

Desolate 231

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 9: Ji Ning of Serpentwing Lake Chapter 8: The Mysterious Adept Mooncrescent

The highest hall on Mount Mooncrescent.

“My daughter, Wei?” The sinister old man’s face changed. His daughter had shattered the talisman he had given her, and he could clearly sense that the talisman had been shattered in Yu Dong’s nearby estate.

“What’s going on? With Yu Dong protecting her, what sort of problems could Wei have encountered, that she would suddenly break the talisman? This is Mount Mooncrescent.” Adept Mooncrescent couldn’t believe that in his own territory, his daughter would encounter any danger.

Swoosh!

Adept Mooncrescent instantly transformed into a streak of black light, departing from his hall and charging towards the skies, flying towards Yu Dong’s estate.

Given how fast peak Wanxiang Adepts moved at, as soon as Ji Ning emerged from his dragon-headed warship, Adept Mooncrescent appeared before him.

“This is...?” Adept Mooncrescent, upon seeing the distant dragon-headed warship in the skies, and upon seeing Ji Ning and Mu Northson, couldn’t help but secretly feel alarmed. Given his experience and judgment, he could immediately tell, just through that distant glance, that these were definitely no ordinary cultivators. No wonder his daughter had instantly shattered the talisman.

“I wonder which Daoist friends have come to visit my Mount Mooncrescent,” Adept Mooncrescent said with a loud laugh. “Why haven’t you come to visit me, and have instead come to my disciple’s place?”

His voice reverberated in the air, and as it did, Adept Mooncrescent landed in the courtyard, standing in front of Yu Dong and Yue Wei, who respectfully moved backwards.

“Who are they?” Adept Mooncrescent sent to them.

“Daddy, I’ve never met them before,” Yue Wei hurriedly sent.

“Master, I’ve never met them either,” Yu Dong said.

“Hmph, if you don’t know them, why would they suddenly come to my place, but not come visit me, and instead visit you?” Adept Mooncrescent barked mentally at them, and Yu Dong didn’t dare to say a single word in response.

However, Adept Mooncrescent still had a smile on his face. He looked towards Ning and the others in midair. “Fellow Daoists, it seems as though my disciple doesn’t know you; why, then, do you say that you are old friends?”

“Adept Mooncrescent.” Ning took a single step forward, descending from the skies to the estate below. Northson and the Whitewater Hound followed behind him. Ning said, “I have something to discuss with

your disciple, Yu Dong. I'd like to ask you, Adept Mooncrescent, and your daughter to temporarily withdraw."

Yu Dong's face changed, and Adept Mooncrescent couldn't help but feel shocked as well. Previously, he had only spoken mentally with his daughter, but this fur-clad youth actually knew that they were father and daughter...clearly, he had come prepared.

"Withdraw?" Yue Wei grew frantic. Her loyalty had long since been given to Yu Dong, and she couldn't help but mentally send, "Daddy, we have no idea who these people are. You can't let senior apprentice-brother face them on his own."

"Daughters always favor outsiders." Adept Mooncrescent frowned as he looked at his daughter. At the same time, Yu Dong sent frantically, "Master, it seems to me that these people must have come with a plot in mind."

"Leave it to your master," Adept Mooncrescent snapped back, then laughed loudly. "You wish to speak in private with my disciple, but I don't even know who you are...isn't this a bit too impolite?"

Ning's divine sense covered the entire mountain. Thus, although Adept Mooncrescent had arrived quite quickly, Ning could've killed Yu Dong even more quickly. Still, the hatred he felt towards the murderer of his parents had caused Ning's heart to become filled with rage. To kill his enemy so quickly? That would be letting him off so easily.

What Ning wanted was for this man to die in regret, agony, and despair! Only thus would he be able to give vent to the hatred in his heart!

"Adept Mooncrescent." Ning's face sank. "I respected you, which is why I asked you to leave. To tell you the truth, the reason I wish to speak in private with your disciple, Yu Dong, is because I suspect that he is colluding with a criminal I am pursuing."

"Colluding with a criminal?" Adept Mooncrescent was startled.

"Colluding?"

Yue Wei and Yu Dong were both greatly shocked as well. Ning waved his hand, and a medallion appeared within it, atop which was the image of a Raindragon.

"The Raindragon Guard!" Adept Mooncrescent's face turned solemn. He knew that trouble had truly arrived today; anyone capable of becoming a Raindragon Guard was a true elite, and even he didn't feel confident in being able to defeat this youth in front of him.

Yue Wei felt nervous as well; to her, a Zifu Disciple, any Raindragon Guard was an incomparably powerful individual.

As for Yu Dong, he was absolutely panicking. "I've never offended the Raindragon Guard, and I've never met these three. What on earth is going on?" He quickly went through a mental list of those he had killed, but no matter what, he couldn't find any flaws in his plots; he had no idea what these people had come for.

"I've come to Mount Mooncrescent for the purpose of seeking out Yu Dong and chatting with him," Ning said coldly. "Adept Mooncrescent, are you going to interfere in the Raindragon Guards carrying out their cases?"

Adept Mooncrescent's face clenched. He definitely wouldn't be able to handle the repercussions of such an act. But at this time, Yu Dong spoke out. He said respectfully, "I don't know what you wish of me, milord Raindragon Guard; if you are asking questions pertaining to a case, why must you avoid my master? If you have any questions, ask away; I, Yu Dong, will definitely be fully honest and speak no word which is not true."

Having clawed to his current position over many years, Yu Dong was an incomparably intelligent man. Since this 'Raindragon Guard' insisted on separating him from his master, he definitely wouldn't let his master leave. Once his master left, he would probably be at the complete mercy of this man, without any protection at all.

"Right. If you have any questions, ask them here," Adept Mooncrescent said hastily. "I definitely won't interfere in the Raindragon Guards carrying out a case."

Ning's face sank. This Adept Mooncrescent had reached the peak of the Wanxiang level more than two centuries ago, and was close to the end of his life. Because of this, Ning didn't dare to underestimate him at all. Although his talent was inferior to the likes of Dong One, he had trained for very long and must have had many fortuitous encounters; an old fellow like him would surely have many tricks up his sleeve.

To take away Yu Dong while he was present would be quite difficult. As for Northson, he pointed towards Adept Mooncrescent and cursed angrily, "Mooncrescent, we Raindragon Guards are carrying out a case, but you are here causing trouble. I urge you to immediately depart! Otherwise...don't blame us two brothers for being merciless!"

"Two sirs," Adept Mooncrescent said, a smile still on his face, "This is the talisman of the Northmont clan of Stillwater." As he spoke, a blood-red medallion appeared in his hands, with the characters 'North' and 'Mont' atop it. "You can refuse to give face to Snowdragon Mountain, but you should still give face to the Northmont clan of Stillwater, yes? If you have any questions, ask them right now. If you have no questions, hurry up and leave."

"A medallion of the Northmont clan?" Ning was startled. This wasn't something an ordinary person could produce. The medallion which Baiwei had given him was merely the medallion of his father, Northmont Blacktiger, not the true medallion of the Northmont clan.

As good friends of Baiwei, he had learned quite a few things. Someone capable of producing the 'blood medallion of the Northmont clan' was definitely someone who had a deep connection to the Northmont clan of Stillwater.

"It's been so many years, and this is only the second time I've ever taken out this medallion." Adept Mooncrescent looked towards Ning's group. "I haven't much longer to live, and I really don't want to trouble the Northmont clan to help me."

Although his words were casual, the threat behind them was real. This caused looks of delight to appear on the faces of Yue Wei and Yu Dong.

“Senior apprentice-brother, what should we do?” Northson sent mentally. “This old fellow was actually able to take out a medallion of the Northmont clan; I imagine he has an impressive background. How about we step back for now...then find another chance later?”

“Adept Mooncrescent.” A hint of anger was in Ning’s gaze. “You have truly decided to stand up for him?”

Adept Mooncrescent smiled, then nodded. He could tell that this Raindragon Guard appeared fierce but was actually nervous; he trusted that this person would soon leave.

“You can protect him for now, but I refuse to believe you can protect him forever!” Ning turned and said, “Junior apprentice-brother, let’s go.”

“Hmph.” Northson let out an angry snort as well, also turning and leaving.

But right at this moment...a savage look flashed through the eyes of Ning, who had just turned his back on Adept Mooncrescent. This was savagery born from long-suppressed hatred. However, since Adept Mooncrescent and Yu Dong couldn’t see Ning’s face...they were feeling quite smug, and a smile was actually on Adept Mooncrescent’s own face.

“Rumble...”

Ning’s powerful divine will suddenly swept outwards like a raging river, crushing directly towards Adept Mooncrescent. BOOM! It viciously collided against his soul. [Soulshaker Art]!

Adept Mooncrescent was close to the end of his life, and he now only cared for enjoying himself; as a result, his Dao-heart had actually weakened considerably. Still, since Adept Mooncrescent would never encounter the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations, he hadn’t cared too much about the weakening of his Dao-heart. At this moment, however, as Ning’s divine will came crushing downwards, Adept Mooncrescent instantly felt his soul shudder.

“Not good! A divine will art!” He had many years of experience, and he had risked his life many times in the past for the Northmont clan. His Dao-heart was consequently still quite firm, and he was instantly shocked. “Wake up! Wake up!” Adept Mooncrescent’s soul was struggling fiercely, and a hint of clarity appeared in his eyes. “Saber formation!”

Just as he was about to activate the supreme technique which he had used to dominate the region, the ‘Mooncrescent Saber Formation’, a mesmerizingly beautiful and seemingly slow sword-light flashed.

The sword-light was absolutely breathtaking! Just as ten black sabers appeared in the surrounding area and were about to join together to block, the sword-light slashed past one of the black sabers...and chopped directly onto the body of Adept Mooncrescent. The two scimitars in Adept Mooncrescent’s hands moved to block, but were knocked flying away.

Slash! His body was rent in half, and blood splattered everywhere. Ning appeared directly behind Adept Mooncrescent, Darknorth sword in hand.

In that instant...he had used the [Soulshaker Art], the [Starseizing Hand], the Windwing Evasion, and also the Manifold Thistlethorns of the [Three-Foot Sword]!

In that instant, Ning had completely exploded forth with his most powerful attacks! This was an old fellow who had lived for very long, and who had an unfathomable background...Ning didn't want to waste too much time with him. If he did, who knew what might happen? Ning's subconscious had been warning him...that this old fellow would be extremely hard to deal with! He had to instantly execute the old man as he was feeling smug and overconfident.

"You...you killed..." Yu Dong came to his senses. Staring at Adept Mooncrescent's bisected body, his face completely changed.

Darknorth sword in hand, Ning stared coldly at him. The icy look in his eyes caused Yu Dong's heart to shudder. Ning said in a growling, cold voice, "Forget about a damn medallion...even if members of the Northmont clan were present, I would still kill him!"

The Desolate Era

Book 9: Ji Ning of Serpentwing Lake Chapter 9: Why, Why?!

Yu Dong felt despair. The youth in front of him was simply too terrifying; he had actually killed Yu Dong's master, Adept Mooncrescent, in an instant...and that divine will attack! Yu Dong had personally sensed it as well, and had gone dizzy for a brief moment. He knew exactly what that sort of short-term dizziness represented in a battle between Immortal cultivators, where life and death was determined in an instant.

"Milord Raindragon Guard." Yu Dong was incomparably frantic; he could sense the surging, killing intent coming from the person before him. "Are you sure there isn't a mistake? I, Yu Dong, have always been unwilling to offend people, and in fact, I've never offended others. Milord Raindragon Guard, is it possible that you've been deceived? Killing me isn't a major matter, but if you were to let the real culprit escape, that'd be a disaster."

Yu Dong was trying his best to dissuade Ning. Ning just laughed. "Deceived?" His laughter caused Yu Dong to shiver. Could it be that Ning's father and mother had deceived him? In addition, Ning's Uncle White, who had personally experienced the events of that year, was standing right next to him. How could there be any mistake?

"The real culprit is enjoying himself while you, milord, have been deceived into acting against me," Yu Dong said frantically. Ning, seeing the frantic, terrified look on Yu Dong's face as he tried to dissuade him, only felt a surge of satisfaction in his heart. The more panicked his enemy was, the more agonized and desperate he was, the more satisfied Ning would be!

"Father. Mother. Uncle. Can you see this?" Ning murmured in his heart. "This Yu Dong is just the first one. All of them will slip into despair. They will die in regret," Ning promised himself.

Yu Dong watched as the freezing light in Ning's eyes continued to grow, and he couldn't help but grow increasingly frantic. What should he do? What should he do?

He had yet to become a true leader within Snowdragon Mountain; had yet to make his name known throughout the world. How could he die like this? Yu Dong's heart was filled with a strong unwillingness to accept this. What he desired the most was not to slowly, stealthily clamber his way up to the top using tricks and stratagems; he wanted to use absolute power to shock the world and be revered by countless individuals.

He had yet to truly explode onto the world's stage! The vast world had yet to hear of his name! "I have to go all out!" Yu Dong felt as though he had become suddenly trapped back into his early, childhood days when he had to fight and kill, with only a hint of a chance of survival. Success meant that he would rise to the heavens, while failure meant that he would die without a place to be buried.

The same was true right now. If he were to escape, he would be able to soar to the heavens. If he died, he would truly not even have a place to be buried.

"Junior apprentice-sister." Yu Dong looked towards Yue Wei, then sent urgently, "Help me stop him at any cost." He trust in his junior apprentice-sister, trusted in his own abilities. He knew with absolute certainty that his junior apprentice-sister wouldn't hesitate to sacrifice her own life for him.

Yue Wei's eyes reddened, and infinite love radiated from her eyes. "Do it!" Yu Dong howled mentally. Swoosh! Yue Wei threw herself straight towards Ning, just like a moth throwing itself into a flame. Her Zifu Lake instantly began to detonate. Tears were at the corners of Yue Wei's eyes, and she stared at Yu Dong with a longing look in her eyes as she sent to him, "Senior apprentice-brother, I truly do love you!"

