name; Yongchun, meaning ‘Everspring’.”

“Senior apprentice-brother Everspring, please come in.” Ning, as an Immortal practitioner, had an incomparably perfect memory. He remembered that during the Dao Debates, this Everspring had been by the side of the fat, sloppy-looking youth. Someone who was able to stand directly next to that youth was most likely one of the fairly talented Wanxiang Adepts of the College.

The two fellow disciples sat there facing each other, while Cloudjade delivered fine wine and fruits to them. “Junior apprentice-brother, you have quite a lovely lady here.” Everspring laughed as he delivered a few words of praise, and Cloudjade’s face turned slightly red.

Ning laughed. "She's just taking the chance to train under my service." "Oh." Everspring nodded. He immediately noted that this junior apprentice-brother of his seemed to hold no interest at all in this devilishly attractive maiden, and so he didn't mention her any further.

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Cloudjade served the two, watching as Ji Ning and Everspring, two formal disciples of the Black-White College, chatted and laughed amongst themselves. At first, she had been filled with eagerness, but towards the end, she felt vaguely heartsick. At first, Everspring had praised her beauty, but afterwards, both he and her own master, Ji Ning, had completely focused on their conversation, not sparing so much as a glance for her.

Both of them were blessed by the heavens with talent; clearly, they didn't care about her appearance. This truly hurt her heart.

"Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning!" Suddenly, a voice rang out from outside. "Another one," Ning mused to himself. The reason why he had left the private training room so early today was precisely because he realized that his performance during the Dao Debates had probably attracted the attention of quite a few fellow disciples, who would come in order to make friends with him. In turn, the more friends he had amongst his fellow disciples, the better it would be for him.

The formal disciples of the Black-White College, after all, were people who outsiders would view as extremely hard to befriend, even if they wanted to. One formal disciple after another arrived, either alone or in pairs or triplets, causing the courtyard to become quite rowdy. Every so often, one of them would leave, but there would always be from three to five people within the courtyard.

Cloudjade, as his female servant, naturally served them personally. What hurt her the most was...aside from those senior apprentices who offered her a kind word of praise, there was only a single senior apprentice-brother out of the twenty-plus formal disciples who gave her so much as a close look. That senior apprentice-brother's Daoist title was 'Joybliss'. According to what he said, he delighted in tandem-training.

"These disciples of the Black-White College, aside from that one that likes to engage in tandem-training, truly all have extraordinary Dao-hearts." In the end, Cloudjade could only sigh to herself in amazement. Indeed, everyone capable of joining the Black-White College was a peerless talent. And, from the sounds of it...

Her own master, Ji Ning, was one of the most outstanding members of this group of peerless talents, someone who could be described as a monster! This was why so many fellow apprentice-brothers and apprentice-sisters had come to befriend him.

"Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, I brought two of my junior apprentice-sisters over as well. Would you be willing to meet them?" A soft voice rang out, and instantly, Ji Ning and the two people he was chatting with turned their heads. They soon saw three streaks of light moving towards them through the air from afar.

"Senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus, since you wish to meet with me, how would I dare refuse?" Ning raised his head to stare at Ninelotus, high in the sky. Ninelotus was accompanied by a lovely woman

dressed in red robes as well as a silver-robed maiden with a fierce aura. The three women landed from the skies at the same time.

“They...” Upon seeing these three senior apprentice-sisters descend, Cloudjade suddenly had a sense of self-contempt in her heart. The bearing and aura of these three...only they were truly worthy of being referred to as fairies.

“This is junior apprentice-sister Qingqing, while this is junior apprentice-sister Whitewater.” Ninelotus laughed as she looked towards Ning. “Greetings to you, senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.” Both the willowy, red-robed woman and the silver-robed maiden looked towards Ning.

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Only with the arrival of nightfall did Ning’s Darknorth Peak return to its usual calm. His fellow disciples had all left. Only...one more person had arrived. It was Northmont Baiwei.

“Baiwei, sit.” Ning and Baiwei sat down. Baiwei smiled and said, “I knew that you would definitely be very busy today, and that quite a few of your colleagues would definitely come visit you. So, I intentionally waited until it was almost dark before coming.”

“Baiwei, you truly are formidable,” Ning said in praise. Baiwei laughed loudly. “How could I not guess that this would happen? Right; today, I’ve come at the orders of my father.” Ning was startled. “Your father?”

Northmont Blacktiger...the intimidating aura of that man filled Ning with fear. He definitely wasn’t inferior to the headmaster of the Black-White College, and he was a man with an exceptionally dominating, overbearing aura! One of the candidates to be the next Marquis of Stillwater!

“You’ve come here because...?” Ning was stunned.

Clap, clap. Baiwei clapped his hands twice. Instantly, the two Zifu Disciple servants standing behind him immediately moved forward. They each took out multiple black jade platters from their storage-type magic treasures. These black jade platters were all engraved with the exquisite carving of a black tiger, and the platters themselves were crystal clear, incomparably beautiful works of art. Atop each platter, there were multiple items.

There were, in total, six black jade platters. They had on them a pair of jade bottles, a small boat, a set of black wings, and two sets of flying swords that were the size of sewing needles.

“There are two sets of flying swords. One has 72 flying swords, while the other has 18. They are all excellent Mortal-ranked flying swords.”

“This set of black wings...is a high-grade Mortal-ranked wing-type magic treasure.”

“This boat is a top-grade flying magic treasure.”

“This jade bottle holds a miasma gas treasure, which is a type of fleeing treasure.”

“This other jade bottle holds five hundred kilograms of liquefied elemental essence.” Baiwei said, with composure and assurance, “Accept all of these things.”

Ning was poleaxed. He could clearly tell that these were all extraordinary gifts. Aside from the set of black wings, which was slightly poorer, the others were extremely valuable. "This...how can I accept this?" Ning hurriedly refused. "It's too expensive."

"My father ordered me to come here, and I've already delivered the items. Everything else has nothing to do with me." Baiwei waved his hands and said, "You don't have to be modest. You and my father have had the chance to meet each other, and my father has given these congratulatory gifts with good intentions. Just accept them."

Ning hesitated momentarily. Since Baiwei and himself were good friends, there now existed an irreversible relationship between himself and Northmont Blacktiger's Estate. Since that was the case, he might as well accept them.

"Alright." Ning nodded.

"That's more like it! No point in not accepting my father's things, and these aren't that important for someone like him," Baiwei said. "Oh, right. You asked me to search for that Meng Roch. I've already found him. It's true; he hasn't been able to join any sect at all. Do you want for me to send someone to deliver him directly to the Black-White College?"

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#### **Book 8: Raindragon Guard Chapter 3: Our Master, Ji Ning**

"Meng Roch?" Ning's eyes lit up. Although he had only known Roch for a few days when they met on the way to Stillwater City, he felt extremely well-disposed towards Roch. In addition, the fact that he was willing to sacrifice his own life for others meant that he was someone worthy of Ning's assistance.

"Cloudship!" Ning called out in a high voice. Cloudship soon hurried over, bowing and saying with respect, "Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, you wanted me?"

Ning nodded, then pointed to the nearby Northmont Baiwei. "Baiwei, in a short while, lead this Cloudship and arrange for someone to send Cloudship to Meng Roch's place. Let Cloudship bring Roch back to the Black-White College."

"Alright." Baiwei nodded. Ning looked towards Cloudship. "Cloudship, do you hear and understand?" The reason why he wanted Cloudship to go was because he could tell that Cloudship was a lively fellow who was able to make snap decisions based on the actual situation. Whatever Ning asked him to do, he would definitely do perfectly well.

Cloudship immediately nodded. "Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, don't worry. I will definitely invite Meng Roch over." "Good." Only now did Ning nod.

Baiwei laughed. "I've carried out my father's tasks as well. Next are the gifts that I personally prepared for you." "Baiwei, what are you..." Ning hurriedly moved to refuse, but Baiwei immediately interjected, "Don't decline. You and I are brothers. You have entered the Black-White College, and had a glorious performance at the Dao Debate. As your brother, how can I not prepare a congratulatory gift? Don't worry; because of the restrictions which Father placed on me, I'm not as wealthy or as generous as Father, and my gift isn't that valuable."

Ning let out a laugh. If Baiwei had already put things this way, what else could he, Ning, do? Baiwei waved his hand, and a thick, seemingly ordinary-looking book appeared. Although this book seemed to be made from excellent materials, Ning couldn't notice anything special about it at first glance.

"I imagine that quite soon, you'll be going out to do some adventuring. Immortal practitioners all must be tempered by countless life-and-death experiences. Only then will we be able to walk farther on our Immortal paths." Baiwei laughed and continued, "Thus, I prepared a map for you! This is a map of the entire Xia Dynasty."

Ning called out in shock, "The entire Xia Dynasty?" The Xia Dynasty was unimaginably vast! "Don't get too excited. The Xia Dynasty is enormous, and this map only goes into detail regarding our Stillwater Commandery. It only has some rough information regarding the distant places of the vast Xia Dynasty, which is thousands of times larger than our commandery. At least, however, you won't get lost." Baiwei was a bit resigned. "A detailed map of the entire Xia Dynasty is something which even I don't have access to."

Ning sighed inwardly. To Immortal practitioners who went out adventuring, the importance of a good map was unquestionable. This was because there were simply far too many mysteries, dangers, and terrifying locations in this vast world. If one moved about blindly and ignorantly, one might accidentally charge into a fatal area. If that happened, one really would die a miserable death.

"Now that I've done what I need to, it's time for me to leave." Baiwei rose and laughed, "I know that for a genius like you, your training time is quite precious." Ning rose to his feet as well and asked, "Leaving so soon?"

"Your Black-White College is within Stillwater City. I can come any time." Baiwei led his servants and Cloudship, then quickly departed.

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Ning watched as Baiwei and the others transformed into streaks of light and departed. Only now did he lower his head to stare at the six jade platters of treasures that were before him.

"My [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] just so happened to be lacking in swords, and now I've received two sets of them." Ning stared at the two sets of flying swords; one a set of 72, the other a set of 18. The set of 18 swords in particular appeared to be all exceptionally fine flying swords. "Although I haven't used the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] many times, Northmont Blacktiger clearly knew long ago that I need a large number of flying swords. He really lives up to his reputation as being a potential candidate for the next Marquis of Stillwater. His information really is reliable."

"As a Zifu Disciple, it shouldn't be too hard for me to cobble together seven hundred or so Mortal-ranked flying swords. But once I reach the Wanxiang Adept level, I'll need seven hundred or so Earth-ranked flying swords. As a Primal Daoist, I'll need Heaven-ranked flying swords."

Ning sighed to himself. The [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] was something which caused even Immortal Juhua concern. Ning also possessed the [Nuwa Painting], and walked the path of the Sword Immortal. Indeed, the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] was extremely well suited for him. Most likely, the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], in his hands, would be even more effective than it had been for the Thousand Swords Immortal.

Ning continued to view the treasures. "Wings?" Ning looked at the black wings atop the jade platter. "They are much better than the wings I acquired after killing the disciples of Snowdragon Mountain." The wings weren't that useful for Ning, as he primarily used them to cover-up the fact that he used the [Windwing Evasion].

This was a divine ability which the ancestor of the Yuchi clan had only acquired after rescuing a Celestial Immortal, who in his gratitude had bestowed it upon the clan. It was abundantly clear from the fact that even the entire Black-White College only had five divine abilities that divine abilities were incomparably precious. No wonder the Yuchi clan insisted on using wing-type magic treasures to disguise themselves.

"The flying boat!" Ning stared at the fourth present, then laughed. "A top-grade Mortal-ranked magic treasure. In the future, I'll be able to travel much more quickly." Ning stretched his hands out, effortlessly binding both the wings and the boat-type magic treasures.

"The miasma gas magic treasure." Ning stared at the fifth treasure. He picked up that white jade bottle. After easily binding it, he discovered that within, there was a white pearl, surrounded by an extremely dense foggy white miasma gas.

"Step back. Go far away." Ning swept the surrounding area with his gaze, and the nearby Cloudjade hurriedly retreated all the way out of the courtyard. "Activate." Ning willed it.

Instantly, a large amount of white miasma gas filled the courtyard. The white miasma gas covered an area of many tens of meters, and the density of it was such that even Ning's Fiendgod-enhanced eyes were only just barely able to view his own fingers. In fact, it even influenced the surrounding elemental ki flow, causing Ning to be unable to sense what was around him.

"According to what I hear, miasma gas magic treasures are extremely suited for fleeing, precisely because they prevent both vision with the naked eye as well as sensing one's surroundings." Ning nodded lightly. "So it really is the case. Even I, the person who released the miasma gas, am unable to see the surrounding area. Once I release this miasma gas...for a short period of time, my foe will be unable to find me. I can choose a direction and immediately flee."

Miasma gases were unable to distinguish from friend or foe. What Ning bound was the jade bottle and the pearl within it; that miasma gas simply existed within the pearl itself.

"I wonder if my divine sense can see through it." Ning willed it, and suddenly...whoosh! His divine sense spread out, instantly encompassing the entire courtyard. "Eh?" Ning revealed a hint of delight. Although the miasma gas was so powerful as to be able to disturb the flow of natural elemental energy, under Ning's divine sense...everything still appeared.

"Excellent." Ning was overjoyed. "To others, miasma gas magic-treasures are only for fleeing, but for me...I can release the miasma gas to befuddle my foes, then engage them and kill them in close quarters." This combat tactic instantly flashed through Ning's mind. Given that his own divine sense was not affected by the gas, in the future, it would be much easier for him to deal with Wanxiang Adepts.

"Yet another killer move," Ning laughed. Ning then looked towards the sixth jade platter. Five hundred kilograms of liquefied elemental essence! This was an astonishing fortune; ordinary Earth-ranked magic treasures were worth merely five kilograms, which was to say that this gift was the equivalent of a

hundred Earth-ranked magic treasures! Even if he wanted powerful Earth-ranked magic treasures, he would still be able to trade for eight or ten of them.

