

## Desolate 23

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### Book 2: The Lake in the East Mountain Chapter 6: Ji Ning and Serpentwing

The hall was very silent, with the thick candles flickering and casting their light everywhere.

Ji Ning's head was lowered as he devoured the food in front of him, quickly gulping down all of the meat and wine on the table. Today, they were celebrating his father's return, so he actually had the rare chance to drink some wine.

"Father." Ning spoke out.

"Mm." Ji Yichuan frowned as he looked at his son.

Ning could sense that his father wasn't in a very good mood, because this attempt to kill Serpentwing had resulted in failure. To kill a late-stage water-type Xiantian level Diremonster which was hiding in the depths of a lake was simply too difficult. If the Ji clan of the West Prefecture truly wanted to directly slaughter Serpentwing, they could if they paid a large price for it, but clearly, the Ji clan of the West Prefecture wasn't willing to pay that price. For the sake of their pride and honor, the Ji clan of the West Prefecture had already wiped out the other creatures in Serpentwing Lake, then stationed soldiers all around Serpentwing Lake, as well as numerous Xiantian lifeforms, forcing Serpentwing to be afraid to leave Serpentwing Lake. This would be a long battle. Once Serpentwing became the slightest bit incautious, the Ji clan of the West Prefecture's Xiantian lifeforms would immediately slaughter him.

"I want to go out and adventure." Ning spoke.

"Adventure?" Yichuan frowned.

Yuchi Snow said hurriedly, "Ning, you were just ambushed by Serpentwing. You should know how terrifying Diremonsters are. Outside the Western Prefecture...there are many Diremonsters lying in wait in the high mountains and the deep lakes. To go adventuring outside...you are still too young. Wait a few more years."

"In the West Prefecture, I no longer have anyone whom I can train myself against." Ning shook his head.

Yichuan snapped coldly, "How old are you? Wait until you are at least sixteen before going out and adventuring."

"But Father!" Ning said urgently, "I've been in the Western Prefecture since I was a child. I've always stayed in this small little area of the Western Prefecture. I want to see the countless tribes in the greater world. I want to be like Father, to go out and adventure, to experience danger, to go fight with those Diremonsters and kill them."

"Diremonsters? Just based on your little bit of power..." Yichuan shook his head.

"What's the problem with my strength?" Ning said hurriedly. "Even under Serpentwing's full strength attacks, I was still able to survive. What's the problem with my strength?"

Yichuan was startled, and seemed to have suddenly thought of something. "Right. I haven't had the chance to ask you. How did you survive Serpentwing's attack?"

The nearby Snow laughed. "Yichuan, you've been dealing with Serpentwing this entire time and hadn't had the chance to come back, so we haven't had the chance to tell you. Our son, in that moment of life-and-death when being attacked by Serpentwing, has reached the 'one with the world' level of footwork. Relying on his 'one with the world' level of footwork, he was able to escape Serpentwing's attacks.

"One with the world?" Yichuan stared at Ning in astonishment.

At merely ten years old, he had reached the level of 'one with the world' in footwork?

"Receive three sword blows from me." With a sudden flip of his hands, Yichuan made three hazy sword-shadows suddenly appear and surround Ning, attacking as fast as lightning.

Ning had been kneeling down at the dinner table. Now, he suddenly dodged aside gracefully, moving past those three hazy sword-shadows as gracefully as the wind.

"What do you think?" Ning said proudly.

"You really have reached it." Yichuan stared at his son in amazement. "One with the world. Your footwork has reached the 'one with the world' level. Then your swordplay...isn't too off from reaching the 'one with the world' level as well."

Yichuan looked at his son, his heart swelling with excitement as he quickly pondered. His son, Ning, had such a high level of talent. In the area around Swallow Mountain, he was definitely an extremely rare, monster of a talent. Such incredible talent couldn't be treated as a normal person was! Given Ning's rapid rate of improvement, there truly was nothing left in West Prefecture City which would prove useful for him in training.

"If you want to go out and adventure, that isn't completely out of the question." Yichuan looked at his son. "But you need to accomplish a requirement of mine."