BOOM!

Ning's Waterflame Lotus had both dire-ice and earthflame merged into it. The power of his Waterflame Lotus was consequently much greater than before...the self-detonation of a Zifu Disciple wouldn't be able to move him in the slightest.

"Senior apprentice-brother, I truly do love you!" Her voice echoed in his mind, and even Yu Dong felt his heart shake. But then, he instantly suppressed this feeling. He understood that this 'love' his junior apprentice-sister felt towards him was nothing more than a natural 'love' that would emerge once a person's soul had been completely dominated and tamed. It was precisely because her mind had been tamed that she was willing to die for him.

Was this love?

This was just slavery!

BOOM. As the explosion rang out, Yu Dong instantly fled far away, and as he did, he produced an insect nest in his hands. "Children, go, stop them!"

The nearby Northson and Whitewater Hound just watched, not interfering. As for Ning, the Waterflame Lotus around him first blocked the self-detonation of that woman, and then greeted the countless venomous pests that swarmed towards him. The enormous Waterflame Lotus was imbued with both dire-ice and earthflame, which were no weaker than divine abilities. However, after imbuing both into the Waterflame Lotus, they both reached new heights of power.

Under that grinding, killing power, the countless venomous pests were all ground into dust, without a single one of them able to survive for even a moment. Seconds later, the countless, heaven-covering swarm of venomous pests that had been attacking Ning had all been reduced to dust.

"Hahaha..." Yu Dong had charged far away into the distance, and activated a bewildering formation. Instantly, the area around him changed and twisted into illusions as he remained within its borders.

“Do you think that you’ll be able to escape, just because you are hiding within a bewildering formation?” Ning took a single step forward, towards the formation.

Ning appeared to be quite brash and arrogant, but in truth, he was being extremely cautious. His divine sense had already covered this entire area, to a distance of a hundred kilometers, and everything was under his control. If a Primal Daoist suddenly appeared, Ning would no longer delay, and would instantly kill Yu Dong. But now? Since no one had appeared to stop him, Ning would slowly torment him.

The long-suppressed hatred within Ning’s heart made it so that he wasn’t willing to let the man die too easily.

“What?” Within the bewildering formation, Yu Dong watched as Ning walked in. Ning didn’t appear to be the slightest bit puzzled or baffled by the formation, and he walked directly towards Yu Dong. “How can this be?! Seal it!” Yu Dong once again used a formation technique; this was his estate, and naturally he had quite a few formations present.

A blurry light sprang up, protecting him. Swish. A sword-light flashed past, and Ning easily chopped apart the grand sealing formation.

“Too weak.” Ning continued to slowly stroll forward.

“Teleport.” Yu Dong clutched at his precious Lesser Teleportation Dao-seal, intending to flee...but it was completely useless.

“The surrounding region has already been spacelocked.” Ning continued to walk towards him.

Yu Dong finally went berserk. He howled with rage, “What the hell do you want?! The bewildering formation is useless against you, you effortlessly killed my venomous bugs, you killed even my master with a single sword blow...and you even prepared a spacelock formation in advance! You are so powerful and so calculating...what the hell did I do to piss you off?”

Instantly, a figure appeared before him, moving as fast as lightning. A sword-light pierced directly into Yu Dong’s dantian. One magic treasure after another tumbled out from his body. Only the magic robe he wore on him, as well as the bracer on his arm, remained his; the rest all fell out, no longer under his control. This sword attack was so fast that Yu Dong wasn’t even able to dodge.

“You...you!” Yu Dong stared. Ning replied calmly, “The Zifu in your dantian has already been destroyed by me.”

Yu Dong was absolutely terrified. The Zifu in his dantian was his foundation as a cultivator; it had been destroyed, just like that? In the instant it had been destroyed, a feeling of weakness suddenly filled his body, causing him to be incomparably terrified...

“Why don’t you just kill me cleanly?” Yu Dong howled with rage. “Kill you?” Ning shook his head. “I simply destroyed your Zifu in your dantian because I was afraid that you would commit suicide.” If the Zifu was present, Yu Dong would’ve been easily able to self-detonate his Zifu Lake.

But with his Zifu destroyed, Yu Dong had been transformed into an ordinary mortal. But of course, despite being an ‘ordinary’ mortal, his body had been nourished for many years by elemental ki, and so

it would still be quite powerful, comparable to an ordinary Xiantian lifeform. Unfortunately, he was now no longer able to use magic treasures; naturally, he wouldn't even be able to kill himself in front of Ning.

"Afraid that I'd commit suicide?" A look of terror appeared on Yu Dong's face. What the hell sort of a grudge was this? This person wouldn't even let him commit suicide?

With the destruction of his Zifu, the formation around him naturally vanished. Northson and the Whitewater Hound walked over as well.

"Enjoy this," Ning said with a cold laugh. His elemental ki quickly formed into a shining runic seal in front of him. Upon seeing the shining rune, Yu Dong seemed to realize something. Instantly, utter horror appeared on his face, and he immediately turned to flee. Ning, with a gentle flick of his fingers, sent that shining runic seal into Yu Dong's body.

"NO!" Yu Dong let out a miserable cry, his skin and his bones beginning to twist and his skin beginning to turn red. "AHH, AHHHH!!" An agonized scream ripped out from his throat.

Yu Dong was like a lobster that was being boiled alive; his entire body was turning red, and he fell to the ground, beginning to twitch and twist about. He felt as though countless bugs were crawling beneath his skin, and could even see his skin begin to char and turn black.

"The Heartburner Art?" Northson was secretly shocked. This was a torturing technique possessed by the Black-White College's Dao Repository Vault. Because it didn't have much combat potential, one didn't need too many black-white pellets to trade for it.

Ning had memorized it long ago. When he had memorized it...it was for the purpose of allowing his enemies to enjoy its taste! Enjoy the taste of having their hearts been set aflame! When Ning's father and mother had died, he himself had been filled with the utmost of agony, despair, and hatred. He had decided long ago to do the same in gaining revenge!

"Tell me tell me tell me tell me..." Yu Dong howled hoarsely as he stared at Ning, his eyes filled with madness.

"You are actually still clear-minded. Even though you have the soul of a Wanxiang Adept, for you to stay awake for so long is inconceivable." Ning let out a cold snort. "It seems as though your Dao-heart is even stronger than I had anticipated."

"Why, why?!" Yu Dong's eyes were filled with resentment. As for Ning, he turned towards Uncle White, who was by his side. Uncle White instantly transformed into mist, then reformed into a large, snowy white hound.

"Yu Dong. Do you remember me?" The Whitewater Hound looked towards Yu Dong. Yu Dong's agonized eyes were suddenly filled with shock and resentment. Immortal practitioners had nearly perfect memories. Because Uncle White was now a Wanxiang Diremonster, and because he was in human form, Yu Dong had been unable to recognize him earlier. Now that Uncle White had returned to his true form...Yu Dong immediately thought back to the events of that year...

"Young master, look. That little lady looks quite attractive. That face, that aura, that attitude...ohoho!"

“Mm, not bad at all! And she seems to be pregnant as well...hah, just what I like. The two of you, go over there and catch that little lady alive. Be careful though; those two men next to her should both be Zifu Disciples. The two of you had best not grow careless and fail.”

“Don’t worry, young master.”

“Young master, leave it to us. We’ll definitely catch that little lady and bring her over to you.”

Those events...that battle...everything came to his mind. Deep in his memory, he thought back to how both of those men had been willing to sacrifice their lives for that woman.

“Little Sister, the two of you, go!”

“Snow, go. Little White, take her away!”

In that battle, he and his accomplice, ‘Shui Yi’, were both just peak Zifu Disciples, while their opponents had both used forbidden arts. That woman’s older brother...he was enormously powerful! He had been able to lock down the two of them and let that woman, along with the other, heavily wounded youth, to escape.

However, in the end, he and Shui Yi had naturally killed that woman’s older brother in their rage.

“They...they...” Yu Dong’s entire body was beginning to char. He stared towards Ning with completely bloodshot eyes.

“They were my father, mother, and uncle!” Tears began to appear in Ning’s eyes, and he growled out, “And I, I was the child that woman was pregnant with. I...have come for revenge!”

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 9: Ji Ning of Serpentwing Lake Chapter 10: A Disaster Caused

“My uncle, Yuchi Mount. My mother, Yuchi Snow. My father, Ji Yichuan!” Ji Ning stared at him, his eyes filled with pain and madness. “At the time, you didn’t give a damn about them at all, did you? In fact, you’ve forgotten all about them. But now, I have come to take revenge for them!”

Ning’s words came one at a time from the innermost depths of his heart. As for Yu Dong, he could feel the hatred oozing from the fur-clad youth. “This youth...he’s the child that woman was pregnant with?”

“Twenty years...it’s only been twenty years. That child was born, and now is easily able to kill my master, Adept Mooncrescent. I...what the hell type of an enemy have I, Yu Dong, created for myself.” Yu Dong had always been extremely cautious and unwilling to offend important figures. Even when killing a few geniuses, he had been extremely cautious and made sure to leave behind no clues that it had been him.

Unexpectedly, that pregnant woman he had simply wanted to catch in order to flatter and pander to young master Dong Seven had given birth to such a terrifying youth.

“I...I actually fell due to this?”

Yu Dong in absolute agony due to his torment, but in his mind, one scene after another flashed by. Scenes of how he had clawed his way up the ladder as a youth. In order to reach further heights, he had

been willing to do anything! He had even been able to toy with and manipulate figures who were more powerful than him, and he had made them into his pawns. And now, he had become a Wanxiang Adept.

“I’ve been calculating my entire life, but I failed due to this...” Yu Dong’s eyes were filled with torment. Suddenly, he let out a final, furious howl. “The heavens conspired against me! I don’t accept this, I can’t accept this!!!”

As his howl rang out and echoed in the estate, Yu Dong’s charring body suddenly began to blaze with fire as his entire body started to roast. As for Ning, he just watched calmly. Suddenly, an incense burner appeared in his hands. “Collect it!” Ning willed this to be done.

Ning’s divine sense could clearly see a soul be absorbed directly into the incense burner. There were many types of magic treasures that were meant to be used against the soul, such as the ‘Myriad Wraiths Banner’ and the like, that were capable of sucking souls into them. As for Ning’s incense burner, it was an item with a different purpose that had a similar effect. However, it was just meant to absorb in a soul and then destroy the soul’s power; it could be considered a sort of supportive treasure that couldn’t actually be used to attack.

“This Yu Dong can be considered a formidable figure as well,” Northson sighed. “He was able to claw his way up from an ordinary commoner to the Wanxiang Adept level, and was even able to make Adept Mooncrescent’s daughter be willing to sacrifice her life for him! Formidable!”

Halfway through his words, Northson suddenly stopped speaking. He couldn’t help but look at the nearby Ji Ning. This Yu Dong was Ning’s hated enemy, after all.

Ning’s gaze was as deep and tranquil as the waters of a lake. He glanced calmly at the blazing corpse on the ground, then said calmly, “He was indeed a formidable figure. However, he was unscrupulous in his actions...for the sake of being able to reach a higher position, he was willing to do anything! For the sake of ingratiating himself to that young master Dong Seven, he was actually willing to act against my mother, even though she was pregnant! For the sake of protecting my mother, my uncle died on the spot, while my father’s future potential in his Immortal path was shattered.”

“In the end, Mother and Father still died. Just for the sake of ingratiating himself with Dong Seven, he was able to do such a thing...” Ning thought back to what he had seen with his divine sense, and how Yu Dong had treated Yue Wei as he might a sex slave. This person was completely unscrupulous. As the saying went, if one often walked by the river, eventually, one’s shoes would get wet. Even if Yu Dong didn’t fall in Ning’s hands today, eventually, a different expert would have come to kill him!

The path of Immortal cultivation was one of self-reliance! Tricks, strategies, outside sources of help, waylaying others...they would only allow one to rise to prominence briefly. In the end, the grave would await.

Self-reliance was the only true, eternal path!

“Whoosh.” Ning waved his hand, collecting all of the magic treasures within the courtyard. “Let’s hurry up and leave.” Ning looked towards Northson and Uncle White. “Earlier, that Adept Mooncrescent gave me a very bad feeling. I imagine he must have a significant background; we cannot tarry here.”

“Alright.” Uncle White nodded. “Right.” Northson agreed as well. “That blood medallion of the Northmont clan proves that he is dangerous.”

Soon, Ning’s group quietly snuck away from Mount Mooncrescent. Nobody noticed their departure at all.

In midair. The dragon-headed warship once more changed colors, to a pure, pitch-black color as it slowly flew forward. “Father. Mother. Uncle.” Ning quietly murmured to them, “I’ve already killed one of our three enemies. Don’t worry. Not a single one of them will survive! And uncle’s only child...one day, I’ll find a way to find her.”

Based on what Ning’s father had said, his uncle had a single daughter. But where exactly was this cousin of his? What was her name? What did she look like? Unfortunately, Ning didn’t know the answer to any of these questions. It would be very hard to find her.

However, Ning didn’t give up, because the more powerful an Immortal cultivator was, the more options they would have to them...he had heard that some legendarily powerful Immortals could, with the flick of a finger, even be able to calculate what events would unfold in the future. If, in the future, he was able to learn these techniques, searching for his cousin probably wouldn’t be too difficult.

The nearby Whitewater Hound just watched quietly. He also felt incomparably excited at having been able to kill one of their hated foes, and also felt gratified in his heart. He murmured silently to himself, “Big Brother, our child Ning has grown more and more powerful. Even a peak Wanxiang Adept was slaughtered by him. Ning’s name will definitely be spread throughout the vast, endless world, and he will become a truly influential and famous figure in the world ruled over by the Grand Xia Dynasty.”

