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#### Book 9: Ji Ning of Serpentwing Lake Chapter 18: The Avatar of a Fiendgod

“Unfortunately, I have yet to truly be acknowledged by the spirit of the estate.” Ning understood this point. There were many secrets which the giant yellow bear refused to tell him. Instead, he had Ning go risk his life time and time again. If Ning truly were to die...then, it would be just like it had been for Immortal Juhua and Rampart. If he died, he died. The spirit of the estate would wait the next master. Even Daoist Threelives had stated that Ning would only be considered his disciple upon reaching the ‘Empyrean God’ level; clearly, Ning’s current level of power was far from being sufficient.

“It makes sense. The more powerful a person is, the more attention will be paid to him. Compared to the first time he met me, the spirit of the estate is being much nicer nowadays.” Ning remembered quite well that the first time he had met the giant yellow bear, the bear had paid him almost no attention.

These thoughts flashed through Ning’s mind, but he then immediately crushed them. This wasn’t the time to over-analyze them! What truly mattered right now was to defeat this Fiendgod avatar in front of him!

“I’ve heard that some powerful Fiendgods can create clones just by plucking hairs from their bodies.” Ning stared at the distant, golden-armored warrior, then said in a high voice, “However, in those legends, the power of those transformed hairs are extremely weak...I imagine that this avatar of yours is quite weak as well.”

The golden-armored warrior’s face changed slightly. Ning had cut straight to the heart of the matter; indeed, this avatar was simply formed from a strand of divine power, and even his ‘weapons’ were just formed from divine power. In terms of just comparing bodies, this avatar’s body was even weaker than Ning’s! However...his comprehension of the Dao was far too high.

“If my true body was here, a single breath from me would disintegrate you!” An arrogant look flashed through the golden-armored warrior’s eyes. “Even though this is merely an extremely weak avatar, formed from a strand of divine power...against you...hmph!”

“Disintegrate me with a breath? It seems as though his true body is indeed extremely formidable. No wonder I had such a sense of danger earlier. That sense of danger from my subconscious must have originated from his true body,” Ning mused to himself.

Ning spread out his divine will with a thought. Bang! His divine will poured out through the Soulshaker Seal, instantly surging forward in a tidal wave and crashing towards the soul of that golden-armored warrior.

BOOM. The tidal wave of divine will seemed to have crashed against an extremely unyielding rock; as it smashed against it, despite being powerful, it couldn’t overcome the resilience of the rock.

“Haha, divine will?” The golden-armored warrior shook his head, saying with disdain, “Although the hint of my soul contained within this wisp of divine power is very weak, the quality of it is far greater than yours. Your divine will could be ten times stronger than it is now, and you still wouldn’t be able to move me. Kid, use everything you have; later, don’t blame me for not having given you a chance.”

Although the golden-armored warrior appeared quite brash, in truth, he was pondering meticulously. This was because he, too, was both curious and cautious about this legendary place. "The legendary abode of the God-King...why have I been summoned to deal with a little child? He's so weak...where did this child come from, and what is his relationship with the God-King? His soul is fairly strong, though; he's not yet at the Primal level, but his soul is already this powerful."

Although he was powerful, compared to the legendary God-King, he was filled with dread and veneration. That one-armed God-King would most likely be able to annihilate him with a single glance.

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Ning felt that the golden-armored warrior was mysterious. But the golden-armored warrior also felt that Ning was similarly mysterious.

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"Actually, it would've been enough to have a golem fight against you." The giant yellow bear said to itself, amused, "But you are indeed someone with the potential to be the successor to Master, a person who will roam the Three Realms...and so, I might as well let you find a few things out in advance." By letting Ning touch a few secrets, it would actually help instigate Ning to work harder and desire to learn more.

"Quite powerful, eh? It's been a long, long time since I've interacted with those ancient, powerful presences as well." The giant yellow bear was also filled with desire. He had been alone for far, far too long.

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The third level of the Wargod Hall. Ning was rapidly considering his options. "He's a weak avatar of an extremely powerful figure. His strength lies in the fact that his insights into the Dao are very high, but his weakness is that he is only formed from a strand of divine power. Because it has been separated from his true body, it is like water that has been separated from its source; after using up divine power, there's no way to replenish it."

The Dao of combat required one to be able to use one's strengths to attack others' weaknesses.

"Exhaust his divine power!" Ning immediately began to move. Swoosh! He didn't charge directly forward. Instead, he rapidly retreated, while at the same time generating more than seven hundred flying swords in front of him. Late-stage Wanxiang elemental ki filled every single flying sword, and instantly, the flying swords began to undulate slightly. After having increased his comprehension of the Dao, it was now much easier for Ning to utilize the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation].

"The ninth level of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]." Ning formed an flying sword that seemed to be made of white jade in front of him. Swish! Swish! Swish! One white jade sword after another formed, then flew at high speed towards the golden-armored man.

"This sword formation is quite profound, but unfortunately, the user is too weak." The golden-armored warrior raised his two massive warhammers in an extremely leisurely manner, then strolled forward. With each step, however, he traversed many hundreds of meters, even faster than Ning using the Windwing Evasion.

“Waterflame Lotus.” Ning divided his mind, using half of it to control the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] and the other half to generate Waterflame Lotuses. One enormous Waterflame Lotus after another began to bloom, surrounding the golden-armored warrior and furiously seeking to impede his movements.

“This is troublesome.” The golden-armored warrior frowned. A warhammer in his hand swung out, instantly creating rippling cracks in space. The outer layer of the Waterflame Lotus it collided into immediately began to crack, then finally shattered apart.

“I only destroyed a single lotus?” The golden-armored warrior was secretly surprised. But swish! Swish! Swish! The jade-white swords flew out, moving like strokes of the brush on the canvas of the sky, all of them seeming quite plain, simple, and reserved, but causing the golden-armored warrior to feel exceptionally cautious. “The Dao of the Sword? And what a fierce, terrifying sword technique.”

Clank. The golden-armored warrior swung out with his massive warhammer, blocking one sword-flash after another. Each time he blocked one of Ning’s sword-flashes, the warhammer would tremble. This was because the warhammers were formed from divine power, and weren’t actual magic treasures.

Clank. Clank. Clank.

Faced with the Waterflame Lotus that was infused with dire-ice and earthfire, and the rays of sword-light from the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], the golden-armored warrior was temporarily befuddled...

When roaming the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains, the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] had been inferior to Ning’s close combat skills, but afterwards, at the Black-White College, Ning had trained all the way from the early Wanxiang stage to the late Wanxiang stage! The rise in power of his elemental ki made it so that when Ning now used the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], the power was two levels higher than it had been before. It was extremely close to Ning’s close combat power by now.

“His avatar is clearly very weak, but he’s still able to defend against all of my techniques.” Ning’s face turned cold, and the Darknorth swords in his hands disappeared. Immediately afterwards, a black greatbow appeared in his hands.

This black greatbow was an Earth-ranked magic treasure. It could only be considered an ordinary item, and it didn’t have any special, additional powers. It was quite hard for Ning to locate a legendary divine bow, but...this Earth-ranked greatbow was enough for Ning to display all of his power.

“[Starseizing Hand]!” Ning instantly executed the [Starseizing Hand], holding the grip of the bow with one hand and nocking the arrow and pulling the bowstring with the other...

Creaaak. He pulled the bowstring to its maximum length. Ning’s eyes seemed to spit lightning towards the distant figure. Pulling a bow didn’t require much mental effort; it only used his divine power! This, Ning could pull the bow, control the Waterflame Lotuses, and the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] at the same time.

Swish! The arrow flashed out, instantly passing through the distance between them and arriving before the golden-armored warrior. “Not good.” The golden-armored warrior was shocked ; this arrow was

even faster than the sword-flashes sent out by that [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]. He hurriedly moved to block.

Bang! The giant warhammer in his hands trembled so hard, it began to crack. It then quickly healed, but the golden-armored warrior had to take a few hurried steps back.

The power of an arrow...it came from accumulating strength, then letting it all explode forth from the arrow. The explosive power of an arrow was naturally even more powerful than Ning's close combat power. However, the weakness of an arrow was its lack of agility; so long as enemies could dodge, the arrow would have been shot out for nothing.

But, Ning and the golden-armored warrior were only hundreds of meters away from each other! Given the speed of the arrows which Ning shot out while using the [Starseizing Hand], that distance would be passed in an instant. It was simply too fast! And the Waterflame Lotuses and the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] were also restricting and impeding the warrior's movements! Due to these reasons, the golden-armored warrior wasn't able to dodge at all, and had to rely on his own strength to block the arrows.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Each arrow carried a mountain-shattering force which burst forth with each collision. The nearby Waterflame Lotuses of dire-ice and earthfire, along with the late-stage Wanxiang-level [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] sword-flashes were hard to deal with as well. For a time, the golden-armored warrior found it incredibly hard to cope, and his divine power was rapidly depleting.

"If this continues, my divine power is going to be used up. After this avatar of mine uses up its divine power, it's going to dissipate." The golden-armored warrior couldn't hesitate any longer.

"RAAAARGH!" The golden-armored warriors suddenly let out an explosive shout. His entire body suddenly radiated a powerful golden light, and the warhammers in his hands transformed into streaks of light, shattering the nearby sword-flashes of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] as well as the Waterflame Lotuses as he charged straight towards Ning.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Ning shot out four arrows in a row! These arrows were all under the control of Ning's divine will, and they were even able to slightly curve in midair, attacking the golden-armored warrior in unison. There was no way the golden-armored warrior could avoid the joint attack of these four arrows; all he could do was hurriedly block, and in doing so, he was immediately knocked backwards.

The Waterflame Lotuses and the sword-flashes of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] once more formed and moved to entangle him...

One arrow after another, each containing astonishing, savage power. They all swept towards him! These arrows guided by divine will moved in eerie, unfathomably strange ways. Now only were the arrows too powerful...the divine will caused them to adjust in minute ways.

"You little rascal, do you dare fight me in close combat?" The golden-armored warrior bellowed.

"You lose." Ning just replied in a soft voice as he shot out four more arrows simultaneously. The golden-armored warrior was barely able to block them, but then his entire body began to tremble, then

collapsed and vanished into the void. As his body vanished, he growled in anger, clearly quite dissatisfied.

“Whew.” Ning let out a sigh. “This was a mere avatar of the Fiendgod, but he was already quite difficult to deal with. I had to use the [Starseizing Hand] eighteen times in a row, and 39 attacks with my [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation].” Ning could sense that his divine power had been enormously depleted, as well as much of his elemental ki, and he couldn’t help but feel secretly amazed.

Whoosh. Ning disappeared into thin air. By the time the world grew clear, Ning found himself within the main hall of the underwater estate again.

“...you actually used the bow to win?” The giant yellow bear stared at Ning, disbelief in his eyes. He had expected that this would be an extremely difficult battle; the two would’ve fought savagely in close combat, and in the end, Ning stood a high chance of losing.

But in the end...Ning had annihilated his foe by using the [Starseizing Hand] to shoot arrows at him from far away.

“The divine ability which Master transmitted to me, aside from being used in close combat, can also be used to attack others with the bow,” Ning said meekly. “I was lucky enough to win.”

“Lucky?” The giant yellow bear saw through Ning’s meekness and saw the smugness underneath. “Fine, fine. You defeated the third level, and you can go choose an Earth-ranked magic treasure or item of equivalent value. Go!”

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### **Book 9: Ji Ning of Serpentwing Lake Chapter 19: Nethercold**

The Treasures Hall was the same as it had always been. Hanging in the air at the top of the hall were many powerful magic treasures and curious artifacts, all emanating powerful ripples...if it weren’t for the fact that they were separated from the bottom by restrictive spells, those powerful ripples would easily annihilate Ji Ning if he were to interact with them! Ning felt no doubt about this whatsoever.

The giant yellow bear and Ning were within the Treasures Hall. “Ji Ning, you may now begin to select Earth-ranked magic treasures from the Treasures Hall,” the giant yellow bear said, looking at Ning. “You must be even more careful than in the past, when you chose a Mortal-ranked magic treasure. This is because although you moved quite quickly from the Zifu level to the Wanxiang level, you will most likely take far more time to move to the Primal level. As for going from the Primal level to the Void level, the amount of time that will consume is even greater.”

Ning nodded. The farther along the path one went, the longer it would take to reach the next stage.

“The same is true as well in selecting magic treasures.” The giant yellow bear said, “It is guaranteed that you will only be using Mortal-ranked magic treasures for a short period of time; the three that you chose previously, for example, are most likely already of limited use to you.”

Ning chuckled. Of the three he had chosen, he had sold off the Netherwurm Heavenlock Formation at Stillwater City’s Carefree Caverns long ago! As for the Nine Yang Swords Formation, he had replaced them with the superior Northriver Sword Formation which he had acquired at the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains.

Only the Evanescent Demonslayer Sword, which he could use for sneak attacks, was still being regularly used. However...this sword had its flaws as well. It was most suited for underground sneak attacks; in other situations, such as when battling in midair in the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains, as soon as it moved close to the enemy, it would be easily discovered, at which point in time it could no longer be used for a sneak attack.

“You’ve passed through the third level of the Wargod Hall, and soon, you’ll be able to overcome the fourth level. Once your Fiendgod body reaches the Wanxiang level...you’ll have had a total of three chances to obtain Earth-ranked magic treasures, or artifacts of an equivalent value.” The giant yellow bear looked at Ning. “Choose carefully. Some of the top-grade magic artifacts present are most likely only owned by the most powerful of organizations in this major world of the Grand Xia Dynasty’s. It will be incredibly difficult to purchase or trade for them.”

Ning nodded. There were very few top-grade Mortal-ranked magic treasures, and top-grade Earth-ranked treasures were even more incomparably rare. They were almost never seen, and to find one suitable for one’s self was even less likely. He, however, now had a chance to choose amongst the top-grade Earth-ranked magic treasures of the underwater estate for one he liked.

“Choose.” The giant yellow bear produced a golden book out of nowhere, and the book was covered with two Fiendgod characters for ‘Precious Treasures’.

“Why is it that this book looks identical to the Mortal-ranked magic treasures book?” Ning couldn’t help but ask this question. The giant yellow bear looked at Ning. “Not just Earth-ranked; the Heaven-ranked, Immortal-ranked, and Pure Yang-ranked magic treasures book are the same as well, because I personally compile these books. This is your first time choosing an Earth-ranked magic treasure, and so I will only show you a portion of the items available. The second time, you’ll have more options, and the third time, you’ll be able to go through any of the items in the book.”