Even when Baiwei and Fox had been betting frantically against each other, the stakes had only gone up to forty or fifty kilograms of liquefied elemental essence.

“Northmont Blacktiger really is quite generous.” Ning no longer hesitated; he collected the treasures, picked up the jade bottles, and headed for his private training room.

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Within the private room. The jade flask was placed in front of him, and the stopper had been pulled open. Ning sat in the lotus position atop the jade bed, calming himself down. He opened his mouth, and the liquefied elemental essence within the jade bottle instantly began to fly out and be absorbed by Ning’s body.

Rumble...

The enormous Zifu Lake within the illusory space of the Zifu Violet Palace. The watersource suddenly began to surge with large amounts of pure elemental energy. The entire Zifu Lake began to swirl about expand in an incomparably rapid pace.

The outer regions of the Zifu Lake were constantly expanding towards every direction. The lake was growing to take up a larger and larger amount of the illusory space, and began to surge towards the deepest recesses of it.

Expanding! It was still expanding! Fifty kilograms of liquefied elemental essence. A hundred. A hundred fifty...Ning didn’t hesitate at all, constantly refining and absorbing it all. His base was solid, and his comprehension of the Dao was quite high. His divine soul was very strong, and his sword-heart was lustrous...he absolutely could surge all the way to the early Wanxiang Adept stage if he so chose.

The Zifu Lake continued to expand. It now covered a truly shocking amount of space, and could even be said to have expanded from a ‘lake’ to a ‘sea’. A Zifu Sea!

Three hundred kilograms. Three hundred fifty kilograms!

“Last time, I used forty or so kilograms of liquefied elemental essence. This time, if I use another 360 kilograms, it’ll be about enough,” Ning mused to himself. According to the [Flowing Watersource], if one refined four hundred kilograms of liquefied elemental essence as a Zifu Disciple, then the foundation that one would establish would be the so-called ‘foundation for a Celestial Immortal’. The Manifestation one would later have would also be the best of Manifestations.

“Rumble...” 355 kilograms. 360 kilograms. 365 kilograms.

“Why doesn’t my Zifu Lake feel as though it has reached its maximum capacity yet?” Ning was feeling rather puzzled, and he slowed down the rate at which he was refining liquefied elemental essence as well. Some of the weaker Ki Refining techniques made it so that the practitioner’s Zifu Lake would at best be able to withstand fifty kilograms of liquefied elemental essence. But Ning had already been able to withstand more than four hundred kilograms.

370 kilograms...390 kilograms...400 kilograms! Ning opened his eyes, halting his training.



“Last time, I used forty kilograms, and this time, I used four hundred. And yet, my Violet Palace is able to continue to accumulate more?” Ning frowned. Although the [Waterstream Source] hadn’t described an upper limit in detail, and there were small differences in each person’s capacity, generally speaking, four hundred kilograms should be quite close to the limit.

“I’ll halt for now. In two days, when I meet Master, I’ll ask him.” Ning halted his training.

As Ning was training. In a quiet, secluded courtyard within East Stillwater City. Roch was seated in the lotus position on his bed, quietly nourishing his own Zifu Violet Palace. His Violet Palace had been damaged; naturally, he had to carefully cultivate it and heal it.

“Rocky, Rocky, come out, quick!” A frantic voice rang out. “Uncle Ming?” Roch came to an immediate halt, leaving the bed and walking out. “Uncle Ming, what is it?”

Roch pushed the door open, then saw the bald, middle-aged man, his entire face covered with urgency. Roch felt extremely grateful towards Uncle Ming; at least Uncle Ming had let him stay here this entire time.

“Did you cause trouble or offend someone? A guard of Stillwater Commandery has come in search of you.” The bald-headed, middle-aged Uncle Ming was utterly frantic right now.

“Ah?!” Roch shook his head. “I haven’t.” Uncle Ming hurriedly said, “Enough talk. Hurry, go see him.” Although he had safely secured this quiet, secluded little residence for himself in Stillwater City, compared to the exalted Marquisate of Stillwater...he was like an ant in front of a divine dragon. No – he wasn’t even an ant. He was nothing more than a speck of sand.

Roch, his face covered with puzzlement and unease, quickly appeared before the gates of the estate. In front of the gates, there were two armored Zifu Disciple guards, and next to them was a white-robed youth. The two guards were standing behind this white-robed youth.

Upon seeing this, although he felt terror in his heart, Roch also felt a hint of bitterness. “To be able to have guards of the Marquis of Stillwater stand behind me...how long will it be before I can be at this level?” Roch felt sourness in his heart. “I’m not even able to join a school right now. Not a single school wants me. How long will it be before I am able to continue walking down my Immortal path!?”

The tall, skinny, white-robed man, upon seeing Roch, immediately revealed a smile. “Are you Brother Meng Roch?” “Brother...Meng Roch?” Roch stared. The bald Uncle Ming, by his side, was astonished as well. He hurriedly said, “Yes, he’s Meng Roch.”

The tall, skinny, white-robed man laughed. “My name is Cloudship. I have come on the orders of my master, Ji Ning, to invite you, Brother Meng Roch, to the Black-White College.”

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#### **Book 8: Raindragon Guard Chapter 4: A Sturdy Base**

Meng Roch was completely stunned. Ji Ning? Of course he knew Ji Ning. This was the man who had saved his life. In the Carefree Caverns, he had watched as Ji Ning and another youth were welcomed with great splendor.

“Might I ask who your master, Ji Ning, is?” Roch was somewhat hesitant. Was this the same Ji Ning he knew?

“My master is a formal disciple of the Black-White College.” The tall, skinny, white-robed Cloudship laughed. “When he entered the Black-White College, he consecutively defeated multiple senior fellow disciples, and even several Wanxiang Adepts were defeated by him. Brother Meng Roch, my master has invited you to go; will you go?”

“Go? Of course he’ll go.” The bald Uncle Ming, standing nearby, immediately urged Roch to go. At the same time, he sent Roch mentally, “Rocky, your stroke of good fortune has arrived! That Ji Ning is a monstrous talent and has successfully entered the Black-White College as a formal disciple. The formal disciples of the Black-White College are permitted ten retainer positions, and by the look of things, this youth is one of them. If Ji Ning is inviting you to go...it’s very possible that you’ve received one of those ten positions.”

Roch, hearing this mental transmission, was shocked. One of the ten formal retainerships for a formal disciple? The Black-White College was an incomparably exalted place; it was the most powerful school of the entire Stillwater Commandery, and a place where peerless geniuses gathered! Even the retainers of the peerless geniuses, as long as they worked hard and rendered merits unto the school, would have the chance to learn some truly top-tier Ki Refining techniques. This was far better than being a formal disciple of the Thousand Rivers School.

It must be understood that those extremely large schools were divided into outer court disciples, inner court disciples, main disciples, and the most supreme, core disciples. There were multiple layers of status. In the Black-White College, however, there were only formal disciples and retainers; two layers. Thus, even retainerships were positions that were deeply coveted.

“I’ll have a chance to enter the Black-White College?” Roch’s heart was filled with all sorts of ideas. “Uh, Brother Meng Roch?” Cloudship said with a touch of urgency. “Ah?!” Roch frantically nodded. “Go, go, of course I’ll go.”

The Black-White College. Cloudship and Roch had both transformed into streaks of light and were flying in the air. “Look. That is Darknorth Peak, the place where my master, Ji Ning, resides.” Cloudship pointed towards a distant, elegant mountain peak.

Ever since he passed through the formal gates of the Black-White College, Roch’s mind was filled with all sorts of wild thoughts. He...he had actually entered the Black-White College? The nearby Cloudship really was one of the ten retainers?

Whoosh. The two charged down into the courtyard, quickly landing outside of its gates. The two young gate guards outside the gate all saluted respectfully.

“There is such a thick elemental aura here.” After stepping into the courtyard, Roch could sense an incomparably dense elemental aura presence. “The elemental aura in Stillwater City is already dense enough as it is, but this estate actually has a ki-gathering formation that is operating at all times.”

Roch was now growing rather nervous. Cloudship was leading him through a hallway, and they soon passed through a door, at which point they arrived at a wide, spacious estate. In the center of this estate, there was a fur-clad youth, who had a peerlessly bewitching beauty by his side, waiting on him.

It was already very late at night. The figure of the fur-clad youth seemed quite blurry and unclear.

“Brother Ji Ning!” Roch, upon seeing the fur-clad youth, couldn’t help but blurt these words out.

“Rocky!” Ning rose to his feet and walked over.

Roch was rather reserved and nervous right now. This was no longer the same Ji Ning who had come to this city alongside him in search of a school. This was a formal disciple of the Black-White College, the number one school of the entire Stillwater Commandery. And, from what Cloudship said...it seemed as though even in the Black-White College, Ji Ning was quite the standout.

“Don’t be nervous,” Ning laughed, then asked, “Meng Xin and Meng Jun?” “The two of them both entered schools.” Roch said hurriedly, “Both of them are at the early Zifu Stage, and so it was easy for them to join a school. They both entered the Thousand Rivers School.”

When saying this, Roch felt a bit of pain in his heart. He had originally wanted to join the same school as Meng Xin, but unfortunately, his foundation had been damaged and not a single school wanted him.

“The Thousand Rivers School?” Ning nodded slowly. “After becoming a formal disciple of the Black-White College, I have ten retainer positions. I don’t know if you’d be willing to become a retainer under my control?”

Roch’s eyes instantly lit up, and his body began to tremble slightly. “I’m willing!” Roch said hurriedly. Ning laughed. “You’ll only be a retainer in name. The two of us will still treat each other as brothers. Oh, right. There’s something you must understand...the Black-White College has quite a few internal rules.”

“Right.” Roch nodded vigorously. What he was afraid of was that he would have no hope for the future. Since he had already joined the Black-White College, a wide route for his Immortal path had just appeared before him. Naturally, he would exert all possible effort to grow increasingly powerful. He would walk ever-farther along the Immortal path, and in his heart, he murmured to himself: “Little Xin. Wait for me.”

“I...” Roch looked at Ning. His eyes were somewhat red. With a thud, he suddenly fell down to his knees, then kowtowed.

“Rocky!” Ning hurriedly went to pull him up. “Brother Ji Ning, you saved my life, and now you’ve given me my Immortal path back. I, Meng Roch, have nothing to repay you with. So long as you give the order, even if I must climb a mountain of blades or enter a sea of flames, I will charge forward.” Roch looked towards Ning.

Ning laughed. “Rise, rise.” Right at this moment, the nearby Cloudjade actually grumbled, “Given senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning’s talent and power, how can he possibly need your help?”

“Cloudjade.” Ning gave the Cloudjade a glance, then instructed, “Go make the arrangements for some food. Rocky and I are going to have a good chat.” Compared to his other three retainers, Ning felt more well-disposed towards Roch.

“Yes.” Cloudjade turned and immediately departed, but while doing so, she was secretly grumbling to herself. “Yet another hunk of wood!” That Meng Roch fellow, upon entering, had given her just a single glance. She was beginning to question her own seductiveness.

The morning sun rose, spreading its dim light throughout the entire Black-White College. Everything appeared so dreamlike and illusory. Ning was atop a flying boat. Transforming into a streak of light, he flew out of Darknorth Peak. Soon afterwards, he arrived in the air above the mountain of his master, Immortal Diancai.

“Master.” Ning landed in the courtyard, then called out respectfully. “Come in.” Immortal Diancai’s voice transmitted to him from outside. Ning immediately entered, and the servants at the gate naturally did not bar his path.

Within the hall. The black-robed, black-haired Immortal Diancai was seated in the lotus position atop a ‘bed’ of clouds. He looked at Ning, and he felt as though the more he saw him, the more satisfied he was with him. Being able to teach an extremely talented disciple made him feel quite successful as well. Immortal Diancai said in a calm voice, “Ji Ning, how did your three days of meditation go?”

“Your disciple has made considerable gains!” Ning said respectfully. “Mm.” Immortal Diancai nodded slowly, then narrowed his eyes. “Previously, Headmaster Jadesea has already informed you regarding the Great Dao of the Sword, yes?”

Ning nodded. “Yes.”

“The sword,” Immortal Diancai said slowly, “is a killing tool. It is also the tool which we Immortal cultivators will use in our ascent to the peak, in slaughtering all who would impede our path.”

“The Dao of the Sword is a type of combat-focused Dao. Sword Immortals, in turn, are Immortal cultivators that are extremely skilled in combat.” Immortal Diancai laughed as he looked at Ning. “Do you know...what the Dao of the Sword is?”

Ning was speechless. And then, lost, he shook his head. He had just entered the earliest realm of comprehension regarding this Grand Dao of the Sword, and knew almost nothing at all about it. What is the Dao of the Sword? He really didn’t know how to respond to such a question.

“Some Daos are Daos involving the mysteries underpinning the way in which the world operates. For example, your Rainwater Dao. The Dao of Freezing Ice. The Dao of Mystic Ice. And more! All of them are Daos regarding the profundities of the natural world.”

Ning nodded. These were, indeed, all natural Daos. The techniques one came up with after comprehending these Daos would all be referred to as ‘arts’.

“Arts are a way to apply the Daos. The ‘sword arts’ are that which you generally use when wielding the sword. To reach a level in the sword arts which is so high as to be a Dao of its own....that is what the Dao of the Sword is!” Immortal Diancai looked at Ning. “Thus, the Dao of the Sword is actually a technical Dao, a Dao of applying certain techniques and knacks.”

Ning now understood.

“Not just the Dao of the Sword; the Dao of Taiji is the same. Taiji also involves the application of certain skills and techniques. Taiji, in turn, is also a Grand Dao.”

“When, for example, you began to gain insights into water and fire, you might be able to apply the insights you gained into fire and water through the Dao of Taiji, and the power will exponentially

increase." Immortal Diancai looked at Ji Ning. "The Dao of the Sword which you have chosen as your path, in turns, results in you applying and executing the insights you have gained into the Dao of the Sword."