"Yichuan!" Snow was a bit frantic, but Yichuan stretched his hand out, stopping her.

"Father, speak." Ning was full of excitement.

Yichuan nodded. "The Ceremony of the Golden Sword is hosted once every four years. It is a ceremony which all youths under the age of sixteen will participate in. I want you to seize the golden sword during this year's Ceremony of the Golden Sword! As long as you are able to seize the golden sword, I will permit you to go out adventuring."

"Golden sword?" Ning's eyes lit up.

He had known long ago about the agreement that if he could seize the golden sword, he would become the next Prefecture Lord. And during these recent years of training...his father had also spoken to him about this matter of 'seizing the golden sword to become the Prefecture Lord'.

"Seizing the golden sword is very easy." Ning looked at Yichuan suspiciously. "Father, I only need to use perhaps a tenth of my full strength to seize the golden sword. This isn't much of a test for me. Can it be that Father, you truly care so much about the Prefecture Lord position?"

His father's heart was totally set on the Immortal Path.

Ning naturally also had the same desire to step on the Immortal Path.

“Prefecture Lord position?” Yichuan shook his head. “You are the son of Ji Yichuan, my greatest pride. I trust that you will be able to go even farther than me...the position of Prefecture Lord of the Ji clan of the West Prefecture will only be a constraint on you. You will definitely spread your wings and fly higher.”

Ning was confused. “Then Father, why do you wish me to go seize the golden sword?”

“First, to let Ji Lee know that he can stop dreaming.” Yichuan said. “The second reason, you will discover after you seize the golden sword. So long as you can seize the golden sword, I will permit you to go out and adventure. But if you are unable to seize it, then be a good child and stay in the Western Prefecture City.”

“Alright.” Ning grinned widely.

The nearby Snow, on the other hand, was frantic.

“Enough, you can go back and get some rest now.” Yichuan said.

Ning immediately jumped up and returned to his room, overjoyed. In the main hall, Yichuan began to explain the reason for his actions to his wife, Snow.

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The next morning. Dawn.

While Ning was eating with his parents, Snow instructed him, “After seizing the golden sword, I won’t block you from going adventuring either, but you have to bring followers.”

“Followers?” Ning said hurriedly. “But I’m going out to adventure. What’s the point of bringing a big group of followers?”

“You only need to bring two people.” Snow laughed. “The first is Autumn Leaf. She is familiar with your habits and can cater to your needs. The other servant would be Mowu. Mowu used to be a Ninefang Warrior of the black armored riders, and then he followed your father for a long time. He is extremely loyal. Although he isn’t as strong as you, he has abundant experience in adventuring in the wilds.

Ning pondered for a while, then nodded. “Fine, I’ll bring them. I can’t bring any others though.”

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“Young master, you are going to leave the Western Prefecture to go adventuring? And you are going to bring me along with you?” Autumn Leaf was extremely excited. Ever since she was brought into the Ji clan of the West Prefecture, she had not had a chance to leave the city for a long, long time.

“Don’t just stand there, silly. Hurry up and get all the records on the Diremonsters in the area around Swallow Mountain from the library. Also get the records on the various tribes, and the maps as well. Move them all here.” Ning was feeling very intrepid as he instructed Autumn Leaf, “I need to get a good understanding and prepare a rough path of adventuring for myself.”

“Yes, young master.” Autumn Leaf all but flew out.

Autumn Leaf was Ning's personal maidservant, and thus ever since she was young, she had been taught extremely good Ki Refining techniques, and thus was close to the peak of the Houtian level. For someone of her status, the personal maidservant of Ji Ning, she naturally would also be taught special techniques as well, permitting her, at a critical juncture, to sacrifice her life for the sake of her master.

"Coming." Autumn Leaf came back, carrying a high stack of books. With a thudding sound, she set them down on the ground. This huge stack of books had to be several hundred pounds.

Ning hurriedly began to flip through them.

One legendary Diremonster after another...

Only now did Ning truly realize exactly how many Diremonsters lay hidden within the high mountains and the deep lakes. It was because Diremonsters were both abundant and very hard to deal with. Thus, the Diremonsters and the local hegemony such as the Ji clan actually had an unspoken understanding. Diremonsters usually wouldn't wildly slaughter humans on a wide scale, while the Ji clan and the other hegemony wouldn't go all out to slaughter the Diremonsters.

Both sides would stay their hands, maintaining their superficial calm.

Although some tribes would often be slaughtered and some Diremonsters would be killed...it was all within a manageable degree! There was an invisible line which neither the Ji clan and the other local hegemony, nor the Diremonsters, wished to cross. Once that line was crossed, then a true storm of blood would occur.

"Blacktooth Tribe." Ning pointed at the map. "This is the newest map of the territory of our Ji clan of the West Prefecture, and the Blacktooth Tribe is a newly erected, small tribe. It should be Spring Grass' father's tribe. It is right here, just a thousand kilometers away from us."

"Young master, young master, we have to go pay a visit to the Blacktooth Tribe and see Spring Grass." Autumn Leaf said hurriedly.

"Of course we'd have to go."

Ning nodded. "But we have to make an adventure of it. First we go here, then here, then here, and...here!" Ning pointed at one dangerous area after another, marked with black colors on the map.

"Those are all places where Diremonsters are hiding." Autumn Leaf cried out in shock.

"Right." Ning's eyes were shining. "I'm going to go kill some Diremonsters! Don't worry, the Diremonsters I've picked out are all early Xiantian level ones. They are much weaker than Serpentwing. I'll fight them all, one after the other...until the time comes when I break through and become a Xiantian lifeform myself. After I become a Xiantian lifeform, it will be time to go to Serpentwing Lake."

Autumn Leaf said frantically, "Young master, Serpentwing is a late Xiantian level Diremonster."

"I have confidence." Ning said.

The number one Fiendgod Body Refining method, the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], had boundless strength. Right now, despite only being at the third stage, he could already equal an ordinary early Xiantian level Ki Refiner!

Once he broke through to the fourth stage, he would be on par with a late Xiantian level Ki Refiner.

Even if he fought Serpentwing head on, he would be on par. But in terms of enlightenment, he was far superior to Serpentwing.

“Diremonster. Serpentwing.” Ning’s eyes flashed with a hint of wildness. He couldn’t forget the scene of how Serpentwing had suddenly attacked him. “This time, when I go out and adventure, my final goal is you. I hope you won’t die before I reach you!”

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The Ji clan of the West Prefecture made preparations to welcome the arrival of the quadrennial Ceremony of the Golden Sword. The promising youths which the countless tribes had been preparing were all filled with eagerness, and they registered for it, one after the other. They wanted to defeat one opponent after another at the ceremony and become dazzling, glorious personages. They wanted to let their names spread throughout the countless tribes!

“This time, after the Ceremony of the Golden Sword, I am going to go back to the tribe. I am definitely going to make it into the top eight, so that I will be able to learn the techniques for training to reach the Xiantian level. That way, in my lifetime, I’ll have the chance of becoming a Xiantian lifeform!” A youngster with pitch black skin, carrying a single blade on his back and dressed in ragged beast furs, with two leather shoes on his feet that had been almost worn through.

“The name of Tigerhowl shall definitely spread throughout all of the tribes of this land!”

“I am the strongest!”

“This is my final chance to obtain a training manual for Immortal magic.”

All the youths of the tribes were filled with their own desires, and they went to register for the Ceremony of the Golden Sword.

This was a holy ceremony.

A holy ceremony for countless tribal youths.

The entire area under the dominion of the Ji clan of the West Prefecture and all of the young talents living in that area were going to participate in it. They desired to become famous, to obtain a profound Ki Refining technique from this Ceremony of the Golden Sword, or some other powerful techniques. These would become the powerful, awe-inspiring abilities they would rely on in the future.

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“What? Ji Ning is participating in the Ceremony of the Golden Sword?” Ji Lee, who had just received this news, stared, and the scarlet viper looped in his ear also spoke. “He’s only ten years old. He absolutely could wait another four years to participate in the Ceremony of the Golden Sword. Why is he participating now?”