Ning asked hurriedly, “Senior, which is the most suited to me?” The treasures to be chosen from were simply too dazzling. Only the giant yellow bear would know which were the best. Last time, for example, the giant yellow bear had advised him to choose the Nine Yang Sword Formation, and the third time, he had indeed chosen it.

“There are plenty of precious artifacts, quite a few of which are suited to you,” the giant yellow bear said. “I think you should read through it slowly.” Resigned, Ning began to flip through the book.

“Wow, this really is...!” Ning’s gaze instantly grew heated. He had gone to the Heavenly Treasures Mountain before, and had seen the Earth-ranked magic treasures there, and had also seen some Earth-ranked treasures that were only for display and not for sale; these were some of the most precious, top-quality magic treasures of that local branch of the Heavenly Treasures Mountain. Without having a few treasures like this to display, how could the Heavenly Treasures Mountain awe the masses? But Ning couldn’t help but think to himself, “All of these treasures are comparable to those items at the Heavenly Treasures Mountain.” His heartrate sped up.

Xuanwu’s Goldscale Ship; a top-grade Earth-ranked flying treasure. While flying, it could transform into a goldscale fish that could soar into the heavens or burrow into the ground. It was incomparably quick when flying, and was as incomparably nimble in the skies as a fish was in the water. Upon entering the ground, it would become even more agile, comparable to many Heaven-ranked flying treasures.

In addition, given that it was named after Xuanwu, the Black Tortoise, it was also incomparably sturdy. When hiding within the Xuanwu Goldscale Ship, even a Primal Daoist's attacks would find it difficult to do anything to it.

"What an item," Ning murmured to himself. "In the Heavenly Treasures Mountain, I saw an item on display, the 'Ruyi Godspeed Boat', which was comparable to this item in speed but far weaker in defense. And yet, that was enough for it to be considered one of their not-for-sale items."

It was indeed an excellent item. However, since it was guaranteed that Ning would at most have three chances to choose Earth-ranked magic treasures, he wasn't willing to waste one of the three chances on a flying magic treasure.

Earthfire Heartlamp, a strange artifact. The Earthfire Heartlamp was a unique sort of rock that was formed from the natural world. It was naturally formed into the shape of the lamp, and within it there was something akin to the extracted essence of fire...this extract was incomparably, shockingly effective in nurturing earthfire, and if Ning were to often place his earthfire within it and absorb from that essence, in ten short years, his earthfire would rise to be of the first grade! If other types of supportive treasures were used, the amount of time it would take for earthfire to be nourished to the first rank would be even less.

"Earthfire Heartlamp!" Ning was truly intrigued. Although many of the previous items had caused his heart rate to speed up, this was the first time he was truly filled with a powerful urge. "This is what I'll choose, I imagine."

"Should I choose it?" Ning began to ponder. "Earthfire, at the first grade, is capable of threatening even Primal Daoists. But this will take roughly ten years." Ning thought about it, shaking his head in the end. "In ten years, my [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] will probably have increased dramatically in power, and my swordplay as well; earthfire of the first grade won't be as helpful then as it would be now."

It had only been four years since he had joined the Black-White College! And yet, he had already developed the third stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]! He had truly improved tremendously during the past four years. Ten years ago, he had been fighting with the Azure Skysnake, and had just arrived at the Eastmount Marshes after having left West Prefecture City. Now, ten years later, he was capable of effortlessly killing Wanxiang Adepts.

Although it was true that the further along one went, the slower one improved, ten years...Ning felt confident that he would improve dramatically in this period of time.

"It's very good item." Ning pondered a bit more. "However, it's guaranteed that the goldflame earthfire will never be my most powerful attack; in addition, my body has both earthfire and dire-ice. When using the Waterflame Lotus, ideally, the dire-ice and earthfire should be balanced. If the earthfire is too powerful or the dire-ice too weak, that will not be good for my Waterflame Lotus.

"Even without this Earthfire Heartlamp, I'll still have the ancient glacial ice, the firelotus pith, and other treasures. Although they are a bit slower, and will only be able to improve my earthfire and dire-ice to the fourth or fifth grade, at least the power will be matched." Ning persuaded himself to forget it, then began to continue reading.

One magic treasure after another. In the past, any Earth-ranked magic treasures were very alluring, but that was before Ning had truly gone out adventuring. Now that he was a disciple of the Black-White College, a Raindragon Guard, and had visited the Heavenly Treasures Mountain...his horizons had been broadened, and only now did he understand how precious and rare the priceless items which Daoist Threelives had left behind were. Most likely, not even the treasures of the entire Grand Xia Dynasty were comparable to the items here. Unfortunately, he was only allowed to choose three items from each level.

The Brocade-Cloud Miasma, a top-grade Earth-ranked protective item...

A Hundred Venoms Immortal-Lock Formation...an Earth-ranked formation...

A Dire-Ice Mirror...a precious item capable of improving dire-ice to the first grade in ten years.

One precious item after another. Ning's eyes were turning red from desire. "Senior, you should treat the Dire-Ice Mirror and the Earthfire Heartlamp as one treasure," Ning said, raising his head to look at the giant yellow bear. "If you did, I'd pick it."

"As one treasure?" The giant yellow bear stared at him. "Are you not aware that many different types of earthfire and dire-ice are only capable of being improved to the third or second grades? Although some have the potential to be improved to the first grade, that's just potential! How hard would it be for one to truly improve it to the first grade? Upon doing so, once it is further upgraded to skyfire, its potential and its power will become even greater. Are you aware of all this? I refuse to believe that in the entirety of the Grand Xia Dynasty, you'll be able to find a single place which is willing to sell Earthfire Heartlamps or Dire-Ice Mirrors to outsiders!"

Ning was speechless. Sell it to outsiders? In the Heavenly Treasures Mountain and the Carefree Caverns, he truly had never seen these items for sale before.

These rare artifacts were all formed naturally by the natural world, and were not magic treasures which would be created or forged. Thus, there was a very limited number of them in the world. Given that there were thousands of Heavenly Treasures Mountains, one in each commandery, how could they possibly sell Earthfire Heartlamps to outsiders?

"The only reason I brought out the Earthfire Heartlamp and Dire-Ice Mirror out for your first selection is because I saw that you, kid, have dire-ice and earthfire in your body." The giant yellow bear looked at Ning. "I'm taking special care of you, which is why I expanded the range of choices a bit. To tell you the truth, there are three items that are the most suited for you in this selection."

"The Earthfire Heartlamp and the Dire-Ice Mirror are two of them. There is a third, however, on the third to last page." As soon as the giant yellow bear's words came out, Ning immediately flipped to the third to the last page, looking at it carefully.

The Nethercold Sword Formation. The Nethercold Sword Formation was made up of nine top-grade Earth-ranked flying swords, each of which was made from an extremely precious material known as the nethercold lunar metal.



“All nine are top-grade Earth-ranked flying swords?” Ning was so shocked, his eyes bulged out. These so-called ‘top-grade’ items were not graded by the Heavenly Treasures Mountain; they were graded by Daoist Threelives!

These were on completely different levels; Daoist Threelives was far more strict in grading these magic treasures. There were some items he had left behind, such as the Nine Yang Swords Formation which Ning had chosen previously, which he had ranked as nine high-grade items, but which the Heavenly Treasures Mountain would rank as nine top-grade items!

“How can all nine be top-grade Earth-ranked swords?” Ning stared in shock at the giant yellow bear.

“Originally, I planned on separating the nine of them and just putting in a record for a ‘Nethercold Sword, a top-grade Earth-ranked flying sword’.” The giant yellow bear shook his head. “But afterwards, I reconsidered; if I were to split them apart, I would probably go through dozens or even hundreds of masters without any of them choosing a Nethercold Sword. So, I decided I might as well list them here together, as a sword formation. Because these nine swords form a complete sword formation...logically speaking, I shouldn’t have shown it to you until your third selection. However, I don’t want for you to die early on in the outside world, kid. So, I decided to just forget it, and let you see it in advance.”

“Earthfire Heartlamp, Dire-Ice Mirror, Nethercold Sword Formation. These are the most suited for you.” The giant yellow bear looked at Ning. “Choose.”

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#### **Book 9: Ji Ning of Serpentwing Lake Chapter 20: Senior Apprentice-Sister Ninelotus**

Ji Ning hesitated. Which to choose?

“Senior.” Ning hurriedly, deferentially asked, “Given that when my Fiendgod body reaches the Wanxiang level, I’ll have another chance to acquire an Earth-ranked magic treasure after overcoming the fourth level of the Wargod Hall...will I have the chance to acquire even better magic treasures at that time?”

“Of course!” The giant yellow bear said confidently, “Items better than the Earthfire Heartlamp, the Dire-Ice Mirror, and the Nethercold Sword Formation...there will be more than one that is better than these three! You’ve merely overcome the third level of the Wargod Hall; how can I possibly bring out the very best Earth-ranked magic treasures right away? When I bring those out, you won’t choose the likes of the Earthfire Heartlamp.”

“Hurry up and choose. In the end, there will be countless treasures, but unfortunately, I can’t give them all to you.” The giant yellow bear looked at Ning. “Master left behind many treasures, but not for just any single successor. In the event of your death, I need to ensure that the next successor has some treasures as well, yes?”

Ning pursed his lips. What a doleful thing to say! Die? Ning absolutely didn’t wish to fail, after having embarked on the Immortal path.

“This is my choice.” Ning flipped through the book to the third to last page, the one mentioning the Nethercold Sword Formation.

“I really do want the Earthfire Heartlamp and the Dire-Ice Mirror,” Ning sighed to himself. “However, they aren’t able to increase my power right away, but the Nethercold Sword Formation can! These nine

Nethercold Swords in the formation are all top-grade, and it was Daoist Threelives who was the appraiser; their power must be superior to that of ordinary Heaven-ranked flying swords. They'll be able to increase the power of my [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] to a whole new level!"

The higher one's level of power became, the more difficult it was to further strengthen one's self. To rise by a full level was incomparably difficult, but these Nethercold Swords were simply too powerful.

If he were to go and try to purchase them at the Heavenly Treasures Mountain, their price would surpass that of an ordinary Heaven-ranked flying sword. And, given their rarity, they would probably at least five thousand kilograms per sword! With all nine top-grade flying swords having come from the same source...the entire set would definitely go for at least fifty thousand kilograms of liquefied elemental essence. Fifty thousand kilograms? That was enough to make even a Primal Daoist turn green in envy. Even when Ning had been lucky enough to loot the corpse of the Dragonwhale King, he hadn't reaped such a fortune.

"The power of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] depends entirely on the powerful flying swords comprising it! This is completely indisputable! Fortunately, I have the Treasures Hall," Ning mused to himself. "In turn, only in my hands can this [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] unleash its true, terrifying power."

The more powerful the swords used, the more monstrous and heaven-defying these swords were. In the past, the Thousand Swords Immortal had grown tremendously famous with this technique, but in the end, he had still fallen to Immortal Juhua. Given that Ning had the Treasure Hall behind him...the power of his [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] would be even more incomparably shocking.

"Come." The giant yellow bear beckoned towards the distance. In the void above, a point of light suddenly flashed and started to descend. It quickly passed through the restrictive spells, arriving next to Ning. It was nine completely black flying swords. Although they were completely black, they had a very soft, luxuriant gleam to them; it was almost as though a faint, extremely dark green luster covered these flying swords. They were so beautiful that they could be considered a work of art.

"They are perfect." Ning couldn't help but let out a sigh of praise. Reaching out with this elemental ki, he sent one strand after another of watery-blue ki forward, swirling around the nine Nethercold Swords and easily binding them. With but a thought, Ning sent them swirling around him like nine shining stars.

"They are comparable to Heaven-ranked magic treasures in power," Ning said in praise. Heaven-ranked magic treasures were only usable by Primal Daoists, but his magic treasures were also at this level of power...this was why they were considered top-grade treasures. And he had nine of them!

"Most likely, they would be enough to cause even Primal Daoists to grow envious and kill me for them," Ning said with a soft laugh. The giant yellow bear replied, "If they don't bind them personally, it'll be hard for them to tell just by looking at them that these are top-grade."

"What fine treasures." The more Ning thought about them, the happier he became.

"Time to go. If you want more treasures, go back and train hard," the giant yellow bear urged. Ning nodded. Instantly, a phantom of a giant bear's head appeared, swallowing Ning with a single gulp.

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Serpentwing Lake. Brightheart Island. Soon, everyone on the island knew that after half a month, Ji Ning had left from his secluded meditation.

Aside from Ning, no one else knew of the existence of the underwater estate. Given that Ning's training room was a place where others were strictly forbidden from trespassing, everyone had assumed that he had been in the room training this entire time.

"Master, Master!" An azure-robed maiden was the first to suddenly appear at the entrance of the room. Ning walked out of it, raising his head to look towards the outside. A cold wind pressed down upon him, and giant plumes of snow were falling down from the skies.

"Master, why is it that after you went into training, I could no longer sense your presence?" The azure-robed maiden stared at Ning, mentally sending to him with franticness, "I felt as though you were very, very far away. I'm your spirit-beast, and our spirit-bond was not dispersed, so I knew that you weren't dead, but...if you weren't dead, why couldn't I sense you?"

The nearby Whitewater Hound walked over, sending mentally, "Ning, son, when you went into training, this Azure Skysnake wanted to go inside to search for you. I had to stop her."

"Oh." Ning laughed. The first time he had entered the underwater estate, he had caused his father and mother to be concerned over him. They all knew that he had entered a special, ancient relic site, and naturally, Uncle White had learned this as well.

"I had a stroke of karmic luck," Ning said. "Luck?" Qingqing was surprised. The Grand Xia Dynasty's territory was simply too vast and contained far too many secrets; anything was possible within it. For example, someone might be in the middle of a perfectly normal battle when an ancient Fiendgod might suddenly wake up and intervene. If this could happen, what couldn't?

Qingqing could tell that Ning didn't want to discuss this in detail, so she just muttered to herself, "So stingy with your secrets."

Ning laughed. The underwater estate involved Daoist Threelives, and it was so important as to be able to shock the entire Three Realms! How could Ning casually reveal its secrets to others? For example, although he was now the master of the underwater estate, he was the only one who could enter it; others could not. Thus, Ning hadn't even told his parents; after all, given that his parents couldn't enter it, letting them know of it would only prove problematic, not beneficial in any way.

"Young master." Autumn Leaf walked towards them from afar, face covered in smiles. "You've left your secluded meditation. During this period of time, young master Ji Mo came. He wished to ask for your instructions, young master."

"Ji Mo?" Ning nodded. "During those first three days after my return, he hadn't come." Ji Mo was, aside from Ning himself, the most talented member of the younger generation of the Ji clan.