Ning nodded his head in understanding. Taiji? Dao of the Sword? The application of a Dao?

"Regardless of whether it is Taiji or the Dao of the Sword, these are all extremely, unfathomably profound Grand Daos. They are extremely hard to comprehend." Immortal Diancai sighed. "For example, the Dao of the Sword requires one to comprehend and develop one's sword-heart. The Dao of Taiji also requires one to comprehend and develop one's Taiji-heart. Both are extremely difficult tasks. But upon embarking on this Grand Dao, one's future potential will be limitless."

Ning nodded as he listened.

"Remember!" Immortal Diancai looked at Ning, then said solemnly, "As a Sword Immortal, you must have a supremely sincere heart! Sincere to the sword, and sincere to your own heart. Do you understand?"

Ning nodded solemnly.

"You must always reflect on your actions, and hone your sword-heart. Do not let any dust alight on your sword-heart. You must know, a truly sincere heart is always lustrous!" Immortal Diancai looked at Ji Ning. "You must firmly engrave these words of mine into your heart."

"Yes. Your disciple will memorize them carefully, and will never dare to forget them," Ning replied.

"Mm." Immortal Diancai waved his hand, retrieving a leather scroll which he handed to Ning. Ning accepted it, slightly puzzled. "During these three days," Immortal Diancai said, "I've been carefully considering your earlier performance during the Dao Debates. In the end, I selected thirty-six sword arts manuals for you. Afterwards, when you go to the Dao Repository Vault, go trade for the thirty-six manuals recorded on this leather scroll."

"Thirty six?" Ning was stunned. "I am to go trade for them?" Although he had just embarked on the path of the Dao of the Sword and had received two thousand black-white pellets...thirty-six sword arts manuals?!

"Don't worry. These are all Earth-ranked or Heaven-ranked sword arts. In addition, I'm only having you trade for the first scrolls. In total, they will only cost six hundred black-white pellets," Immortal Diancai said. Only now did Ning let out a sigh of relief. Six hundred black-white pellets was indeed not too great a cost for him.

"Although they are only Earth-ranked and Heaven-ranked sword arts, and although you are only trading for their first scrolls, they will be enough for you to use at the Zifu Disciple level and at the Wanxiang Adept level," Immortal Diancai said. "These are all sword arts which, if placed within some lesser tribes, would be considered peerless sword arts that serve as the foundation for the entire tribe. Carefully read through these sword arts."

"The first reason I am having you peruse so many different sword arts is to raise your level of insights into the Dao of the Sword," Immortal Diancai said with a laugh. "Second is, the more you see and the more you study, the greater your experiences and understanding will be. In the future, when you are

adventuring and battling in the outside world, you'll be able to advance more quickly and benefit from this study."

"Understood," Ning acknowledged.

"Go, then, to the Dao Repository Vault. After today, one day each month, you may come visit me and ask me some of the questions which have mystified you in your day-to-day training," Immortal Diancai said. "Once I feel your foundation is solid enough, then I'll permit you to leave the Black-White College and go temper yourself in wandering the outside world. If you stay forever under the protection of your elders, there is no way you'll be able to become a true Immortal. Only when you live beneath the pounding of the rain and the howling of the wind, when you are tempered by life-and-death battles, will you be reborn into a mighty Immortal who does not fear the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations.

Ning nodded. "Understood."

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### **Book 8: Raindragon Guard Chapter 5: [Soulshaker Art]**

"Master, your disciple has one more issue." Ji Ning was still thinking about how, even after using four hundred kilograms of liquefied elemental essence, his Zifu Lake hadn't reached its limit.

"Speak," Immortal Diancai said.

Ning hurriedly said, "Your disciple has trained in the [Flowing Watersource]. In total, I've used 405 kilograms of liquefied elemental essence. According to the [Flowing Watersource], 400 kilograms is enough to establish a 'foundation for a Celestial Immortal', and if one tries to refine even more, one will quickly reach a limit. However, my Zifu Violet Palace has not yet reached the limit. Why is this?"

"Oh?" Immortal Diancai laughed. "Hahaha, most Immortal practitioners are vexed by their Violet Palace's not being able to absorb enough elemental ki and their foundation not being sufficiently stable. But you are complaining about your Violet Palace being able to absorb too much?"

"That's not it," Ning said hurriedly. "I just am puzzled, and I don't understand why I am unique."

Immortal Diancai laughed. "This is because your body is the body of a Fiendgod! It would be one thing if you had an ordinary Fiendgod body, but yours is one which has been created by the legendary, number one Fiendgod Body Refining Technique, the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]. It is a truly perfect Fiendgod body, no weaker than that of a mighty Fiendgod who was born from the natural world. It only makes sense that the Zifu Lake within your Fiendgod body is able to withstand a tremendous amount of elemental ki.

"Oh." Ning now understood.

"Actually, the better a Ki Refining technique is, the more stable one's foundation will be. Perhaps you'll spend a bit more time at the Zifu or the Wanxiang levels, but the further you go, the easier your life will be," Immortal Diancai said. "Also; there are some other techniques that are also Immortal-ranked, but are even better than even the [Flowing Watersource], which allows one to use five hundred kilograms of liquefied elemental essence at the Zifu Disciple stage. The more powerful a technique, the more elemental ki it is able to control." Immortal Diancai looked at Ning. "You should be happy."

“Your disciple understands,” Ning said. “However, how much liquefied elemental essence does your disciple need to use before advancing to the Wanxiang level?”

Immortal Diancai pondered for a moment, then said, “Disciples who train in the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] who also train in the [Flowing Watersource] are indeed quite rare...let me think about it. Mm. Mmm. Yes, I imagine you will need around eight hundred to one thousand kilograms or so.”

Ning sucked in a cold breath upon hearing this. Immortal Diancai looked at Ning. “The [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] is the number one Fiendgod Body Refining Technique in the world. You must practice it with diligence as well.”

“Alright.” Ning nodded, then added, “Then I’ll go to the Dao Repository Vault now.” Immortal Diancai nodded. “Go,” he said, then closed his eyes.

Ning departed. As he left the room, he boarded his flying boat and soared into the skies, heading to the Dao Repository Vault.

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The Dao Repository Vault. Ning headed straight for the second floor, that of the ‘arts’. “Originally, I had 200 black-white pellets left over. From the Dao Debates, I gained 600 black-white pellets. After embarking on the path of the Sword Immortal, the College bestowed me with two thousand black-white pellets. I have a total of 2800 black-white pellets.” Ning carefully searched through the countless books placed on the bookstacks. He was searching for the thirty-six sword arts manuals which his master had instructed him to find on that leather scroll.

“Quite cheap. This one is only thirty black-white pellets. Mm, this one is just ten. Ouch, this one is actually a hundred.” Ning moved as fast as the wind, and his eyes scanned the books as fast as lightning. He moved past large stacks of sword arts manuals, quickly picking out all thirty-six books.

The cheapest of these thirty-six books was just ten black-white pellets, while the most expensive was a hundred. However, these were all seemingly random, disjointed manuals; there were strange sword arts, tyrannical sword arts, fast sword arts...

“Out of a sea of sword arts manuals, Master actually chose these thirty-six after considering things for me. From this, one can imagine how many sword arts manuals Master has read.” Ning sighed to himself in amazement.

Clearly, to become a truly mighty Sword Immortal, it was also important to read many sword arts manuals. “Not bad. This sword art is even more suited to me than the [Duality Azureflame Sword].” As Ning flipped through the books, his eyes instantly began to light up.

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After choosing the thirty-six books, Ning came to another table. Atop the table, there were five abridged books. They were: [Heavenly Transformation], [Divine Thunderbolt Eye], [Myriad Hibernating Venoms], [Three Heads, Six Arms], and [Eye of the Luminous Heart].

“Divine abilities.” Ning pondered to himself. “I only have 2200 black-white pellets left. Should I choose a divine ability, or a skill for my divine sense.” Divine sense techniques were even rarer than divine abilities; the Black-White College only had three books. The [Soulshaker Art], the [Soulcharmer Art], and the [Soulslayer Art].

Divine abilities and divine sense techniques were equally attractive to Ning. He wanted both. “If only I could choose whatever I wanted...” Ning gritted his teeth.

He gave one last, regretful glance to those five abridged books, then turned and left, moving directly towards the other table filled with divine sense techniques. Atop the table, there were a total of three golden books.

Not hesitating at all, Ning picked up one of the golden books, then straightforwardly departed the Dao Repository Vault.

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Upon Ning leaving the Vault, the tall, muscular, armored Dao-Protector looked at him. “You’ve made your choice?”

“Yes. Take it.” Ning handed it over, and when he did, he couldn’t help but turn to look back at the Dao Repository Vault. His divine abilities! He really, really wanted to acquire a few divine abilities.

For example, that [Eye of the Luminous Heart] also had a side-effect pertaining to divine sense, and was extremely mysterious and profound. But the cost of the first scroll alone was five thousand black-white pellets. For the [Divine Thunderbolt Eye], one could immediately open a third, divine eye which was able to draw in and store the lightning and thunder of the world. With but a thought, one could release thunderbolts from that divine eye! Its power was truly terrifying.

“For now...I can’t have my cake and eat it as well,” Ning sighed to himself. “I already have a divine ability, the [Starseizing Hand], which is vastly superior to these divine abilities. These divine abilities, as far as I’m concerned, are just supporting arts that can make up for some of my weaknesses. They will not, however, noticeably increase my real power.”

“This [Soulshaker Art], however, will allow me to be able to gain yet another killer technique in a short period of time,” Ning mused to himself.

The [Soulshaker Art]’s power was not related to one’s divine power or elemental ki; it relied on the strength of one’s divine will! The stronger the divine will, the more powerful the [Soulshaker Art] would be. His divine will was at the level of a Primal Daoist’s by now, and with the [Nuwa Painting], his divine soul would only continue to grow in strength. Naturally, he had to learn a divine sense technique.

“You didn’t choose a divine ability?” The Dao-Protector, after looking at Ning’s choices, was rather amazed. “Apprentice-Nephew Ji Ning, this [Soulshaker Art] only requires a divine will to be used, but only other Wanxiang Adepts will have a divine will as well. At most, you’ll be able to slightly impact other Wanxiang Adepts. You train in the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]; it’s best if you choose a divine ability.”

Ning laughed. This Dao-Protector had no idea that his divine soul was already at the ‘divine sense’ level. “This is my choice,” Ning said.



“Your decision.” The Dao-Protector had only chosen to say a few extra words for Ning’s benefit. Since Ning insisted, he naturally wouldn’t say anything else.

“The [Soulshaker Art] requires 2000 black-white pellets, while the others need exactly 600.” The Dao-Protector looked at Ning. “I’ll destroy the restrictive spells around these sword arts manuals, and I’ll also go acquire the actual copies of the [Soulshaker Art] and the Heaven-ranked sword techniques for you.”

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Soon, Ning paid the 2600 black-white pellets, then departed with the thirty-six sword arts manuals as well as the [Soulshaker Art] and returned to his Darknorth Peak.

Upon returning to Darknorth Peak, Ning felt quite the itchy feeling in his heart. He gave a few instructions, ordering that he was not to be disturbed unless there was something important. And then, he went directly into his private training room.

“Back to the training room again.” Cloudjade stared at Ning, chewing on her lips. There was a hint of sadness in her eyes. “He won’t talk to me at all.”

The nearby Roch cast Cloudjade a glance, laughing inwardly. How could he not tell that Cloudjade had been hoping to seduce Ning? “What a pity. Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning’s Dao-heart is incomparably firm. How could a vixen like you possibly move him?”

Within the private room. Ning sat down in the lotus position, immediately beginning to flip through the [Soulshaker Art]’s complete manual. The complete manual to the [Soulshaker Art] wasn’t too thick. After beginning to carefully read through it, Ning started to understand...the so-called [Soulshaker Art] was just an extremely unique way of applying the divine will. This was a technical manual, but its value was comparable to a divine ability.

“The [Soulshaker Art]?” Ning closed his eyes, beginning to ponder on what he had read. Rumble...Ning’s powerful divine will began to spread out, filling the entire private room, and he began to test it over and over.

Failure. Failure. Failure. Ning’s repeated failures didn’t cause him to feel the slightest bit dispirited. Each time, he would realize what his mistake was, and each time, he would perform better than the last.

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In the blink of an eye, more than half a month passed with Ning staying within the training room. Because Ning had ordered his servants long ago that he was not to be disturbed unless there was something critically important, for this period of time, things were quite calm and quiet.

Within Ning’s sea of consciousness, there was a miniature Ji Ning, seated in the lotus position. This was Ning’s ‘divine soul’. The divine soul sat there in the lotus position, a runic seal repeatedly appearing and disappearing over his chest.

“Whoosh!” The azure seal managed to remain alive for a few instants, but then was extinguished once more.

Ning calmly absorbed the lessons of this failure, then tried again. “Whoosh!” Instantly, a queer azure seal once more appeared in front of the chest of Ning’s divine soul. This seal, at first glance, appeared to

be some sort of script, but it was neither a Fiendgod character, nor a character from any language he was aware of. When seeing this azure rune, one felt as though a violent wave was slamming against the shore.

“Go.” Ning willed his divine soul to release his tremendously powerful divine will, which came out through that azure runic seal. The divine will which was released wasn’t as dispersed as it was before; rather, it was a wave that was folded together in layers. His divine sense spread out like waves in every direction, constantly rolling forth without end. One could imagine how, if Ning encountered a living creature with a soul, these turbid waves of divine will would instantly smash down against the enemy’s soul, just like a wave smashing down upon a shore.

“At last, I’ve finally managed to just barely manifest the ‘Soulshaker Rune’.” Ning opened his eyes, revealing a hint of a smile. “However, I’m still quite far off from the true, perfect Soulshaker Rune as mentioned in the book.”