“Senior apprentice-brother.” Northson spoke out. Ning looked over to him. “Shall we go to the Cloudfields?” The Snowcloud Fields was the place where the Dong clan had established their foundations. Shui Yi was a Zifu Disciple of the Dong clan. If they were to kill Shui Yi, they would naturally have to go to the Snowcloud Fields. “Yes. We’ll go right now,” Ning said.

“But that’s an extremely large clan,” Northson said hurriedly. “They have more than ten Wanxiang Adepts, and it is also the tribe of a Primal Daoist. Although that Primal Daoist stands guard over Snowdragon Mountain, he certainly will have left some protective techniques for his clan. And, at a critical moment, the Primal Daoist himself might hurry back.”

Ning nodded. “I know. Don’t worry, junior apprentice-brother. I’m not so arrogant as to go head-on against a Primal Daoist.”

“It’s good that you are clear-minded.” Northson nodded. When he had watched Ning kill Yu Dong, Northson had begun to worry. He had personally undergone a similar experience, and he knew that once one faced the killers of one’s parents, one might go berserk, at which point one really might be capable of anything. He didn’t wish for Ning to throw his life away.

“Ning, my son,” the nearby Whitewater Hound urged, “As I see it, let’s first investigate the treasures left behind by Adept Mooncrescent. I, too, continue to feel as though that Adept Mooncrescent was a very dangerous person.”

“Alright.” Ning and Northson both nodded. They immediately began to bind the magic treasures left behind by Adept Mooncrescent and began to search through his storage-type magic treasures.

Mount Mooncrescent was as calm and peaceful as before. The servants and retainers didn’t even know that Adept Mooncrescent had died. However, roughly two hours after Ning’s group had left, the surrounding space began to buggle and twist.

Slash! A completely pitch-black sword-shaped warship appeared in the air above the mountain. Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh. One blood-robed figure after another immediately flew out from it, and in the blink of an eye, the skies became filled with thirteen of them. Their leader had a silvery flying sword embroidered on the sleeves of his robes. As for the other twelve, they had grayish flying swords embroidered on their sleeves.

“Rumble...” A powerful divine sense instantly swept downwards, covering the area. The leader of the blood-robed men, a bald figure, had bizarre runes atop his skull. His gaze was icy cold as he stared downwards.

“Captain? Second Brother, he...?” A blood-robed man next to the leader whispered. “He’s dead.” The bald, blood-robed man’s voice was gravelly; it sounded ear-piercing, like sabres clashing against each other. “Although his corpse has already been destroyed by the murderer, the aura of the battle is still present, and the scent of Second Bro’s blood remains in the air. Actually, back when Second Bro’s candle, which we had within our main hall alongside all the other candles, went out, he had already died! Only, none of you were willing to believe it...”

“How could that be? Old Second Bro was close to the end of his life, and he had returned to Mount Mooncrescent to enjoy his retirement. He didn’t have any enemies, and even if he did, when he took out our blood medallion of the Northmont clan, shouldn’t he have been able to scare them off? Who would have dared to forcibly kill Old Second Bro?”

“Ole Second Bro was extremely powerful as well. Old Second Bro acquired his Mooncrescent Saber Formation thanks to his many military accomplishments, and it was tremendously powerful. Perhaps a few geniuses at the Wanxiang level would be able to defeat him, but he should still be able to withstand them for a period of time. Giving his fleeing abilities, he shouldn’t have found it too difficult to escape.”

“The only possibility is that someone knew all of Old Second Bro’s abilities, and so specially set things up so that they could kill him at one blow.”

The group continued to chat amongst themselves.

“Old Second Bro fought in our squad for more than a century. Countless generations of brothers formed lifelong friendships with him! He had returned to his own Mount Mooncrescent, but was killed by someone here? The other old brothers won’t accept this lying down. Others should feel relieved if we don’t bully them; who dares to bully us?! We definitely must avenge him!”

“We must take revenge!”

“Whoever killed Old Second Bro, we must kill him. We’ll destroy his soul.”

“The brothers of the Shadow Army cannot be killed without repercussion.”

All of the blood-robed figures were filled with furious, baleful auras.

As for the bald, blood-robed leader, he said in a cold voice, "Investigate! We must investigate this thoroughly! We need to find out who killed Old Second Bro. He had gone home to enjoy his retirement, but they still refused to spare him...we must find the killer."

"Right."

"Yes."

They all nodded.

"Let's go back. I'll ask the Old Captain to help and also have the headquarters of the Shadow Army to initiate an investigation into who the murderer is." The bald man said in a cold, grim voice, "Let's go."

Whoosh. The group of blood-robed men all flew back into that pitch-black, sword-shaped warship. A spatial ripple once more appeared, and then the pitch-black warship disappeared into thin air once more.

As for Ning, Northson, the Whitewater Hound, and Qingqing, they were going through the relics left behind by Adept Mooncrescent. Yu Dong's items were mostly Mortal-ranked, and so they were the first to be bound. Ning's group was surprised as the items contained within his storage treasures, because his wealth was actually comparable to Dong One and Northriver Zhou's.

However, Ning's group was primarily interested in binding Adept Mooncrescent's magic treasures. Finally, they were able to bind one of the storage-type magic treasures he had left behind, and they took out one item after another from within. Ning's group began to closely investigate them. And as they did...all of their faces changed.

"Oh, crap," Qingqing muttered softly.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 9: Ji Ning of Serpentwing Lake Chapter 11: The Culprit, Ji Ning

After having bound Adept Mooncrescent's storage-type magic treasure and taken the items out, Ji Ning and his companion's faces changed.

"This is...!"

Ning's gaze fell upon a blood-red robe. This blood-red robe emanated a sanguine aura, and it had a grayish flying sword sown onto the sleeve.

"A battle-uniform," Mu Northson said softly. "This blood robe is covered with many runes and can also serve as a construct-type magic treasure...if my guess is correct, this should be meant to be used in unison with a group of people who all wear this same robe. They'll be able to join into one entity and unleash an extremely powerful joint attack."

Northson was a genius of the Dao of constructs; he instantly discovered this. As for Ning, although he wasn't able to understand this as clearly as his junior apprentice-brother did, he was skilled in formations and so was able to discover that this war-robe was similar to a Dao-soldier's armor.

“Judging from the complexity of the runes on this blood-red robe...it’s definitely not something which an ordinary organization can produce,” Northson said with a frown. “Sects like Snowdragon Mountain are completely unable to produce this sort of uniform war-robe...and in fact, most likely even my master wouldn’t be able to produce it.”

“He had the blood medallion of the Northmont clan,” Ning said in a low voice. “It’s very possible that he has some sort of a connection with the Northmont clan of Stillwater.”

“Look at this.” Qingqing pointed at a leather parchment. They had removed several leather parchments from the storage treasure. “Don’t touch them with your hands,” Ning barked. And then, he carefully inspected the contents on the leather scrolls.

“Old Second Brother, I, your brother, am going to retire as well. However, I will stay here at the Skylands world. I don’t want to go back...there’s nothing for me there. I’ve fought to subjugate the enemies for so many years here in the Skylands world, that I have grown accustomed to it. I have so many old brothers here, and I truly don’t wish to leave. In the past, you invited me to go with you to Mount Mooncrescent, but...forget it. If, in the future, you are free, please come to the Skylands world...”

The contents of the leather scroll instantly made Ning’s scalp turn numb. Retired? Old Second Brother? Skylands world?

“Retired?” Northson called out in shock, “Adept Mooncrescent must’ve been a member of an army, and judging from the blood-red robe...the robe should be the uniform which Adept Mooncrescent wore in that army! Because he was too old and was close to the end of his life, he came back to retire here.”

“Old Second Brother?” The Whitewater Hound spoke out as well. “Given how long this Adept Mooncrescent had lived for, I imagine that all of his surviving brothers must be extremely old as well, which is why they addressed him as ‘Old Second Brother’. But this Skylands world...”

“Skylands world...?” Ning frowned as well.

“Can it be one of the trillions of lesser worlds?” Northson whispered.

The Three Realms were incomparably vast, and the ordinary, common worlds were exceedingly numerous. The worlds were divided into the three thousand major worlds and the trillion lesser worlds. Some of the trillion lesser worlds were naturally created by the universe, while some had been established by major powers!

“Battling in the Skylands world?” Ning mused to himself, “The blood medallion of the Northmont clan?” Ning continued to ponder, while at the same time, he began to carefully read the other leather scrolls. Some had strange maps on them, while others were letters. Ning then looked at the other items. Slowly...a hypothesis began to form in Ning’s mind.

The Northmont clan of Stillwater must have had a secret, hidden army, with Adept Mooncrescent having been one of the members of this army! Ning didn’t feel surprised at the fact that the Northmont clan had a secret army of its own, because the history of the Grand Xia Dynasty included quite a few rebellions by Marquisates. The mere fact that Marquisates would attempt to rebel was a testament to how powerful and how deep their roots were. They had existed from the Fiendgod Era until the present era; this was simply too long a stretch of time.

Nobody knew exactly how deep the roots of the Marquisates were; it was quite normal for them to have secret armies of their own. As for the Skylands world, it must be one of the trillion lesser worlds, or a dimension which a major power had carved out for himself. In short, there should be living creatures within this world, which is why it needed to be subjugated.

“Senior apprentice-brother, what should we do?” Northson said softly. “It seems as though Adept Mooncrescent was most likely a member of a secret army under the control of the Northmont clan of Stillwater. And, by the looks of it, he had battled for many years for them...he definitely must have an extremely good relationship with those lifelong, battle-tested friends.”

Ning nodded. After battling shoulder-to-shoulder for countless years...one could imagine how close those soldiers were! Now that Adept Mooncrescent had died in his retirement, how could those people take it lying down?

“This is trouble.” Ning frowned. Still, even if he had known Adept Mooncrescent’s background, Ning still would’ve done the same thing. Although Adept Mooncrescent had returned to Mount Mooncrescent to retire, he had still proved to be a calamity for the surrounding area. Ning had acquired quite a bit of information on Adept Mooncrescent when reading up on Yu Dong, and the description of the Adept was...he was a sinister, petty man who had offended many.

Perhaps because he had so many pent up desires in the army, as soon as he had retired, he had relied on his power to act savagely and viciously, revealing his true nature! Ning wouldn’t show mercy to this sort of person.

“Ning, son, what should we do?” The Whitewater Hound looked towards Ning. “Master?” Qingqing looked towards Ning as well.

Ning frowned. “Let’s keep the liquefied elemental essence. We’ll put all the other treasures into the storage treasure, and then...Qingqing, use your Void Blink to go extremely deep underground and cast it deep into the magnetic core.”

“The deep magnetic core?” Qingqing nodded. “Understood.”

They kept only the thousand kilograms of liquefied elemental essence, and then discarded everything else, including even the jade bottle which held the essence! The liquefied elemental essence was incomparably pure and untraceable, so they could keep it, but everything else had the potential to prove problematic.

“I’m going now.” The little azure snake winked out of existence, passing through the void and disappearing. Deep underground, there was a magnetic core, and a powerful field of magnetic light that one could see with the visible eye. Qingqing carefully threw the storage-type magic treasure, now unbound, into the magnetic light.

A short time later.

Qingqing returned. “I tossed it all.” She looked at Ning, who nodded. “Good. Everyone, let’s think it over. Have we left any clues behind?”

“Senior apprentice-brother, earlier, when we appeared at Mount Mooncrescent...is it possible that the servants or disciples of Adept Mooncrescent might have noticed us?” Northson said, worried.

Ning shook his head. "Don't worry. My divine sense covered the entire Mount Mooncrescent, and everything was within my field of observation. Only three people accidentally saw our dragon-headed warship, but at that time, the warship was under disguise and also had a different coloration. There's no way they would've been able to identify us just on the basis of seeing that warship."

"Alright." Northson nodded. They came here secretly, and so they had naturally disguised the warship into a very ordinary, common-looking sort. "There's no way they could find us just based on the appearance of the warship."

"Good." Ning nodded. "Everyone, can you think of any flaws?" They all shook their heads. They had been incomparably cautious when coming, and hadn't even used teleportation arrays. They had flown all the way here, through the clouds and the mist. Only three people had seen their true appearances at Mount Mooncrescent; Adept Mooncrescent, Yu Dong, and Yue Wei. All three were now dead.

"Junior apprentice-brother, next I am going to act against Shui Yi. There's no need for you to go," Ning said. "Dealing with Shui Yi...will be much trickier than dealing with Yu Dong. Although he's merely a peak Zifu Disciple, he's within the Dong clan's territory."

"I have no ties or attachments to be worried about. Senior apprentice-brother, don't say anything else," Northson said firmly. Ning nodded gently. "Fine, then. Still...we need to decide on how we should deal with Shui Yi." Ning looked around at everyone.

Qingqing said hurriedly, "It's quite simple. Master, you have divine sense...you can effortlessly cover the entire Dong clan with it. As long as you find a chance to kill him, you can easily kill him, right?"

"It won't be that easy." Northson shook his head. "That's the lair of the Dong clan, and the home of a Primal Daoist. It definitely will be guarded by numerous layers of protections, and there's no way an outsider will be able to silently sneak in..."

Ning nodded. "Even an idiot can guess that this place must be ringed by countless formations. There's no way to sneak in at all."

Qingqing pouted.

"Ning, son," the Whitewater Hound said, "Although it might be hard for us to enter the Dong clan to kill Shui Yi...why can't we make Shui Yi come out instead?"

"Have him come out?" Ning's eyes lit up. "Right!" Northson called out in approval as well. Ning quickly began to ponder this, and the information he had acquired on Shui Yi began to flash through his mind. Soon, he came up with a way.

"If it's hard to go in to kill him, then we'll draw him out." Ning nodded. "Find. Then let's go right now..."

"Let's go."

Immediately, the warship, now appearing to be an ordinary, pitch-black ship, disappeared from the clouds.