"Young master Ji Mo was adventuring and testing himself in the outside world as well," Autumn Leaf said. "Thus, when you returned, the Patriarch sent people out to find young master Jji Mo. They spent quite a few days before finding him, and afterwards, young master Ji Mo came by himself, arriving on the ninth day of your secluded meditation."

Smiling, Ning nodded. Suddenly, another figure appeared in the distance. In but two flashes, the figure appeared close to them; it was a tall, sturdy-looking handsome youth with a pair of sword-shaped eyebrows. He stared towards Ning with a blazingly eager gaze, and he immediately said with respect, "I pay my respects to you, young master Ji Ning."

"It seems as though you've improved quite a bit in recent years," Ning said with a praising laugh. With but a single glance, he could tell that Ji Mo's aura had changed significantly. In the past, Ji Mo had been quite reserved, but now, Ji Mo seemed like a drawn warblade. He had a powerful, sturdy willpower that was forged through battle.

"Compared to you, young master, I'm still quite inferior," Ji Mo said respectfully.

"If you are willing," Ning suddenly said, "You can come here and stay here whenever you please." Ji Mo was stunned. Instantly, he revealed a look of joy on his face. In the past, he had knelt down to beg Ji Ning to accept him as disciple, but at that time, Ning was focused on his own pursuit of the Dao, and didn't have any time to spare. Now that Ning had chosen to permanently stay here at Serpentwing Lake...he was naturally willing to occasionally make the time to provide some guidance to the most talented younger members of the Ji clan. This could be considered a way in which he would help the Ji clan train future experts.

Suddenly...

"Is junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning present?" A very familiar voice rang out, echoing throughout the entire Serpentwing Lake.

"Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning?"

"Someone who addresses our young master as 'junior apprentice-brother'?" Autumn Leaf revealed a look of amazement.

"Someone who is addressing the island master as junior apprentice-brother?" The many maids and servants who lived on Brightheart Island all revealed looks of amazement. The 'island master' was, of course, the master of Brightheart Island, Ji Ning.

"Junior apprentice-brother?"

Instantly, everyone in the Serpentwing Lake area was puzzled and curious. Only a very few of them knew that Ning had joined the Black-White College, and they were able to guess at the truth: "Most likely, a member of the Black-White College has come."

Upon hearing this voice, Ning also lifted his head in surprise, staring towards the source of the voice. A masted ship soared towards them from the distance, with two beautiful, indistinct figures atop it.

"Ning, son, it seems to be two of your senior apprentice-sisters," the Whitewater Hound sent. "You really are formidable. As soon as you came back, you managed to get two of your senior apprentice-sisters to chase after you all the way here."

Ning stared at Uncle White. "They are just passing through and paying their respects." Uncle White just snickered.

Ning lifted his head, staring towards the distant ship. He said softly, "But it really is a coincidence. As soon as I left my seclusion, they arrived."

Swoosh. Ning immediately flew into the skies to go greet them. "Senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus, senior apprentice-sister Qingqing." In the skies above Serpentwing Lake were the blue-robed Ninelotus and the silver-robed Qingqing. They, too, flew over.

"We learned from junior apprentice-brother Twinwood that you, junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, were living here," Ninelotus laughed. "We are out adventuring and just so happened to go past Swallow Mountain, so we decided to come and pay a visit. Junior apprentice-brother, you really have quite the eye; you actually chose such a beautiful place! This vast Serpentwing Lake, and that island in the center of the lake; they are all quite lovely."

Ning turned to look. Indeed; light rippled off the waves, which appeared as beautiful as jade, and the countless flowers and grassy areas on the central island, along with the various pavilions, made it look like a true utopia, a peach garden beyond the mortal world.

"Senior apprentice-sister, you don't know this, but this used to be the territory of a monster," Ning said with a laugh. "Afterwards, I eradicated that monster, and our Ji clan arranged for quite a few people to spend a long period of time renovating the place. Only then was the previously monster-infested island changed to its current appearance. My two senior apprentice-sisters, let's not chat in the air. Come, let me show you around my island and show you some hospitality."

"Let's go."

Ninelotus and Qingqing, along with Ji Ning, immediately flew down. The mortal maids of Brightheart Island all murmured to themselves, "Wow...as Immortal fairies!"

"They are flying."

"They are so beautiful."

"Goddesses!"

All of the mortals were extremely excited.

Ning's group of three quickly descended. The Azure Skysnake and the Whitewater Hound came over at this time as well. "These two Diremonsters are the ones which junior apprentice-brother Twinwood spoke of, right? The Azure Skysnake, 'Qingqing', and the Whitewater Hound, 'Uncle White'?" Ninelotus laughed.

"What?! Qingqing!?" The nearby, silver-robed maiden instantly stared.

"Right, Qingqing, she's also named Qingqing." Ninelotus choked back a laugh. She had been waiting, a long, long time to say these words; she had been eagerly anticipating the meeting between these two Qingqings.

## **[The Desolate Era](#)**

### **Book 9: Ji Ning of Serpentwing Lake Chapter 21: Life With Ninelotus**

"My name is Luo Qing." The silver-robed maiden stared at the Azure Skysnake.

The Azure Skysnake replied, "My name is Ji Qingqing."

And then, they began to laugh and chat amongst themselves. These two 'Qingqings' grew quite close to each other. From this day forward, Ninelotus and Luo Qing began to temporarily live at Brightheart Island.

Only at nightfall did the snowfall come to a halt. In the sword-training terrace of Brightheart Island.

"Young master." Ji Mo was incomparably respectful, and his eyes were filled with anticipation and eagerness. "Please provide me with some guidance."

Ning stood with hands clasped behind his back, not too far away. With but a thought, he instantly created multiple waterflame swords out of nowhere through his elemental ki. These waterflame swords were incomparably fierce, and they began to swirl around Ji Mo. Ji Mo's face changed...although Ning had merely activated the power of the natural world, it was still enough to cause a Xiantian lifeform to be in tremendous danger.

"Condense." Ning's eyes flashed as he looked at the manifestations of sword-ki. The many waterflame swords in midair quickly condensed into a single, massive lotus of sword-ki that was many tens of meters in diameter. The sword-ki had formed into a blooming lotus which had completely surrounded Ji Mo.

"Ji Mo," Ning said. "This lotus of sword-ki contains some elementary tricks and knacks of the sword. There are a total of ninety one lotus petals that are revolving around you, each of which has a different type of sword-ki...what you need to do is destroy all of the lotus petals. Only after you destroy all of the lotus petals can you be said to have truly gained a basic level of expertise in the sword."

"Can it be that I can't be said to have reached even a basic level of expertise? But I reached the 'one with the world' level long ago," Ji Mo couldn't refrain from saying.

"You haven't even gained a hint of the True Meaning of the Dao; how can you be considered to have reached a basic level of expertise?" Ning shook his head, then sat down nearby, leisurely pouring himself a cup of wine. While drinking some of this wine that Autumn Leaf had specially prepared, he pondered on the fourth stance of the [Three-Foot Sword].

Right at this moment...

"Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning." From afar, a woman walked over; it was Ninelotus and Luo Qing. In terms of appearance, they were absolutely the most beautiful women here at Brightheart Lake, and in terms of aura? They were disciples of the Black-White College! Luo Qing's aura was quite unique, while Ninelotus was an incomparably dazzling figure even within the Black-White College who had drawn quite a few suitors.

Ning turned to glance at them, then hurriedly rose to his feet. "Senior apprentice-sisters Ninelotus and Luo Qing."

"You are training your clan members?" Ninelotus glanced with interest towards the enormous lotus of sword-ki, as well as Ji Mo, who was striving to attack the lotus petals from the center of the lotus.

“A lotus?” The nearby Luo Qing laughed in surprise. “You were actually able to form a lotus of sword-ki by activating the energy of nature. It seems as though you are quite formidable in the mysteries of the lotus, junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.”

Ning shook his head. “I just learned a few things and developed a protective technique, the Waterflame Lotus...which is why I have a few simple insights into the lotus.”

The lotus flower...its very existence was filled with countless mysteries. In the Three Realms, there were many major powers who would seat themselves on thrones of lotus flowers, or have protective lotus-treasures, or use lotus-related techniques.

“Senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus has comprehended many things pertaining to the lotus as well,” Luo Qing hurriedly said. Ninelotus shook her head. “A bit less than junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning,” she said.

“Artificial modesty!” Luo Qing frowned, then let out a smirk. “In terms of swordplay, it’s true that you cannot compare to junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, but in terms of the lotus...senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus, you were born into the Dongyan clan, which is referred to as the Freshlotus Tribe ...and the secret manual which brought your tribe to prominence is the ‘Fresh Lotus Manual’! In terms of the lotus, I imagine that none of us third-generation disciples of the Black-White College can compare to you.”

Ning looked towards Ninelotus in surprise. The Dongyan clan? He had read various intelligence reports regarding the major powers of the Stillwater Commandery region. The Dongyan clan was an extremely powerful clan. Although it wasn’t ranked amongst the eight major powers of Stillwater Commandery, the actual power of the Dongyan clan was actually superior to the likes of the Black-White College, the Skysplitter Sword Sect, the Eastriver clan, the Dragonhunter clan, and the other four! This was because the Dongyan clan’s roots were actually in another place, the Highwater Commandery.

The Dongyan clan’s roots were from the Highwater Commandery, but they were located in multiple other commandery cities. It could be said that the Dongyan clan stretched across three entire commanderies! It was a truly ancient and powerful clan. It was only because it was generally considered a power of the Highwater Commandery that it was not ranked amongst the eight great powers of Stillwater Commandery. But in terms of total power, in Stillwater Commandery, most likely only the Northmont clan or the local Raindragon Guards surpassed them.

“No wonder senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus has such an extraordinary aura and demeanor, and was so unique even in the Black-White College.” Ning sighed in amazement to himself. “So she’s from such an ancient clan, the Dongyan clan. The genius disciples of such an ancient, deeply rooted clan...they truly are extraordinary.”

“So you come from the Dongyan clan. The Dongyan clan’s ‘Fresh Lotus Manual’ has long been famous throughout the world,” Ning said with a laugh. “I do have a few questions; might you be willing to answer them, senior apprentice-sister?”

“Junior apprentice-brother, please go ahead and ask them. If I can answer them, of course I will; if I’m not able to, then please don’t blame me,” Ninelotus replied. Ning was secretly elated; Ninelotus was from the Dongyan clan, and she most likely had an extremely deep level of understanding regarding the secrets of the lotus flower.

"I once self-created a technique, the Waterflame Lotus..." Ning immediately began to ask questions. Stretching his hand out, he immediately caused a small Waterflame Lotus to bloom out of nowhere atop his palm and began to discuss some questions he had.

"Junior apprentice-brother, actually, you've gained a very deep level of insight already. However, you've never truly realized the ways in which the various elements of this technique interact with each other." A fresh, azure lotus appeared within Ninelotus' palm as well. She lightly tapped just one of the petals, and one petal after another instantly began to open, like a real lotus flower beginning to bloom. In fact, one could even see the dew atop the petals.

Ning's eyes began to shine as he listened.

"However, junior apprentice-brother, this Waterflame Lotus of yours..." Ninelotus began to ask questions of her own.

"Actually, the secrets within are quite simple..." Ning began to explain.

The two both possessed extraordinarily strong Dao-hearts, and were quite resolute in pursuing their Immortal paths. Once they became absorbed in discussing the Dao, they naturally began to ignore everything else.

The two of them...one was a truly monstrous genius of the Dao of the Sword, who had the support of the underwater estate and who had gained quite a few insights into the lotus. As for the other, she came from the massive, mighty Dongyan clan, and had meditated on the Fresh Lotus Manual, and was even more impressive with regards to the secrets of the lotus. As the two of them discussed their insights into the Dao, they stirred insights in each other, and both of them improved.

This was the reason why Immortal cultivators delighted in discussing the Dao with others who were on the same level. If they were to truly discuss the insights they had gained without holding anything back, then as they discussed the Dao together, both would gain tremendously.

The Waterflame Lotus was a supportive technique Ning had personally developed, and so there was no need for him to withhold any of its secrets. As for Ninelotus, she knew exactly what she could say, as the Dongyan clan was an incredibly majestic clan which had strict rules on what its disciples could and could not say when discussing the Dao. Ninelotus only revealed a few of the profound mysteries that could not be considered the true secrets of the clan, but this was already enough to cause Ning to feel incomparably delighted and overjoyed.

"The two are chatting quite happily to each other." The nearby Luo Qing felt helpless; while absorbed into their discussions of the Dao, Ji Ning and Ninelotus paid no attention to her whatsoever.

"Hmph." She sat there next to them, picking up the vessel of wine that had previously belonged to Ning and beginning to drink it.

An entire night was spent in a discussion on the Dao. Autumn Leaf and the others didn't dare disturb them. But by nightfall the second day, as the sun was about to disappear...

"What?! The two of you are still here?!" A silver-robed Luo Qing walked past, staring at them and shouting. As she did, Ning and Ninelotus instantly 'woke up'. They immediately realized that a night and a day had passed.



“This junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning truly is brimming with talented. Although this Waterflame Lotus technique of his isn’t that profound, he’s gained so many insights from it.” Ninelotus began to feel even more admiring of him now. She had joined the Black-White College a long time ago, but as soon as Ning had joined, he had debated many senior fellow disciples in the Dao Debates. If she had engaged in a Dao Debate with Ning back then, she definitely would’ve been defeated.

Back then, Ninelotus had begun to admire Ji Ning. Now that she saw that Ning had so many insights into the lotus, which she herself specialized in, she grew all the more admiring.

“Senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus has truly treated me well. She’s told me so many secrets.” Ning felt secretly grateful; after all, these techniques were not to be casually taught to others. Although she wasn’t explicit about them, the pointers that she gave caused Ning to instantly comprehend. If it hadn’t been for her guidance, he probably would’ve needed a much, much longer period of time to understand some of the things he had learned today.

“Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, we’ve discussed the Dao for very long, and I’ve benefited greatly from it. I’m going to go back and meditate,” Ninelotus said, rising to her feet. As she did, she took the nearby Luo Qing’s hand and walked together to their residences.

Ning watched as Ninelotus left. Thinking back to the night and day they had spent discussing the Dao, he couldn’t help but feel a strange feeling in his heart. He felt as though...he and Ninelotus were quite suited for each other.