Relaxed, Ning left the private room. By the time he arrived in the outer courtyard, he saw that it was late at night. Outside was a sea of sparkling stars in the night sky. Ning raised his head, staring at the sea of stars, then laughed. “In the upcoming period of time, what I’ll need to do is spend quite some time meditating on the Dao and on sword arts here at the Black-White College. Only when Master nods in approval shall I go out and temper myself through adventuring.”

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Time flowed on like water. Ji Ning and Mu Northson, the two new disciples of the Black-White College, lived lives that were peaceful and yet meaningful. They focused on comprehending the Dao, on analyzing sword arts and the Dao of Constructs, and unconsciously, their power grew greater and greater. The two of them had been like two pieces of unpolished jade, but the Black-White College slowly carved and shaped them, letting them reveal their true luster.

In the blink of an eye, more than three years passed. It was the height of summer now. This year, Ning turned twenty years old.

### **The Desolate Era**

#### **Book 8: Raindragon Guard Chapter 6: Three Years Later**

This midsummer dawn was uncommonly cool. Ji Ning, still clad in his black furs, walked out from the estate atop Darknorth Peak.

“Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.” Meng Roch, who had grown only more muscular and tanned, immediately greeted him with respect.

“Rocky, prepare some food for me. Same as what we’ve done in the past.” Ning laughed as he gave some instructions. In the past three years, Northmont Baiwei had delivered two more retainers, and so he now had a total of six under his control. He was now quite familiar with all six of them, but he still trusted Roch the most.

Because Roch had damaged his ki foundation in the past, upon entering the Black-White College, he began to train as a Fiendgod as well, and his skin had darkened as a result. “Yes, senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning,” Roch said, immediately departing.

“Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, you came out.” A beautiful figure walked over from afar. It was Cloudjade. Behind her was a black-robed youth; this was one of the six retainers under Ning’s command, Weifang.

Cloudjade’s eyes were as bright as jewels. After having been in the Black-White College for so long, her aura had improved as well, and she now had an additional hint of otherworldliness about her. “You were in closed-door meditation for so long this time, senior apprentice-brother. It was almost a month.”

She stared at Ning with a gaze that was quite scorching. Although her horizons had been expanded during her time at the Black-White College...in her eyes, Ji Ning was still the most brilliant star of them all. Three years had passed, and compared to three years ago, Ning’s aura had only grown more simple and pure; he was like a youth who lived a rustic life in the mountain wilderness.

But Cloudjade understood that her senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning was now far more powerful than he had been three years ago. There were now extremely few people who were willing to engage in a discourse on the Dao with Ning at the Dao Debate Palace, and quite a few secretly claimed that Ning must surely be a reincarnated Immortal. From this, one could tell how monstrous Ning’s performance had been.

“Each time I come out of seclusion, I’ll see you,” Ning laughed. “Cloudjade, you need to calm your heart and focus on training as well. Look at Weifang..he arrived after you did, but he’s the most powerful of the six of you.”

“Senior apprentice-brother, you praise me over-much,” the black-robed youth, Weifang, immediately said with respect. “Compared to you, senior apprentice-brother, I am countless tens of thousands of kilometers beneath you.”

“I’ve already worked quite hard,” Cloudjade said. But Ning only shook his head. “Your talent is excellent, but your Dao-heart is somewhat lacking.” Cloudjade just rolled her eyes.

Ning secretly shook his head. When Cloudjade had first joined the school, she had wanted to seduce him. After realizing that there was no hope...although she was still very respectful to Ning, she started to begin to work on seducing the other senior apprentice-brothers of the College.

“She walks the path of Immortal cultivation, but instead of calming her mind and focusing on training, the only thing on her mind is becoming Dao-Companions with powerful Immortal practitioners. Jeeze!” Ning felt quite resigned about this as well.

He understood everything quite clearly. Cloudjade, by nature, wasn’t a bad person. Of his six main retainers, the person Ning trusted the most was Roch, and the person he trusted the second most was Cloudjade. As for the other four, although they were extremely respectful towards him, Ning could sense that all four of them were hugely ambitious, and so he had to be careful in the amount of trust he showed them.

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Ning sat there, sipping some stewed rice porridge that contained natural elemental energies within it while eating some delicacies. His mood was quite good to begin with, and it was improving further and

further. Next to him was the Whitewater Hound who just lay there, looking at Ning. He sent mentally to Ning, "Ning, son; you seem to be in quite a good mood."

"Right. I was in closed-door training for nearly a month, but I've finally comprehended the second stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]!" Ning looked at his Uncle White, his face covered in smiles.

"You've comprehended it?" The Whitewater Hound instantly revealed a look of surprise and delight as well. Over the past three years...Ning had an Immortal guiding him, the sword arts manuals of the Dao Repository Vault to peruse over, and the complete [Three-Foot Sword] in his mind, as well as the sword-intent which senior Northwalker had transmitted to him.

Ning's rate of improvement had naturally been astonishingly fast. In the past, he had never had a truly formidable teacher. Even his father and the others, when faced with Ning's monstrous talent, felt that they were not quite good enough to teach him.

With Immortal Diancai guiding Ning, Ning felt incomparable joy, and his rate of improvement had reached an astonishing level. However, he had never been able to completely comprehend the second stance of the [Three-Foot Sword].

"Three years. You've finally mastered it." The Whitewater Hound rose to his feet, feeling excited for Ning.

"With this sword art mastered, I now have the confidence to go spar with Master once again," Ning said with a laugh. "Perhaps this time, Master will acknowledge my growth and permit me to go out wandering." Without his master's permission, Ning was not to leave the school.

Logically speaking, given his current level of power, Ning should've been able to go out wandering long ago. However, given how incredible Ning's talent was, Immortal Diancai's requirements for Ning were similarly incredible! By now...Ning had sparred against his master numerous times, and although he had improved greatly each time, he had never received his master's permission.

"Go," the Whitewater Hound mentally sent to him with a laugh. "If you go, I'll be able to accompany you in wandering. In the past, I went out adventuring with your father as well. When I think about it, my blood starts to pump."

By borrowing from Ning's liquefied elemental essence, the Whitewater Hound had naturally reached the peak Zifu stage long ago. Ning had wanted to trade for some powerful secret arts on behalf of the Whitewater Hound, but the Whitewater Hound didn't need it. All he accepted was some formation techniques to analyze, which Ning had spent 200 black-white pellets on. Because it took quite a long period of time to analyze formation techniques, the price of such techniques was actually quite low. Ning had spent 600 black-white pellets for his thirty-six sword arts manuals, but as for the formation manuals...he had spent merely 200 black-white pellets for 91 books.

The [Nine Scrolls on Formations] which that Loose Immortal had left behind was incomparably broad and profound. This was the complete legacy of a Loose Immortal. As a Godbeast, the Whitewater Hound had focused on analyzing formations, even when he had been accompanying Ning's father. Acquiring the Nine Scrolls was already a case of him being akin to a tiger who had gained wings. Now that he also gained so many formations manuals from the Black-White College, he naturally had made enormous

improvements. And, every so often, the Whitewater Hound would even go to the Black-White College to listen to some Primal Daoists or even to some of the Immortals expound on the Dao.

"I'll go, then." Ning rose to his feet. "Go." The Whitewater Hound watched as Ning left. Ning boarded his flying boat, then quickly disappeared into the distant horizons.

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Ning stood there atop his boat in midair, staring downwards. Soon, he arrived at the residence of his master, Immortal Diancai.

Whoosh. Ning landed in front of the estate, and the gate guards smiled towards Ning. Ning strode directly inwards without waiting. Immortal Diancai had given the order long ago that Ning was to be permitted to enter directly, without any need to report his arrival.

Within the hall. The black-haired, black-robed Immortal Diancai was seated in the lotus position on his jade bed. It seemed as though the passage of three years had not affected Ning's master at all.

"Today is not the first of the month. Have you come here to spar with me once more?" Immortal Diancai looked at his beloved disciple. Over the course of the past three years, he had come to love his sole disciple even more, to the point where his affection for Ning was even greater than his affection for the descendants of his clan.

"Yes." Ning looked at his master. A sword-light that seemed almost physical had appeared within Ning's eyes, and his entire person slowly began to radiate a terrifying sword-intent. His sword-intent surged through the heavens!

"It does seem that you've improved a bit." Immortal Diancai nodded. "Come, then. Attack me."

"Be careful, Master." A Darknorth sword appeared out of nowhere, and he gripped it with two hands. Swish! Ning transformed into a blurry, rapidly moving figure, and the sharp sword in his hand seemed to have turned into a ghostly image. His speed had reached an extremely high level, and he instantly pierced the sword towards Immortal Diancai, seated on the jade bed.

Immortal Diancai, seated on the jade bed, leisurely stretched out his fingers, forming a sword-finger. With a light tap, a streak of sword-light instantly arced out. "Clash." This solitary streak of sword-light repeatedly clashed in mid-air multiple times with Ning's sword-shadow. Ning's sword moved about like a ghost, but although this solitary streak of sword-light was in an arc, it's position also fluctuated unpredictably.

"Hmph." Ning's sword-light changed, becoming domineering and tyrannical. Bang! Instantly, the surrounding area was submerged into a sea of fire, and Ning's sword became one of the flames within it, incomparably valiant as it chopped directly towards Immortal Diancai. This sword attack of Ji Ning's...had already vastly surpassed the [Thunderflame Sword]'s level, and most likely even the person who had originally developed the [Thunderflame Sword] was no match for the current Ning in terms of the Dao of the Sword.

"Extinguish." Immortal Diancai revealed a hint of a smile as well. With a gentle tap of the fingers, a sword-light flew out from his fingertips which instantly transformed into thousands of silken lines. These

silken lines criss-crossed each other, seeming to form a giant net. This giant net of sword-light howled forward, quickly surrounding and wrapping around Ning's pyroclasm of sword-light.

"'Heartless Waterflame'!" Ning revealed a smile as well. Instantly, the surrounding area changed yet again. One side was filled with blazing flames, while the other side was filled with boundless rainwater. In one of Ning's hands was a blazing sword of fire, while in the other was a sword of rain.

Ning's entire figure radiated an invincible aura as he charged directly towards that net of sword-light, and the twin swords in his hands spun in a vortex together as he did so.

"Bang!" The sword-lights of fire and water clashed head on with the net of sword-light in a giant explosion...and both shattered apart.

"This latest 'Heartless Waterflame' finally seems to have a bit of flavor to it." Immortal Diancai pointed with his sword-finger once more. Swish! A sharp sword-light attacked with incomparably astonishing speed towards Ning, while at the same time, Immortal Diancai pointed again, and again...one streak of sword-light after another shot out, all moving at incomprehensible speeds.

"Last time, he was defeated by this technique, and his body was filled with quite a few bloody holes. I wonder if he'll be able to block it this time." Immortal Diancai's eyes were filled with anticipation.

Ning no longer revealed an incomparably relaxed smile on his face as he had before. Instead, his eyes lit up, and he seemed to suddenly explode with power.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! The twin swords in Ning's hands began to move. Suddenly, in the area around Ning, an enormous millstone of fire and water appeared. Fire and water were contradictory, opposite types of elemental energy, but they twisted past each other here to form this enormous millstone. In the very center of the millstone, where the water and fire clashed with each other, a terrifying wind force arose. This tri-colored millstone revolved around Ning, and where Ning's sword light flashed past, an incomparably powerful wind arose as well!

Fast! Faster than fast! Chop! Chop! Chop! Ning consecutively chopped and extinguished the sword-lights created by his master's finger-taps. The bedstone of fire and water revolved around him, while the gale raged around his body. Ning's sword flashed out like lightning as well, each time striking at the weaknesses on the side of those flashes of sword-light, rather than taking them head out.

"Faster. Move a little faster." Immortal Diancai began to tap with his fingers even faster, and the sword-light which appeared in the air grew increasingly ferocious as they shot towards Ning. Ning, ensconced within that giant millstone of fire and water, wielded his sword at an inconceivably fast speed, and continued to chop apart and extinguish those flashes of sword-light.

"Go, then!" Immortal Diancai gently flicked his fingers, and the thousand rays of sword-light that were in midair suddenly seemed to transform into brilliant stars. They resonated amongst each other, thundering forth with a unified attack that blasted towards Ning at the same time.

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### **Book 8: Raindragon Guard Chapter 7: Master and Disciple, Pre-Departure**

“Not good.” Last time, when Ji Ning had sparred with his master, his master hadn’t used this technique. Faced with the sudden attack of a thousand star-like bursts of sword-light, Ning knew that his ‘Tripartite Millstone’ wouldn’t be able to withstand the assault.

The sword-intent radiating from Ning’s body compressed itself to the utmost. “Pierce!” Ning’s sword suddenly shout out. It was as though even if there were infinitely great impediments standing in front of Ning and wrapping around him, as though ropes were bound about him, causing his sword to frantically struggle to pierce forward. It moved incomparably slowly...and yet, in reality, that was just a misperception, as the sword itself had reached an incredibly great speed.

Swish! The sword shot out like a meteor! It tore through the boundless darkness, ripped through all impediments, and completely shattered the thousand-plus bolts of starry sword-light. With part of it having been destroyed, all the surrounding bolts of starry sword-light vanished and dispersed.

As for Ning himself, moving like a phantom, he charged towards his master, the sword in his right hand having stabbed forward and broken those thousand stars of sword-light. At the same time, the sword in his left hand had already stabbed towards his master, Immortal Diancai.

“Break!” Immortal Diancai revealed a smile as he rapped out this word. A formless sword energy instantly clashed with Ning’s Darknorth sword. It was not only powerful, but backed with a seemingly endless momentum of energy, causing Ning to be pushed back many meters before finding his footing.

Immortal Diancai, still seated on his jade bed, nodded slowly. “The ‘Manifold Thistlethorns’. You’ve finally comprehended this technique.”

This was the attack Ning had just demonstrated, the second stance of the [Three-Foot Sword] – ‘Manifold Thistlethorns’. This technique represented the highest level of comprehension regarding the Dao of the Sword which Ning had ever reached. “Thanks to your guidance, Master,” Ning said respectfully, “Your foolish disciple was able to finally comprehend this technique today.”