They had already killed Adept Mooncrescent. There was nothing else they could do about that now! However, just as they were afraid of...Adept Mooncrescent's group of old friends wouldn't let the matter of his death rest! The entire Shadow Army wouldn't let one of its old, retired brothers die in such

a manner! The members of the Shadow Army had all battled for many years together, and too many of them had died. Very, very few survived to retire. If even their retirees could be killed without rhyme or reason...how could they accept this?

“Don’t worry. The old brothers of our Shadow Army won’t be killed for no rhyme or reason, just like this! In other places, the intelligence reports of the Heavenly Treasures Mountain might be formidable, but here in Stillwater Commandery...the intelligence reports of our Northmont clan are even more superior!” Within the headquarters of the Shadow Army, a red-haired old man was speaking to a group of blood-robed men in a loud voice.

Stillwater Commandery was the territory of the Northmont clan. Here, the Northmont clan’s roots were the deepest.

Just half a day later....

Stillwater City. Northmont Blacktiger’s Estate.

“Eh?” Northmont Baiwei, who was drinking some wine and listening to music, suddenly frowned. He heard footsteps from outside. “I’m listening to music. Who dares disturb me?” A hint of anger could be seen in Baiwei’s furrowed brows.

Suddenly, the door was pushed open, and a muscular, bald man dressed in an ornate black uniform walked in. Next to him was a pale-faced, beardless old man with triangular pupils. The triangle-eyed old man seemed to have a hint of laughter on his face, but it made others shiver.

“Father!” Baiwei shot to his feet. In the face of his father, Baiwei always felt uncontrollably nervous. “Baiwei.” Northmont Blacktiger’s deep, hooded gaze was like an infinitely cold pool of ice. “I ask you this – was it you who sent people to the Heavenly Treasures Mountain for an intelligence report on Yu Dong, Shui Yi, and Dong Seven?”

“Yes.” Baiwei nodded. “Why?” Blacktiger asked. Baiwei immediately said respectfully, “It was for the sake of my brother, Ji Ning, who brought his fellow disciple, Mu Northson, and asked me to assist. He didn’t wish for the Heavenly Treasures Mountain to find out, so I was extremely careful as well. Aside from myself and the our servants who carried the orders out, no one else knows.”

“Oh?” Blacktiger’s eyes were dark and cold. He said calmly, “It seems, then, that the culprits are Ji Ning and his group.”

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 9: Ji Ning of Serpentwing Lake Chapter 12: Father and Son

“The culprit is Ji Ning?” Northmont Baiwei said, frantic, “Father, what are you talking about? What ‘culprit’? What are you saying?”

“Can’t you guess?” Northmont Blacktiger looked at his son. This was the son who he had entrusted all his hopes to, the one whom he had always strove to train. If he hadn’t placed all of his hopes on Baiwei, he would’ve left Baiwei to his own devices and let him become a carefree, ignorant, wastrel descendant. However, Blacktiger had instead always been very strict and exacting with him.

“Father, are you saying...” Baiwei was no fool. Frowning he said, “Brother Ji Ning didn’t want for the Heavenly Treasures Mountain to know it was him, so he must’ve been carrying out something he couldn’t let others know about! He went to kill an enemy with a powerful background? Dong Seven, Yu Dong, Shui Yi...of the three of them, the only one with a bit of a background is Dong Seven! Can it be that he killed Dong Seven? But Dong Seven has a mere Primal Daoist backing him; he isn’t worthy of you, Father, acting like this.”

Blacktiger nodded. “It isn’t Dong Seven. He killed Yu Dong.” Baiwen shook his head. “Yu Dong? He’s just a minor figure.”

“But Yudong’s master, Adept Mooncrescent, was present at the time as well. Thus, most likely because he tried to stop Ji Ning, he was caught up in the fray and killed by Ji Ning as well.” Blacktiger stared at his son. “And Adept Mooncrescent was a retired Immortal cultivator who belonged to one of the armies under the control of our Northmont clan of Stillwater, the Shadow Army.”

“What?!” Baiwei’s face instantly changed. Naturally, he knew that his own clan, the Northmont clan, had some hidden, powerful armies of Immortal cultivators. Every single Marquis had some armies of their own.

The Grand Xia Dynasty knew this as well. However, the exact number of secret armies, how many individuals were in each army, and how powerful the members of the armies were...those were the true secrets.

“A retired cultivator of the Shadow Army?” Baiwei began to mumble to himself, “A retiree? Then he must have fought for many, many years...he must have many old friends and brothers-in-arms. The retirees...they are the most sensitive figures for these Immortal armies.”

“Right. Just so!” Blacktiger growled, “They battle for the sake of our Northmont clan, and countless numbers of them have perished. Very, very few are able to survive and retire. If the retired cultivators are killed...the cultivators of the entire army will naturally be enraged! They absolutely will not permit this sort of event to occur, and if it were to occur, they will find out who the killer was, then take revenge for their old brother!”

“This is a sensitive, sore spot for Immortal cultivator armies! Those who touch it will die!” Blacktiger’s eyes were filled with solemnity as well. This was one of the unspoken rules of the armies; they wouldn’t permit their old, retired brethren to suffer! Absolutely not!

“Ji Ning’s group acted very cleanly and professionally,” Blacktiger said. “The intelligence division of the Shadow Army has begun their investigations, they have already searched the memories of many of the ordinary mortals who lived on Mount Mooncrescent. They’ve even found the blood-robe which Adept Mooncrescent once wore; it had been cast deep into the magnetic depths of the world.”

“However, because a total of three people had died, being Mooncrescent, his disciple Yu Dong, and his daughter Yue Wei, the Shadow Army’s intelligence division has already begun to investigate Yu Dong and Yue Wei as well. Soon, they found that someone has recently asked the Heavenly Treasures Mountain for a copy of the report on Yu Dong.”

Blacktiger stared at his son. “Following this clue, the Shadow Army’s investigations led them to my estate; the Northmont Blacktiger Estate! That is how I learned of this.”

“What should we do, then?” Baiwei was worried now. “The Shadow Army is currently following up on several leads,” Blacktiger said, “But if Shui Yi and Dong Seven both die as well, then the Shadow Army will definitely grow convinced that the culprit had purchased intelligence reports on these three figures at the Heavenly Treasures Mountain.”

Baiwei said, frantic, “Then I’ll immediately send someone to seek out Brother Ji Ning and have him temporarily avoid killing Shui Yi and Dong Seven?”

Blacktiger shook his head. “No use. They’ll soon be able to rule out the other leads, at which point in time, they will make inquiries to us regarding this matter.”

“Then what should I do?” Baiwei said, worried. “There are two options,” Blacktiger said. Baiwei looked towards his father.

“The first option is to give up Ji Ning,” Blacktiger said. “That way, we’ll avoid all trouble.”

“Impossible.” Baiwei shook his head.

Blacktiger, seeing this, actually began to laugh. “Hahaha, that’s my boy. Right; don’t easily give up or betray your good friends and brothers! If you can so easily sacrifice them...then you’ll never be able to make any true friends and brothers! If you wish for others to be willing to risk their lives for you, you have to treat them with sincerity, understood?”

Baiwei was startled.

“Then, only the second option remains,” Blacktiger said. “Just admit that you were the one who did this deed.” Baiwei was astonished. “Me?!”

“Right. Admit to the Shadow Army that it was you who did it; it was you who sent people to investigate Yu Dong, and then who led people to kill Yu Dong! However, because Adept Mooncrescent tried to stop you...you ended up killing him as well!” Blacktiger continued, “You had no idea that Adept Mooncrescent was a retired soldier, and thus you cannot be faulted for what you did. There’s no way for the Shadow Army to insist on punishing you...as a member of the main lineage of our Northmont clan, and as someone who might become a future Marquis of Stillwater, for you to have accidentally killed Adept Mooncrescent is just a small matter.”

“If you accept responsibility for this matter, it will just be a small matter, because in the end, the Shadow Army is the army of our Northmont clan. It won’t be easy for the cultivators of our Shadow Army to make too much trouble for a main lineage descendant of the Northmont clan, just due to an accident.”

“However, if anyone else were to accept responsibility, they would almost assuredly die.” Blacktiger looked at his son. “Still...as a result of this, I imagine that there will be some old fellows of the Shadow Army who will hate you.”

“Just hate me? A mere retired Wanxiang Adept...I would be shocked if there was even a single Loose Immortal-level cultivator who was a true friend of his! And I imagine that very, very few will truly, deeply hate me.” Baiwei shook his head. “For now, I don’t have anything to do with the Shadow Army. As for Brother Ji Ning, I can tell that he’s the sort who is willing to shoulder difficulties for his friend. I will accept responsibility for this matter!”

“Good.” Blacktiger nodded. “As for how Yu Dong, Shui Yi, and Dong Seven offended you, I’ll come up with a suitable excuse.” Baiwei nodded respectfully. “It shall all be as you say, Father.”

“Remember!” Blacktiger looked at his son, then said softly, “You’ve done very well to be willing to sacrifice for your brother, but you must remember...you need to let Ji Ning know what you did for him.”

“Let him know?” Baiwei was startled. “Right. Let him know about your sacrifice,” Blacktiger said calmly. “You’ve paid a high price for him; if he doesn’t even learn of it, then wouldn’t that mean that you did it for nothing? If he were to ‘accidentally’ find out the truth of what transpired, then he will naturally feel grateful towards you.”

Baiwei frowned. “Isn’t that a bit artificial and contrived?” “Contrived?” Blacktiger gave his son a glance. “You just need to let him find out by ‘accident’; after all, you really did take on responsibility for his actions. Remember...although you must be sincere in taking care of your friends, you need to be slightly strategic about it as well. This is the principle behind using your human resources.”

“Think about what I have said.” Blacktiger gave his son a frowning glance. His son was extremely intelligent, and he had high hopes for him. However, thanks to the influence of Baiwei’s mother, he was sometimes excessively sincere in his treatment of his friends. Although this allowed him to make some truly good friends, a temperament like this would make it very hard for him to truly dominate and unify a powerbase.

“Let’s go,” Blacktiger said, leading the triangle-pupiled elder away with him. The frozen atmosphere within the courtyard instantly grew calm, and the beautiful maid who had been singing a little song nearby suddenly came to her senses. “What, what happened?”

She didn’t see anything or hear anything earlier; in fact, it was as though she had lost a portion of her memories. She just vaguely remembered the master of the estate, Northmont Blacktiger, arriving. And then, by the time she regained her faculties, Northmont Blacktiger was departing.

“Strategy? Using your human resources?” Baiwei frowned. “Father...you are calculating towards everyone...and that’s why Mother left you. You are you. I am myself.”

His father wanted to train him and make him into a second Northmont Blacktiger.

But he was Northmont Baiwei.

The one and only Northmont Baiwei!

“I wonder how Ji Ning is doing,” Baiwei worried silently to himself.

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Ning’s group had flown for half a month and had arrived at Stillwater Commandery’s ‘Dawn Bay’. Dawn Bay was roughly equivalent to Swallow Mountain in size.

“Shui Yi’s tribe really is puny.” A ship that was six hundred meters wide was floating atop Dawn Bay. The Dawn River was more than a million kilometers in length, and it was a large river that passed through nearly half of Stillwater Commandery. Northson, atop the ship, said with a sigh, “It actually doesn’t even have a single commandery city!”

“It is quite weak.” Ning nodded. The Ji clan at least had a commandery city of the Grand Xia Dynasty, the City of Ten Thousand Swords; being in possession of at least one commandery city was necessary for a clan to be considered a local hegemony. But Shui Yi’s clan, the Shui clan, was truly puny.

Before Shui Yi had appeared, their clan was an extremely ordinary, weak one. Afterwards, Shui Yi had become a servant for the extremely large and powerful Dong clan, and had been trained by the Dong clan until he had risen to the Zifu Disciple level. He had also served young master Dong Seven for a long time. Naturally, he brought prominence to his Shui clan as well.

With Shui Yi’s assistance, the Shui clan slowly grew more powerful and built a city of their own. But of course, it wasn’t a commandery city; it was more like the Ji clan’s ‘West Prefecture City’, a self-built city.

In addition, the Shui clan was actually under the umbrella of another clan. Because Shui Yi remained with the Dong clan, it didn’t cause any troubles for the Shui clan, and so it continued to grow to the point where it now had a middle-stage Zifu Disciple guarding over it.

“Senior apprentice-brother, how are you planning to draw out Shui Yi and have him leave the Dong clan?” Northson laughed as he looked towards Ning. “Simple.” Ning shook his head. “His clan, the Shui clan, is too puny; the entire clan only has a single Zifu Disciple guarding it. I have plenty of ways to send the entire Shui clan into a state of panic and chaos! To force Shui Yi to immediately hurry back!”

And indeed, he did have many methods. The Shui clan was far too weak; whenever it encountered any major troubles, it would immediately reach out to Shui Yi to beg for rescue.

“Master, let’s kill them. If we slaughter the clan, it will be sent into a state of chaos,” Qingqing said. But Ning shook his head. “No need.”

Much like how when he killed River He of the Riverside tribe, he didn’t act against River He’s son, Ning wouldn’t act against the other members of the Shui clan. As to the potential fall of the Shui clan with Shui Yi’s death...Ning would just calmly watch.

As an Immortal cultivator with a powerful Dao-heart, Ning was extremely confident in his actions, and he wouldn’t act in a way that was contrary to his Dao-heart. If, in the past, he had acted to kill River He’s son, it would have affected his faith in his own heart and would’ve posed a major obstacle to his path of cultivation.

“If you don’t attack them, how will you throw them into a state of chaos?” Qingqing muttered.

“It’ll be quite quick. Wait here. I’ll pay a visit and will be back in the amount of time needed to boil a kettle of tea.” A sword-light flashed into existence beneath Ning’s feet, and he soared through the air, moving towards the headquarters of the Shui clan, located thousands of kilometers away; Yishui City.

The Desolate Era

Book 9: Ji Ning of Serpentwing Lake Chapter 13: The End of the Road for Shui Yi

Yishui City.