“Eh?” Ning turned his head. The lotus of sword-ki which he had generated previously was still active. As for Ji Mo, who was within the lotus, his face was pale, and his eyes were completely bloodshot. Clearly, he had been striving an entire day and night to break the formation, and he was utterly exhausted.

“...I ended up making Ji Mo spend an entire day and night here.” Ning willed the lotus to dissipate.

Whoosh. The lotus of sword-ki instantly disappeared into thin air.

“Petals? Petals?!” Ji Mo hurriedly stared around him, his eyes terrifyingly bloodshot.

“Ji Mo.” Ning felt guilty, but he still called out in a high voice, “You’ve spent an entire day and night on breaking through this formaton; it seems you are rather tired. Go back and get some rest. Tomorrow, you may come back again and once more attempt to break this lotus sword-ki formation.”

After speaking, Ning turned and left. Ji Mo stared, stunned, for a moment, then began to worry. “I spent an entire day and night here without being able to break through the sword-ki lotus...did this cause young master Ji Ning to feel angry with me?”

Time flowed on.

Ninelotus and Ning both gained significantly from their discussions on the Dao; naturally, they were quite delighted to continue. Every three or five days, they would engage in a discussion on the Dao. In the blink of an eye, more than three months had passed in leisure.

Within a private, secluded room within Brightheart Island. This was Luo Qing and Ninelotus’ room. Luo Qing and Ninelotus were currently seated next to a black stone table which was as smooth as jade. Atop the table was fruit and wine.

“Senior apprentice-sister,” Luo Qing said, “We’ve spent three months here. Isn’t it time to leave? We came out to go adventuring, but the only place we’ve gone to is this place, Serpentwing Lake. We haven’t gone anywhere else.”

“No rush,” Ninelotus said. “Let’s spend a few more days here. During the past three months, my lotus techniques have improved considerably, even more so than in the past three years. Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning truly is formidable; he always has so many new and original insights.”

“We still aren’t leaving?” Luo Qing stared, then gave Ninelotus a weighing glance. She stared carefully at Ninelotus, as though trying to find any warts or blemishes on her face.

“What are you looking at? Why are you staring at me like that?” Ninelotus frowned slightly.

“Senior apprentice-sister, I wonder...have you taken a fancy to Ji Ning, and wish for him to be your Dao-Companion?” Luo Qing asked the question directly.

Ninelotus was stunned. Despite always being so composed, she suddenly felt rather embarrassed.

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### **Book 9: Ji Ning of Serpentwing Lake Chapter 22: The Tenth Stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]**

Luo Qing was truly quite familiar with Ninelotus; the two had known each other for many years, and she had never before seen this expression on Ninelotus’ face. Ninelotus had always been calm and composed, and she had a breathtaking background; she had been selected long ago to be the next leader of the Dongyan tribe. As such, Ninelotus had naturally been given the best of training since youth. To force her to reveal shyness and bashfulness...this was virtually impossible.

“You...you...” Luo Qing stared, her mouth falling open as she pointed to Ninelotus. “You really are...” Ninelotus quickly recovered her calm. “Is there a need for you to act so shocked?”

“Shocked? Senior apprentice-sister, when you were in the Dongyan clan, you had countless admirers. Even in the Black-White College, where many of our fellow disciples do not know of your history and background, you still have many admirers and pursuers. You’ve never taken a fancy to any of them!” Luo Qing said, shocked, “Why have you taken a fancy to him? He’s a disciple of a small clan, and won’t be of any help to you in administering the Dongyan clan’s affairs in the future.”

Ninelotus frowned, revealing a hint of displeasure. Luo Qing hurriedly shook her head and said, “I’m not saying...I mean, you...”

“Although the tribe which Ji Ning is from is a weak and small one, his own potential is quite astonishing,” Ninelotus said. “You must understand that for some people, it doesn’t matter which tribe they come from, because they, by themselves, are even mightier than entire tribes.”

Ninelotus had a hint of anticipation in her eyes. “And...in choosing a Dao-Companion, what matters the most is the feeling one has in one’s heart. He...gives me a very good feeling.”

Luo Qing stared at Ninelotus. “You really are choosing him for your Dao-Companion?” Ninelotus shook her head. “Not just yet. Immortal cultivators have extremely long lives, and the selection of a Dao-Companion is a monumental, life-altering event. Naturally, I’ll have to spend more time watching him

and understanding him. We've only interacted for three or so months; it's still too early to discuss becoming Dao-Companions."

Even mortals, when in a relationship, would at least be together for a year or two before getting married. Immortal practitioners...there were even those who would be involved with each other for centuries before finally becoming Dao-Companions!

"If news of this were to spread, that the future Matriarch of the Dongyan clan has chosen a Dao-Companion...oh, boy!" Luo Qing let out a sigh. "This would definitely cause a storm of commentary!"

"My choice of a Dao-Companion is mine alone. Who can intervene?" Ninelotus was very calm. Luo Qing could sense how resolved Ninelotus was, and she immediately said, "Senior apprentice-sister, I won't try to dissuade you from this decision. By staying here, you'll be able to improve your understanding of your lotus techniques, and also continue to inspect a potential future Dao-Companion. For me, however, staying here is pointless...I'm planning to leave tomorrow. I'll go around adventuring for half a year, then return to the Black-White College."

A look of guilt appeared on Ninelotus' face, and she took Luo Qing by the hand. "Qingqing, we said that we'd go out adventuring together...I'm sorry."

"It's fine. Since you are choosing a Dao-Companion, as your junior apprentice-sister, of course I'll be supportive," Luo Qing said with a laugh.

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The next day, Luo Qing departed, having been sent off by Ji Ning and the others. As for Ning and Ninelotus, they continued to live quite peacefully on Brightheart Island, discussing the Dao every few days.

"Eh?" Late one night. Ning, who had been seated in the lotus position on his bed, suddenly revealed a hint of excitement. "It seems that over the course of the past five months, all these discussions on the Dao with senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus has caused my understanding of the ways in which fire and water support and neutralize each other to rise significantly. I've finally understood the final principles that were necessary for a breakthrough to the tenth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]."

"In I go." Ning willed it, and instantly, a giant phantom of a bear's head appeared out of nowhere within the room. It opened its mouth, swallowing the seated Ning within it. And, just like that, Ning disappeared..

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Within the main hall in the underwater estate. The giant prayer mats were there, the same as ever. Ning casually chose one of them, taking a seat in the lotus position.

"Ji Ning, kid, why've you returned so soon after your last trip?" The old black bull looked at Ning. At this moment, the giant yellow bear suddenly materialized as well. "He's about to make his breakthrough. If he were to make it in his own room, it would probably be destroyed. In addition, to be a bit more cautious, he decided to come here, to the underwater estate, which naturally would be the safest place."

Ning sat there in the lotus position, having absorbed his magic robes into his body, leaving it completely nude. "Let it begin."

Since he had already grasped the essence of it, Ning immediately began to activate the principles of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]. Whoosh! Whoosh!

Upon Ning's bared back, the Divine Solar Tattoo and the Divine Lunar Tattoo all suddenly lit up with incomparable brilliance. They instantly began to resonate with those two most supreme of celestial bodies, the Solar Star and the Lunar Star, which were located an unfathomable distance away and separated by countless realms. The Solar Star and the Lunar Star instantly began to send out a stream of Solar Truefire and Lunar Truewater towards him.

To advance from the ninth stage to the tenth stage was a major leap between realms. With each major transformation, the Solar Star and the Lunar Star would provide their assistance, causing the divine body to become transformed once more.

"Breakthroughs via the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] truly are special." The giant yellow bear stared at the lotus flowers, stamen, and petals that had appeared around Ning, all of which looked just like real ones. Ning was completely enfolded within the lotus flower. "Each time, there will be Solar Truefire and Lunar Truewater to assist. This sort of divine body will thus have the potential to control Solar Truefire and Lunar Truewater in the future."

"To advance from earthfire and dire-ice to skyfire and sky-ice, then to Solar Truefire and Lunar Truewater..." The nearby black bull shook his head. "That is all too far off. Generally speaking, only Celestial Immortals and Empyrean Gods have the chance to control Solar Truefire and Lunar Truewater...and that's just a chance."

A cultivator had to start by nurturing earthfire, then slowly improve it step by step, painstakingly nourishing it to the point of it becoming Solar Truefire when the cultivator became a Celestial Immortal!

"He's almost finished," the giant yellow bear said. Indeed. The Waterflame Lotus surrounding Ning was beginning to turn translucent; clearly, the truefire and truewater within had slowly been completely absorbed by Ning. The translucent petals of the Waterflame Lotus slowly opened, revealing Ning within the heart of the lotus. Every single part of Ning's body was incomparably perfect; it was the body of a Fiendgod!

Ning opened his eyes, and the fur clothes appeared on his body. They still appeared just like the ones his mother had made for him.

"I broke through," Ning said with a smile. What massive, majestic divine power. His entire body coursed with a flood of strength!

At the ninth stage, he was only comparable to regular, early Wanxiang Fiendgod Refiners. But at the tenth stage, he was already comparable to late Wanxiang Fiendgod Refiners! Most importantly of all...after every three stages, there would be a major gap, and passing through each gap was extremely hard. The three mini-stages were much easier to advance through; one only had to absorb enough solar power and lunar power in order to break through. Thus, there would be no bottlenecks for Ning as he advanced from the tenth to the twelfth stage.

"I have the Fiendgod body of a late Wanxiang Adept, and have mastered the third stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]!" Ning mused to himself, "And, with the divine ability, [Starseizing Hand]...my current level of power is significantly greater than it was back in the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains. If I were to once more encounter a Primal-level Dragonwhale Diremonster, it wouldn't be too hard for me to fight against him head on. And, I most likely should be on par with senior apprentice-brother Bloodshadow," Ning thought to himself delightedly.

In terms of Fiendgod bodies, Bloodshadow was merely at the peak Wanxiang stage; Ning was comparable to being at the late Wanxiang stage, and was just slightly weaker. However, he had a far more powerful divine ability! And, with the help of his swordplay...

"Given my current level of power, I can fight against Primal Daoists now. Even if I cannot overcome them, I should be able to escape," Ning mused to himself.

"Ji Ning." The giant yellow bear spoke out. "Senior." Ning looked towards him. "Since your foundation has improved, your power has naturally improved as well," the giant yellow bear said. "If you were to go re-challenge the third level of the Wargod Hall, even without relying on archery, you would have a 100% chance of obtaining victory in close quarters combat."

Ning laughed. "Then if I were to go challenge the fourth level? Would I pass?" "The chances of passing are less than ten percent," the giant yellow bear said. "Once your Fiendgod body reaches the eleventh stage, you should have a 30% or 40% chance of victory. If you were to improve in swordplay as well, then your chances would become still greater. To overcome the fourth level of the Wargod Hall...generally speaking, you'll need to be powerful enough to defeat Primal Daoists."

Ning couldn't help but secretly shake his head. Oh, Daoist Threelives...

The bar he had set for his successors really was too high. Even someone as monstrous as Ning found it incredibly difficult; the former successor, Immortal Juhua, really was unfortunate! He ended up becoming a Loose Immortal, and only many years after doing so was he capable of defeating the seventh stage and selecting an extremely powerful Immortal-ranked magic treasure. Unfortunately...by then, it was too late.

"No rush. I'll challenge the fourth level of Wargod Hall next time," Ning said with a laugh. "I just made a breakthrough as a Fiendgod; I can be considered to have reached the Wanxiang level formally now."

The giant yellow bear nodded. "Yes." Ning's eyes lit up, blazing with eagerness. "Then I now have another chance to choose a treasure from the Treasures Hall."

"Naturally. You will only have a total of three choices each time, so you must be cautious each time you do so; there's no going back after you make your choice," the giant yellow bear said. "Come. Let's go to the Treasures Hall and slowly pick through the treasures."

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An hour later. After having selected yet another treasure, and with his power greatly improved, Ning quietly returned to Serpentwing Lake. No one knew that within those two short hours, Ning had left Serpentwing lake. Naturally, no one knew that Ning's power had greatly improved.

Time continued to flow on. In the blink of an eye, a year had passed since Ninelotus had arrived at Serpentwing Lake.

The distant Stillwater City. The Black-White College.

“Junior apprentice-sister Qingqing!” In the skies above a mountain, a black-suited youth was calling out in a high voice.

“Senior apprentice-brother Flowcloud, it’s quite rare for you to come visit me here.” A tall, willowy, silver-robed, maiden, Luo Qing, walked out of her courtyard. Raising her head, she smiled towards the skies as she spoke. The black-suited youth in the air immediately landed in the courtyard.

“Senior apprentice-brother Flowcloud, please sit,” Luo Qing said. The black-uniformed youth sat down, then laughed, “I heard that recently, junior apprentice-sister Qingqing, you came back from your adventures, so I came to see how you are doing...as I recall, you and junior apprentice-sister Ninelotus went out together. Why is it that a year later, you returned but she did not?”

Luo Qing hesitated a moment, then said, “Chen Jin!”

The black-suited youth was startled. Chen Jin was his true name; however, Qingqing usually referred to him by his Daoist title, as ‘senior apprentice-brother Flowcloud’. For her to address him by his actual name...she most likely was going to discuss something important with him.

“You, me, and Ninelotus, we all came to Stillwater City together,” Luo Qing said in a low voice. “You and I both know about her background.” Chen Jin nodded. “Of course I do.”

“In the past, when senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus was in the Dongyan clan, you continuously wooed her. When she brought me to Stillwater City and the Black-White College, you decided to enter the Black-White College as well...I know that your heart has continued to be infatuated with her,” Luo Qing said.

Chen Jin laughed. “Although Ninelotus has never nodded and accepted me, I’ll continue to wait. Ten years, a hundred years...I’ll slowly wait for her.”

“There’s something...” Luo Qing gritted her teeth. “...that I think I must tell you about.”

“What is it?” Chen Jin laughed. Luo Qing looked so unwilling to speak out; could it be that she was about to confess feelings for him?

Luo Qing took a deep breath. “Senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus has chosen a Dao-Companion.”

Chen Jin was stunned.

“But unfortunately...it isn’t you.” Luo Qing looked at him.

It was as though a thunderbolt had fallen out of the clear skies, completely stunning Chen Jin.

## [The Desolate Era](#)

### **Book 9: Ji Ning of Serpentwing Lake Chapter 23: Holyfire**

“What did you say?” Chen Jin stared at Luo Qing, an incomparably terrifying look in his eyes. “Say it again!”

Luo Qing knew Chen Jin very well. She naturally could guess at what Chen Jin was currently feeling, and she immediately said with solemnity, "I said...that senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus has already chosen a Dao-Companion. She's chosen someone else, not you."