“Hahaha. You only spend three years to comprehend the second stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]. If this performance of yours is to be described as ‘foolish’, then your master would have to be described with the word ‘idiot’,” Immortal Diancai laughed. “After I comprehended the first stance, it took me ten years before I comprehended the second one. Your talent is, indeed, far superior to mine.”

Ning said respectfully, “My talent is at most comparable to those reincarnated Immortals. Our Black-White College has had reincarnated Immortals in every generation, and even in the current Black-White College, there are several reincarnated Immortals. You, Master, despite not being a reincarnated Immortal, are able to surpass those who are in power, and are universally acknowledged as being the Immortal with the greatest chances of becoming a Celestial Immortal. Similarly, the Sloppy Daoist is also the undisputed number one figure amongst the third generation disciples.”

Immortal Diancai nodded in satisfaction. “It is good that you are always humble and vigilant. Now...you can leave the school and go out wandering.” Immortal Diancai smiled as he looked at Ning. Finally, he had said these words.

“I can go out adventuring now?” Ning couldn’t help but feel excitement in his heart. Each time he had made a breakthrough, he felt that he should be able to receive his master’s acknowledgment, but in reality...he had been disappointed time and time again. For example, when he had reached the Dao

Domain level in the 'Dao of the Inferno', or when he had developed increasingly powerful sword arts, including his own perfected and highly suitable 'Tripartite Millstone Sword' attack, he had felt incomparably proud and vigorous.

However, his master had not nodded in approval. Not until today! After he had mastered the second stance of the [Three-Foot Sword], he had finally gained his master's acknowledgment. Finally, he was going to be able to wander the outside world, filled with both dangers and opportunities. The vast, endless outside world.

"Ji Ning." Immortal Diancai looked at Ning. "Master." Ning tamped down the excitement in his heart.

"Accept these two protective items." Two items appeared out of nowhere in Immortal Diancai's hands. One appeared to be a brooch which was covered with carvings that appeared to be of a beautiful Immortal palace. As for the other, it was a fiery red jade bottle. "This pendant is something I personally created. After refining it, carry it with you at all times. With but a thought, you can release the sword-energy within it to protect yourself. With that sword-energy protecting you...you will be able to resist the attack of even a Loose Immortal or an Earth Immortal for one breath's worth of time."

"As for this jade bottle...you must be extremely careful within it. Within it there is a single 'Polar Aurora Thunderflame Pearl'. It's power is tremendous. Once you throw it out, it does not distinguish between friend or foe. Everything within a radius of thirty meters will be reduced into powder. Even Loose Immortals or Earth Immortals will most likely be heavily wounded, while almost all Primal Daoists will perish."

"Of these two items, one is meant for offense, while the other is meant for defense. However, each can only be used a single time. Thus, you must consider carefully when to use them." Immortal Diancai looked at Ning, his eyes filled with anticipation and solemnity.

As the saying went, when a child travelled a thousand kilometers away, the parents would be filled with worry. He only had a single disciple under his tutelage, and this disciple was about to go adventuring in distant lands...as his master, how could Immortal Diancai not be worried? After all, no matter how powerful a peerless genius was, if he didn't have the chance to grow in power, he still wouldn't be able to overcome some older, more powerful figures. For example, if Ning encountered a Primal Daoist opponent, he would still be crushed without being able to fight back at all.

"You must remember to be cautious in all matters. Think thrice before acting...but once you decide, act decisively." Immortal Diancai looked at Ning. Suddenly, Ning felt an aching feeling in his heart. That look...

In the past, when he had left West Prefecture City to go adventuring, his father and his mother had looked at him with those exact same eyes. Eyes filled with worry, but also anticipation. Although his master was powerful, he couldn't take on all the risks of life for his disciple. Every disciple needed to truly test themselves...only then would they be successful.'

"Don't worry, Master. Your disciple will definitely be careful," Ning said hurriedly.

"The only things which Master can give you are these two items." Immortal Diancai looked towards Ning. "Remember. Everything else will be up to your own efforts."



“Alright.” Ning accepted the items respectfully. These two items were both truly priceless items; in fact, they vastly outstripped the value of the presents which Northmont Blacktiger had given.

The defensive pendant was able to defend against the attack of an Earth Immortal or Loose Immortal for a full breath’s worth of time. In a life-and-death attack, death would sometimes come in an instant. To Immortal practitioners, the amount of time one needed to take a breath was enough for them to fly countless kilometers away.

As for the Polaris Aurora Thunderflame Pearl, it could badly injure Immortals and kill almost all Primal Daoists. It could be described as a true killer item.

“When next you return to the College, come seek me out. You can go now.” Immortal Diancai waved his hand as he spoke, then closed his eyes.

“Alright.” Ning bowed, then immediately departed.

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After leaving his master, Ning boarded his flying boat and flew into the skies. He felt an aching feeling in his heart. He could sense that his master’s heart was filled with concern for him, and that concern was not unreasonable; the path of an Immortal practitioner was a path which was against the heavens, a path that was filled with pitfalls. Even the heavens themselves would, intentionally or unintentionally, create numerous traps and barriers for Immortal practitioners.

Far too many disciples of the Black-White College had died in the outside world. It must be understood...so long as the disciples of the Black-White College did not perish, the vast majority would become Primal Daoists! But there were hundreds of third generation disciples, while only thirty or so second generation Primal Daoists. Why? The reason was...the rest died!

They died while testing themselves, while roaming the outside world! As the saying goes, if jade isn’t polished, it cannot be carved, but during the carving process, how many pieces of unpolished jade would end up being destroyed? The ‘jade-carving knife’ of the ‘tempering’ process was truly a vicious one. To embark on the path of Immortals...this was embarking on a path that was filled with countless pitfalls and snares.

“Master. I will definitely return to you alive,” Ning murmured in his heart. And then, his flying boat went directly to the residence of his junior apprentice-brother, the mountain peak of Mu Northson.

Twinwood Peak. Ning flew into the air above it, then called out directly, “Junior apprentice-brother Northson.” His voice echoed out in waves, reaching the estate below. Soon, a figure appeared in the courtyard below, who quickly called back, “Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, quick, come in.”

Ning descended to the ground. Compared to three years ago, although Northson still had the appearance of a immature youth, in terms of both power and Dao-heart, he had grown considerably. After all, he had been able to join the Black-White College at the age of fourteen, and had been able to spend so much time in meditation in front of the Black-White Diagram...his talent was, without question, extremely high.

The reason why he had lost at the Dao Debates was because he was simply too young, and because he hadn’t had as great a stroke of karmic luck as Ning had, who had acquired the underwater estate.

“Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, why did you decide to come here to my place?” Northson laughed. “Normally, it’s quite rare to see you come out.”

“I was just approved by master to go out adventuring in the outside world.” Ning revealed a smile.

“Really? Wonderful!” Northson instantly began to celebrate. “I’ve waited for this day for over a year now. Two years after I joined, my master gave me permission to go out adventuring. You are so strong, senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, but you spent three years in training. Immortal Diancai really is extremely exacting towards you.”

Ning laughed. After receiving the nod from his master, Daoist Jedefine, Northson had immediately come to find Ning. But Ning hadn’t been able to leave...and so Northson had tamped down his impatience. He didn’t want to go out wandering all by his lonely self; he wanted a companion. If two brothers went out adventuring together, at least they wouldn’t be too lonely.

And so, he had waited...all the way until today.

“Oh, oh, I need to go to my master and bid her farewell,” Northson said hurriedly. “Go, go,” Ning said. “Your master dotes on you so much, you really should have a good chat with her before leaving.”

The master of Northson, Daoist Jedefine, did indeed dote on him. First of all, the entire Black-White College had very, very few people who focused on the Dao of Constructs; it was rare for her to find such a wonderful disciple. And secondly, Daoist Jedefine had been stuck at the Primal Daoist level for many years. The assaults of the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations had grown increasingly difficult for her to withstand, and she was close to her limit. A person close to the end of her years, upon suddenly taking on such a talented disciple who was so young...Daoist Jedefine naturally doted fiercely on this disciple of hers.

After he had entered her tutelage, Daoist Jedefine had given Northson five hundred kilograms of liquefied elemental essence. Thus, Northson had, at one go, trained all the way to the middle Wanxiang stage. Even in the Black-White College, this was incredibly rare!

The unspoken rule of the Black-White College was that masters would not give their disciples too many treasures; instead, they would provide guidance to them. The College would place those special Ki Refining techniques and divine abilities in the vault, and as the disciples rose in power, for example reaching the ‘Dao Domain’ level, they would then be able to go acquire those techniques.

Even though a mountain of gold or a silver was right there in front of them, the disciples were to go dig for them themselves. Only then would they acquire them. Divine abilities, secret arts; they were all there. However, had to train in earnest and make improvements before acquiring them.

If one didn’t have to work hard and didn’t make any improvements, and yet still received everything one wanted? This would result in a useless, hedonistic son of rich parents. Thus, the unspoken rule.

A master could help, could guide, could lead by the hand. But the disciple had to go out and struggle for himself! It was extremely rare for someone like Daoist Jedefine to give five hundred kilograms of liquefied elemental essence to a disciple. However, that was also the limit of Daoist Jedefine’s doting on Northson; in other aspects, such as in handing out black-white pellets, she didn’t wantonly give him things.

“Right.” Northson nodded. “Senior apprentice-brother, go back to your own place for now. I’ll go visit Master, then make some preparations...tomorrow, I’ll come seek you out, senior apprentice-brother. We’ll head out tomorrow morning and leave the Black-White College.”

“Alright.” Ning nodded. Northson immediately produced the Azure Dragon construct out of nowhere. Boarding it, he rapidly soared into the skies and disappeared.

“Junior apprentice-brother Northson has gone to visit his master.” Ning boarded his own flying boat, soaring into the skies. As he did so, he turned to glance towards Immortal Diancai’s residence.

“Master. Your disciple definitely will not let you down.”

### The Desolate Era

#### **Book 8: Raindragon Guard Chapter 8: Entering the Raindragon Guard**

The next morning, at dawn. Darknorth Peak.

“Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, I want to go alongside with you. I can pour tea for you and service you.” Cloudjade looked expectantly at Ning.

“We are going out in the world to adventure and to test ourselves. There will be countless dangers. This isn’t tourism! You had best just stay here calmly at the Black-White College.” Ning looked towards his retainers; Meng Roch, Cloudjade, Cloudship, Forgard, Weifang, and Nethersun. “After I leave the Black-White College, all matters here at Darknorth Peak, great and small, will be managed by Meng Roch.”

Cloudship and the others, upon hearing this, were all rather amazed. Roch? The weakest amongst them was most likely Roch. The others had all improved in strength, but because Roch’s ki foundation had been damaged, he had been forced to divide his attention and also train as a Fiendgod. For now, at least, he was the weakest of them.

“Yes, senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.” Cloudjade and the others all acknowledged the order.

“Rocky. I entrust Darknorth Peak to you.” Ning looked towards Roch. The tall, swarthy Roch nodded solemnly. “Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, don’t worry at all.”

Ning suddenly raised his head. From afar, a streak of light was flying over. It was Mu Northson, riding on his Azure Dragon construct. Northson called out towards him from afar, “Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning!”

“Let’s go, Uncle White.” The flying boat appeared next to Ning, and the Whitewater Hound ambled into the boat. The two of them, a man and a large, snowy white hound, immediately soared into the air, moving to join with the distant Northson, aboard his flying dragon. Soon, they all disappeared into the distant mountain peaks.

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Ning, Northson, and the Whitewater Hound walked out from the main gates of the Black-White College. “The next time we return,” Northson said, “We will be even more powerful.” Northson turned to look at the gates of the school, his eyes filled with anticipation and desire. He said softly, “And I’m going to bring back a pile of techniques and arts which the College doesn’t have...I’ve grown sick of not having

enough black-white pellets, and of the pain of not having enough of them to trade for all sorts of golem-related arts.”

The Black-White College had a sea of techniques and arts; where did they all come from? Naturally, they had been accumulated over the years by its disciples, who had brought them back after adventuring in the outside world. When the disciples offered new techniques and arts, they would receive corresponding rewards in black-white pellets and liquefied elemental essence!

Ning actually had two extremely powerful techniques which he could offer to the College; the first was his divine ability, the [Windwing Evasion], while the second was the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]. The entire school only had five divine abilities; from this, one could see how rare they were. This divine ability, however, had been passed down from generation to generation by the Yuchi clan, and even his mother had told him that it was not to be given to outsiders. How could he so casually give it up?

As for the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], that was something he could make his own decision on, but he had already left the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] to the Ji clan; in the future, the Ji clan would rely on it to rise to prominence. His father had given his entire life for the Ji clan, and Ning had grown up within the clan ever since he was young. He felt a powerful sense of loyalty to the clan. For now, Ning still needed to seriously consider as to whether or not he was to give such a powerful, consummate technique to the College.

After all, all schools, sects, tribes, and clans viewed arts and techniques with great importance. It was entirely possible that an entire tribe might be exterminated for the sake of a divine ability or a powerful secret art.

“Let’s go,” Ning said.

“Where should we go?” Northson asked.

“First, to the Heavenly Treasures Mountain.” Ning laughed. “The Heavenly Treasures Mountain has countless treasures within it. If we are going to go adventuring, we’ll need to prepare ourselves. We can go shopping there.”

“Right. I really do want to go shopping.” Northson nodded. And so, Ning, Northson, and the Whitewater Hound immediately departed the Black-White College.

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A white-haired, young-faced old granny was standing within a courtyard. The water-scrying mirror in front of her revealed Ning, Northson, and the Whitewater Hound departing from the gates of the Black-White College.

“Northson...” Daoist Jadevine’s eyes held a hint of both worry and anticipation.

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The black-robed, black-haired Immortal Diancai was seated in the lotus position on his bed. Suddenly, he opened his eyes. They were filled with anticipation. His disciple had gone out to temper himself.