This was a newly constructed city. It had been slowly built up as the Shui clan had begun to flourish, and it was guarded by the current Patriarch of the Shui clan, the Zifu Disciple, Shui Tianyi.

“Eh?”

Ning stood atop the clouds, staring downwards. His divine sense covered the entire city. By now, Ning had enough power that he could've annihilated this entire city, but as an Immortal cultivator...Ning didn't dare to massacre too many commoners. For Immortal cultivators to kill commoners was a taboo and a grave sin! But of course, if commoners dared to offend cultivators, cultivators could naturally punish them, but a large-scale massacre would result in sin swirling around one's body...and just like Bei Zishan, invite the assaults of the Raindragon Guard!

"It seems as though those ten are all potentially the Patriarch of the Shui clan." Ning's divine sense swept out and identified several people with fairly powerful souls and strong auras, but he wasn't able to accurately ascertain their strength just by looking at them.

After watching for a bit longer..."It's him." Ning quickly picked out the actual Patriarch of the Shui clan.

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"Patriarch."

"Milord."

When Shui Tianyi was walking across the stone path, the other clansmen were incomparably respectful towards him, because he was the only Zifu Disciple guarding the clan! But of course, there was also the even more powerful 'Shui Yi', who was located in the distant, incomparably powerful Dong clan.

These people had no idea that the fact that they were respectfully addressing Shui Tianyi as 'Patriarch' had let Ning, high above them in the skies, know exactly who the Patriarch was.

"Mm." The blue-robed Shui Tianyi's long beard billowed in the wind. He did appear quite distinguished. Soon, he arrived at his quiet, secluded meditation room. No servants were here, and no clansmen dared to draw near. To his clansmen and servants, his meditation room was an extremely mysterious place that no one would dare to disturb.

Within the private room. Shui Tianyi sat down in the lotus position, his eyelids drooping. "My Shui clan is increasingly flourishing. The liquefied elemental essence which Elder Yi has delivered us has allowed our clan to produce three more peak Xiantian experts. If one of them were to break through to the Zifu level, that would be wonderful. Our Shui clan currently has too few Zifu Disciples!"

As the Patriarch of a tribe, Shui Tianyi held a deep desire to let his tribe grow stronger. Their current status was simply too awkward. Weak? They did have Zifu Disciples. Strong? They didn't even have a single commandery city! An awkward status like this naturally caused Shui Tianyi and 'Elder Yi', these two Zifu Disciples, to rack their brains for methods for strengthening their tribes.

"Endure for now." Shui Tianyi still remembered the words which Elder Shui Yi had told him. "Tianyi, don't be impatient. Take things one step at a time. The roots of our tribe are simply too shallow...if we are too impatient, we might be viewed with hostility by the other great powers in the Dawn Bay region, at which point, we might be in danger of being annihilated. We need to be patient and slowly wait. Since I am with the Dong clan, the other powers of the Dawn Bay region won't launch a war against us. When we have more Zifu Disciples in the tribe, I will bring over some of my good friends from the Dong clan and establish a base and foundation for our Shui clan!"

“Elder Shui Yi has sacrificed far too much for our tribe,” Shui Tianyi said with a silent sigh. It was only because Shui Yi had willingly entered the Dong clan as a servant that he had been able to slowly help the Shui clan.

“Eh?” Shui Tianyi suddenly felt a powerful collision against his soul. BOOM! Everything in the world instantly went dark. A sword-light flashed past, piercing through the roof of the private room, and a figure entered the room. Ning stood there in the room, a white sack having appeared out of nowhere into his hands.

“Come in!” Ning opened the bag, and the bag instantly unleashed a powerful, wild sucking power. Whooooooosh. The sucking power was so great that the nearby plates and utensils were all drawn in. As for the dazed and completely defenseless Shui Tianyi, he too was drawn directly into the sack. This sack was known as the ‘one-breath sack’, and was only a Mortal-ranked magic treasure. The sack possessed a sucking power that could draw objects into it, and although it didn’t seem to be larger, it could store quite a few meters worth of objects.

This sack wasn’t able to be used to actually attack others. Only when enemies were completely helpless would they be absorbed into it. To put it simply, this was used to store people! It was impossible to breathe within the ‘one-breath sack’, and so ordinary people who were drawn into it would all suffocate to death. Xiantian lifeforms and above, however, would be fine even if they couldn’t breathe.

“Hmph.” Ning immediately tied the sack off with a rope. Then, with a wave of his hand, he sent out a powerful surge of strength from his Fiendgod-enhanced arms, smashing directly against the wooden table and blasting it apart in an explosion of sound.

“Time to leave.” The large sack over his shoulders, Ning transformed into a streak of light, moving towards the hole he had created moments earlier, charging into the heavens and disappearing.

The people outside were naturally able to hear the explosive sounds which came from within the private room.

“What just happened?”

“A streak of light seemed to soar into the skies, just now.”

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! The Xiantian experts of the Shui clan all hurried over, moving so fast as to appear like blurs. Quite a few of them saw the streak of light soar into the skies, moving so fast that they could only vaguely tell that it was human-shaped.

“So fast...it should have been an Immortal cultivator.”

“A cultivator flew out from the Patriarch’s private room?”

“Not good.”

All of them began to panic.

“Look, there’s a giant hole in the roof of the private room.” The Xiantian lifeforms who had reached this place first had flown in at a high enough angle that they could immediately see the large hole in the private room’s ceiling.

“Let’s go in.”

“Quick.”

They each leapt into that giant hole.

The Shui clan was truly too weak. The strongest member of the clan, Shui Yi, was merely a servant for the Dong clan, and so only the Patriarch’s private room was made of decent materials. Ordinary Xiantian lifeforms wouldn’t be able to break through the room, but Zifu Disciples generally would be able to.

The private rooms of the formal disciples of the Black-White College, by comparison, couldn’t be broken into by even the likes of Loose Immortals.

“Where’s the Patriarch?”

“It’s a disaster zone inside.”

“The table has been smashed, and the roof was broken apart, and the Patriarch is gone.” The entire Shui clan was instantly thrown into a state of panic. The very first thing they did was to go investigate the Patriarch’s life-tablet in the ancestral hall. When they did, they let out sighs of relief.

“The Patriarch’s life-tablet is intact. The Patriarch isn’t dead.”

“But why has the Patriarch gone missing?”

“Which Immortal cultivator attacked him?”

The Shui clan remained restless and uneasy. Their most powerful cultivator, the Patriarch, had gone missing; how could they not be uneasy? At this point in time, they thought of the most powerful member of their clan; Elder Yi, also known as Shui Yi, who was a servant within the Dong clan.

“Quick, ask Elder Yi to come back.”

“Quick, ask for Elder Yi to return.”

Ning, in the clouds above, held the one-breath sack over his shoulder as he inspected the below area with his divine sense. “As I thought, they have gone to ask Shui Yi to come.” Ning revealed a smile on his face. “However, from here to the Snowcloud Fields of the Dong clan is quite far. It will take anywhere from half a month to one or two months.”

Ning glanced sideways at the one-breath sack on his shoulder. “This fellow is a Zifu Disciple. He’ll survive a month or two being trapped inside this sack.”

Time flowed on.

The Shui clan had immediately shattered an insignia, causing Shui Yi, located in the distant Dong clan, to be greatly shocked. He knew that something major must have occurred within his clan, as otherwise, they wouldn’t have shattered it.

“I have to go back right away.” Shui Yi instantly applied for a leave of absence from the high-level members of the Dong clan. As a peak Zifu Disciple, he was naturally no ordinary servant, and could be said to have some status within the clan...a leave of absence to pay a visit to his home was a small

matter. The high level members of the Dong clan had naturally nodded in approval. That very day, Shui Yi had embarked on a return trip back to his clan.

Roughly half a month later.

Just a hundred kilometers away from Yishui City, atop a wild, untamed, forested mountain, there was a beautiful estate. This was Northson's construct-estate, and it was covered by formations that ensured that commoners and Xiantian experts would have no chance of discovering it. Ning's group, for now, took up residence within this place.

"Master, would Shui Yi perhaps not return?" Qingqing said, worried. Ning shook his head. "This is his tribe, and he is the most powerful member of it. How can he not come back?" Aside from a very small minority of figures who had been humiliated by their tribes, most members of a tribe who had grown up within it would feel a powerful sense of belonging to their tribes. This was part of the law of survival in this vast world. If one wanted to live a good life, the entire tribe would have to be incomparably unified.

One generation after another would do battle for the sake of the tribe; this had become a form of faith for the countless tribesmen. Even those who weren't truly infatuated with and loyal to their tribes would generally return when the tribe was in trouble.

"Eh?" A flash of sword-light suddenly appeared in Ning's eyes. The nearby white-robed Uncle White glanced towards Ning as well. "He's back?" Ning nodded. "He's back!"

"Let's go." Uncle White couldn't resist any longer as well, and Ning nodded. "Right." Swoosh! Swoosh! Ning and Uncle White soared into the skies, quickly moving towards Shui Yi, who was currently hastening back towards Yishui City.

"We'll follow them as well." Northson and Qingqing immediately transformed into streaks of light, following after them.

In midair. A green, leaf-type magic treasure was soaring through the skies, with a gray-robed Daoist standing atop it. Shui Yi had a black birthmark on his face, and he always bore a smile, which gave him a rather crafty, sly look. However, a sly, craft person like him...had been able to claw his way to increasingly greater heights within the vast Dong clan, and rise from becoming a servant to a peak Zifu Disciple.

Actually, in addition to from those who had truly formidable backgrounds, the Immortal cultivators who had clawed their way up the ladder, one step at a time, could not be underestimated!

"What exactly happened? Why did they break the seal and ask for me to return? Even Tianyi couldn't handle this matter?" Shui Yi, till this very moment, had no idea what had happened.

"Here I am." Shui Yi could already see the distant Yishui City. The reason why Yishui City was named Yishui was precisely because the entire clan wanted to express its gratitude to him, Shui Yi.

"Swoosh." Just as Shui Yi controlled his green leaf-type magic treasure to soar down from the clouds, suddenly...

Swish! A streak of light suddenly flew past, blocking his way. "Eh?" Shui Yi's face changed. Just as he was about to reach Yishui City, another cultivator had come to bar his way? Shui Yi instantly sensed danger.

He took a close look. Standing in the air opposite from him was a fur-clad youth and a white-robed man. The white-robed man appeared to be the fur-clad youth's servant or housekeeper. The fur-clad youth just stood there, staring at Shui Yi, his eyes as cold as ice. He said in an icy voice, "So you are Shui Yi?"

The Desolate Era

Book 9: Ji Ning of Serpentwing Lake Chapter 14: Return to Serpentwing Lake

"Not good." Shui Yi was secretly shocked; he could sense that both the fur-clad youth and the white-robed steward by his side both posed a serious threat to him.

This sensation came from the killing intent that filled the hearts of Ning and Uncle White. Shui Yi could sense it, and thus his heart was filled with dread.

"I am Shui Yi. Given that the two of you have stopped me, I imagine that you already know who I am." Shui Yi looked at the two of them. "I imagine that you two also expected that I would hurry back here from the distant Dong clan. Our Shui tribe is a small one, and it isn't overly ambitious; if there's anything you want, just go ahead and tell me. As long as I can accomplish it...naturally, I won't decline."

His words were simple, but at the same time, he not only issued a threat via his backers, the Dong clan, he also assumed a humble attitude. In an ordinary power struggle, this would be enough for the two sides to enter a negotiation. However...this wasn't a power struggle. This was revenge!

"I want you..." Ning suddenly moved as he executed the Windwing Evasion, and a flashing sword-light stabbed directly through Shui Yi's chest. Shui Yi wanted to dodge, and in fact, he even sent a few flying swords in front of him, but the difference in power between them was too great...in terms of power or in terms of the Dao, the difference was too great. In a single exchange, Shui Yi's chest was pierced through.

"You...you!" Shui Yi stared. His flying swords fell down from midair, and multiple magic treasures spilled out next to him. Although his storage-type magic treasure remained with him, it was now an ownerless item, because his Zifu had been completely destroyed.

"You destroyed my Zifu..." Shui Yi couldn't believe it.

"I'll take these." Ning waved his hand, collecting all of the magic treasures, then turned to stare coldly at Shui Yi. Although his Zifu had been destroyed, Shui Yi still stood there in midair, not sinking down at all...because an enormous Waterflame Lotus had bloomed beneath him, and Shui Yi was standing right on top of it, at its center. The lotus wasn't swiveling; naturally, it contained no killing power.

"Why did you destroy my Zifu. I...I don't even know you." Shui Yi was stupefied. This sudden calamity was beyond his ability to comprehend. "Who exactly are you? Who are you!!!" Shui Yi's face began to twist and distort. With his Zifu destroyed, his Immortal path had been severed; he would have no more hopes for advancement.

"Shui Yi, do you recognize me?" The nearby Uncle White transformed into mist, and then reformed into a snowy white dog.

"A Godbeast, Whitewater Hound?" When Shui Yi saw it, memories from twenty-plus years ago suddenly flooded his mind. These were memories from back when he followed young master Dong Seven. Back then, he had done all sorts of dastardly deeds with Dong Seven, but he had been completely fearless,

because the young master would be able to deal with any repercussions. That truly was an enjoyable period of time for him.

Back then, he and Yu Dong had received orders to go capture a woman...but that woman's elder brother and husband had used forbidden arts, frantically trying to block them. At that time, a snowy white dog had carried the woman away and fled.

"You...you are that Whitewater Hound?" Shui Yi looked at Ji Ning. "And you, you are...?"

"Those people you acted against were my uncle, my father, and my mother!" Ning stared at him, the cold look in his eyes causing Shui Yi's heart to tremble.

"You are that child the woman was pregnant with?" Shui Yi stared. Good heavens. It was only twenty or so years. The child that woman was pregnant with had become this powerful? Could it be that the woman was pregnant with a reincarnated Immortal?

"Hmph." With but a thought, Ning sent the elemental ki surging from his body, forming into a glowing rune that appeared in front of him. It was the Heartburner Art. The shining runic seal instantly merged into Shui Yi's body.

"Enjoy this," Ning said with cold emotionlessness. Shui Yi instantly let out an agonized scream. His flesh and his bones began to twist and distort, and his skin turned completely red. The agony was causing him to scream in pain.

"Kill me, kill me!" Heartrending roars rang out from Shui Yi's mouth, but Ning just watched him calmly. "KILL ME!" Shui Yi bellowed. "Make it clean and fast!"

"Clean and fast? If I granted you your wish, who would come and grant me mine? Can you let my parents come back to life? Let my uncle come back to life?" Ning stared at him coldly. Shui Yi's flesh was beginning to char, and his eyes had turned completely red. This was hell itself.

"I curse you, I curse you. You'll die a miserable death, a miserable death!" Utterly agonized, Shui Yi stared death at Ning, filled with a towering rage.

Crackle, crackle, crackle...his body began to actually flicker with flames as it began to burn...

Ning produced the incense burner magic treasure. "In you go!" A soul was directly absorbed into the incense burner, then was corroded and destroyed. Ning then waved his hand, collecting all of the magic treasures that remained in the surrounding area.

Ning, previously incomparably icy, suddenly turned calm. Only, a very complicated look remained in his eyes. "Two are dead," Ning said softly.

"Ning, son, your father and your mother never would have imagined that two out of the three culprits would have died in your hands so quickly." Uncle White stood there to one side, gently patting Ning on the shoulders. "If they knew, they would definitely feel very gratified."

"The last one, Dong Seven, remains. However, he's at Snowdragon Mountain. That's the headquarters of a school; even Loose Immortals would be cautious about charging into it. I have no chance at all, right now," Ning said softly. "I'll wait. I'll let Dong Seven live for a bit longer, but when the time comes, I'll destroy his soul as well!"

Revenge. Naturally, he wouldn't give them a chance at all. These enemies were all Immortal cultivators with extremely powerful souls. Generally speaking, after they died and went to the Netherworld Kingdom, they could cooperate and become ghost soldiers, and eventually train to become Ghost Immortals. Ning wouldn't permit this to occur.

"Let's go. The others have been waiting quite a while," Uncle White said. Ning turned his head and saw the distant Mu Northson and Little Qing. They clearly didn't want to disturb Ning as he was taking revenge, and so simply had watched from far away.

"Right. It's time to go back." Next, Ning released Shui Tianyi. They were no grudges between them; given Ning's proud disposition, he wouldn't stoop to massacring this man. However, with Shui Yi's death, in the future, the entire Shui clan would definitely begin to decay.

At the Crimson Dragon Mountains, the headquarters of the Raindragon Guard, not too far away from Stillwater City.

Ning and Northson both handed in their missions. "With these ten karmic points, we'll have a hundred years of leisure." Northson looked towards Ning. "Senior apprentice-brother, where are you planning to go?"

"I plan to go home," Ning said. "I will probably stay permanently at Serpentwing Lake in my homeland, Swallow Mountain. I'll occasionally go out and do some adventuring, but most of the time, I'll be staying at Swallow Mountain."

That place was his home.

That place had the people he was most familiar with.

That place had the underwater estate which would be of great use to him.

And similarly...it had been a long, long time since he had drifted about on a small boat on Serpentwing Lake, and enjoyed that feeling, that truly warm sensation, of being in the embrace of his father and his mother. He missed that sort of feeling.

"Back to Serpentwing Lake?" Northson paused for a moment, then said, "Senior apprentice-brother, then I'll part with you for a time. I want to focus on analyzing the Dao of Constructs...I am going to return to the school. My master has reached an extremely deep level of understanding regarding the Dao of Constructs, and being with her is of great help to me. In addition, Master is close to the end of her life; I want to spend some time with her."

Ning could sense that this junior apprentice-brother of his truly viewed Daoist Jade with affection, almost like the affection a son felt for a mother. After all, his actual mother had long since passed away.

"Alright." Ning nodded. "Let's split up for now. If you are free in the future, you can come to Serpentwing Lake of Swallow Mountain."

"Right. When the time comes, I'll definitely go to visit you, senior apprentice-brother," Northson said with a nod. And then, Northson rode his dragon-headed warship into the skies, flying straight towards Stillwater City.

As for Ning, he just watched as his junior apprentice-brother left. Then, he turned to Little Qing and Uncle White. "Let's go." They walked towards the Crimson Dragon Mountain's teleportation array. This place was rather far away from Swallow Mountain, and going through the array would be somewhat faster.

Swallow Mountain. The mountains were the same mountains; the water was the same water. A ship was soaring through its skies, and aboard it was a fur-clad youth, a large, snowy white hound, and also a little azure snake, the latest addition to the party.

"We're back." As Ning stared at the sight of his homeland, he revealed a hint of a smile on his face. "When I left, it was winter, and white snow covered the entire place. Upon my return...it is still the cold winter."

When he had left the Black-White College and joined the Raindragon Guard, it had been the middle of summer. However, after the trials at the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains, the pursuit of criminal suspects, and the killing of Yu Dong and Shui Yi, it was already the middle of winter. The ground below was covered with silver-white decorations of snow. Swallow Mountain was a cold place to begin with, and in the winter, it was almost completely covered in snow. When Ning was born, the world was covered in snow as well.

"Serpentwing Lake." The Whitewater Hound suddenly spoke in the human tongue. "We're here." Ning, too, stared at the vast Serpentwing Lake. Although snow had built up on the banks of the lake, the waters of the seemingly endless lake continued to flow forth in waves. A lake of this size...even in the coldest of temperatures, it would very rarely be completely frozen over.

"Serpentwing Lake." Upon seeing the lake, Ning felt a surge of warmth. His mother's ashes...his father's ashes...they had all been sprinkled into the waters of this lake. The boat drifted downwards from the skies, landing in the middle of the lake.

"Father. Mother." Ning looked towards the lake, then revealed a smile. "I'm back. Of our three enemies, your son was only strong enough to kill two of them for now. One of them is awaiting his turn. He, too, will die."

"Uncle White. I'm going to sleep for a time," Ning said. The Whitewater Hound nodded. Ning then lay down on the boat, feeling incomparably relaxed and comfortable. The boat drifted atop the surface of the lake. It felt so very wonderful, far more so than sleeping on a bed. The gentle rocking movements of the boat stop the waters of the lake...it felt like how, when he was an infant, his mother had constantly cradled him in her arms.

The boat slowly rocked forward, a Whitewater Hound lying on one side of it, and with a little azure serpent wrapped around Ning's wrist, snugly nestled against him.

Slowly, the boat floated towards the center, towards Brighthouse Island.

Sundown. Only now did the boat draw close to the shores of Brighthouse Island. Ning could sense the auras of the many people living on the island, and he naturally rose to his feet. As he rose to his feet, he saw the distant snowbanks, and a white-robed woman standing within them, staring towards him, unable to disguise the tears within her eyes.

“Autumn Leaf!” Ji Ning revealed a smile on his face. “I’m back.”

The Desolate Era

Book 9: Ji Ning of Serpentwing Lake Chapter 15: The Rise of the Ji Clan

“Young master.” Autumn Leaf’s eyes flashed with tears, but these were the tears of joy. Ning laughed as well. It had been so long since he had seen Autumn Leaf. Since he was a child, the closest to him had been his father, his mother, Uncle White, Spring Grass, and Autumn Leaf. His parents and Spring Grass had all passed away, leaving behind only Uncle White and Autumn Leaf. Ning knew that what he felt for Autumn Leaf wasn’t romantic love; it was a sort of familial love.

“Four years. Autumn Leaf, you haven’t changed much at all. You should’ve broken through to become a Xiantian lifeform.” Ning walked over to her. Autumn Leaf hurriedly wiped her tears away, then said, “It was all thanks to the medicines that you left behind, young master; they helped me to break through to the Xiantian level.”

Ning didn’t feel the slightest bit surprised by the fact that Autumn Leaf had made a breakthrough, because as someone who had been selected to be his personal handmaiden, she was naturally quite talented. With the help of the medicines he had left behind for her, Autumn Leaf did indeed have a very high chance of becoming a Xiantian lifeform.

“Have you been well, these past four years?” Ning asked.

“I’ve been alright. Brighthouse Island is the same as it always has been, while the Ji clan has been growing more and more powerful,” Autumn Leaf said. “After that battle, Snowdragon Mountain’s forces in the Swallow Mountain region grew much weaker. Although they sent three more Zifu Disciples to be stationed at the Swallow Mountain branch, after news spread that you joined the Black-White College, young master, the Swallow Mountain branch of Snowdragon Mountain no longer dared to cause trouble.”

Ning nodded. In terms of power, since the Swallow Mountain branch of Snowdragon Mountain had the support of the main Snowdragon Mountain sect, it had far more experts and a much deeper base of strength than the Ji clan.

However, Ning joined the Black-White College. When Northmont Baiwei had sent people to Swallow Mountain to collect and harvest the elemental ore mines, he had also sent messengers to inform the Ji clan that Ning had joined the Black-White College. Once this news spread, the Ji clan’s reputation instantly soared to unprecedented heights.

Good heavens. The Black-White College! To the powers located in the Swallow Mountain region, the Black-White College was an incomparably massive behemoth that was far beyond their level. According to legend, every single person admitted to the Black-White College was a supreme, peerless, monstrous genius. Even Snowdragon Mountain, despite its grudge against Ji Ning, had to temporarily stay their hand and let go of their hate.

“And Bluestone?” Ning asked. “Bluestone.” Autumn Leaf turned and called his name out, and a tall, muscular youth ran towards them from far away.

Ning was shocked. What a tall, muscular fellow! The man was at least 1.9 meters tall, even taller than Ning himself. When Ning had left, Bluestone had been a mere youngster, but after four years...he'd actually grown so tall!

"Big Brother." Bluestone walked over. "Why were you hiding over there?" Ning laughed as he 'reprimanded' Bluestone. He had watched Bluestone grow up from his toddler years, and had long since come to view Bluestone as his own little brother.

Bluestone chortled. "I wanted to let Big Sister Autumn Leaf and you, Big Brother, have a private meeting, alright?"

Autumn Leaf instantly stared at him. As for Ning, he just laughed.

"Big Brother, why do you have a snake around your arm?" Bluestone saw the little azure snake wrapped around Ning's wrist.

"Little Qing," Ning called out. Whoosh; the little azure snake instantly transformed into mist, and then reformed into an azure-robed maiden. Even Autumn Leaf was shocked, and as for the nearby Bluestone, he actually jumped. "A monster! A Diremonster!"

"I'm a Wanxiang Diremonster! A peak Wanxiang Diremonster!" Qingqing raised her head and spoke smugly.

"A Wanxiang Diremonster?" Bluestone blinked. Although Ning had originally left behind some pills and treasures for him, in terms of talent, Bluestone was somewhat inferior to even Autumn Leaf. Although Autumn Leaf had already become a Xiantian lifeform, Bluestone remained unable to break through, and was still at the Houtian stage. However, he knew about the major levels of Immortal cultivators.

"Peak Wanxiang? Our Patriarch of the Ji clan seems to only be a Zifu Disciple." Bluestone looked towards the azure-robed maiden, unable to believe that this was someone who could easily crush the Patriarch of the Ji clan.

Ning laughed. "Little Qing was originally an Azure Skysnake who lived in the Swallow Mountains. Afterwards, fate brought us together in the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains, and so she accompanied me and became my spirit-beast."

"Your spirit-beast, Big Brother?" Bluestone let out a sigh of relief, then asked with curiosity, "Big Brother, are you at the peak Wanxiang level yet?" "Late Wanxiang level, a bit weaker than Little Qing," Ning said.

"Although Master's only at the late Wanxiang level, I'm far from being his match." Qingqing lowered her head and said, "Master...he's a real monster, even more of a monster than me."

Autumn Leaf and Bluestone were both delighted and surprised. Autumn Leaf then looked at the Whitewater Hound behind Ning. "Uncle White, you..." "Uncle White is also at the late Wanxiang level," Ning said.

"This...this..." Autumn Leaf instantly realized how, despite only a few years having passed, her young master had improved at an utterly astonishing rate.

The Whitewater Hound began to speak in the human tongue. “Monsters train much more slowly, and many monsters will take thousands of years to go from the Zifu level to the Wanxiang level, and tens of thousands of years to go from the Wanxiang level to the Primal level...although I reached the necessary level of insights long ago, in terms of accumulated elemental ki, I had needed to accumulate much more. Fortunately, Ning helped me, and thus I very quickly reached the Wanxiang level.”

“Three Wanxiang experts.” Bluestone was full of delight and excitement. “The other powers of Swallow Mountain don’t even have a single Wanxiang Adept amongst their ranks, but our Ji clan has suddenly gained three. This is too...too...ahahaha, we’re going to be invincible!”

“The young master’s formidable, but you aren’t. He gave you excellent techniques, excellent masters, and various treasures and spirit-pills...but you still have yet to become a Xiantian lifeform. When the young master was your age, he was able to effortlessly kill Zifu Disciples,” Autumn Leaf scolded.

“How can I compare to Big Brother? In terms of cultivating, I can’t even compare to you, Big Sister Autumn Leaf,” Bluestone shook his head. Autumn Leaf scolded him angrily, “You don’t work hard, and you always make excuses for yourself.”

Seeing this, Ning actually felt a strong, warm feeling surge into his heart. It was just like before; Autumn Leaf also treated Bluestone as she would her own little brother.

Ji Ning had returned. The unparalleled genius, the disciple of Black-White College, Ji Ning. He had come back to Swallow Mountain. This news quickly stunned the entire Ji clan, and the members of the clan celebrated and danced for joy.

Soon, the likes of Patriarch Ji Ninefire, Ji Young, Ji Redflower, and the others, including the most outstanding youths the Ji clan had produced in recent years...they all made their way to Brightheart Island of Serpentwing Lake!

“This is a Wanxiang serpent monster?”

“The Whitewater Hound has become a Wanxiang Diremonster as well?”

The Patriarch and the others, upon arriving, were all astonished. They weren’t too surprised by the fact that Ning had become a Wanxiang Adept, as Ji Ning had been able to easily slay the Wanxiang Adept, Xu Li, in the past. In addition, Ji Ning had entered the legendary Black-White College; in their hearts, for a monster like Ji Ning to improve so rapidly was perfectly normal. If he trained as slowly as they did, that would be quite surprising.

“Patriarch,” Ning said, “Recently, I joined the Raindragon Guard.” The nearby Ninefire, Granny Shadow, Ji Truekeep, and Young all revealed looks of surprise on delight on their normally calm faces. They didn’t know that Ning had recently joined the Raindragon Guard; however, they weren’t at all surprised by the fact that he was strong enough to join them.

“After joining the Raindragon Guard, I was granted the authority to designate a region of ten thousand kilometers to be protected by the Raindragon Guard! Even if I were to die in the future, this land would still be protected by the Raindragon Guard for a thousand years. The region I designated has the City of Ten Thousand Swords at the center, and the other four prefectural cities included within it as well.”

“Here’s the talisman.” Ning took out a talisman, then said, “Only Zifu Disciples can bind it. After doing so, hang it above the gates of the Lord Prefect’s residence at the City of Ten Thousand Swords. When you do so, the entire city’s walls will have a vague outline of a Raindragon appear. Others will instantly know that this place is under the protection of the Raindragon Guard, and they won’t dare to invade.”

Ninefire accepted the talisman with incomparable excitement. “This will be the foundation of our clan, the foundation of our clan! With this talisman, our clan’s base will be even more secure, and our Ji clan will definitely flourish and grow!” The nearby Truekeep and others were all filled with anticipation and eagerness as well.

“Ji Ning, how long will you remain, this time?” Ninefire asked. “In the future,” Ning said, “I’ll permanently live here at Serpentwing Lake. I’ll occasionally go out and take on some missions for the Raindragon Guard, and also occasionally pay a visit to my master at the Black-White College of Stillwater City. The rest of the time, I should be here.”

There were some students of the Black-White College who always stayed at the College. This was because the college had the Black-White Diagram, and because they could often discuss the Dao with their fellow disciples. Ning, however, was different. First of all, Immortal Diancai only occasionally provided guidance to him. As for the Black-White Diagram? It wasn’t of too much benefit to Ning, as it would be enough for him to just go view it occasionally. This was because Ning had the underwater estate, which was even better. The Stellar Hall of the underwater estate was far more formidable than the Black-White Diagram.

Whether for the sake of the clan, or because of the underwater estate, or for the sake of the calmness of his own soul, Ning would choose to remain at Serpentwing Lake.

“Good. Good!” Ninefire, overjoyed, said hurriedly, “It won’t affect your training, will it? No matter what, training as an Immortal is of paramount concern.”

“It will not,” Ning shook his head. “Good.” Ninefire nodded repeatedly. “With you here long-term, Ji Ning, and with two Wanxiang Diremonsters...our Ji clan’s power will grow exponentially. With this additional power, our Ji clan will flourish still further, and our territory will grow.”

“Right. Three Wanxiang Adepts, and with Ning possibly being a Primal Daoist in the future! The territory our Ji clan has is too small.” Granny Shadow, Ji Truekeep, and the others all began to grow excited. The larger one’s stomach was, the more food one could eat. In the past, the Ji clan’s power was limited, and so they naturally didn’t dare to desire too much. But now that Ji Ning was so powerful, and now that he had two Wanxiang Diremonsters, and had the support of the Black-White College? Given their power, the Ji clan was naturally going to flourish.

“Do as you see fit.” Ning agreed, because this had been his father’s hope as well. “If you run into any trouble...Little Qing, Uncle White, the two of you need to give them a hand.”

“Leave it to me,” Qingqing said confidently. “Swallow Mountain only has us three Wanxiang Adepts; doesn’t that mean we’ll be able to do whatever the hell we want?”

“Haha...” Ninefire and the others all began to roar with laughter.

Ji Ning's decision to stay at Serpentwing Lake sent excitement throughout the Ji clan. Ning also gave some guidance to some of the more promising new talents of the Ji clan. However, these so-called talents could only be considered talents in the Swallow Mountain region; none of them truly astonished Ning. Ning soon understood that the fellow disciples he usually interacted with were all members of the Black-White College...how could the 'geniuses' of a small clan such as the Ji clan compare with them?

Reuniting with his clan members. Providing guidance to his juniors. After three days, things at Brightheart Island finally calmed down. Only now did Ning enter his private study room.

"The underwater estate." With but a thought, Ning manifested an enormous phantom of a grizzly bear's head within his private room. The phantom bear had a hint of a smile on its face. Opening its mouth, it swallowed Ning into it.

Ning disappeared from the private room. He had returned to the 'underwater estate', located in a different dimension.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 9: Ji Ning of Serpentwing Lake Chapter 16: Comprehending the Dao in the Stellar Hall

The large, ancient hall was the same as it had been in the past. Those giant prayer mats remained in the same positions as they had for trillions of years.

Ning materialized out of nowhere within this main hall. He instantly saw an old black bull and a giant yellow bear, and he hurriedly said with respect, "Ji Ning greets you two, seniors."

"Late Wanxiang stage?" The giant yellow bear nodded slightly. "You've improved quite quickly as a Ki Refiner, but you have only reached the ninth stage as a Fiendgod. You are a bit slower."

"Already at the Wanxiang level?" The old black bull was quite surprised. He looked at Ning. "Ji Ning, kiddo, it seems as though you are already much more powerful than our fourth master, Rampart. Rampart died at the Wanxiang level, you know."

Ning just grinned. As for the giant yellow bear, he nodded. "Ji Ning is naturally much more powerful than Rampart; his talent is comparable to a reincarnated Immortal's."

"You praise me too much, senior," Ning said with a laugh. Naturally, he felt quite pleased at being praised. "I wonder how much of a chance I would currently have at challenging the third level of the Wargod Hall?"

"Less than ten percent." The giant yellow bear shook his head. "What?!" Ning was shocked. When he had left Swallow Mountain and gone to Stillwater City, he had already successfully passed the second level of the Wargod Hall. In the past four years, he had only grown more powerful as a Fiendgod Body Refiner, and had embarked on the path of the Dao of the Sword...and yet the spirit of the estate, the giant yellow bear, was actually saying with great certainty that he had less than a ten percent change of passing the third level?

"Senior, you don't even know what level I have reached in the sword," Ning protested. The giant yellow bear shook his head. "Ji Ning, you don't understand. The first and second levels of the Wargod Hall, upon being completed, result in rewards of Mortal-ranked magic treasures or items of comparable value. But the third and fourth levels, when completed, will result in you acquiring Earth-ranked

magic treasures or items of comparable value...in short, after every two levels of the Wargod Hall, the difficulty skyrockets.”

“Skyrockets?” Ning frowned.

“Right. The first and second levels of the Wargod Hall are generally meant to be a test for Fiendgods who have reached the Zifu level. The third and fourth levels, however, are meant for Fiendgods who have reached the Wanxiang level.” The giant yellow bear looked towards Ning. “Generally speaking, only when Fiendgods have reached the Wanxiang level will they have a chance at passing the third level of the Wargod Hall. You are only at the ninth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]; your fundamentals are, by comparison, far too weak. Although you have divine abilities, the test has already accounted for them as well; these are tests meant for the heirs of Master, after all.”

“For example, the seventh and eighth levels of the Wargod Hall are meant to test Fiendgods who have reached the Void level of power. In the past, Immortal Juhua had remained unable to break through as a Fiendgod Body Refiner, and so although he did break through as a Ki Refiner, and he even reached the peak of the Void level as a Ki Refiner, he was still unable to pass the seventh level. Only after he trained for many years and became a Loose Immortal was he able to pass the seventh level...from this, you should be able to imagine how difficult it is.”

Ning nodded silently. Right. Immortal Juhua, even as a peak Void-level Ki Refiner, was unable to pass the seventh level. Thus, for a peak Wanxiang-level Ki Refiner to pass the third level would be similarly difficult. One had to have the finest Fiendgod Body Refining techniques, a high level of insight into the Dao, and a divine ability like the [Starseizing Hand], or one of the other top three divine abilities in the Divine Abilities Hall, in order to be able to pass it.

These were the trials left behind by Daoist Threelives!

“But of course, you can try if you want,” the giant yellow bear said. “At the Zifu level, as a Fiendgod, you have two chances to challenge the Wargod Hall. You’ve only used one; you have one more!”

Ning laughed. “No rush. The main reason I’ve come is to go visit the Stellar Hall.” The old black bull said hurriedly, “Let me take you there. The Wargod Hall is extremely difficult; in the past, it drove Immortal Juhua nearly insane. The Stellar Hall is much better; it is completely filled with the mysteries of the Dao, and is a sacred place for comprehending it.”

The giant yellow bear followed them from behind. A bull, a man, and a bear. They walked together towards the Stellar Hall.

Within the Stellar Hall. The giant mountain remained there, filled with green, verdant life. Beneath that mountain, the stones remained strewn about wildly, with a thatched straw hut in the mist of them. The sky was still filled with those countless, sparkling stars.

“Each time I come, I have a different feeling.” Ning looked towards the stream of water which flowed atop some of the rocks, then towards the wild grass that grew amidst them. He stared at the stars in the sky, each of which made him feel extremely aware of the profundity of the Dao. “That one is the Dao of the Inferno. That one is...the Dao of the Sword?”

Ning raised his head, giving it a look. "The Dao of the Sword?!" Ning couldn't help but let out a startled cry. The nearby old black bull gave him a surprised glance. "You've embarked onto the Dao of the Sword?"

Ning nodded. "Right. After leaving Swallow Mountain, I went to Stillwater City. Shortly after I entered the Black-White College, I embarked on the Dao of the Sword."

"In the past, Juhua embarked on the Dao of the Sword as well. Immortal Juhua was an extremely famous Sword Immortal...unfortunately, he wasn't able to completely comprehend the Dao of the Sword." The old black bull shook his head and sighed.

"The Dao of the Sword is one of the Grand Daos." The giant yellow bear walked towards them from behind, then said leisurely, "If you have the heart of a Sword Immortal, a heart which is sincere to the sword, and a high level of comprehension, you'll generally be able to embark on the Dao of the Sword."

Ning muttered to himself. It was easy for the bear to say that, but in the entire Black-White College, aside from his master, Ning was the only person to embark on the Dao of the Sword. It seemed, however, as though the bear viewed it as quite a simple matter. Still...the spirit of the estate had previously followed Daoist Threelives, a Primordial Fiendgod. It only made sense that he had a broader view of things.

"It's easy to embark on the Dao of the Sword, and it's also not too hard to be fairly accomplished in it. However, to comprehend the entire Dao of the Sword...that is incomparably difficult." The giant yellow bear looked towards Ning. "In your homeland, this world which has been unified by the Grand Xia Dynasty, there probably isn't a single person who has comprehended the entire Dao of the Sword!"

Ning was speechless. He continued to listen.

"Lesser Daos are lesser Daos. Grand Daos are Grand Daos. Heavenly Daos are Heavenly Daos!" The giant yellow bear let out a sigh. "The differences between the three are tremendous. Immortal Juhua had comprehended nine complete Dao-Paths, but even if you gave him another ten million years, he still wouldn't be able to completely comprehend a complete Grand Dao! My master, a Primordial Fiendgod, was born from the primordial chaos with innate mastery over an entire Grand Dao! Afterwards, he comprehended quite a few complete Grand Daos, and many ordinary Daos...but unfortunately, up till the day he built this estate, he still remained unable to master a Heavenly Dao."

Ning's ears pricked up. Daoist Threelives? He was born from the primordial chaos with innate mastery over a Grand Dao? And had mastered many Grand Daos?

"Slowly enlighten yourself. Your talent is far greater than Juhua's. Only by comprehending a complete Grand Dao will you have a chance at becoming a major power who can roam freely about the Three Realms. Only then will you have a chance at becoming comparable to your master, Daoist Threelives." The giant yellow bear looked towards Ning. "In this major world controlled by the Grand Xia Dynasty...you may become the very first person to completely comprehend the entirety of the Grand Dao of the Sword."

Ning instantly felt his blood beginning to pump. Neither Immortal Northwalker nor the even more powerful Immortal Juhua had been able to even come close to mastering the complete Grand Dao of the Sword, despite the fact that they had travelled quite far along that path. And yet, they had already

become incredibly powerful figures that had awed the entire Grand Xia Dynasty, and were even comparable to Celestial Immortals, despite only being Loose Immortals. If he were to truly master the complete Dao-Path of the Sword, then he would become a truly formidable figure in the Three Realms.

“My talent is greater than Immortal Juhua, and I have the divine ability, Starseizing Hand...my starting point is much higher than his as well.” Ning mused to himself, “And with the underwater estate assisting me...given all of my advantages, if I’m still unable to become a Sword Immortal who has completely mastered the Grand Dao of the Sword, I’ll have no one to blame but myself.”

Ning felt an incomparably heroic aura surge within his breast. Senior Northwalker? Immortal Juhua? He was going to become an even more powerful Sword Immortal, the most powerful Sword Immortal of the entire Grand Xia Dynasty! A Sword Immortal whose name would be known throughout the Three Realms!

“A nine-story tower is built on a foundation of earth. A journey of a thousand kilometers starts with the first step. I must move forward on my path, one step at a time.” Ning immediately moved towards the thatched hut, then pulled open a book. It was the [Stellar Scroll One], [Stellar Scroll Two], and so on...after placing these books on the stone table within the thatched cottage, Ning sat down on a stone bench. Opening the first scroll, Ning began to read.

“Today, Chang Laijian came to me, asking me for help...” Ning read on, his enunciation of each character seemingly quite simple, but when spoken together, they linked in a way which was filled with the exquisite music of the great Dao. Naturally, this guided Ning’s heart to begin to enter a state where his subconscious began to focus even more on comprehending the Dao...

Ning’s eyes grew hooded as he stared towards the stars in the sky. Whoosh. A wind arose. Small winds began to stir in the nearby region. Ning stood up, then took a single step, and as he did, he seemed to become part of the wind, merging into it. He was like the flapping wings of a giant Roc, soaring about through the wind. With each movement, it was as though he was using an evasive, agility technique; he’d disappear in one place, then reappear somewhere else, where the wind had arisen. This...this was the true [Windwing Evasion].

“The Dao of the Gale.” The giant yellow bear nodded slightly. “He has reached the Dao Domain level in yet another Dao. It seems as though in the past four years, Ji Ning has improved considerably.”

During these past few years, Ning had accumulated many experiences and insights. All of them were now being drawn out by the Stellar Hall, and they began to burst forth.

Within the Black-White College in the distant Stillwater City, as Ning was reading the [Stellar Scrolls] and meditating on the Dao in the Stellar Hall.

“Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning and I have both completed our Raindragon Guard missions. Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning returned to his homeland, the Swallow Mountain region. For me to go there wouldn’t help me much in gaining insights into the Dao of Constructs, so I came back,” Northson said with a laugh. In front of him was senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus, dressed in a sky-blue robe.

Ninelotus laughed, then nodded. “You two junior apprentice-brothers truly are formidable. Both of you became Raindragon Guards in such a short period of time. To this very day, I have not yet joined the Raindragon Guard.”

“Senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus, you have also reached the Wanxiang level. I imagine that you will soon become a Raindragon Guard,” Northson said.

“No rush. When I grow a bit more powerful, I’ll join the Raindragon Guard.” Ninelotus paused for a moment, then asked, “Right...when junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning returned to Swallow Mountain, did he tell you where he was going?”

Northson said, “Serpentwing Lake! Senior apprentice-brother said that in the future, he would be living there!”

“Oh, Serpentwing Lake!” Ninelotus nodded gently, silently memorizing this name, then laughed and rose to her feet. “I won’t bother you any further, junior apprentice-brother. I’ll go back now.” Ninelotus stepped onto a snowy white lotus-shaped magic treasure, then soared into the skies, flying far away.

While soaring through the skies, she had a hint of a smile in her eyes. “Serpentwing Lake of Swallow Mountain? Master also said that I’ve spent too much time in the College, and should go out and do some adventuring and broaden my horizons. Mmm. I’ll first go visit Serpentwing Lake.”

Two days later.

Ninelotus and her junior apprentice-sister departed from the Black-White College, heading out on an adventure. The first destination for the two of them was Serpentwing Lake of Swallow Mountain.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 9: Ji Ning of Serpentwing Lake Chapter 17: The Third Stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]

The underwater estate. The Stellar Hall.

A wild gale howled within the skies of the Stellar Hall. Occasionally, flames would fill the skies, and occasionally, sheets of rain would fall. And Ning...he was the master of the wind and the storm, as though everything was under his command.

“A true genius.” The giant yellow bear stood within the thatched cottage, staring off into the distance. He couldn’t help but sigh, “In four short years, he’s managed to improve this much.”

“He is formidable.” The old black bull’s pair of ox-eyes were completely round as he stared. “As long as this kid doesn’t screw up on his path and die somewhere, he will definitely be able to reach Immortal Juhua’s level with ease.”

The giant yellow bear gave a sidelong glance to the old black bull. “Stop praising your master. Your master, as an Earth Immortal, wasn’t able to overcome the seventh level of the Wargod Hall...despite the assistance of the underwater estate, in the end, he still became a Loose Immortal. How can his talent be compared to Ji Ning’s? Ji Ning, in terms of comprehension or temperament, is significantly superior to your master.”

The old black bull let out an awkward laugh. “Look,” he said hurriedly, “Ji Ning is now beginning to gain insights into the Dao of the Sword.” The giant yellow bear turned to look over...

Ning stood there, amidst the strewn rocks. The wild gale, the torrential rain, the blazing inferno...it had all vanished. In the area around him, one surge of sword-ki after another began to emerge, visible to the naked eye. They began to wantonly swing through the area near Ning, and each stroke of sword-ki

contained the profundities of the Dao of the Sword, as they continuously put on display the insights Ning was gaining.

As for Ning himself, he remained staring at the star-studded skies, focusing on one star in particular. This was the star that contained the complete Grand Dao of the Sword.

Previously, when Ning was comprehending the Dao, he had been like a blind man trying to build a mental image of an elephant by using his hands to feel it. He had advanced at a very slow pace, one step at a time...but now, within the Stellar Hall, which contained an entire, complete Dao-Path, it was as though a lamp had been lit within the darkness, allowing Ning to see where he was going. The accumulated experiences Ning had gained into the Dao of the Sword were beginning to burst forth...

"His ability to comprehend the Dao of the Sword is quite high," the old black bull breathed in surprise. "Ji Ning's ability to comprehend the Dao of the Sword has long surpassed the level of 'comprehending one's sword-heart'."

"Right. A bit a higher than I predicted." The giant yellow bear laughed, then said in praise, "It seems as though Master will finally have a true successor."

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Time passed, one minute at a time. The sword-ki around Ning became increasingly intricate and profound, and increasingly pure as well. The old black bull and the giant yellow bear, these two magic treasure spirits who had lived for unfathomably many years, watched leisurely as Ning continued to gain insights into the Dao. They watched for more than half a month.

"It truly is unfathomably profound." Ning suddenly let out a surprised sigh, and the sword-ki around him instantly, completely vanished.

"Finished?" The old black bull called to him. Ning turned to look, only to see the old black bull and the giant yellow bear within the thatched hut. He immediately nodded and sighed in amazement, "To be able to easily view and analyze the complete Dao of the Sword is the dream of any Sword Immortal. This time, when I viewed the entirety of the Grand Dao of the Sword, I finally understood...that even our Black-White College's Immortal Northwalker's [Three-Foot Sword] only contained a small portion of the complete Grand Dao of the Sword. The path of Immortal cultivators truly is a long, winding one.

"Ji Ning." The giant yellow bear had a hint of a smile on his face. "What level has your swordplay reached? Show it to me."

"Please provide me with some guidance." Ning manifested a longsword of elemental ki in his hands. Calmly, he struck out with the sword, almost as though he were painting something. The sword danced in his hands, just like the brush of a master painter on a canvas; it was a very natural, relaxed movement of the sword.

"Swish!" The sword of elemental ki flashed outwards, and a faint sword tip suddenly appeared, leaving behind a sword-scar in the skies that could be seen with the visible eye, as though a painter's brush had left behind visible markings.

The third stance of the [Three-Foot Sword] – Sudden Sword Light!

“What a reserved sword. What a shocking sword.” The giant yellow bear’s eyes lit up, and he couldn’t help but saying in praise, “The person who was able to develop this sword technique was truly a genius, most likely superior to even Juhua.”

The old black bull instantly said, angry, “Big Brother, how can you say that he’s superior to Juhua? My master was an extremely powerful Loose Immortal whose fame was well known throughout the lands under the control of the Grand Xia Dynasty.”

Ning explained, “This sword technique is known as the [Three-Foot Sword], and it has a total of nine stances. Just now, I displayed the third stance, ‘Sudden Sword Light’, the most powerful sword technique I am currently capable of using. This sword technique was developed by the most powerful Sword Immortal in the history of the Black-White College, ‘Immortal Northwalker’. He was a Loose Immortal who lived for more than a million years...but of course, in terms of longevity, he couldn’t compare to senior Juhua.”

“More than a million years?” The giant yellow bear stared at the old black bull. “Black bull, this Immortal Northwalker was merely an Immortal of Stillwater Commandery, but he still became so accomplished. I wasn’t wrong in saying that he was more talented than Juhua, was I?”

“Hmph. Maybe he had even more monstrous luck than Juhua did,” the old black bull snorted. The giant yellow bear stared at him. “You black bull...you are going to be pig-headed with me? So I have to lock you up for a few thousand years before you shape up?”

“Big Brother, we’re just debating with words, not violence!” The old black bull hurriedly took two steps back. Ning, seeing this, couldn’t help but secretly laugh. These two...

One was the spirit of Immortal Juhua’s Immortal-ranked magic treasure, while the other was the spirit of the estate which Daoist Threelives had forged. The two were both magic treasure spirits, and yet they could actually end up bickering like this?

“Big Brother, let’s not make a fool out of ourselves in front of Ji Ning. Am I right?” The old black bull hung its head. The giant yellow bear couldn’t even be bothered to look at the old black bull. He said directly to Ning, “Ji Ning, you have finished comprehending the Dao in the Stellar Hall...even if you spend more time here, it will be useless. You will need more normal, everyday experiences in the real world before you can gain more insights here! What do you plan to do next?”

“Senior,” Ning said. “If I were to go challenge the third level of the Stellar Hall, how are my chances now?”

“Now?” The giant yellow bear hesitated. “Your insights into the Dao of the Sword truly are at a higher level than I had anticipated. That that sword technique of yours, that...what was it...the ‘[Three-Foot Sword]’? It is quite formidable! Mm, and given that you have my master’s most powerful divine ability...you should have a 30% chance of overcoming the third level of the Wargod Hall.”

“Thirty percent?” Ning was secretly startled. The Dao of Rainwater, the Dao of the Inferno, the Dao of the Gale...he had improved significantly in all three Daos. He had also made significant gains in the Dao of the Sword, and had comprehended the third stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]! Ning could sense that his power had increased dramatically! But he still only had a thirty percent chance?

“Are you going to challenge it?” The giant yellow bear asked. “Yes!” Ning nodded, not hesitating at all. “Eh?” The giant yellow bear was puzzled. “Why’ve you decided to challenge it? Aren’t you going to wait until you are a bit stronger and have a better shot?”

Ning shook his head. “I can sense that I will soon break through to the tenth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]. Once I make the breakthrough, I will be at the Wanxiang level as a Fiendgod Body Refiner. By then, I’ll have two new chances to challenge the Wargod Hall, and the previous chance will have been wasted.”

As a Xiantian-level Fiendgod Body Refiner, Ning had two chances. He used the first to pass the first level of the Wargod Hall, and the second in a failed attempt at the second level.

As a Zifu-level Fiendgod Body Refiner, Ning had gained two additional options. He had only used one, to pass the second level of the Wargod Hall. If he didn’t use this second option...he would soon break through to the Wanxiang level, at which point it would be wasted.

“Let’s go,” the giant yellow bear said. “Follow me to the Wargod Hall.”

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As they exited the Stellar Hall, they moved through the winding corridor, soon arriving in front of the Wargod Hall. Ning pressed hand directly against the giant bronze door that was covered with a layer of bloody light . With a whoosh, that layer of bloody light devoured Ning, teleporting him away.

He was in a vast, endless world. The ground here seemed to be stained red with blood, and in the distance, a massive, towering edifice could be seen.

“Senior.” Ning saw that the giant yellow bear had appeared out of nowhere, next to him. “The third level?” The giant yellow bear looked towards Ning. “Yes.” Ning nodded.

“Go, then!” The giant yellow bear pointed towards the distant tower. “Go in through the gates to that tower. You’ll be transported directly to the third level. Remember; if you realize that you have no hopes of winning, immediately use the talisman to teleport out. Your opponent won’t show any mercy; if you aren’t careful, you might die. That really wouldn’t be worth it.”

Ning nodded. Swoosh! Moving like a flash, he crossed the three hundred meters and arrived at the gates to the tower, glowing with a hazy white light. He took a step inside...and space twisted.

“The third level?” Ning stared at his surroundings. This was a blurry white room that was three thousand meters high and many thousands of meters in circumference. “What’s the trial here on the third floor?” The Darknorth swords materialized into Ning’s hands as he carefully stared around.

Suddenly...

A ray of golden light shot out. It began to coalesce, quickly shaping into a golden-armored general. This golden-armored general had a cold, cruel look on his face, but his armor was incomparably beautiful. He had a pair of warhammers in his hands.

“Eh?” The golden-armored general looked around, then a hint of delight appeared on his face. Soon, his gaze fell upon Ning. Ning...felt his heart tremble.

Danger!

Danger!

His subconscious was frantically warning him that the golden-armored warrior in front of him was extremely terrifying. His soul had never been wrong before, and Ning instantly grew extremely cautious. "Didn't the spirit of the estate say that I have a 30% chance of winning? 30% isn't that bad...why is it that this golden-armored warrior gives me such a terrifying sense of danger? Even ordinary Primal Daoists don't have such a terrifying presence."

"Little kid, you seem quite weak. The aura of your Fiendgod body isn't that strong." The golden-armored warrior looked weighingly at Ning. "Although I'm nothing more than an avatar created by a strand of divine power...beating you will be far too easy."

Divine power?

Avatar?

Ning knew that Fiendgod Body Refiners had special powers at special levels. At the Zifu level, one would be capable of the Blood-Drop Rebirth ability. At the Wanxiang level, one would be able to change one's appearances and features. At the Primal level, one could separate part of their flesh and blood and form it into a clone, but the so-called 'clones' a Primal could create were not capable of independent movement; they had to move alongside the main body, and weren't independent.

In order to create an avatar through a strand of divine power, and one that was able to move about at that...this was definitely something only an extremely powerful Fiendgod was capable of!

"A Fiendgod?" Ning held his breath. "It must be a Fiendgod who is at least at the Void level. How could the avatar of a Fiendgod have been teleported here by the Wargod Hall?"

"What other secrets does this underwater estate hold? In the past, Immortal Juhua was capable of binding the estate and carrying it with him, but the old black bull said...that Immortal Juhua always had the feeling that there were other secrets hidden within it." Ning cursed inwardly, "Given that the avatar of a Fiendgod has appeared in the Wargod Hall, even an idiot would be able to guess that there are other secrets within the underwater estate."