Chen Jin's face was ashen, and his body swayed.

"A pity," Luo Qing murmured to herself secretly. They had been friends for many years, and so she couldn't bear for Chen Jin to be kept in the dark. However, she also knew exactly what a blow this was for Chen Jin to hear. "He pursued her for so many years without success. In the end, junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, who didn't even pursue her, ended up attracting her attention."

Chen Jin shook his head. "Impossible. Ninelotus is the future Matriarch of the Dongyan clan; she has tremendous expectations for her future. Not even the many geniuses of the Black-White College have ever attracted her attention. Soundless and silently, she suddenly selected a Dao-Companion?"

"His name is Ji Ning," Luo Qing said. "He's our junior apprentice-brother. His Daoist title is Darknorth."

"Junior apprentice-brother Darknorth?" Chen Jin was stunned. Ji Ning, also known as Adept Darknorth, was quite resoundingly famous within the Black-White College. When this crazy junior apprentice-brother had first joined, in the Dao Debates, his performance had been such that the reincarnated Immortal, Rainbowflame Fairy Yu Wei, had been forced to personally intervene to overcome him. However, back then, Chen Jin had been carrying out a mission for the Raindragon Guard, and so hadn't been in the College and hadn't met Ning.

But he knew very well...for him to have been so powerful immediately after joining the school, and to have been selected by Immortal Diancai as a disciple, this person, Ji Ning, would definitely be one of the most supreme disciples of the Black-White College.

"Him?" Chen Jin couldn't help but say, "How can that be? How long have they even known each other? Ninelotus is the future Matriarch of the Dongyan tribe; she's extremely cautious by nature, and she considers all of her actions thoroughly. Even if truly she were to choose a Dao-Companion, she would be more prudent than prudence itself in doing so. It is precisely this temperament of hers that has led the various Immortals of the Dongyan clan to jointly concur on her as their choice. Even though her background is astonishing, it alone wouldn't be enough for her to be selected as the next leader. Given her temperament...she couldn't possibly have chosen a Dao-Companion this quickly!"

Luo Qing nodded. "You understand her very well. The choice of a Dao-Companion is a choice that will change one's life. Indeed, she didn't come to a decision this quickly. I'll tell you something...she's already spent an entire year with Ji Ning, in the secluded Serpentwing Lake of Swallow Mountain."

"She's spent a full year with Ji Ning in his secluded residence?" Chen Jin's face changed. There was no man who could accept the fact that the woman he loved had been living with another man for a full year! The same was true for Immortal cultivators! In fact, the purity of an Immortal cultivator's Dao-heart made it so that they were far more terrifyingly stubborn than most mortals.

"So what if they were together for a year?" Chen Jin suppressed the rage in his heart.

"When senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus and I first arrived there, we spent three months there, and I left," Luo Qing said. "I'm a woman as well; I could sense what senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus was

feeling. After just three months...she was already beginning to show hints of bashfulness on her face. Now that a year has passed...I can't even guess at how far the relationship between her and Ji Ning has developed!"

Chen Jin's face was as lifeless as steel! He was completely dazed, and his mind was in a state of chaos.. Bashfulness? Three months? Now a year? How far the relationship had developed? What had happened? Could it be that the two of them had already...

"IMPOSSIBLE!" Chen Jin let out a growl, then transformed into a streak of light, flying into the distance.

Watching him fly away, Luo Qing couldn't help but shake her head. "He actually lost composure this badly. It seems this truly was a major blow to him. I really didn't want to tell you, but I had to...telling you now means that you'll have a chance to fight for her. If I were to tell you in a few years...you would probably have no hope at all."

As far as she was personally concerned, given that she, Ninelotus, and Flowcloud had all come to Stillwater City together, she naturally felt extremely close to both of them. Between Ji Ning and Flowcloud...she naturally was biased towards Flowcloud, Chen Jin!

Chen Jin flew blindly through the skies, confusion raging in his mind. "No, no, I can't...I can't continue like this. I need to immediately go to the place where Ji Ning is living, to that Serpentwing Lake place in Swallow Mountain. Right now! Immediately! This very moment!"

Panic. Worry. Unease. These emotions tore at his breast.

"Flowcloud, come in." A voice suddenly rang out in his mind, carrying a hint of meditative dhyana; it actually was able to instantly suppress the turbulent emotions in Chen Jin's heart.

"Uncle Fire?" Chen Jin was stunned. He looked ahead of himself, towards a mountain peak and the scarlet red estate built atop it. This was the residence of one of the leaders of the third generation disciples of the Black-White College – Holyfire.

"Earlier, my mind was in a state of chaos. I actually unconsciously made my way to Uncle Fire's place. It seems as though...my heart subconsciously felt that this was the safest, most secure place for me in the entire Black-White College?" Chen Jin immediately flew into the estate below.

Within a courtyard.

A handsome, elegant looking bald youth, dressed in a fiery red robe, was seated in the lotus position, his feet bare. He seemed almost crystalline in his incomparable purity, and yet he also seemed to blaze like a flame, causing the temperature in the surrounding area to rise.

"Uncle Fire." Chen Jin walked in. Although both he and Holyfire were third generation disciples, in terms of age, Holyfire was more than a century older than him. When he was but a child, Holyfire had already been a prominent figure amongst the other third generation disciples of the Black-White College. Because Holyfire was on extremely good terms with his clan, the Chen clan, ever since Chen Jin had been young, he had addressed him as 'Uncle Fire'. Even after he himself had joined the Black-White College, he continued to address Holyfire in this way.



"I can tell that your aura is disturbed, and a look of chaos and wildness is in your eyes. If this continues, your Dao-heart will be damaged." Holyfire shook his head. "What exactly has happened?"

"Uncle Fire, I, I..." Chen Jin found it difficult to speak. Holyfire let out a calm laugh. In terms of Dao-heart and comprehension, there were actually even many Primal Daoists who were inferior to him. In terms of pure power, there were even some Primal Daoists who had been defeated by him! In addition, Holyfire had already made his preparations...in the next few years, he was going to make his breakthrough to the Primal Daoist level. In the entire Black-White College, of the third generation disciples, only the Sloppy Daoist was able to suppress him in might. This wasn't because Holyfire wasn't strong; it was because the Sloppy Daoist was truly too much of a monster.

Even Wanxiang Adepts who were reincarnated Immortals were completely convinced of the Sloppy Daoist's superiority. He, and he alone, was acknowledged by all as the number one figure amongst the third generation disciples.

However, monsters like the Sloppy Daoist only came once in countless years. In addition, they had a chance at becoming Celestial Immortals. In any other era, someone like Holyfire, who was capable of defeating Primal Daoists as a Wanxiang Disciple, would have already been considered the number one figure amongst the third generation disciples.

"Speak," Holyfire said. His voice seemed to carry a power to calm the hearts of others. Chen Jin nodded. "It is because of Ninelotus. Uncle Fire, as you know, Ninelotus and I grew up together, and our parents are good friends with each other." Having calmed down, Chen Jin began to slowly narrate everything, but towards the end, he couldn't help but begin to grow frantic once more. "...but she's now spent a full year at Serpentwing Lake of Swallow Mountain! That's Ji Ning's place. I, I..."

"Don't panic," Holyfire said calmly. "Panicking won't help solve the situation; thus, why panic? Your Dao-heart is insufficiently tempered. Romantic love between men and women can result in an emotional tribulation. If you trap yourself too deeply within it, then when you encounter the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations, you will most likely suffer greatly for it."

Chen Jin was shocked into awareness by these words.

"I know that you can't possibly wait, however, so...I'll come with you. Let me take a look and see what techniques this junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning has used to attract the attention of that child, Ninelotus," Holyfire said with a laugh.

"Uncle Fire, you'll come with me?" Chen Jin revealed a look of joy. Chen Jin had joined the Raindragon Guard long ago, and was extremely powerful amongst the third generation disciples of the Black-White College; he was only inferior to the most monstrous of the other disciples. The reincarnated Immortal, Yu Wei, was slightly stronger than him as well; he could be considered to be one of the top ten disciples.

This was, of course, in reference to real combat power. Thus, Chen Jin was actually quite talented...and why he was always extremely self-confident.

"Come."

Very soon, a fiery cloud arose. Atop it stood two figures; Holyfire and Chen Jin. They rapidly soared into the skies.

Serpentwing Lake.

It was spring, now. The days were warm, and the flowers were blooming. A boat was lazily drifting atop the waters of Serpentwing Lake. Ning was lying down within the boat, sleeping blissfully. There was another person within the boat...Ninelotus, who was seated within it. Ninelotus sat there, looking quietly at the sleeping Ji Ning.

A year...

The two of them had become extremely familiar with each other, to the point where they could faintly sense the joy each felt for the other's presence. But the selection of a Dao-Companion...both Ninelotus and Ji Ning were hesitant. Choosing a Dao-Companion was an incomparably important decision. Ninelotus was the next leader of the Dongyan clan, while Ning was the heir to the underwater estate; he had already cast his vision beyond the limits of this major world, and his goal was to roam the Three Realms and become a major power within them.

Both of these two were extremely ambitious, and their Dao-hearts were extremely resolute. Thus, neither of them would casually choose a Dao-Companion. However...for Ning to be willing to allow Ninelotus to accompany him in floating in the waters of Serpentwing Lake represented certain thoughts and feelings that Ning felt.

"Is this...truly like sleeping in the embrace of his parents?" Ninelotus mused silently to herself. Because Ning often liked to lie on that boat and drift on the waters of Serpentwing Lake, Ninelotus had asked Autumn Leaf, "Why is it that your young master often goes to lie on that boat and drift around on Serpentwing Lake for an entire day?"

"The ashes of his parents were sprinkled atop Serpentwing Lake. Serpentwing Lake is like his parents," Autumn Leaf had said.

For some reason...Ninelotus had felt a twinge of pain in her heart.

"If I were to lose my parents?" Ninelotus thought of her own father and mother. Both of them were alive, and her elders were all tremendously powerful. "Ji Ning, he..." Ninelotus couldn't help but stretch out her hand, gently stroking Ning's face with it.

Ning continued to sleep.

Ninelotus gently helped Ning adjust his hair. She watched there, quietly, feeling an unusual calmness in her heart.

In midair. A fiery cloud was flying towards them at high speed, and atop it were two figures. Both of them stared downwards. As they did, they immediately saw that little boat floating atop Serpentwing Lake. Ning was lying there, within that small boat, his head next to Ninelotus, who sat next to him, helping him comb his hair.

"Ninelotus!" Chen Jin, aboard the fiery cloud, instantly turned red-eyed as he saw this.

## [The Desolate Era](#)

### **Book 9: Ji Ning of Serpentwing Lake Chapter 24: Burning With Jealousy**

They had grown up together, and he had followed her all the way from Highwater Commandery to Stillwater Commandery and entered the Black-White College with her. After having pursued her for so long, how could Chen Jin not be infuriated by what he saw in front of him?

“Flowcloud.” The nearby Holyfire grabbed Chen Jin by the arm, pulling him towards him. Chen Jin had been about to charge out.

“Uncle Fire.” Chen Jin turned to look at him. Holyfire looked back, gaze as calm as ever. “Calm down.”

Chen Jin said, agonized, “How can I possibly calm down. I have to ask and understand exactly what the hell is Ninelotus thinking. Why would she take a fancy to this kid, Ji Ning?” Although they were fellow disciples, Chen Jin was currently filled with boundless disgust and distaste for Ning.

“You’ll only have a chance if you can calm down.” Holyfire looked at him.

Chen Jin wasn’t a fool; he had simply been provoked by the scene before him. He quickly suppressed his rage, then nodded and said, “Uncle Fire, don’t worry. I won’t do anything crazy.”

“Right. No matter what, we are all fellow disciples of the same school. We cannot commit fratricide against each other,” Holyfire instructed. “Come. Let’s go meet with junior apprentice-brother Darknorth and junior apprentice-sister Ninelotus.”

Chen Jin obediently followed by his side as the two flew downwards...

Atop the boat. A surge of power was rippling down towards them from the skies. Ninelotus couldn’t help but look upwards, and the ripple of power caused Ning to awaken from his slumber and open his eyes.

“Is that...?” Ning immediately recognized the bald, handsome, crimson-robed, bare-footed youth who had a divine svastika tattoo in the middle of his forehead. A look of surprise appeared on Ning’s face. “Senior apprentice-brother Holyfire? Why has he suddenly come to my place? There shouldn’t be many people who know that I am here at Serpentwing Lake of Swallow Mountain.”

Holyfire had mastered a complete Dao Path, and whose Fiendgod body had reached the peak of the Wanxiang level long ago. He had even defeated Primal Daoists before. He was one of the true leaders of the third generation disciples of the Black-White College!

“Senior apprentice-brother Holyfire, senior apprentice-brother Flowcloud.” The nearby Ninelotus’ face suddenly changed. “He actually came...it seems Qingqing must’ve told him. This will be troublesome.” As soon as she saw the two, Ninelotus was able to guess at what had happened.

“Ji Ning.” Ninelotus hurriedly sent to him, “Next to senior apprentice-brother Holyfire is senior apprentice-brother Flowcloud! Be careful of him.”

“Be careful of him? He should be one of our fellow disciples, right? Although I’ve never met him, I’ve heard of his name and that he is very powerful. Why should I be careful of him?” Ning was puzzled; he had never met Flowcloud before, and no enmity existed between them.

“Just be careful.” Ninelotus gritted her teeth. Right at this moment, Holyfire and Chen Jin flew down from the skies, landing atop the water. The two strode forward atop the water as easily as if they were walking on flat land.

“Senior apprentice-brothers Holyfire and Flowcloud,” Ning laughed, “Why have the two of you come to my Swallow Mountain?”

Holyfire smiled at him. “We learned that you were here by chance,” Holyfire said. As for Chen Jin, he just let out a cold snort, not speaking. This caused Ning to feel surprised...he had never offended this man before. Why was he treating Ning so coldly? Just now, Ninelotus had also warned him to be wary of Flowcloud...it seemed there really were some strange things going on. Multiple thoughts instantly began to flit through Ning’s mind.

“Since you’ve come to my place, senior fellow disciples, I naturally will show the hospitality of a host. Senior fellow disciples, please come with me,” Ning said warmly.

“No need.” The black-suited Chen Jin gave a cold response.

Ning frowned. No matter how good-tempered he was, he wouldn’t try to ingratiate himself to someone who was treating him icily. “Oh, then why have you come to my place, senior apprentice-brother Flowcloud?”

Holyfire gently shook his head, not saying anything. As for Chen Jin, he looked at Ninelotus. He stared directly into her eyes.