Some disciples would return in two or three years. Some would only return after decades. Still others would return only after centuries! But of course, there were also some who would never return, having died in the outside world.

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Heavenly Treasures Mountain. This place had the support of the mighty imperial clan of the Xia Dynasty. They were in every single one of the commandery cities which were stretched across the vast land.

In the three years since joining the Black-White College, Ning had come out and met with Northmont Baiwei quite a few times. Naturally, he had gone to the Heavenly Treasures Mountain as well.

“Uncle White, this time when we go adventuring, we shall be beset by dangers. What do you need?” Ning looked towards the Whitewater Hound by his side and spoke to him mentally.

“You’ve already given me that Lesser Teleportation Dao-seal,” the Whitewater Hound sent back mentally. “Right now, there is one thing which I wish for the most...the ‘Fuxi Staff Formation’.”

“Fuxi Staff Formation?” Ning nodded. Although he couldn’t compare with his Uncle White in terms of formations, in his spare time, Ning would also go meditate on them. Naturally, he knew about the renowned ‘Fuxi Staff Formation’. Fuxi...that was a major power from the legends. Even in his previous life on Earth, Ning had heard some of the legends of Fuxi.

Fuxi, Houyi, Kuafu...these were all figures out of ancient legends. The Fuxi Staff Formation, in turn, was supposedly created by Fuxi, formed from eight arrays of eight staffs, for 64 staffs in total. Fuxi was able to use it to execute all sorts of formations. Those 64 staffs...there were boundless ways in which they could be used. In the hands of an ordinary Immortal cultivator, they might be useless, but in the hands of a formations expert, they could unleash astonishing levels of power.

The higher one’s level of insights into formations was, the greater and the more miraculous the power one would be able to unleash from the Fuxi Staff Formation. According to legends, Fuxi was able to rely on this Fuxi Staff Formation to set up a grand formation that had the power to annihilate the heavens and exterminate the earth. In addition, the Fuxi Staff Formation was something which could be carried about; like the ‘Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation’, it could be unleashed at any time. Thus, those who were skilled in formations would generally try to procure a set of the Fuxi Staff Formation.

“Alright. Leave it to me.” Ning nodded.

“Young master Ji. Young master Mu.” A devilishly attractive female Zifu Disciple had come to the gates of the Heavenly Treasures Mountain early on, and she now came to welcome them. Ning, Northson, and the Whitewater Hound thus entered the Heavenly Treasures Mountain.

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There were countless treasures within the Heavenly Treasures Mountain, but the prices were similarly extravagant. Still, those who the Heavenly Treasures Mountain cared about would generally be given discounts. For genius disciples of the Black-White College, a 30% discount would be given. This was essentially as large a discount as was possible, because when the Heavenly Treasures Mountain purchased treasures, they would usually buy them at a 60% valuation!

But of course, there were stories of some Immortals who both bought and sold items at a cost of 60%; the Heavenly Treasures Mountain wouldn't try to make any money off them at all. But of course, for now, Ning's group couldn't possibly be treated in this way.

"I'm selling this set of sword formations. This magic treasure as well. Oh, this set of sword formations as well." Within the Heavenly Treasures Mountain, Ning quickly began to sell off the many magic treasures he had accumulated, such as the various magic treasures he had acquired when killing the Immortal cultivators of Snowdragon Mountain. He had even sold off the sword formations bestowed upon him by Northmont Blacktiger and senior apprentice-brother Bloodshadow. This was because, although these sword formations were of high quality, they came from different sources; some were ice-attribute flying swords, while others were fire-attribute flying swords. Having too many swords of different types was not beneficial to the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation].

Soon, an hour had passed. Ning, Northson, and the Whitewater Hound all departed from the Heavenly Treasures Mountain.

Ning acquired a set of 360 high-grade Mortal-ranked water-attribute flying swords, then acquired another set of 360 high-grade Mortal-ranked fire-attribute flying swords. In total, he had 720 high-grade flying swords now. Although these were all produced by the Heavenly Treasures Mountain, and were flying swords of the most common variety, with nothing unique about them, they were still high-grade Mortal-ranked weapons. If he had to use liquefied elemental essence to purchase them, he would have spent nearly five hundred kilograms.

Blacktiger had gifted him two sword formations, while Bloodshadow had gifted him with one. He had managed to sell them off for nearly 450 kilograms of liquefied elemental essence. The magic treasures of Adept Xu Li, in turn, were sold off for nearly fifty kilograms.

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In short, in the end, Ning ended up paying an additional hundred kilograms in exchange for 720 high-grade Mortal-ranked flying swords, and a Fuxi Staff Formation. He then spent a bit more to purchase some necessary adventuring items.

"Ugh!" After exiting the Heavenly Treasures Mountain, Northson let out a sigh. "After entering the Heavenly Treasures Mountain, I realized how poor I actually am. All I have left right now is around five kilograms of liquefied elemental essence or so. As for you, senior apprentice-brother, I imagine you should be a bit better off."

"In the past three years, although I've won a few battles at the Dao Debate Palace..." Ning shook his head. "After this visit to the Heavenly Treasures Mountain, I'm essentially bankrupt as well. I only have around fifty or so kilograms left."

Northson nodded, but then his eyes lit up. "Of course we won't be able to acquire any treasures while staying within the College all the time. We are now going to go out adventuring, and we'll have plenty of opportunities to acquire them. For example, back in the day, senior apprentice-brother Bloodshadow managed to effortlessly gift you that precious Mortal-ranked sword formation to you, senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning. Clearly, to him, it wasn't worth anything at all. Now that we are going out adventuring, I trust that soon, we'll be just like him."

“Right.” Ning’s eyes were filled with eagerness as well. In the College, they would often hear about how this senior apprentice-brother found a senior’s legacy and acquired some precious item, or about how that senior apprentice-sister had killed hundreds of other Immortal practitioners over ten-plus years of wandering and battling, and had acquired countless treasures. Or...

Well. In short, Ning and Northson had never been out adventuring, and so they naturally felt itchiness in their hearts.

“Just now, I traded for some treasures. My power has improved a bit, compared to the past. This time, I’m definitely going to go on a rampage around the world.” Northson was filled with a boundless heroic aura.

“Hahaha.” Ning just laughed.

His [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] still had, as its core, the Nine Yang Swords Formation which he had acquired in the underwater estate. The other 360 water-attribute flying swords and 360 fire-attribute flying swords...they both countered and reinforced each other, and extremely well-suited for controlling within the Dao of formations. Ning trusted that his [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] would also have incomparably astonishing combat power.

“My long-distance attacks are now comparable to my close-quarters attacks,” Ning mused to himself. Ning was now extremely powerful in close combat, because he had reached the ninth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], which was comparable to an ordinary early stage Wanxiang Adept Fiendgod! In addition, after he had reached the Dao Domain level in the Dao of the Inferno and gained a thousand black-white pellets, Ning had purchased both the divine ability [Heavenly Transformation] as well as the second scroll of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens].

Thus, even if he didn’t use the utterly monstrous [Starseizing Hand] ability, just by relying on his [Windwing Evasion] and [Heavenly Transformation] divine abilities, Ning could unleash a truly astonishing amount of power in close combat. In addition, as a Ki Refiner, he had the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], and so he was also extremely strong. Both in close quarters and at long range...he was extremely powerful.

“Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, where should we go?” Northson looked at the nearby Ning. “Where should we go adventure?”

“Previously, our senior fellow disciples all recommended that we go join the Raindragon Guard,” Ning said. “There are many benefits for someone to join the Raindragon Guard, and we can also take on missions from them, and so have fixed goals when we go out adventuring. In addition, as Raindragon Guards who are out on official missions...we can also overawe and frighten off some people, and also avoid some difficulties.”

“Right.” Northson nodded. “I was thinking the same thing.”

The two finished their discussion, and their decision was...to first join the Raindragon Guard!

## [The Desolate Era](#)

### **Book 8: Raindragon Guard Chapter 9: Raindragon Guard, Stillwater Division**

Ji Ning, before leaving, paid a visit to Northmont Blacktiger's Estate as well. He bade farewell to his good friend, Northmont Baiwei, who upon learning that Ning was leaving, gave him quite a few pieces of advice. He knew exactly how dangerous adventuring in the outside world was, but in order to become a truly influential, powerful figure in the greater world, one did have to undergo a brutal, merciless tempering process.

Within a desolate, wild region outside Stillwater City. "Kakakaka...crunch." An Azure Dragon construct, hovering in midair, suddenly transformed, its body beginning to change into the shape of a wide, dragon-headed ship.

Ning raised his head, staring at the dragon-headed ship, then gave a surprised sigh and glanced towards the nearby Mu Northson. "Junior apprentice-brother Northson, this construct of yours can even transform? How formidable."

"You are an outsider who knows nothing at all about the art of constructs. Transformations are nothing more than parlour tricks," Northson said smugly. "Let's go. The Stillwater division of the Raindragon Guard is located at the Crimson Dragon Mountains. Although it's a bit far from here...flying on magic treasures isn't quite as comfortable as letting the construct fly for us on its own."

Laughing, Ning led the Whitewater Hound in boarding the dragon-headed ship. Standing atop the front of the ship, Northson had an incomparably bold appearance, and the ship quickly soared into the clouds, moving at high speed. Northson said, "I have an essence-gathering runic formation placed atop this construct, and so when flying at this speed, it won't use up any elemental energy at all. The elemental essence it absorbs while flying will be enough."

"I often heard aunt-master Jdefine praise you and say that your talents in the Dao of Constructs are extremely high. In the College, we would at most engage in Dao Debates, and so I've never had the chance to personally witness your power in this regard, junior apprentice-brother Northson. Now that we are joining the Raindragon Guard...I'll be able to take a good look," Ning laughed.

"Make sure you watch with wide eyes." Northson raised his head proudly, seeming quite delighted with himself. Ning roared with laughter.

Although they had gotten to know quite a few senior fellow apprentices during the past three years at the Black-White College, and they were on very good terms with some, such as Ninelotus and Bloodshadow, in Ning's heart, the one he was closest to was still Mu Northson, who had joined the school alongside him. Northson, perhaps because of his young age, had completely focused on the Dao of Constructs since he was a child, and unlike Ning, didn't have memories from a former life. Thus, his behavior was quite juvenile and immature. In short; Northson had the temperament of a child!

If he liked something, he liked it; if he was mad, he was mad. He wasn't able to hide anything! When he first entered the school, he had been defeated twice in Dao Debates, and had been unspeakably angry. If he had been slightly better at hiding his emotions, he wouldn't have exposed his anger so openly. Strictly speaking...he was a bit too earnest and sincere.

In turn, however, Ning found it quite easy to get along with a little junior apprentice-brother like him.

"There we are. We reached the Crimson Dragon Mountains." Northson's eyes were gleaming as he pointed into the distance.



Ning stared into the distance. Past the clouds, he could see a chain of mountains that did indeed seem to be shaped into the sinuous figure of a dragon. The entire dragon-shaped mountain range was covered with a fiery red color, and from the distance, it did indeed look like a fiery, divine dragon! Its aura was quite astonishing as well, and in fact, it was even more terrifying than the grand formation of the Black-White College, which had been reinforced by countless generations of Immortals of the College.

“It lives up to its reputation as one of the top two supreme powers within Stillwater Commandery,” Ning said with an amazed sigh.

Northson sighed in amazement as well. “The two supreme powers are the Northmont clan of Stillwater, and the Stillwater division of the Raindragon Guard. In addition, just from looking at the grand formation, we can see that they definitely far surpass our Black-White College. The Raindragon Guard really live up to their reputation. This was just a mere commandery division! When you think about how there is such a division in every single commandery which has been united under the control of the Xia Dynasty...one can’t help but shudder.”

Ning nodded. “This is true.” The Northmont clan of Stillwater Commandery held, as their enfeoffment, the entire Stillwater Commandery. They had existed from the Fiendgod era; naturally, they had accumulated countless valiant powers.

As for the Raindragon Guard? One could see from a superficial look as to how powerful they are. In addition, they could ask for the support of the other divisions at any time, and could even request support from the headquarters of the Raindragon Guard in the imperial capital of the Xia Dynasty! To the Raindragon Guard which oversaw the entire Xia Dynasty, sending out a few hundred or even a thousand Immortals was a minor matter.

“It’s precisely because they are so powerful, being representatives of the Xia Dynasty, that even we desire to join the Raindragon Guard,” Ning said. “Come. Let’s move over.”

“Right.” Northson nodded. The dragon-headed boat immediately swooped lower, moving directly towards the Crimson Dragon Mountains.

The Crimson Dragon Mountains were shaped like an enormous dragon, with the head of the dragon being the mountain where guests were welcomed. Ning and Northson directed the construct vessel to swoop downwards, landing directly atop a flat area at the guest-welcoming mountain. After collecting the Azure Dragon construct, Ning, the Whitewater Hound, and Northson all moved over. Right at this moment, two Zifu Disciples who wore fiery red armor walked over from afar. A cold look on their faces, they barked, “Why have you come to our Crimson Dragon Mountains?”

Ning and Northson both felt as though they were being rather overbearing, but this was the local division of the Raindragon Guard, after all. The two of them couldn’t act too inappropriately.

“We have come to join the Raindragon Guard,” Ning said. “Oh?” The two fiery-armored Zifu Disciples gave them a glance, and the leader, a tall, skinny cultivator, said in a cold voice, “Then follow me.”

Ning, Northson, and the Whitewater Hound immediately followed after him. They all moved through the mountainous as easily as though they were moving through flat land, and these crimson-armored Zifu Disciples could be seen throughout this guest-welcoming peak.

“The two of you, listen up.” The tall, skinny cultivator leading to them said in a cold voice, “Quite a few wish to join our Raindragon Guard. However, you have not yet joined and are not yet Raindragon Guards. And so, you’d best obediently obey the rules here...”

Northson, upon hearing this, frowned. Ning, however, was more or less calm.

“Remember this. First of all, you are not Raindragon Guards; thus, within the Crimson Dragon Mountains, you are forbidden from fighting. If you violate this, you will be killed with no mercy!”

“Second, the only place within the Crimson Dragon Mountains which you may move about in is this place, the guest-welcoming mountain. If you barge into other areas, you will be killed with no mercy!”

“Third, you are not to touch or damage the restrictive formations set upon the guest-welcoming mountain. Violators will be killed with no mercy.”

The tall, skinny man didn’t even look at Ning or Northson. Northson’s face was now turning rather ugly. He sent mentally, “Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, the Raindragon Guard have too many rules, and they are too brash and arrogant. We are disciples of the Black-White College, and yet they treat us like this?”

“Forget about being disciples of the Black-White College; even if we were members of the Northmont clan of Stillwater, it wouldn’t mean anything in this place.” Ning had read the intelligence reports, and knew a few things about the Raindragon Guard.

Ning, Northson, and the Whitewater Hound continued to follow from behind. Soon, they arrived at the back of the mountain, where there were wooden houses and stone houses scattered everywhere.

“Take a look.” The tall, skinny cultivator pointed towards the distant stone and wood houses. “Within those houses are those who wish to join the Raindragon Guard. These houses were built and left behind by others who came to join us. You can choose an empty one and live there for now. When we’ve cobbled together enough people, you’ll be sent to the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains.”

After speaking, the tall, skinny cultivator turned and departed, quickly disappearing.

“Who the hell is he? He’s so arrogant,” Northson muttered. “He’s an auxiliary ‘Keeper’ of the Raindragon Guard,” Ning said. He had met with Baiwei quite a few times, and had learned many things.

“A ‘Keeper’ of the Raindragon Guard?” Northson said, surprised, “The Raindragon Guard actually has Keepers?”

Ning nodded. “Of course. Those of us who join the Raindragon Guard are all quite free and unrestrained; we roam about the world, and only when we come to take on missions will we appear! However, the Raindragon Guard also needs some people who are permanently stationed here, or some soldiers who they will be able to trust completely. Thus, the ‘Keepers’ were created!”

“The Keepers of the Raindragon Guard are like soldiers; they are controlled extremely strictly, and are subject to many rules. They aren’t as free as us,” Ning said. “You should know that the Raindragon Guard has an auxiliary corps! Generally speaking, the Keepers are selected from the auxiliary corps.”

“Oh!” Northson now understood.

“Although their freedoms are restricted, they have the highest degree of trust from the Xia Dynasty. Within the Raindragon Guard, they have access to more divine abilities, secret arts, treasures, etc. As for us, even after we become Raindragon Guards, we’ll still need to carry out missions in order to receive such benefits,” Ning said. “To get something, you have to give something.”

Northson hurriedly nodded. “I don’t want to become a Keeper. There are so many rules; how does it even feel like being an Immortal practitioner? That’s just a form of suffering.”

“Everyone has their own choices,” Ning said with a laugh, then sighed. “Those who are extremely talented will naturally have the option of choosing to be free and unrestrained. But for those who are less talented, they naturally might give up these things, so as to be able to acquire some top-class techniques, secret arts, and whatnot.”

“Mm. That’s true as well.” Northson nodded, seeming to have understood something. As the two chatted, they continued to move forward. The stone and wooden residences were all very simply made; generally speaking, they had just a single house and a yard. A number of them already had Immortal cultivators residing in them.

“This one.” Northson pointed at a grassy area in front of him. As he pointed, instantly, a streak of light flew out, and the streak of light quickly began to transform and expand atop the ground, quickly developing into quite an elegant-looking estate.

“An estate made from a construct?” Ning was startled. The Dao of Constructs truly was a remarkable one. Carriages, warships, people, beasts, estates, or even cities; all these things could be produced through the Dao of Constructs.

“Who knows how long this adventure of ours shall last? It’s quite unsafe to stay in an empty, desolate area. Thus, I personally created this ‘Moonwood Estate’, which even a Wanxiang Adept would need to spend quite a bit of time to break into,” Northson said smugly.

“Not bad, not bad,” Ning laughed as he walked inside. And so, Ning, Northson, and the Whitewater Hound took up residence within the ‘Moonwood Estate’. One day after another passed, and the Immortal cultivators living in the nearby stone and wood houses began to discover that a construct-estate had appeared in their midst. However, none of them commented on it, just waited quietly together.

Early one dawn, a month after Ning’s group had arrived.

“Everyone!” A sonorous voice thundered out, instantly filling every single stone room and even wooden room. Even the construct-estate which Northson had created was unable to block out this sound, which blasted forth next to Ning, Northson, and the Whitewater Hound’s ears.

“It is time to go to the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains.” The voice continued to echo forth.

Ning felt his chest grow tight, and his face changed. “Such terrifying power. This level of power...makes me feel as though I cannot resist it whatsoever. It must be an Immortal.” Although he didn’t feel confident in being able to fight a Primal Daoist, he wouldn’t feel as completely powerless as he did now. Thus, it should be an Immortal.

Ning and Northson both walked out. Northson waved his hand, and the entire construct-estate was tucked away.

At this moment in time, figures emerged from the stone and wooden houses as well. These were all people who wished to join the Raindragon Guard.

### The Desolate Era

#### **Book 8: Raindragon Guard Chapter 10: The Immortals of the Raindragon Guard**

Ning stared at his surroundings. During the past month, all of the Immortal cultivators had remained in their own stone or wooden houses, training quietly. To them...training and waiting for a month was a very simple matter. Thus, during the past month, he hadn't really gotten to know any of them!

"A hundred!" Ning's gaze swept past them, and he realized that the total number of figures who had emerged numbered exactly a hundred people. Ning then turned his gaze to the front.

Up ahead, there were three figures who were staring at Ning and the other 99 who wished to join the Raindragon Guard. These three were led by a silver-haired, black-robed elder who carried a desolate, killing aura about him. When he swept his gaze past the prospective recruits, everyone, Ning included, felt an invisible pressure bear down upon them. It was as though a black dragon was staring at a crowd of ants.

"An Immortal!" Ning said silently to himself. The gaze of the silver-haired, black-robed elder flashed like the gleam of a weapon, causing them all to feel shock in their hearts. He suddenly spoke out. "Your batch of a hundred Immortal cultivators has been completed. Now, you can go to the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains."

Ning and the rest of the hundred all listened carefully.

"You are not yet Raindragon Guards," the silver-haired, black-robed elder continued coldly. "Thus, you were assigned to live in this desolate, backwater part of the mountain. Once you become true Raindragon Guards...you will naturally be permitted to enter the depths of the Crimson Dragon Mountains."

As he spoke, he pointed towards the distance, to a peak of the Crimson Dragon Mountains. "That place is the place where true Raindragon Guards reside. The Crimson Dragon Mountains aren't a place for pleasure, and it isn't as bustling as Stillwater City. The only thing we have here is the endless quiet." The silver-haired elder continued calmly, "Those who focus on training quietly will generally take over one of the cave estates of the Crimson Dragon Mountains and train within. The number of Immortals who are currently training within the Crimson Dragon Mountains...is greater than twenty!"

Once these words came out, Ning and the rest of the hundred Immortal cultivators all felt their hearts clench tightly. The Raindragon Guard really did live up to its reputation as being one of the two titans of Stillwater Commandery! More than twenty Immortals?!

Ning and Northson were from the Black-White College, which was ranked as the third greatest power. And yet, they now understood what a tremendous difference in power there was. Although the College had quite a few Immortals...just the ones training in at the Raindragon Guard's base numbered over

twenty, much less the ones out on assignment or in the other branches spread throughout the Xia Dynasty.

“In fact, some Celestial Immortals will occasionally come from the imperial capital to expound on the Dao for the Raindragon Guards present.” The silver-haired elder swept his gaze forward. “In terms of power, our division of the Raindragon Guard is comparable to the Northmont clan of Stillwater. In terms of our roots and background, however, the Raindragon Guard vastly outstrips them.”

“So long as you can enter the Raindragon Guard, divine abilities, secret arts, and even the chance to head to the core of the Xia Dynasty, the imperial capital...all these are possible. You might even have a chance to go to the main headquarters of the Raindragon Guard to learn and be trained.”

“All of this...requires you to first join the Raindragon Guard!” The silver-haired, black-robed elder stood there, waist as straight as a mountain, his voice reverberating sonorously in each person’s inner heart. “Now, each of you shall tell me of your history and your power. If you wish to join the Raindragon Guard...you must meet the minimum requirements of our Raindragon Guard. If you aren’t even able to fulfill the minimum requirements, then there is no need for you to go to the Gaol Mountains’s wild marshes; you can just go back right now.”

Whoosh! Instantly, a bronze mirror floated up into the skies, hanging there. “All of you, fully explain your histories and your level of strength. If you dare to lie at all, you will be killed without mercy. You.” The silver-haired elder pointed towards a black-bearded youth, and the bronze mirror turned towards him.

The black-bearded youth immediately said, “Skysplitter Sword Sect, Ki Refiner, middle-stage Wanxiang Adept, Bu Violetsun!”

“Alright.” The silver-haired elder nodded. “Next.”

“Eastriver Clan, Ki Refiner. Late-stage Wanxiang Adept, Eastriver Cloudsoar!”

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One practitioner after another began to reveal their histories. The Raindragon Guard would naturally want to learn about the backgrounds of those who came to join. After learning their backgrounds and names...given the intelligence networks of the Raindragon Guard, they would quickly be able to obtain detailed reports.

Not a single person dared to lie. To lie in front of an Immortal of the Raindragon Guard would be suicidal.

“You.” The silver-haired elder pointed towards Northson. Northson answered, “Black-White College, Ki Refiner. Middle-stage Wanxiang Adept, Mu Northson.”

“The Black-White College?”

“Someone from the Black-White College came as well.”

Instantly, quite a few Immortal cultivators began to pay attention to Northson. Although they also came from extremely top-tier schools, sects, and extremely large clans that were on the same tier as the Black-White College, those tribes and clans had many disciples and descendants. Every single member of

the Black-White College, however, was definitely a peerless genius. Not a single one of them was easily offended.

“You.” The silver-haired elder looked towards Ning.

“Black-White College, Ki and Fiendgod Body dual refiner. Ninth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]. Ji Ning.” Ning gave his response.

The silver-haired elder gave Ning a surprised glance. For even an Immortal to be surprised, the reactions of the other Immortal practitioners went without saying. All of them were filled with boundless amazement and curiosity. To join the Raindragon Guard...generally speaking, the early Wanxiang Adept stage was a minimum requirement, but of course, if one trained in the legendary, number one Fiendgod Body Refining Technique, the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], one would be an exception. Being at the Zifu Disciple level would suffice.

This situation, however, was extremely rare. Unexpectedly, today they managed to encounter someone who had trained to the ninth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens].

“The ninth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] is comparable to an ordinary early stage Fiendgod Wanxiang Adept. Upon using a divine ability, the power will definitely be significant; after all, he came from the Black-White College.”

“He’s too rash. No matter what, he’s only an early stage Wanxiang Adept. Since he didn’t discuss his power as a Ki Refiner, he hasn’t reached the Wanxiang level in it either. He’s a weak Ki Refiner, and just barely qualifies as a Fiendgod Body Refiner...upon encountering a group of enemies, they will trample him to death.” The Immortal practitioners were all thinking this to themselves.

Those who dared join the Raindragon Guard were all quite self-confident, and could be considered elites amongst their peers.

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“Mm...” The silver-haired, black-robed elder looked towards Ning’s reflection in the bronze mirror, then nodded slowly. “You are indeed at the ninth stage. Next.” The silver-haired, black-robed elder looked towards the next person. But, right at this moment...

A voice suddenly echoed in Ning’s mind. “Your name is Ji Ning? The [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] has been publicly acclaimed since the Fiendgod Era as the number one technique, and it has quite a few special aspects. Once you join the Raindragon Guard, you’ll learn how to better unleash your battle power as a Fiendgod. You must return from the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains alive...and actually, it’d be better if you waited until you reached the tenth stage or the eleventh stage before going to the wild marshes. Then, you will definitely be incomparably safe.”

The silver-haired, black-robed elder even gave Ning a sidelong glance. Ning understood...this Immortal of the Raindragon Guard was the one who had mentally sent him this message. Ning smiled towards this Immortal of the Raindragon Guard, but he didn’t hesitate at all. Clearly, his mind was set.

“Special?” Ning pondered this statement. “When I was in the underwater estate, the giant yellow bear also said that my Fiendgod body can be described as ‘perfect’, and capable of learning the [Starseizing Hand] which Daoist Threelives left behind. In addition, even in the Fiendgod Era, the [Crimsonbright

Diagram of the Nine Heavens] was publicly acclaimed as the number one Fiendgod Body Refining Technique. It has spread so far...I imagine that it is quite easy to acquire. Even our Ji clan has a complete copy of the first scroll and the first nine stages of it!”

Ning had the feeling...as though there must be a tremendously powerful force which was propagating the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]. In addition, this technique had been publicly acknowledged long ago. The Xia Dynasty itself had only been established during the later periods of the Fiendgod Era. This technique had existed even before the Xia Dynasty’s founding...and yet, the Xia Dynasty actively propagated it.

“There must be some reason for this,” Ning mused to himself. “However, without question, this technique, as one which even the giant yellow bear praised, shouldn’t have any problems. Since the technique itself has no problems...then for now, a kid like myself has no need to worry about the other reasons.”

“This Immortal of the Raindragon Guard said that there are some special aspects to it, and that after joining the Raindragon Guard, I’ll learn how to truly unleash the combat potential of my divine body?” Ning instantly grew rather eager. The Raindragon Guard was the most powerful military force of the entire Xia Dynasty. It only made sense that it had some special secret arts.

In terms of its roots and its background...the Raindragon Guard was naturally countless times superior to the Black-White College. Not even the Marquis of Stillwater could compare to the entire Raindragon Guard.