Ning couldn’t help but begin to feel anger rise in his heart. After having been together with her for a year, Ning had begun to understand how Ninelotus felt, and the two of them had reached a tacit level of understanding. They hadn’t felt the need to rush into open proclamations, but...Ning naturally felt quite upset for this Chen Jin to stare so fixedly at ‘his’ senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus.

“Senior apprentice-brother Flowcloud,” Ning barked.

“Shut your mouth.” Chen Jin gave him an angry glance.

Ning’s gaze instantly turned sharp. Although he had been angry, he had at least been able to maintain a level of decorum. But this Flowcloud telling him to shut his mouth was a clear sign that he intended to give Ning no face at all. If that was the case, then he had no need to give him any face either. He immediately barked back, “Flowcloud, this is my territory. This isn’t a place for you to throw your weight around. Get the f\*ck out of Serpentwing Lake.”

Chen Jin was startled by Ning’s shout, and he immediately said with fury, “You think you are capable of making me leave? You don’t know your own limits.”

As for the nearby Holyfire, he just watched quietly. Ninelotus, however, could no longer hold back. “Chen Jin!” Ninelotus barked angrily. Chen Jin, pain in his eyes, turned to look at her.

“Ninelotus, leave this to me,” Ning said. Although Flowcloud was famous, Ning truly didn’t hold him in any regard. Amongst Wanxiang Disciples, only the truly most top-tier experts such as Holyfire were capable of inspiring caution in Ning.

“Let me handle it.” Ninelotus shook her head, staring at Chen Jin.

Chen Jin, agonized, looked back at her. “Little Yun, you’ve really made up your mind?”

Ninelotus let out a light sigh. She had grown up with Chen Jin, after all. "Chen Jin, stop being so stubborn. Let it go."

Let it go?

Let it go?

Let it go?

These three words continuously echoed in Chen Jin's mind, causing the last vestiges of hope that he had in his mind to instantly be exterminated. His face changed, beginning to redden as he pointed towards Ning and howled, "Because of HIM!?"

"Chen Jin!" Ninelotus immediately barked at him but Chen Jin said, agonized, "Little Yun, we grew up together. When we were young, you always liked to be together with me as well, right? Because of you, I left Highwater Commandery and came to join the Black-White College of Stillwater Commandery! You should know that my departure from Highwater Commandery had a major impact on my status within the tribe, but for your sake, I didn't hesitate at all. I sacrificed so much, and in all these years, I've never wavered in my feelings towards you. You...you...you...this is how you are going to treat me?"

Ning, standing there, finally understood. So the two of them had known each other as children...but so what? Did they necessarily have to become Dao-Companions, just because they had grown up together?

"Chen Jin." Ninelotus shook her head. "I've never accepted you, despite the passage of all these years. How can you not understand?"

"Understand what?" Chen Jin let out a cold laugh. "You just grew fickle-hearted!"

Ninelotus was stunned. As for Chen Jin, a cold light flashed through his eyes. His many years of pursuit had resulted in such an ending...his final hopes had been extinguished. The jealousy that he had previously felt was completely transformed into rage! He was enraged...enraged that all of his sacrifices over the years had were like water that flowed east into the sea, never to return. Enraged that Ninelotus had actually taken a fancy to this kid from a minor clan!"

"No need to say anything else." Chen Jin looked at Ninelotus. "Dongyan Yun, after today, I will never bother you again. However, your judgment truly is terrible for you to have taken a fancy to this kid! We've been friends for so many years...today, I'll help you out and let you know how utterly worthless this kid you've taken a fancy to is!"

"Ji Ning!" Chen Jin let out a loud roar.

Rumble...instantly, the air above Serpentwing Lake instantly exploded with noise. At the same time, a large number of clouds began to gather, and the entire world seemed to change color. Around the black-suited Chen Jin, 108 golden disks of light suddenly appeared out of nowhere, all of which immediately flew towards the skies in every which way.

The clouds into the sky also surged at high speed towards those 108 golden disks of light. Soon, the clouds had transformed into a formation of 108 giant clouds, which were shaped like lions, chariots, dragons, and other creatures. These 108 giant clouds circled about the surrounding area.

As for Chen Jin, he stood there in midair, staring towards the distant Ning and shouting, "Ji Ning, if you have even the slightest bit of courage, then come battle with me. I'll let Ninelotus know...that you will crumple at a single blow. But of course, if you have no courage, if you are afraid, then just hurry up and get the hell away from Ninelotus. You aren't worthy of her!"

"Chen Jin!" Ninelotus was angry now as well. But the nearby Ning stretched out his arm, stopping her. Ninelotus couldn't help but turn to look at him.

"Leave it to me." Ning only said these four words. Ninelotus felt her heart tremble; she could sense Ning's determination.

The changes to the world near Serpentwing Lake and the sudden appearance of these 108 giant clouds had thrown Brightheart Island into a state of chaos. Many people charged out, and even Patriarch Ninefire, Granny Shadow, and the old servant Ah Xing came out to see what was going on.

"What's going on?"

"What's happened? Who is causing trouble here at our Serpentwing Lake?"

All of them were shocked and mystified. Ninefire, Granny Shadow, and Autumn Leaf all looked towards the Whitewater Hound and the Azure Skysnake.

"That red-robed man is named Holyfire; he's one of the leaders of the third generation disciples of the Black-White College. He's extremely powerful, and supposedly has even defeated Primal Daoists," the Whitewater Hound said. "Next to Holyfire is another disciple of the Black-White College; his name is Flowcloud."

"If they are all disciples of the Black-White College, what's there to fight about?" Autumn Leaf said, worried, "Is the young master alright?"

"Ning's already sent a message to me. Don't worry," the Whitewater Hound said. But although he said that, he was very worried as well, because he had spent quite a long period of time in the Black-White College and heard of Flowcloud's reputation. In addition, the grand aura of the technique which Flowcloud had just used was proof that his power was unfathomably greater than the likes of Dong One and Northriver Zhou.

This was a true elite of the Black-White College!

"Ning, son, be careful," the Whitewater Hound sent mentally to him. Ning's soul was so powerful that he could engage in a spiritual communication with his spirit-beast as long as they were in range of his divine sense.

Ninelotus looked at Ning, worry in her gaze. Although she knew that Ning was monstrously talented, he had still only been in the Black-White College for five years. Flowcloud, also known as 'Chen Jin', was also extremely talented and had been training for many years, and was shockingly strong. She was very worried that the two would truly engage in a wild, murderous battle against each other.

"Hmph." Chen Jin, in midair, saw the look of worry on her face. He couldn't help but let out a cold snort. "Ji Ning, dare you or dare you not? If you don't have the courage to fight, then f\*ck off and go back to your little clan."

“Chen Jin.” Ning strode through the air, one step at a time, moving higher and higher with each step. As he did, he spoke calmly, “It seems that your embarrassment has transformed into anger. Becoming Dao-Companions is a personal matter for two individuals; can it be that just because you were stubborn in your pursuit, that Ninelotus has to accept you? You think a bit too highly of yourself. As for you saying that you wish for Ninelotus to know how utterly worthless I am, that I can’t stand up to a single blow...once again, I’m afraid you think a bit too highly yourself.”

“Enough bullshit. Do you dare to fight or not?” Chen Jin stared at the distant Ning.

Ning continued to walk through the air, soon coming to stand at an equal level to Chen Jin. The two stood there in midair, staring at each other. A Darknorth sword suddenly appeared in Ning’s hands. A sword-hum rang out, filling the air above Serpentwing Lake.

“Come, then,” Ning said calmly.

### **The Desolate Era**

#### **Book 9: Ji Ning of Serpentwing Lake Chapter 25: Ji Ning Battles Chen Jin**

The two stood there in midair. As for Holyfire and Ninelotus, they stood atop the water, heads raised, watching them. Ninelotus sent frantically, “Senior apprentice-brother Holyfire, aren’t you going to stop Chen Jin?”

Holyfire, head raised, continued to watch. He sent back calmly, “Chen Jin wooed you for many years. The rage generated from the instant eradication of a dream held for many years is quite astonishingly great; it’s best to let him give vent to it. After doing so, in the future, it will cast less of a shadow on his heart. If he has to completely suppress his feelings, in the future, it will prove to be a disaster for him.”

“For the sake of letting him give vent, you are going to make junior apprentice-brother Ning suffer,” Ninelotus said angrily.

“Don’t worry. The Black-White College forbids its disciples from fratricide,” Holyfire said.

“Although the Black-White College does indeed forbid fratricide, as far as I can tell, Chen Jin has gone completely mad. He’s capable of anything right now. Although the College might punish him later, if he truly does wound Ji Ning...what good would punishment do?” Ninelotus said furiously, “Senior apprentice-brother Holyfire, you are very powerful; you can stop him.”

Holyfire gave Ninelotus a glance. “If something dangerous truly happens, I’ll intervene.”

“I’m afraid that by that time, it would be too late. They are Wanxiang Adepts, after all, and you, senior apprentice-brother Holyfire, are a Wanxiang Adept as well. Life and death can be determined in an instant...senior apprentice-brother Holyfire, you won’t necessarily be able to make it in time,” Ninelotus shouted back mentally. She wanted to give Holyfire more pressure, hoping that he might intervene.

Holyfire just raised his head, continuing to watch.

.....

Ji Ning and Chen Jin were in midair, staring at each other.

“Kid of a puny clan, so you actually have the courage to battle me.” Chen Jin let out a cold laugh, then sent mentally, “But this will make you all the more aware of your foolishness!”

Faint flames could be seen burning in Ning’s eyes as well now. The flames of rage!

“I’ll let you know how weak you are, how puny you are, how worthless you are!” Chen Jin’s eyes were filled with savagery. “In terms of clans, the Chen clan of Highwater Commandery is unfathomably more powerful than your puny little backwater clan. In terms of parentage, both your parents are dead, while my father is a Primal Daoist! In terms of personal power, I’m one of the top ten third generation disciples of the Black-White College, but you? You are merely a junior disciple who just entered a few years ago. Now, let me, your senior apprentice-brother, help you wake up and understand...that compared to me, you are a pile of shit!”

His voice rang out by Ning’s ear. Ning’s face became extremely ugly to behold...these were the words of a disciple of the Black-White College?!

“Indeed, even Immortal cultivators who are normally calm, reserved, and aloof, upon going berserk, can become thousands of times uglier and more unsightly than evil commoners.” Rage was now truly burning in Ning’s heart.

Comparing clans?

Comparing parents?

Comparing personal power?

The reference to his parents had particularly enraged Ning.

“Chen Jin, you’ve always chased after Ninelotus, but she never paid any attention to you, right?” Ning sent back, his voice mocking, “You chased her for so many years, but she never paid you any attention, and yet you still weren’t wise enough to just give up. I feel embarrassed on your behalf! Just look at yourself. Take a good look at yourself...look at how ugly you look right now, with that angry look on your face. Honestly...you are worse than a pile of shit.”

Ning’s words struck straight at Chen Jin’s weakness. Ninelotus had never shown him any interest...there was no way he could refuse this. As far as relationships went, Ninelotus had already chosen Ning; this meant that Ning was the victor.

“You really deserve to die!” Chen Jin’s eyes flashed with savage light. “Wind!” Chen Jin suddenly let out a great howl. The giant clouds that had filled the skies instantly began to glow with streaks of light which condensed around Chen Jin’s body, forming into a gigantic azure bird-of-paradise. The massive azure bird-of-paradise proudly raised its head, the plumage atop its head clearly visible, as well as the arrogance in its eyes.

“Compared to me, you are nothing!” Chen Jin sent a furious mental roar to Ning, while at the same time, the gigantic azure bird-of-paradise charged at high speed towards Ning.

Ning stood there in midair. “Hmph.” Ning let out a cold snort. The area around him instantly became filled with a large number of flying swords. In the center of the mass of flying swords were those nine black Nethercold swords, which had caused the power of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] to



rise by a full level. Light began to glow from the flying swords, and soon, a jade sword of light appeared before Ning. This was the ninth level of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]!

“CHOP!” Ning let out an explosive roar. The jade sword of light instantly slashed through the skies, and as it did, the vague outlines of a tri-colored lotus could be seen. Ning had already reached the ‘Dao Domain’ level in the Dao of Rainwater, the Dao of the Inferno, and the Dao of the Gale. The power of his Tripartite Lotus Sword had also reached an astonishing level, and the attack of this sword was filled with some of the mysteries of the Grand Dao of the Sword.

The sword-light flashed, and as it did, it was as though a dragon had appeared in the skies.

Rumble...the azure bird-of-paradise charging down at high speed instantly collided with the dragon of sword-light. It was just like Chef Ding carving the ox 1; the sword-light sliced seamlessly through the azure bird-of-paradise, causing it to be instantly chopped apart.

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“What?!” A look of shock appeared on Holyfire’s face. He knew exactly how strong Chen Jin was; Chen Jin could be said to be one of the top ten figures of the third generation disciples of the Black-White College. “Although that attack wasn’t his strongest, it was one of his more formidable techniques; how could it have been suppressed by Ji Ning? In addition, Ji Ning used flying swords, not close-quarters combat.”

Ninelotus, by Holyfire’s side, was similarly shocked. She had no idea as to exactly how strong Ning was in real combat, because during this year at Serpentwing Lake, Ning had never truly exploded forth with his full power in battle.

“He actually...actually...” Ninelotus couldn’t believe it. “Can it be that Ji Ning is going to defeat Chen Jin?”

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Ninefire, Granny Shadow, and the others on Brightheart Island all felt extremely nervous. This combat between two Wanxiang Adepts was a world-shaking battle to them, and the power of these blows vastly outstripped the might that had been on display during their previous battle at Oxhorn Mountain. Everyone, including Autumn Leaf, Bluestone, Uncle White, and Qingqing, felt extremely nervous. However, upon seeing Ning’s sword-light chop through the azure bird-of-paradise, they all felt relieved. “It seems he’s going to win.” The Whitewater Hound nodded slightly.

As for the midair Chen Jin, his face was completely ashen. He had wanted to teach Ning a vicious lesson in front of Ninelotus and trample over him, so as to let Ninelotus know how worthless this Ji Ning was, and that he, Chen Jin, was the truly powerful one.

Chen Jin knew very well that in the world of Immortal cultivators, strength determined a person’s true status; everything else was meaningless. He wanted to use his own strength to show that he was more powerful than this kid, Ji Ning, which Ninelotus had taken a fancy to.

“How could...” Chen Jin couldn’t accept this outcome.

“Come, winds! Come, clouds!” Chen Jin suddenly let out a savage roar. Instantly, the skies once more began to gather power, and two creatures simultaneously appeared; an enormous azure bird-of-paradise, and a pure, golden divine dragon.

The bird-of-paradise and the divine dragon coiled about each other, a shocking aura of power radiating from them. They charged directly towards Ning.

“Chop!” The distant Ning once more let out a cold, angry bark. The power of the ninth level of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] once more exploded forth. This time, the jade sword of light seemed to be like a painter’s brush, swiping outwards in an arc that was so beautiful as to cause the heart to tremble...and as it painted a streak of light through the skies, an astonishingly sharp sword-flash appeared as well.

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

“What?!” Holyfire was watching this from down below, and upon seeing this technique, his eyes instantly turned completely round. “The [Three-Foot Sword] – Sudden Sword Light!”

“This...!” Ninelotus was shocked as well. They were both disciples of the Black-White College, and the first six stances of the [Three-Foot Sword] had been passed down for many years; they naturally all recognized this technique.

Swish!

The sword-light suddenly appeared, carrying an invincible aura of majesty and power. Although the bird-of-paradise and the divine dragon mutually reinforced each other, filling each other with power and flexibility, in the face of this sword attack, which seemed to fill the world with its aura...they were still chopped into two halves, completely destroyed.

“The third stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]?” Chen Jin’s eyes were filled with disbelief as well.

“Impossible. This is completely impossible. There’s no way his swordplay can be this powerful. He’s just joined recently; how could he have already comprehended the third stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]? And even if he did master it, he still shouldn’t be a match for me.”

“I reached the peak of the Wanxiang level long ago, and have the support of the Cloudwind Formation. The treasures used to form this formation, my father personally gathered for me...this formation is formed from 108 high-grade Earth-ranked magic treasures. Their power is definitely no weaker than a divine ability’s.” Chen Jin shook his head, his eyes filled with disbelief. “Although his swordplay is powerful, the third stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]...it should only be slightly more powerful than my attacks.”

He was, after all, one of the top ten figures of the third generation disciples. He knew exactly how strong the [Three-Foot Sword] was. The fourth stance of the [Three-Foot Sword] was comparable in power to complete mastery over a Dao Path. The third stance, however, was a level lower in might.

In the Black-White College, only Holyfire, the Sloppy Daoist, and a very few others were at a higher level of comprehension than Ning. The power of this sword attack alone was already enough for Ning to rank alongside Chen Jin and the Rainbowflame Fairy, Yu Wei, as one of the top ten disciples of the third generation.

“Hmph.” Ning let out a cold laugh. It seemed as though Chen Jin found this to be unfathomable?

Chen Jin’s ‘Cloudwind Formation’ had been famous for many years, but Ning’s own [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] was also extremely powerful. By relying on the nine Nethercold swords, Ning was capable of unleashing tremendous power as well, and thus had been able to suppress his foe.

“Impossible. You, a brat from a backwater clan...how can you compare to me?” Chen Jin’s face was filled with savagery. “I’m definitely going to beat you to your knees. Beat you until you submit!”

This was the only thought in Chen Jin’s mind. He had to defeat Ji Ning; he had to!

“Cloudwind Worldchains!” Chen Jin let out a furious howl. But right at this moment, a pair of black wings suddenly appeared on Ning’s back. The black wings trembled, and Ning instantly charged forward like a streak of light.

At this moment, many chains of azure light and golden light were sweeping forward, seeking to wrap around Ning.

Slash! Ning’s Darknorth sword flashed out. Ning’s Fiendgod body had already reached the tenth stage; he was comparable to a normal late-stage Wanxiang Adept Fiendgod, and he was using his divine ability, the [Starseizing Hand]! Ning would even dare give Holyfire a battle, much less this Chen Jin!

“Rumble...” The azure chains and golden chains were completely shattered.

“No...” Chen Jin, shocked, wanted to dodge. But how could he possibly do so?! Ning’s left hand suddenly stretched out like the hand of a Fiendgod, grabbing Chen Jin around his throat, clenching around it. Chen Jin gurgled but was unable to speak. His eyes were filled with shock and horror.

“Who is the pile of shit?” Ning, his hand around Chen Jin’s throat, barked coldly, “Tell me...who is the pile of shit?”

1. Mentioned before, but this is an idiom

## [The Desolate Era](#)

### **Book 9: Ji Ning of Serpentwing Lake Chapter 26: Chen Jin’s Threat**

Chen Jin was being choked by the throat. Ning’s left hand appeared ordinary, but it contained power that was capable of tearing apart mountains; there was no way Chen Jin could struggle at all.

“No...no...” Chen Jin’s eyes were bloodshot. This was humiliation. His throat was being choked by Ning; he felt humiliated, like he had never felt humiliated before.

“You don’t know the answer?” Ning continued to grip Chen Jin by the throat. He said coldly, “Then I’ll tell you the answer. YOU are the pile of shit!”

Although they were fellow disciples, Ning felt nothing but boundless distaste for Chen Jin. Ninelotus and Chen Jin were nothing more than old friends...what business was it of Chen Jin as to who Ninelotus wished to become Dao-Companions with? Because Ninelotus was interested in Ning, Chen Jin was going to try to vent all of his anger on him? He had held Ning in no regard at all.

"If it weren't for the fact that we are forbidden from committing fratricide, I wouldn't let you off this easily." Ning continued to clench Chen Jin by the throat.

"You'd dare to kill me? Do you dare? Do you dare?" Chen Jin stared at Ning, eyes filled with madness.

"Kill you? Kill you, then be punished by the College?" Ning shook his head and let out a cold laugh. "You aren't worth it!" And then, Ning swung his arm, exploding forth with the might of his Fiendgod body and throwing Chen Jin out like a meteor into the distance.

The events which had transpired in midair caused Ji Ninfire, Granny Shadow, and the others on Brightheart Island to feel incomparably nervous.

"He's grown stronger, stronger than in the past." Ninfire's eyes were blazing with heat. "It's only been a few years...although in the past he was already able to easily slay a Wanxiang Adept, Adept Xu Li was incomparably weaker than this student of the Black-White College. However...even this powerful disciple of the Black-White College was easily defeated by Ji Ning. Ji Ning's advancement speed is simply too fast. If this continues...in a few more decades, what will he be like?"

"Young master..." Autumn Leaf watched quietly as well, eyes filled with excitement.

"Too formidable." Qingqing blinked, somewhat dazed. Ning's performance this time was clearly far stronger than his previous one against the Dragonwhale King. "No wonder, despite my countless strokes of good fortune, I remain so much weaker than him. His rate of advancement is simply too monstrous."

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Chen Jin shot down from the skies like a meteor, smashing into the waters of Serpentwing Lake and arousing a wave that was three hundred meters high. However, he quickly managed to steady himself.

"Flowcloud." The fiery-robed, bare-footed Holyfire walked over the waves, moving towards him.

"Uncle Fire." Chen Jin lowered his head, an incomparably ugly look on his face. He had never imagined...that he would lose so disastrously!

He had wanted to let Ninelotus see how powerful he was, and how worthless Ji Ning was! He had wanted to completely dominate and trample this Ji Ning, so as to give vent to his anger. Reality, however, was completely different from what he had anticipated. He hadn't defeated his enemy; instead, he had been completely crushed.

"Ji Ning's innate talent is indeed monstrous," Holyfire sighed softly. "In the past, when I watched him battle our fellow disciples in the Dao Debates for the first time, I knew that he was monstrously talented...but it seems I still underestimated him. Perhaps our Black-White College is going to produce yet another senior apprentice-brother Sloppy."

"Him? As if!" Chen Jin couldn't help but grit his teeth. The Sloppy Daoist...he was universally acknowledged as the number one figure amongst the third generation disciples of the Black-White College. Although he had trained for many years, the Sloppy Daoist was someone who only became more outstanding as the years went on. Generally speaking, Immortal cultivators would find their rate of improvement lessen as time went on, but the opposite was true for the Sloppy Daoist; he seemed to contain endless, inexhaustible potential, causing him to make one breakthrough after another. His

combat power was even more incomparably shocking. Even Fiendgod practitioners like Holyfire and the various reincarnated Immortals were all completely convinced of his superiority.

In this moment, Holyfire had the feeling that this Ji Ning's potential was enough to make him the next 'Sloppy Daoist'.

"Senior apprentice-brother Sloppy is like a raging wave that continues to surge forward, building up power and becoming increasingly mighty as it moves forward," Holyfire said. "As for this Ji Ning, he's like a sharp sword, capable of chopping through all obstacles, allowing him to advance at an inconceivable speed. This sort of astonishing speed...even the reincarnated Immortals in our Black-White College aren't able to advance at such a rate. He's simply too monstrous!"

Chen Jin gritted his teeth. The more Holyfire praised Ning, the more miserable he felt.

"Now, do you understand?" Holyfire looked at him.

"Understand?" Chen Jin looked at the distant Ji Ning, but his heart felt extremely miserable. He felt stifled! Enraged! Unrepentant!

He had wooed Ninelotus for many years, and his jealousy had transformed into rage! He had wanted to viciously pummel Ning and give vent to his rage, then leave in a carefree, relaxed manner. But instead, he had been dominated by Ning, causing his pent-up anger to cause him to feel even more miserable...this sort of agony caused Chen Jin to understand that a shadow had fallen over his heart!

"I understand." Chen Jin nodded, staring towards the distant Ning. Holyfire nodded slightly as well.

"He, Ji Ning, has cast a shadow over my heart. Unless I defeat him, unless I dominate him, or unless he dies...it will be very hard for me to wipe out the anger in my mind." Chen Jin gritted his teeth. "I've never been humiliated like this in my life. I've never felt so stifled, so angry before."

"You..." Holyfire was astonished. He had thought that thanks to this defeat, Chen Jin would regain his calm clarity of mind, but instead...Chen Jin was sinking deeper and deeper into the morass.

"This is terrible." Holyfire instantly understood his mistake. He had thought too highly of Chen Jin. Chen Jin and Ninelotus were of the same age; they were both very young, and were both proud, pampered scions of their clans; thus, they had never suffered much. In addition, Chen Jin himself truly was also an extremely, astonishingly talented individual; this was why, even when Ninelotus had been at the Zifu Disciple stage, he had already become one of the top ten members of the third generation disciples.

He was extremely talented, and so had always been praised by others! The elders within his clan had also encouraged him to woo Ninelotus and become her Dao-Companion; after all, Ninelotus was the next leader of the Dongyan clan, an ancient clan that was even more powerful than the Chen clan and which was spread over three commanderies.

Because he himself truly did like her, and because of the encouragement of his elders, and because of his self-confidence, Chen Jin had always believed that eventually, he would become Ninelotus' Dao-Companion! For her sake, he even chose to join the Black-White College...he truly believed that he had already sacrificed enough for her.

But...

First, Ninelotus had chosen Ning, causing him to feel completely stunned, jealous, and angry. He had planned to release his anger on Ning, but instead was completely crushed...this sort of humiliation was something he had never felt before in his entire life.

“Ning has cast a shadow over my heart.” Chen Jin understood this point; he was an extremely intelligent person, and upon realizing this, he immediately grew frantic. “I want to become a Primal Daoist, and then become an Immortal. I have to dispense this shadow. I have to!”

“What should I do? What should I do? Defeat him? Kill him?” Chen Jin couldn’t come up with any ideas. Just now, they had already fought each other; he was no match for Ning. As for causing Ning to die? Ning was a disciple of the Black-White College, and the senior disciple of Immortal Diancai. Who would dare kill him?

“What should I do?!” Chen Jin shook his head. “No. I must immediately dispense this shadow.” The humiliation and stifled rage which he felt caused him to feel extremely agonized. He knew that these emotions would have an enormous impact on his Immortal cultivation...but he wasn’t able to sever these emotions.

Knowing the problem was one thing; being able to address it was another.

“Ji Ning!” Chen Jin suddenly raised his head, staring towards Ning and Ninelotus, who were chatting in midair. A savage light flashed through his eyes, and with a swoosh, he immediately soared into the air once more.

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Ninelotus was in a dazed state right now. She had no idea that Ning had such tremendous power. Chen Jin was one of the top ten third generation disciples of the Black-White College, but he had been defeated so cleanly by Ning. Didn’t that mean...that in the Black-White College, only the likes of Holyfire and those few who had completely mastered a Dao Path were a match for him?

“Ji Ning, you...how did you become so strong?” Once her words came out, Ninelotus began to laugh at herself for saying such childish words. She hurriedly changed her words, saying, “You defeated Chen Jin...I imagine that he should leave now.”

“I hope he has come to his senses.” Ning turned to look downwards, but as soon as his words came out...a streak of light shot upwards from the ground. It was Chen Jin.

Chen Jin flew into the air, staring towards Ning and Ninelotus. He let out a cold laugh. “Ji Ning.”

Ning smirked. “Want another fight?”

Chen Jin could feel his anger begin to blaze up again, but he forced it down and growled, “Ji Ning, I urge you to leave Ninelotus.”

“Leave?” Ning felt quite amused.

Ninelotus sighed. “Chen Jin, you had best leave.”

At this moment, Holyfire flew up towards them as well. However, he just stood to one side, watching calmly and not saying anything. He hadn't been able to help Chen Jin; instead, a shadow had been cast over Chen Jin's heart. In truth...Holyfire felt rather vexed.

Chen Jin was looking at Ji Ning. He said in a cold voice, "You are indeed talented...but so what if you are powerful? Your clan, the Ji clan, is too weak...it doesn't even have a single Wanxiang Adept. Annihilating this sort of tribe is simply too easy, as easy as blowing a speck of dust."

Ning's face sank. "What do you mean by this!" Ning said in a cold voice.

"You know exactly what I mean!" Chen Jin looked at Ning. "You had best leave Ninelotus. Otherwise...don't blame me for being vicious! I don't even need to do anything personally; I have plenty of tools at my disposal for dealing with a small clan like the Ji clan."

Ning's face was ashen, the color of iron. Threatening his clan? For the sake of the clan...his father, the Patriarch, and the others all had been willing to sacrifice their lives. Although, due to his former life, Ning didn't care as much about the clan as his parents and his elders, because of their influence, he still cared quite a bit about it.

"You..." A killing desire began to surge within Ning's mind. However, the Black-White College restricted its disciples from committing fratricide.

"I know that you are a Raindragon Guard, and that ten thousand kilometers of the territory of the Ji clan is protected by them." Chen Jin looked at Ning. "Anyone who dares violate your territory will definitely suffer retaliation from the Raindragon Guard! However, in this vast world, there are still many forces that don't care at all about the Raindragon Guard...such as those criminals which the Raindragon Guard pursue. They are already wanted criminals; they won't be worried about offending the Raindragon Guard!"

Ning's gaze flashed with a cold light as he listened.

"It will have nothing to do with me. The ones who will annihilate your Ji clan will be those wanted criminals." Chen Jin looked at Ning. "Honestly. It will have nothing to do with me at all."

Ning, as well, understand...that the so-called 'iron rule of law' was something which the supreme clans were capable of avoiding or skirting around. The Raindragon Guard operated on the basis of proof; without proof, the Raindragon Guard wouldn't do anything to Chen Jin.

Chen Jin looked at Ning, then said coldly, "Make your choice. Do you choose Ninelotus, or do you choose your clan?"

Ninelotus was enraged. "Chen Jin, you..."

"He's cast a shadow over my heart. To get rid of it, I will stop at nothing. Ninelotus, you won't be able to stop me." Chen Jin looked towards Ning. "Ji Ning, what will you choose? Speak!"

**BOOM!!!!**

The black wings behind Ning's back suddenly flashed, and he transformed into a streak of lightning as he charged straight towards Chen Jin.

“HALT!” Holyfire roared.

“F\*CK OFF!” Ning let out a savage roar back, and a crushing wave of divine will smashed outwards, striking directly against the soul of Holyfire, who wanted to intervene and block him. Although Holyfire was powerful, he wasn’t a reincarnated Immortal, and although both his soul and his Dao-heart were powerful, he still felt his soul tremble.

That moment’s tremble...made him too late!

Chen Jin, whose soul had also been struck, wasn’t able to even use any magic treasures before Ning’s hand once more clenched around his throat.

Ning, his left hand clenched around Chen Jin’s larynx, began delivering blows with his right hand.

“SLAP!” “SLAP!” “SLAP!” “SLAP!” “SLAP!” “SLAP!” He viciously slapped Chen Jin on the face, and in a single breath, he delivered tens of slaps. “Threaten me? You dare THREATEN me? To boast of annihilating MY clan? You deserve to die. To DIE!”

Chen Jin’s face instantly began to swell.

“I’ll give you two choices.” Ning came to a halt, giving a sideways glance to the distant Holyfire. “Senior apprentice-brother Holyfire, don’t come any closer, or I’ll immediately kill him.” Holyfire was shocked.

Ning then continued to look towards Chen Jin. “You have two choices. The first choice is for you to swear an oath to the Dao of the Heavens that you will never cause any harm in any fashion to my Ji clan; otherwise, your soul will instantly be shattered. The other choice...is for me to shatter your soul right now. DECIDE!”

“You dare...you actually dare kill one of your fellow disciples?!” Chen Jin stared at him.

“You threatened to annihilate my clan. You tell me; would I dare kill you or not?” Ning stared at him. “Swear an oath to the Dao of the Heavens. Otherwise, I’ll shatter your soul right now.”

### **The Desolate Era**

#### **Book 9: Ji Ning of Serpentwing Lake Chapter 27: Traversing the Immortal Path Together**

“You...” Chen Jin stared at Ji Ning, his eyes filled with astonishment. Previously, Ning had appeared to be a very courteous, handsome, slim young man, but now, he was no longer masking the killing intent in his eyes. “If...if I don’t swear an oath to the Dao of the Heavens...he’ll kill me. He’ll definitely kill me!”

Correct.

Ning did indeed desire to kill him now. He absolutely wouldn’t permit his own clan, the Ji clan, to face annihilation. Whether for the sake of his father, the sake of those clansmen who he cared about, or because he felt a strong sense of belonging for the clan, Ning would definitely do everything he could to preserve the clan.

“Even if I commit fratricide against a fellow disciple and violate the laws of the school, so what! I’ll accept the punishment!” This was what Ning was thinking to himself.

Although the school did indeed forbid fratricide, if he actually were to kill Chen Jin...in carrying out any punishment, the school would still first investigate the details of the situation. For example, if a disciple



of the College sought to kill another disciple, could it be that the second disciple would not be allowed to fight back? Thus, this rule against fratricide was an internal rule of the College, and the exact punishment for violators would be determined by the College.

Chen Jin had threatened to annihilate the Ji clan...it was understandable for Ning to desire to kill him. The College wouldn't go so far as to destroy his Zifu; however, he would most likely be sentenced to go into a confinement of atonement for three hundred years, at the very least.

"What do you choose?" Ning stared at Chen Jin.

The distant Holyfire felt quite startled and nervous as well. "This Ji Ning...he actually is capable of using divine soul attacks. It seems he must have reached the divine sense level long ago...and he's also extremely strong! Chen Jin has fallen into his hands, and he can kill him with a thought; there's no way I can save him in time."

He felt somewhat confident in being able to deal with Ji Ning. However...his advantage in power over Ning was still limited; it could be said that the two of them were on the same general level of power. To rescue Chen Jin from Ning's hands? It clearly wasn't possible.

"I, I..." Chen Jin's entire body was quivering slightly; he felt both agonized and humiliated. He finally spat out a phrase that he would never forget for the rest of his life. "I am willing to swear an oath to the Dao of the Heavens!"

"Whew..." Holyfire let out a sigh of relief. The distant Ninelotus, watching this, also let out a sigh of relief. She had been nervous this entire time, because this entire problem was due to her. Although she herself was innocent in her actions, she still felt nervous and ashamed.

"I'll speak first. Repeat the words that I say in swearing your oath to the Dao of the Heavens. You are not permitted to change a single word!" Ning continued to grip Chen Jin by the neck as he said coldly, "Listen clearly. I, Chen Jin, swear an oath right now, with the Dao of the Heavens as my witness..."

"I, Chen Jin, swear an oath right now, with the Dao of the Heavens as my witness..." Although Chen Jin was unwilling, he still repeated every single word.

Invisible ripples of power descended. These were ripples generated by the most supreme of Daos, the Heavenly Daos. This meant that this oath had been officially acknowledged by the Dao of the Heavens. Upon violating this oath, one would have to face the punishment of the Dao! Even an Immortal who violated such an oath would immediately suffer a retributive attack, and if the Immortal had originally sworn that a violation of the oath would cause his soul to be destroyed, then his soul would indeed be destroyed and dispersed.

"...and if I violate this oath, then let the soul of myself, Chen Jin, immediately be destroyed and dispersed, never to be reincarnated again." Chen Jin gritted his teeth as he stared at Ning. "Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, are you satisfied?"

Ning let out a cold laugh, then swung his hand. Swoosh! He tossed Chen Jin far away from him. This time, Chen Jin managed to stabilize himself in midair. He gave Ning a cold glare.

"If you want to act against me, do your best," Ning said. "If you can invite any experts to come help you, I, Ji Ning, will be here waiting for you." Ning stared hard at him. "But when you come to deal with me, prepare to suffer my reprisal!"

"Aren't you a piece of work." Chen Jin gritted his teeth. Of course he wanted to kill Ji Ning. But...he couldn't!

He was, after all, just a disciple of the Chen clan with a bit of status; he wasn't even the heir who was in line to become the next clan leader! His father was merely a Primal Daoist...even if an Immortal of his clan was somehow willing to give him face and help him, how could that Immortal possibly go kill the disciple of Immortal Diancai, a monstrously talented genius of the Black-White College?

For the sake of its own survival, a clan would definitely not act in rash, violent, dangerous ways. A clan which did act in such a way wouldn't be able to survive for too long!

"Let's go." Holyfire flew to his side. Chen Jin glanced at Holyfire. Although his heart still blazed with rage, there was nothing he could do. All he could do was nod. "Fine."

"Ji Ning." Chen Jin, before leaving, gave Ning a final glance, then said in a low voice, "Let me offer you a word of advice. Ninelotus is the next leader of the Dongyan clan; this has already been set in stone. The Dongyan clan is an ancient clan that is even more powerful than our Black-White College. Not just anyone can become the Dao-Companion to the next leader of a clan like this. Even I, in terms of background alone, don't quite match up; that's why I still have to frantically train. As for you? Hmph..."

"No need to worry yourself about that," Ning said calmly.

"Hmph."

Chen Jin and Holyfire once more mounted that fiery red cloud, transforming into a streak of light and disappearing into the distant horizons. The only figures now left in the skies of Serpentwing Lake were Ning and Ninelotus.

"Ji Ning." Ninelotus stood there, a look of guilt on her face. "It's all my fault...I've caused you to gain another enemy."

This was the way of human interactions in the world.

Prior to this, Ji Ning and Chen Jin were fellow disciples of the same school who had never met. In the blink of an eye, however, Ji Ning had become a fiend in Chen Jin's heart, casting a shadow over it! Similarly, because Chen Jin had threatened to annihilate the Ji clan, Ning now viewed him as his hated enemy.

"This isn't your fault, senior apprentice-sister," Ning said with a laugh. "Don't worry. Chen Jin is nothing more than a dancing clown. He might be able to hop around smugly for a time...but what of it? What can he do to me?"

He was one of the two Sword Immortals of the entire Black-White College! The other, naturally, was his own master, Immortal Diancai.

"Right. Earlier, you demonstrated the third stance of the [Three-Foot Sword], the 'Sudden Sword Light'," Ninelotus said softly. "If the Black-White College was to learn of this, the degree of importance they

view you with would skyrocket even more. The [Three-Foot Sword] is the most powerful sword art of the Black-White College, and you are a genius of the Dao of the Sword; the Black-White College will definitely spare no expense in training you!”

“The Chen clan is comparable to the Black-White College, but it’s in the Highwater Commandery; the amount of influence it has in Stillwater Commandery is quite low. In addition, Chen Jin’s status in the Chen clan is fairly ordinary...and so you truly don’t have much to worry about.” Ning nodded as he listened.

Both of them were chatting in midair, and standing very close to each other. When Ninelotus spoke, Ning could almost feel her breath. This caused Ning, who had never before had a relationship with a woman, to suddenly have an impetuous feeling...which was only strengthened by the fact that just now, he had defeated his ‘rival in love’, Chen Jin. Ning suddenly stretched his hand out, grasping Ninelotus’ hand.

Ninelotus’ hand was very soft, as though it were made out of water.

“Eh?” Ninelotus was somewhat caught off guard.

“Be my Dao-Companion,” Ning said.

For a moment, Ninelotus’ mind was thrown into a state of chaos. She had actually been hesitating this entire time; during the past year, she had slowly grown more certain of herself, but she was, by nature, a cautious person. She had been planning to wait and watch for a few more years, but in the face of Ning’s sudden ‘attack’...she didn’t know what to say or do.

“The path of Immortal cultivation is one filled with pitfalls and traps. But we would at least have a Dao-Companion as we traverse this path.” Ning looked at Ninelotus. “Senior apprentice-sister, are you willing to accompany me in traversing this path of Immortal cultivation for a thousand years...for ten thousand years...and for eternity?”

Ninelotus’ eyes suddenly turned red. She nodded gently. “Hahaha....” Ning began to laugh joyfully.

“Remember what you said,” Ninelotus said, looking at Ning. “We shall walk this path of Immortal cultivation together. A thousand years...ten thousand years...an eternity.”

“Right.” Ning nodded.

Their gazes met.

As for Autumn Leaf, who was watching this scene from the distant Brightheart Island, she revealed a hint of a smile as well. “The young master...has finally found his love.”

.....

The Black-White College of Stillwater City. Adept Flowcloud, also known as Chen Jin, had returned to his own estate. He sat there by himself, drinking one cup of wine after another.

“Ji Ning.”

“Ji Ning.”

Chen Jin muttered this name repeatedly, a terrifying look in his eyes. The woman he had loved had been taken from him, and he had first been defeated, then been choked and forced to swear an oath to the Dao of the Heavens. All of these things caused Chen Jin to feel a boundless amount of hatred towards Ning, but...there was nothing he could do. Ning had been training for far fewer years than him, but Ning's rate of advancement caused even Chen Jin to feel tongue-tied and speechless.

"I won't be able to catch up to him. I won't be a match for him." Chen Jin couldn't even rouse himself to fight back.

"What should I do?"

Agony filled Chen Jin's heart.

"Right!" Chen Jin's eyes suddenly lit up. "Although Ninelotus won't be mine, Ji Ning's clan is far inferior to mine. Although he is a monstrously talented person...to an ancient, massive clan such as the Dongyan clan, they won't care about that at all. Right...I imagine that the Dongyan clan doesn't know about Ninelotus and Ji Ning yet. Then...I'll give Ji Ning 'a hand'!"

"Once the Dongyan clan learns of this, they will definitely prevent the two from being together. Definitely!"

Chen Jin was a disciple of a major clan as well; he knew very well how major clans carried out their affairs. Everything was done for the sake of the clan! The same was true for the leader of the clan as well. Only someone whose status in the clan was like Ji Ning's status to the Ji clan, whose personal status and influence completely eclipsed the entire clan itself, was able to surpass the importance of the clan. In those cases, the entire clan would move according to the wishes of that person.

Clearly, Ninelotus, by herself, couldn't possibly surpass the entirety of the Dongyan clan in importance!

"Let's do this." Swoosh. Chen Jin transformed into a streak of light, once more departing from the Black-White College.

.....

The Dongyan clan was an extremely mighty clan; since it stretched over three commanderies, it naturally had a local branch in Stillwater City. That very day, Chen Jin spread news of Ninelotus and Ji Ning to this branch.

The Primal Daoist in charge of running this branch didn't dare to be negligent at all in handling this affair; this news, after all, involved their next leader, 'Ninelotus'.

Very soon...the news made its way back to the primary headquarters of the Dongyan clan in Highwater Commandery, in the Dongyan Mountains. This was a mountain range that spanned more than a hundred thousand kilometers, and which was densely packed with countless structures and buildings. The Dongyan clan's population was calculated in the hundreds of millions, and all of the clansmen lived here. In addition, this mountain range was also filled with countless ancient formations.

This was, after all, an ancient clan that spanned three commanderies, one which had produced multiple Celestial Immortals. But of course, too much time had passed; although Celestial Immortals had infinite

lifespans, they might fall or die. No one knew for certain if the Dongyan clan still had any living Celestial Immortals.

In terms of their roots and their foundation, the Dongyan clan definitely surpassed the eight major powers of the Stillwater Commandery; they were actually close to the Northmont clan in power! Perhaps the only major difference between them and the Northmont clan was that they had never been enfeoffed with a marquidom.

“Little Yun has chosen a Dao-Companion?”

“What’s her Dao-Companion’s name?”

“Ji Ning?”

This news instantly caused a major upheaval amongst the high-ranking members of the Dongyan clan.