“You.” The silver-haired elder pointed to the final Immortal cultivator. This man was dressed in a beautiful golden robe, and he said with respect, “Snowdragon Mountain, Ki Refiner, peak Wanxiang Adept, Dong One!”

Ning’s ears twitched. He turned to look over towards him, and that Immortal cultivator just so happened to be looking at Ning as well. Their gazes intersected.

“He knows me.” Ning instantly realized this, when their gazes cross. The Immortal cultivator named Dong One had a smile on his face, and he even nodded towards Ning. Ning just gave him a calm look, not smiling at all. His parents and uncle, in a way, had all died due to the disciples of Snowdragon Mountain. How could Ning possibly smile when facing a disciple of Snowdragon Mountain?

Ning began to ponder in his heart. “Why has this Wanxiang Adept of Snowdragon Mountain come here? Did he accidentally encounter me, or was he chasing after me deliberately?”

Previously, he had remained in Stillwater City this entire time, and so Snowdragon Mountain didn’t have any chance to take revenge on him. Was Snowdragon Mountain pursuing him as soon as he had emerged?

“Their intelligence networks shouldn’t be this good,” Ning mused. “In addition, I’m a disciple of the Black-White College, and the personal disciple of an Immortal. Snowdragon Mountain shouldn’t be so bold as to act in this way. It’s possible that this is all just a chance meeting.”

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Each person had finished describing their histories and strengths. The silver-haired, black-robed elder waved his hand. Instantly, streaks of light flew out towards each person. Ning stretched out his hand, clasping it; it was a talisman.

“This is a talisman,” the silver-haired, black-robed elder said. “Bind it. Only then will you be able to enter the inner regions of the Crimson Dragon Mountains. The teleportation array within the inner region leads to the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains. If you haven’t bound any talismans, the protective formation around the Crimson Dragon Mountains will not permit you to enter.”

Ning and the others didn’t hesitate at all, as they all immediately bound the talismans. “Go.” The silver-haired, black-robed elder’s body suddenly became shrouded by clouds which appeared out of nowhere, and the clouds lifted up and dragged Ning and the others away. However, the spirit-beasts which some Immortal cultivators had brought were all left behind.

“The test for entering the Raindragon Guard is a personal test. These spirit-beasts are not to enter the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains,” the silver-haired, black-robed elder said. “Have them stay here for now. If you come back alive, you can seek them out.”

Ning stood there atop the clouds. He turned to look downwards towards the Whitewater Hound. “Uncle White, wait for me,” Ning sent mentally. “Be careful,” the Whitewater Hound sent back, looking towards Ning.

And then, the silver-haired, black-robed elder led the group of Immortal cultivators atop his clouds. They quickly flew away, moving deeper into the distant inner regions of the Crimson Dragon Mountains.

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### **Book 8: Raindragon Guard Chapter 11: The Wild Marshes of the Gaol Mountains**

When standing atop the clouds and staring downwards, one would be vaguely make out the Immortal residences that lay scattered throughout the winding mountains. Occasionally, one would also seem some figures flying about on magic treasures; most likely, those were Raindragon Guards.

Just as Ji Ning and Mu Northson were staring with curiosity towards those Immortal cultivators, suddenly...the cloud began to sink downwards.

“That’s...” Ning saw, in the distance, a towering mountain peak, atop which a massive, complicated, tower-shaped formation had been built.

Boom! The cloud landed, and Ning’s group of Immortal cultivators stared towards the tower-shaped formation. This tower-shaped formation up ahead faintly glimmered with gray light, and it was 2400 meters high! The base had a diameter of three hundred meters, and was divided into what appeared to be nine halls. The entire tower-shaped formation’s structure appeared to be made from rare metals, and it was covered with the carvings of many runes. The densely clustered runes covered the entire, 2400 meter high tower-shaped formation.

The entire tower-shaped formation emanated a hazy gray light. Only the tip of the tower shone with a white light. Next to the formation, there were ten old men dressed in plain clothes who were on guard.

“This is the teleportation array?” Northson’s eyes were shining. “Should be,” Ning said, also incredibly curious.



They had heard long ago about the legendary ‘teleportation arrays’, but had never used them. In Stillwater Commandery, only the Raindragon Guards, along with a very few number of others, had the right to use the teleportation array. But of course, one could bring one’s retainers and spirit-beasts along. It was only because Ning’s group was here to join the Raindragon Guard that an exception was made and they were permitted to use it once.

“Teleportation array?”

“A teleportation array that is 2400 meters high? The division stationed in my homeland has a teleportation array as well, but it is only 300 meters high, much smaller than this one.”

“I’ve never even seen one.”

Although these Immortal practitioners all had seen many things, upon seeing this massive teleportation array, they all sighed in amazement. As for those ten plainly dressed elders, upon they all bowed towards that silver-haired, black-robed elder.

“Make your preparations,” the silver-haired, black-robed elder instructed. “These hundred Immortal cultivators are to be sent directly to the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains!”

“Yes.” The ten elders immediately entered the grand formation, which began to change subtly. As for the silver-haired elder, he glanced towards Ning’s group of a hundred, then said in a sonorous voice, “This teleportation array is a top-tier teleportation array. It can even teleport you directly to the imperial capital of the Grand Xia Dynasty! You can reach any region of this vast world through this teleportation array and arrive in an instant.”

“Although the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains are two million kilometers away, you will arrive in an instant,” the silver-haired, black-robed elder said. “Eh?!” Suddenly, the silver-haired elder’s face changed slightly. Swoosh! He suddenly disappeared from the spot.

This completely astonished Ning and the others, who were still listening to him speak. “Why did he vanish?”

“Something important must have occurred.”

“Immortals truly are extraordinary. He vanished in an instant, and it wasn’t some sort of movement technique.” The Immortal cultivators all began to chat amongst themselves.

The ten plainly dressed elders who were guarding the teleportation array were all puzzled as well. Why’d he leave? To change the destination and to verify the teleportation was a simple, fast matter.

“Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning,” Northson whispered. “Although I’ve heard of the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains long ago, I don’t know how dangerous it is, exactly.”

“It is quite famous...it is ranked as one of the most dangerous locations within the borders of our Stillwater Commandery. I heard that in that place, there are many areas where space is fractured, and which might lead directly to some fractured dimensions. There are many monsters lying in wait there, and according to legend, even Fiendgods lie in hiding there,” Ning said.

The land under the control of the Grand Xia Dynasty was simply too vast. Aside from some safe areas like Swallow Mountain, there were also countless mysterious, special, dangerous regions!

Even the Earth of Ning's previous life had, in an area of ten thousand kilometers, countless mysteries and secret areas. The same was true, naturally, for the vast world ruled over by the Grand Xia Dynasty. Within Stillwater Commandery, there were quite a few bizarre places, and some had been created as part of the aftermath of battles that had occurred back in the Fiendgod Era. There were also Immortal estates, relic sites left behind by major powers, and more.

One of the top ten danger zones of the entire Stillwater Commandery were the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains! However, these danger zones were also filled with countless opportunities.

"I, too, have heard that there are Fiendgods here." Suddenly, a handsome, white-robed man moved closer to them. Ning and Northson both turned to look.

"Fellow Daoists Ji Ning, Mu Northson," the handsome, white-robed man immediately said with a laugh. "I am Eastriver Cloudsoar, and my Daoist title is Cloudsoar as well."

"My Daoist title is Twinwood," Northson said quite straightforwardly. At the same time, he glanced at Ning, then continued, "My senior apprentice-brother is Ji Ning. His Daoist title is Darknorth! Right, you just spoke of Fiendgods...can it be that there truly are Fiendgods within the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains?"

The handsome, white-robed man immediately said, "Can it be that you two have never heard of the legends of the 'Gaol Mountains'?" "The legends of the Gaol Mountains?" Ning and Northson exchanged glances, then shook their heads.

"According to legend, an unfathomably long time ago, just as the Fiendgod Era was drawing to an end," Cloudsoar said slowly, "The group of powerful Immortals who had established the Grand Xia Dynasty used a tremendously powerful magic treasure to imprison and seal a large group of Fiendgods! This powerful magic treasure is the 'Gaol Mountains'. It would have been incredibly difficult to kill all the Fiendgods, and most likely some of the Immortals would have died as well. Thus, they simply used the Gaol Mountains to seal these Fiendgods away. The Gaol Mountains sealed them away from the outside world, completely separating them away and preventing them from absorbing the energy of the outside world. The Fiendgods would only grow weaker and weaker, and after a million years, they would become incomparably weak."

Ning and Northson listened and nodded. Immortal cultivators and Fiendgods; at a certain level, they wouldn't need to eat or drink, but they would still need to absorb energy from the outside world. Ki Refiners would absorb natural, elemental ki, while Fiendgods and Fiendgod Body Refiners would absorb some other types of energy, such as the energy of the Five Elements, the energy of the stars, the energy of the sun and the moon, etc. If one was unable to absorb energy from the outside world, one would naturally grow weaker and weaker.

"But afterwards...an extremely powerful Fiendgod who was amongst the group that had been sealed away actually managed to break through the Gaol Mountains and charge out of the sealed grounds! A wild, savage battle erupted. The Immortals and the Fiendgods fought viciously, causing the entire region to shatter and crack. Although no one knows what the results of that battle were, the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains ended up the way they currently are," Cloudsoar said.

Ning laughed. "The Eastriver clan lives up to its reputation. You even know about secrets like this." Cloudsoar laughed as well. "I've just flipped through some books on myths and legends and heard of this explanation. I have no idea if it is real or not."

"I heard that back in the Fiendgod Era, the Fiendgods dominated this world," Ning said. "Now, however, it is us humans who dominate the vast world, with monsters being somewhat weaker...and there are almost no Fiendgods left."

Northson's eyes were shining. "I'm quite curious about the Fiendgod Era as well." Cloudsoar laughed. "When we grow stronger, we'll naturally learn more."

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"This must be clearly investigated!" The silver-haired, black-robed man was in midair, and his voice snapped out icily. Next to him was a black-furred, three-eyed hound who stood in midair. It spoke out. "Yes! If anyone from the Northmont clan of Stillwater impedes us..."

"Kill them all!" The silver-haired, black-robed elder said in a cold voice. "Don't act in your capacity as Raindragon Guards, but kill all those who oppose you. This matter must be investigated."

"Yes," the three-eyed, black-furred hound said respectfully.

"These Marquisates have grown too accustomed to ruling over the territory which has been enfeoffed to them. They all grow restless, and every so often, they need to be given a drubbing," the silver-haired, black-robed elder said in a cold voice. "It seems yet another group of people shall die in the Northmont clan of Stillwater Commandery. Go!"

"Yes." The body of the black-furred, three-eyed hound flickered, and then it disappeared without a trace.

Only now did the silver-haired, black-robed elder ride his flying cloud downwards at a leisurely pace. Soon, he arrived at the mountain peak which contained the teleportation array. Atop the peak was Ning, Northson, and the rest of the Immortal practitioners, all of whom had been waiting for quite some time.

Whoosh! The silver-haired, black-robed elder landed. Instantly, the surrounding area fell silent. Those ten plainly dressed elders all looked towards him respectfully as well.

"All of you, listen clearly," the silver-haired, black-robed elder said. "Those of you who wish to join the Raindragon Guard; your testing grounds shall be the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains! This place is one of the most famous, most dangerous locations of Stillwater Commandery. What you need to do is to survive in the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains for three months, and bring back the head of a Wanxiang-level monster."

"If you survive three months and bring back the head of a Wanxiang-level monster, you will join our Raindragon Guard. If you die in the wild marshes or come back without the corpse or head of a Wanxiang-level monster, then you will have failed. Understood?"

The silver-robed elder swept them with a gaze. The hundred Immortal cultivators all nodded, not hesitating in the slightest. There were many who participated in the Raindragon Guard trials, and this

mission they had been assigned could be considered an ordinary one. Since they dared to come...they naturally had some degree of self-confidence.

“Excellent.” The silver-haired, black-robed elder nodded. “Since that’s the case, then all of you can head out now. I hope that in three months time, I’ll be able to see you return with the head of a monster. Remember; don’t underestimate those monsters. You wish to kill them, but they also wish to kill you. The hatred that has built up between us over countless years means that they won’t show you any mercy at all.

The hundred Immortal cultivators all agreed. Even the youngest amongst them, Mu Northson, had a look of resolve in his eyes.

“All of you, come in. Don’t go beyond the limits of the teleportation base.”

The ten plainly dressed elders began to make the arrangements. Ning’s group all moved into the teleportation array. The entire teleportation array was enormous, capable of transporting thousands of individuals.

“Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, my master instructed me...that after we go to the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains, we must be wary of not only the monsters, but also of other Immortal cultivators,” Northson sent mentally.

“They all know that we are disciples of the Black-White College. The disciples of the Black-White College are incomparably few in number, and each of us carry priceless treasures on us. Thus, sometimes there will be group attacks launched against us disciples of the Black-White College. We are not yet Raindragon Guards...there are no laws against fighting amongst potential recruits.”

Laughing, Ning glanced at Northson. Indeed, human hearts were hard to fathom. In his previous life, he had lived during the era of the information explosion...Ning had definitely learned far more things than most of the people who lived in this comparatively closed, barbarian world.

Despite that, Ning still said, “I know. Junior apprentice-brother, you must be careful as well.”

“Right. If we two disciples join forces, hmph...if one comes, we’ll kill one. If ten come, we’ll kill ten!” Northson sent back.

Suddenly...

The entire surrounding teleportation formation lit up. The blurry gray light on the surface of the tower began to brighten, covering the entire teleportation formation. Someone looking in from the outside would no longer be able to see Ning and the other hundred Immortal cultivators within.

Swish!

The white light emanating from the peak of the tower suddenly increased in luminosity a thousandfold. Its brilliance made it appear to be a second Golden Crow within the skies.

After the bright light turned dim, the blurry gray light returned to normal as well. Ning and the hundred Immortal cultivators within the formation had already disappeared. By now, they had already arrived at the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains.