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Book 12: Immortal Destiny Chapter 24: The Sloppy Daoist Against Adept Ninedeaths

While Ji Ning and the rest of the twelve were in secluded meditation and training within the world of the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers. The imperial citadel's plaza.

Twelve names repeatedly came up in conversations: Xiamang Zishan, Cangwu Jiu, Ji Ning, Sloppy Daoist, Youngflame Zhan, Adept Woodpass, Adept Blackstone, Adept Ninedeaths, Adept Whitedragon, Adept Unicosmo, Adept Primalback, Adept Goldcrow.

"The top twelve have been determined."

"Our South Seas have Adept Woodpass."

"Our North Seas have Adept Goldcrow!"

"Our Quchang Commandery has Adept Whitedragon."

"You guys are nothing. Our Stillwater Commandery has two people; Ji Ning and the Sloppy Daoist!"

Only twelve finalists had emerged from the 3600 commanderies. Two of them belonged to Stillwater Commandery, and both were from the Black-White College!

Immortal Fivecraze was grinning so broadly his jaw was almost crooked. Clutching a calabash of wine, he gulped it down happily, occasionally chatting through divine sense.

"Oh, you are the leader of the Myriad Beasts School? Haha, yup, I'm Fivecraze. Yup, Ji Ning and little Sloppy both belong to our Black-White College. To be honest, Yu Wei of our Black-White College was poisoned; otherwise, she would've made it into the top ninety six as well. She might have even entered the top twelve! What? You would like to get to know the disciples of our Black-White College? You want to go spend some time viewing the Black-White Diagram within the Black-White College? Sure, no problem! How about letting the disciples of our Black-White College also go take a look at the ten thousand beasts of your school?"

"Xiangtian clan? Your Xiangtian clan wishes to send its disciples to the Black-White College? But, but...the Black-White College is in Stillwater Commandery, after all. We have very little room, and it's not convenient for us to have too many disciples! That's why we are extremely strict whenever we take on new students. What's that? Your Xiangtian clan wishes to send an envoy delegation to the Black-White College? No problem. Our Black-White College will definitely take good care of them."

Many people had come to seek out Immortal Fivecraze.

It must be understood that the Xiangtian clan and the Myriad Beasts School were some of the most supremely powerful schools in the entire Grand Xia Dynasty. They had all learned from their Celestial Immortal Patriarchs that the Sloppy Daoist was the disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu. Given how outstanding Ji Ning was as well...all of the major powers were puzzled.

"For a small school to suddenly produce one outstanding genius is one thing; that can just be attributed to luck. But they actually produced two! The entire Grand Xia Dynasty has only twelve on their

level...and one of them is the disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu. I imagine that this Black-White College must be one of the places within our Grand Xia Dynasty where luck is gathering and flourishing.”

“It must be a place of tremendously positive karmic luck.”

Many major powers came to this conclusion.

Luck; it couldn't be seen, nor could it be touched. But some places were just naturally lucky! When the imperial capital of the Grand Xia had been built, the Grand Xia Emperor had invited a major power to personally choose a site with great karmic luck to build on, then set up a grand formation that guarded the entire world from the site.

“We have to send our disciples over there. When they train in a place of such karmic luck, they too will be blessed by luck.”

“Right. We also need to go spend some time observing the Black-White Diagram of this Black-White College.”

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The main hall of the Skylight Palace. An hour had passed.

The Grand Xia Emperor sat above all others atop his throne. With a wave of his arm, a furled scroll appeared in his palm. It was the Pure Yang treasure, the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers. The scroll opened, and twelve streaks of light flew out and landed on the ground. It was Ji Ning, the Sloppy Daoist, and the rest of the twelve.

“We prostrate ourselves before you, your Imperial Majesty,” Ning and the others said as they all fell to their knees.

“Mm.”

The Grand Xia Emperor glanced at them, then nodded in satisfaction. He could vaguely sense that after three days of quiet training, all twelve of these had made some improvements. Some of them had improved considerably.

“This is now the most important part of this Conclave. Three of you shall emerge from the twelve...and one of the three shall definitely be chosen by my master as a disciple,” the Xia Emperor said. “There is no time to waste. Let the first battle in the fourth round of duels begin. Let us have the Sloppy Daoist of the Black-White College fight against the unaffiliated Adept Ninedeaths. The others can all rest, watch, and prepare for their own duels.”

Ning, Xiamang Zishan, and the others were all surprised.

Adept Ninedeaths was extremely strong, and she had yet to unleash all of her full power. As for the Sloppy Daoist, the Celestial Immortals had all gushed over him endlessly. Xiamang Zishan and the others had all heard their respective Celestial Immortal Patriarchs praise the Sloppy Daoist and warn them to be wary of him. It was as though the Sloppy Daoist was the strongest amongst them.

Due to the warnings of their Celestial Immortal Patriarchs, all of them were paying very close attention to the Sloppy Daoist.

Sloppy against Ninedeaths? So soon?

As for the Sloppy Daoist and Adept Ninedeaths, they each gave the other a glance, then walked out from the main hall and towards the grand sealing formation.

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The nine Pure Yang True Immortals seated at the front of the main hall of the Skylight Palace began to argue amongst each other.

“Xiamang, is something wrong with your head?” Truelord Chiji said with a frown, “This is just the fourth round, meant to determine the top six; why are you pitting the Sloppy Daoist against Adept Ninedeaths? Adept Ninedeaths has mastered five complete Dao-Paths long ago, and her divine abilities and training techniques are all incredibly powerful. Her might is significant! She should rank amongst the very top, and definitely has a chance to become number one. The Sloppy Daoist is the disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu; he should rank at the top as well, and also has a chance to become number one. For you to have them fight now...that means one of them will have to be discarded prematurely.”

“It is indeed too early. It isn’t appropriate to have the two of them compete so soon.” Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta slowly spoke out as well.

“Do all of you think that I can’t tell that Adept Ninedeaths is powerful?” The Xia Emperor shook his head.

“Xiamang has his own difficulties.” Lu Dongbin shook his head. “Actually, by now, I have a favorable impression of eight...but six must be eliminated! Thus, no matter how you match them up, at least two of the eight I like will be eliminated.”

The Xia Emperor nodded. “Right. By now, of these twelve, I have a particularly favorable impression of Xiamang Zishan of my own clan, Ji Ning, Adept Goldcrow, Adept Woodpass, Adept Blackstone, the Sloppy Daoist, and Adept Ninedeaths! No matter how I match them up, two of these seven will have to end up fighting each other. I pondered for a long time about what to do. The Sloppy Daoist is already the disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu; Master definitely won’t try to steal someone else’s disciple. As for Adept Ninedeaths, she’s the only female amongst the seven. They stood out. So, I ended up deciding to stop worrying about it and just have the Sloppy Daoist and Adept Ninedeaths fight. Whoever wins will stay behind.”

“That’s quite decisive of you.”

“The reason you are having Adept Ninedeaths fight the Sloppy Daoist is actually because she’s female?” The other Pure Yang True Immortals couldn’t help but laugh.

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Ning, Yu Wei, and Yuchi Xiyue were all behind King Yan. They were staring at the distant grand sealing formation outside the hall. Within the formation, there were two individuals; a sloppy, chubby youth and a similarly dirty maiden.

“Both of them are incomparably slovenly. They are a good match,” Yuchi Xiyue whispered.

“But both are very powerful,” Yu Wei praised.

“They are indeed. When Adept Ninedeaths puts on those silver gloves, even I can’t tell how great her power is. Although I fought against her previously, she hadn’t used that magic treasure at all.” Ning watched carefully. “Eldest apprentice-brother’s power is unfathomable as well. It’s hard to say who will win.”

They were all staring at this battle. The Pure Yang True Immortals were paying absolute attention as well.

The Sloppy Daoist? A disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu.

Adept Ninedeaths? Everyone had noticed long ago that she was one of the two masters of five Dao-Paths, and she had a body like a magic treasure.

“They are starting.” Yuchi Xiyue stared intently.

Ning’s eyes instantly narrowed. “They are finally showing their powers. Adept Ninedeaths...she truly is frightening.” Till now, Adept Ninedeaths had never before revealed her full power. When she had fought Ning, she had mainly focused on tying him down. But this time, in her duel against the Sloppy Daoist, she actively launched a sudden, violent attack.

Gloves on hands, Adept Ninedeaths six arms had become six incomparably fierce weapons!

Attack!

Sometimes, her hands hacked down like blades with invincible sharpness.

At other times, they glided like water, swirling about in a soft, circular manner.

Adept Ninedeaths circled around the Sloppy Daoist, attacking wildly. The two of them both used their divine abilities, both having transformed into three-headed, six-armed giants.

“Which Grand Dao is this?” Ning frowned. The attacks of Adept Ninedeaths were extremely strange. They created an extremely uncomfortable stifling feeling, while her own attacks were constantly fluctuating in style in an unfathomable manner. “It shouldn’t be an especially well-known one. I, at least, have never seen this Grand Dao.”

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“The Grand Dao of Mortality 1! This little girl truly is quite ambitious. The Grand Dao of Mortality...it is one of the most supreme of the many Grand Daos. It is extremely hard to train in. She actually dares to trod on this Grand Dao?” Lu Dongbin shook his head with a sigh. “But if she reaches a certain level in this Grand Dao, then overcoming the Celestial Tribulation will become significantly easier by comparison.”

The Grand Daos of Taiji, the Sword, and the Saber were all technique-focused Daos!

By contrast, the Grand Dao of Mortality contained the infinite mysteries of life and death within it, as well as the technical principles regarding how life and death interchanged.

It was a Grand Dao that not only contained many profound mysteries, but also ways to apply techniques! It was extremely difficult to train in, even more so than the Daos of the Sword or the Saber.

“Interesting.”

“This little lass truly is formidable.”

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Adept Ninedeaths attacked wildly, occasionally becoming as savage and vicious as a God of Death, while at other times seeming to be as gentle and soft as the caress of a mother. The interchange and the linkages between life and death...they caused even the Sloppy Daoist to be suppressed for a period of time.

However...

The Sloppy Daoist was truly too stable and unshakeable. When executing the Grand Black Tortoise divine ability, he also executed his Grand Dao of Taiji.

The Sloppy Daoist seemed to have transformed into a whirling and spinning turtle-shell. His defense was absolutely impregnable. The Grand Black Tortoise divine ability was exceptionally suited for defense, and the Grand Dao of Taiji was also extremely suited for defense.

“Damn.” Adept Ninedeaths let out a furious growl as she grew even more berserk.

By contrast, the Sloppy Daoist was incomparably relaxed and leisurely. His six arms seemed to have transformed into the spokes of an enormous windmill, blocking one attack after another.

HISS!

A sound like the hissing of a serpent.

The Sloppy Daoist had been defending this entire time, his guard as tight as a turtle shell, allowing the opponent no flaws to slip attacks through. All of a sudden, his arm came slamming out! His hand struck out in a serpentine stance, viciously stabbing forth! As it did, it just so happened to strike at a flaw in the stances of the frantically attacking Adept Ninedeaths, tearing her arm apart at the shoulder and sending it flying off.

Slash...

After his first attack, the Sloppy Daoist suddenly exploded with power. He charged forth with the power of a formerly dormant volcano that was suddenly exploding, and his six arms had all transformed into vipers that moved with strange savagery.

His defense had been completely impregnable. His attacks...they were as terrifying as the strikes of a viper.

“Perfect. I was afraid you’d keep hiding!” Adept Ninedeaths wasn’t startled; in fact, she was delighted. If her opponent had continued to defend, he might have been able to exhaust her divine power. That would be an unfair way to lose! Adept Ninedeaths immediately moved forward to exchange blows, and her severed arm was quickly regrowing.

Both of them truly did have the power to contend for the number one position!

1. Literally, life/death

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Book 12: Immortal Destiny Chapter 25: Secret Art 'Wavefolding'

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

The Sloppy Daoist's six arms were currently striking out like six venomous serpents, moving with unstoppable ferocity and extreme viciousness! His savage attacks seemed as torrential as a storm of rain, and each strike was potentially lethal. Clearly, he wanted to seize this chance to break down Adept Ninedeaths; after all, she had lost an arm and now had only five remaining.

"Hahaha...hahaha..." Adept Ninedeaths actually let out a delighted laugh. Each of her palm blows seemed to contain the power of life and death within them, causing everyone who looked at her to feel a stifled feeling. She madly blocked all of the Sloppy Daoist's attacks, and she even used her own body to block some strikes to win a little bit of time.

The Sloppy Daoist was ferociously attacking, while Adept Ninedeaths was striving to hold on until her severed arm had regrown.

"Not good!"

Ji Ning, Yu Wei, and Yuchi Xiyue all felt nervous as they saw this. Even though Adept Ninedeaths only had five arms, the Sloppy Daoist remained unable to shatter through her defenses. She was currently planning to hold on until her sixth arm grew back...at which point, it would be even harder for the Sloppy Daoist to defeat her.

"Is this all he has...this disciple which Grand Emperor Xuanwu took such a fancy to?"

He can't even defeat an unaffiliated cultivator like Adept Ninedeaths?" The True Immortals at the front of the Skylight Palace were all quite puzzled. As they saw it, given Grand Emperor Xuanwu's status, his disciple should naturally be extraordinary. Otherwise, that would be an utter loss of face for Grand Emperor Xuanwu.

Lu Dongbin, by contrast, was staring far into the distance. Smiling, he said, "This battle is interesting. This Adept Ninedeaths has an extremely deep level of insight into the Grand Dao of Mortality; in fact, I even suspect that she has memories from several previous lives...she is definitely extremely strong. Can it be that the Sloppy Daoist is actually going to lose to her?"

"It wouldn't be strange if he did," Truelord Chiji agreed.

"Just because someone is going to become a Celestial Immortal in the future doesn't mean they cannot lose a battle in the present." Sovereign Hao shook his head.

All of the Pure Yang True Immortals felt that the outcome of this battle was now in doubt.

Based on their judgment, both the Sloppy Daoist and Adept Ninedeaths had used all of the powers available to them. The Sloppy Daoist had an impregnable defense, and his attacks were absolutely savage as well...and yet, he remained unable to do anything to his opponent. This was indeed quite dangerous for him.

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The Sloppy Daoist suddenly took a break from his frantic attacks, beginning to launch a different tempo of strikes.

“This is...?!” Adept Ninedeaths face suddenly changed. The Sloppy Daoist was currently very calm; his six arms moved in unfathomable ways, and at almost all times four of them were defending while two of them were attacking! They felt like the waves of the sea. Each successive wave was increasingly powerful, and the same was true for the Sloppy Daoist’s attacks. When defending, he was accumulating power...and when attacking, he would let it erupt forth!

Accumulating power, then unleashing it!

This sort of strange tempo caused the Sloppy Daoist’s attacks to slowly become increasingly ferocious. One wave after another continued to merge into each other, causing Adept Ninedeaths to feel increasingly stifled.

“What what what...what is this?!” Adept Ninedeaths couldn’t understand it at all. The waves were growing increasingly savage in power!

BOOM!

The Sloppy Daoist suddenly struck out with all six arms. They all struck out as fists with a power that felt faintly similar to an enormous black tortoise slamming against the pillars of heaven. Boom....Adept Ninedeath blocked the blows, but was knocked flying backwards. Her body had split open at many places from the force of the collision, and blood was flowing from the wounds nonstop.

Whoosh. The Sloppy Daoist took a single step, appearing before Adept Ninedeaths. His six fists once more moved to strike out.

“I admit defeat.” Adept Ninedeaths discontented voice rang out. She was now using all her efforts to dodge. Only now did the Sloppy Daoist come to a halt. The turtle-shell runes covering his body disappeared as well as he returned to normal.

The dirty face of Adept Ninedeaths was filled with resentment and an unwillingness to accept this. She looked towards the Sloppy Daoist: “Sloppy Daoist; your level of comprehension of the Dao is limited, and whether I am attacking or defending, I can handle you. So why is it that this last technique of yours became increasingly hard for me to withstand...until in the end, I had to admit defeat?”

The Sloppy Daoist just laughed. This was a battle technique he had developed after gaining insight into the Grand Black Tortoise divine ability. When he had been transmitted this Grand Black Tortoise divine ability, he had sworn an oath to the Dao of the Heavens that without permission, he absolutely wouldn’t teach anyone any part of it at all. This technique involved some of the profound mysteries of the Grand Black Tortoise divine ability; naturally, he couldn’t teach it to anyone else.

“What is the name of this sort of battle technique?” Adept Ninedeaths quickly asked.

“Wavefolding!” The Sloppy Daoist responded to her.

“Wavefolding...one wave after another, folding onto each other...I was trapped within the waves, and death was the only way out...I clearly wasn’t weaker than you, but I was still defeated...wavefolding...wavefolding...” Adept Ninedeaths walked away, murmuring the word

'wavefolding' to herself. She even had a sudden feeling...that if she could comprehend the mysteries of this 'wavefolding', then she would have a chance to overcome the Celestial Tribulation and become a Celestial Immortal!

This was a stroke of luck for her! But if she was unable to comprehend it, then in this life, her ninth life, she would probably once more fail the tribulation!

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Within the Skylight Palace's main hall. The nearly thousand-strong Celestial Immortal Patriarchs were all frowning. Although they were very experienced, even they couldn't understand what had just happened. Clearly, these two were both on par with each other in terms of divine abilities, comprehension of the Dao, and Fiendgod Body Refining techniques. In fact, Adept Ninedeaths was even at a slight advantage. So why, in the end, had she been defeated like this?

It had seemed as though Adept Ninedeaths had walked into an endless tide; no matter how much she struggled, it was useless. In the end, the tide had completely drowned her.

"What was that?"

"How could that have happened?"

"I don't understand."

The Celestial Immortals all felt that there were strange mysteries to what had just happened. It should have been some sort of battle art they just saw, but none of them could comprehend it.

"He truly lives up to being the disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu." This was the only thing they could come up with.

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"Wavefolding!" The Xia Emperor and the rest of the nine Pure Yang True Immortals all revealed a look of surprise and amazement.

"I sigh in amazement. I sigh in amazement!" The Immortal Elder of the Northlands shook his head and sighed with emotion, "This Sloppy Daoist truly has astonishing comprehension abilities. He was even able to comprehend some of the true exquisiteness of this secret art of Grand Emperor Xuanwu's...when I watched that battle just now, I was even reminded of that scene from back when I was listening to Grand Emperor Xuanwu expound on the Dao."

"Truly incredible!" Lu Dongbin sighed in disbelief as well.

"Formidable." The Xia Emperor seemed to show a hint of envy.

"Grand Emperor Xuanwu...he truly is a major power!" Truelord Chiji's eyes were filled with admiration.

At their level, they actually all understood the profound principles behind the Sloppy Daoist's 'wavefolding' technique. This was a technique that constantly circulated and accumulated waves of power; the longer the power was stored up for, the more terrifying the final explosion of power would

be! But even if one was taught this technique and completely understood its principles, that didn't mean one would necessarily be able to use it. This was a matter of heart, a matter of comprehension.

They all understood some of the profound underlying principles, but as the saying goes, some things are 'easy to understand, but hard to do'! Understanding was one part; actually executing the technique was something else entirely.

"We can comprehend the mysteries of this Sloppy Daoist's 'wavefolding' technique, but when the Grand Emperor personally executes it, the profound mysteries are countless times more complicated," Lu Dongbin sighed. "Grand Emperor Xuanwu's 'Grand Black Tortoise' divine ability...its true exquisiteness lies in a single word; the so-called 'folding'."

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Ning was frowning as he watched. He could vaguely sense that the final battle technique the Sloppy Daoist had used had seemed to contain an utterly heaven-shaking profound mystery. He could even sense that the Grand Dao of Taiji was mixed into it. But Ning himself did not walk upon the Grand Dao of Taiji; he couldn't understand what he had seen at all.

"Yu Wei, what do you think?" Ning looked towards the nearby Yu Wei; she herself was walked upon the Grand Dao of Taiji.

"I don't understand it. It is very profound, unfathomably so. I can vaguely sense the exquisite essence of the Grand Dao of Taiji, but that's just one part of this secret art. I imagine that eldest apprentice-brother has only mastered the tiniest portion of this secret art." Yu Wei completely couldn't understand the technique either; she couldn't get the slightest bit of insight into it.

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The Celestial Immortals were puzzled, while Ning and the others were completely baffled. Just like that...this battle ended.

One of the top six had been determined...the Sloppy Daoist!

Rumble...

Suddenly, a ripple of the Dao descended within the main hall of the Skylight Palace.

"Eh?"

Everyone's gazes turned in unison to stare at the point where the Dao-ripple had descended. They saw Cangwu Jiu, seated in the lotus position behind a Celestial Immortal Patriarch of the Cangwu clan. In the area around him, a hint of a black wind could vaguely be seen.

"He comprehended a Dao?"

"He comprehended yet another complete Dao-Path?"

"He actually comprehended a complete Dao-Path by watching that battle?"

Everyone present was completely astonished. Generally speaking, it was fairly common for someone to suddenly make a breakthrough during the course of a battle, but Cangwu Jiu had just been watching the battle. In that tense atmosphere, he had actually gained sudden mastery over a complete Dao-Path?

Ning, Xiamang Zishan, Youngflame Zhan, Adept Blackstone, Adept Woodpass, Adept Whitedragon, Adept Goldcrow, and the rest of the twelve Wanxiang Adepts all sensed a new threat.

Cangwu Jiu had been very powerful to begin with. And now, he had mastered yet another complete Dao-Path....and in doing so had immediately become a truly formidable foe!

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“But, but...” The Grand Xia Emperor, seated atop his throne above the others, shook his head and laughed bitterly. He looked towards the other eight Pure Yang True Immortals. “Everyone, how do you think I should arrange these next battles? With this breakthrough, he has now mastered five complete Dao-Paths. In addition, this breakthrough was in one of the Daos of the Wind, one of the Five Elements. He was already exceptionally fast; he now will be even more formidable.”

He had already come up with a plan for matching up duelists. But Cangwu Jiu’s sudden mastery of a new Dao-Path, combined with the fact that he was already very formidable...this made him an even more shocking competitor.

“I view Cangwu Jiu quite positively,” Lu Dongbin said with a laugh. “He was actually able to make a breakthrough just by watching a battle...I imagine that his level of luck must be quite high as well. He was already quite formidable, and had never exploded forth with his full power; now that he has made another breakthrough, I imagine that his power is most likely not inferior to even the likes of Adept Ninedeaths.”

“This is going to be trouble.” The Grand Xia Emperor was pondering. He immediately made some slight mental adjustments to the pairings he had come up with earlier. He had originally ranked Cangwu Jiu as number eight or nine amongst the twelve, but now he ranked him somewhere around the third or fourth.

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A sudden breakthrough in the main hall of the Skylight Palace...this naturally attracted quite a bit of attention. The Celestial Immortal Patriarch of the Cangwu Clan had extremely long eyebrows, and he was currently extremely excited. He stared at Cangwu Jiu, this disciple of his clan. Upon seeing him open his eyes, the Celestial Immortal immediately said, “Good, good, good. Jiu, child, this is an excellent breakthrough. For you to make a sudden breakthrough here in the Skylight Palace must be the arrangement of the heavens; this time, you’ll definitely make the top three.”

The Celestial Immortal Patriarch was almost able to visualize how glorious the Cangwu clan would be in the future.

Why did the Cangwu clan necessarily have to submit to the Xiamang clan? With Daofather Crimsonbright supporting them, in the future the Cangwu clan would be able to grow and develop to the point where they would be able to sit down with the Xiamang clan as equals.

“The second duel in the fourth round shall see Adept Whitedragon of the Divine Dragon Mountain against Cangwu Jiu of the Cangwu clan.” The Xia Emperor’s voice suddenly echoed in the main hall of the Skylight Palac as well as the vast imperial citadel plaza below.

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Book 12: Immortal Destiny Chapter 26: Ji Ning Battles Youngflame Zhan

Cangwu Jiu against Adept Whitedragon!

Every person who had battled through the Conclave of Immortal Destiny to this point was a peerless genius. As if by unspoken agreement, they had all but given up using divine will attacks or spell-based attacks against each other! This was because using magic treasures and elemental ki was not enough to threaten their foes; they all had to rely on divine abilities to battle. Ji Ning had given up the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] as well!

BOOM! WHOOSH!

Cangwu Jiu and Adept Whitedragon were battling savagely against each other. Both of them used [Heavenly Transformation] and [Three Heads, Six Arms], then each unleashed their respective divine abilities.

Adept Whitedragon had completely transformed into a snowy white divine dragon, while Cangwu Jiu had exploded forth with a level of speed that was utterly amazing. The only thing that could be seen was a howling wind which flashed with streaks of lightning. Within the berserk lightning, the vague form of Cangwu Jiu could be barely made out. He flashed forward repeatedly at an utterly astonishing speed...it was as though a group of Cangwu Jius were fighting against this single snowy white divine dragon!

“What terrifying speed.”

“What shocking agility.”

Everyone was secretly amazed.

Ning, Xiamang Zishan, the Sloppy Daoist, and the others all felt their hearts sink. In terms of speed, Cangwu Jiu had always been ranked number one in this Conclave! Now, with this additional new breakthrough, his speed and agility had reached an unfathomable new level.

In close combat, speed and agility were even more important than strength!

“What a terrifying Cangwu Jiu.”

“A single overwhelming advantage can be used to great effect everywhere. Just by relying on his absolute advantage in speed and agility, he is an extremely terrifying foe.”

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There was no question about it. In t his battle between two powerful Fiendgod Body Refiners, Cangwu Jiu could attack when he wished and could retreat when he wished; he completely controlled the tempo of battle! Although Adept Whitedragon was powerful, in the face of Cangwu Jiu’s agility and speed, he had no tactical options available at all. In the end...he was defeated.

The second of the sixth finalists in this Conclave had been chosen...Cangwu Jiu!

“Goodd, good, good!” The long-browed Celestial Immortal Patriarch of the Cangwu clan grew even more excited, and his eyes gleamed with light. He was a Celestial Immortal; naturally, he could tell that although by this point there shouldn’t be any tremendous differences in power amongst the finalists, Cangwu Jiu was able to make his enemies helpless against him, thanks to his tremendous advantage in speed. If this continued...he would definitely be in the top three as well.

The Grand Xia Emperor spoke out once more. “The third duel in the fourth battle...Ji Ning of the Black-White College shall battle Youngflame Zhan of the Youngflame clan!”

His voice echoed forth everywhere.

Ning was seated by King Yan. His pupils contracted. Youngflame Zhan? The Youngflame clan? It was well-publicized that he had a major feud against the Youngflame clan...and his opponent would actually be Youngflame Zhan?

“Ji Ning.” Yu Wei held Ning’s hand in her own as she looked at him. “Be careful.”

“Right.” Ning nodded.

By now, none of the remaining opponents could be underestimated.

On the other side.

Patriarch Arcanum’s face had changed slightly as well. Ji Ning? He had long ago desired to find a chance to get rid of Ji Ning, but compared to the chance of having a clansman becoming the disciple of Daofather Crimsonbright, getting rid of Ji Ning was much less important. He had put that in the back of his mind, and his entire focus was on Youngflame Zhan making the top three.

“Zhan, child.” Patriarch Arcanum looked at Youngflame Zhan, who was by his side. He instructed mentally, “This Ji Ning is a Sword Immortal; he’s most skilled in attacking and battling. There is no need for you to fight him head on...and your talents don’t lie in fighting head on either. Use your strengths to strike as his weaknesses. You absolutely can win.”

Youngflame Zhan nodded gently as well. This battle...it was more important than life or death!

Whoosh. Youngflame Zhan immediately walked over towards the outside of the main hall.

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“Xiamang, when you instructed Ji Ning and Youngflame Zhan fight...why is it that I felt as though the atmosphere within the Skylight Palace became a bit strange? Those Celestial Immortals seem to be looking at Ji Ning and Youngflame Zhan in a rather queer manner,” Lu Dongbin said, puzzled.

The other Pure Yang True Immortals had noticed this as well.

The Xia Emperor laughed loudly, “Everyone, you don’t know this, but there is a feud between Ji Ning and the Youngflame clan. To be honest, it’s actually become a bit of a legend.”

“Legend?” Lu Dongbin and the others all began to listen carefully.

All of these True Immortals had arrived after this Conclave had already begun; they didn't have much of an understanding regarding these Wanxiang-level geniuses of the Grand Xia Dynasty. Naturally, they didn't know of the matters between Ning and the Youngflame clan. The only reason the Grand Xia Emperor himself knew about it was because he had collected intelligence reports on all of the geniuses, which was why he learned of it.

"The Youngflame clan had a member known as Youngflame Nong, who was going to be their next clan leader..."

"....."

"...and in the end, that Deathsworn which the Youngflame clan sent out ended up being killed by this Ji Ning's Primaltwin," the Xia Emperor said with a loud laugh. "So...you now understand the feud between Ji Ning and the Youngflame clan, yes?"

The other Pure Yang True Immortals now all understood.

"Xiamang, that's a nasty little trick. You know that there is a feud between them, and yet you intentionally set them up against each other. Still...given that such a feud exists, they are definitely going to fight even more insanely against each other."

"Mm. This battle is definitely going to be quite exciting."

.....

Two of the six finalists had already been determined. Ji Ning and Youngflame Zhan; only one of them could enter the final six! So long as they could enter the final six...they would be very close to becoming the three victors. Just one step away!

"The disciple of Daofather Crimsonbright should be me." Youngflame Zhan's gaze was cold. He was a very low-key person; in the younger generation of the Youngflame clan, the most famous person had been Youngflame Nong. He, Youngflame Zhan, had kept his head down and focused on quietly training; his goal had always been to overcome the Celestial Tribulation and become an immortal, free, unconstrained Celestial Immortal!

He had never held that playboy, Youngflame Nong, in any regard at all. Youngflame Nong merely relied on the affection of the Patriarch; he would only be able to dominate for a period of time.

"To become a disciple of a Daofather...this is indeed a chance that rarely comes even after a thousand reincarnations. I have to seize it." Youngflame Zhan walked into the grand sealing formation, then stared at the distant Ji Ning.

.....

"The Three Realms are unfathomably mysterious. After I become Daofather Crimsonbright's disciple and have the guidance of a Daofather, I shall be able to advance along my path in a faster, more stable manner!" Ji Ning knew very well that personal hard work and comprehension abilities were only part of it; luck and fate were another part. For example, if he hadn't had the [Nuwa Painting] visualization technique as he had worked hard under the tutelage of his father, Ji Yichuan...although he still might have been able to surpass his father and become a major figure of Stillwater Commandery after a few

centuries, it was thanks to the [Nuwa Painting] that his rise to prominence had become more than ten times faster!

In fact, were it not for the [Nuwa Painting]...he probably would've died when he had entered the underwater estate. Strictly speaking, without the [Nuwa Painting], Ning's talent might not have been high enough for the underwater estate to even teleport him inside.

An initial advantage snowballs into continuous advantages!

To walk farther, to make it to a higher position, to become a major power of the Three Realms...one had to seize every single opportunity possible!

"I am definitely going to enter the top three, and perhaps even become number one!" Ning looked towards Youngflame Zhan. "This Youngflame Zhan...he's a stumbling block, a tiger blocking a critical juncture in my path of Immortal cultivation. I must annihilate him."

Their gazes collided from far away.

Even their gazes seemed to be striking at each other. Everyone could sense the resolute aura emanating from the two. Either I can live, or he can...we cannot coexist!

Boom! Boom! Their bodies moved at the same instant as both transformed into three-headed, six-armed giants!

Ning's six arms were holding six Immortal swords, while Youngflame Zhan's six arms were holding onto six long black whips.

"Ji Ning, although your swordplay is indeed formidable, I perfectly counter you. You will definitely lose." Youngflame Zhan's voice echoed forth from his chest as his six arms struck out. The six long black whips began to dance, each one contorting and twisting in the air like an enormous, coiling black serpent. The whips were tipped with a series of sharp spikes, and were also covered with runes. A powerful aura sprang out from each of them.

"Youngflame Zhan, once you get into close combat with me, you will definitely lose." Ning's voice was also incomparably valorous and echoing.

Although both their words held some degrees of truth, they were actually trying to cause their opponent's Dao-hearts to become unstable.

At their level, if their Dao-hearts became the slightest bit unstable, then the amount of power they could unleash would be slightly lessened. If a strike at a critical moment was slightly weaker...one might be defeated.

Ning was pondering to himself. "Youngflame Zhan is an expert in using whips. Once one whip entangles me, the other whips will come to surround me as well. By then, I will be in serious trouble, and might even lose! Thus, I absolutely cannot give him that chance. That means I can't be too straightforward and rely on brute force...in this battle, I need to focus on agility."

Against different opponents, different battle tactics were needed.

Suddenly...

The two of them, who had been speaking and sensing each others auras, suddenly began to charge forward. The battle had instantly begun!

Swish! Swish!

A Waterflame Lotus bloomed around Ning. He stood at the pistil within the center of the lotus, within the leaves. This Waterflame Lotus was capable of affecting the opponent's whips...although the amount of influence was miniscule, it was enough to be of tremendous help in this fight.

Rumble! Rumble! Rumble!

Three long black whips simultaneously lashed out, unleashing crackling sounds of thunder as they did. They were like three black Flood Dragons, containing an incomparably dominating power! As for the other three long black whips, they silently struck out like deadly vipers towards Ning as well.

Ning brandished his Immortal swords while doing his best to close the gap with his foe. The closer they were to each other, the greater his advantage was! Whips...they needed sufficient space to unleash their power. The closer they were in distance, the less of a threat a whip would be.

Crackle...

Sword-light like silk. Silken rays of sword-light flew about in midair, constantly colliding against the whips.

The flying, dancing silken rays of sword-light carried an incomparable resilience. They came out in an interconnected, unending cycle.

"What tremendous strength." From this first exchange, Youngflame Zhan immediately sensed how terrifying Ning was. Although Ning had not chosen to fight him head-on, and had instead chosen to rely on a sword technique that was like water, repeatedly carrying away the strikes of the long whip...each time the sword-light and a whip collided, a terrifying tremor of power would be unleashed!

Youngflame Zhan even felt as though his six arms were beginning to slightly grow numb! Each time he lashed out with his whip, they were knocked to the side.

After using the [Starseizing Hand], Ning truly did have an absolute advantage in terms of power against him.

.....

Immortal Fivecraze of the Black-White College, Uncle White, Little Qing, Yu Wei, Yuchi Xiyue, and the others were all watching nervously.

Patriarch Arcanum was incomparably nervous as well.

Both Ji Ning and Youngflame Zhan seemed to be quite cautious in their clashes. They were both familiarizing themselves with their opponent's techniques, giving their foe no chances at all.

"Kill him, kill him!" Patriarch Arcanum's narrow eyes flashed with cold light as he quietly chanted these words to himself.

Suddenly...

Within the grand sealing formation, Youngflame Zhan's six arms suddenly, simultaneously changed. His arms actually became covered with many black scales, as though he himself had transformed into serpent as well. His arms instantly became soft and boneless. His whip strikes, which had previously been savage and vicious...immediately became softer and more insidious as they frantically moved forward to encircle and bind Ning.

The Desolate Era

Book 12: Immortal Destiny Chapter 27: The Six Finalists

"Youngflame Zhan has lost for sure." Upon seeing Youngflame Zhan execute this divinen ability, and upon seeing how the whip grew even more insidious and soft in its movements, the Xia Emperor couldn't help but shake his head and say these words.

"Indeed. Youngflame Zhan lost his composure. He actually made a mistake like this!" Lu Dongbin shook his head disdainfully. "Ji Ning has been extremely cautious and hasn't used any power attacks...thus, Youngflame Zhan's whips seemingly held the upper hand for a while. In reality, however, Ji Ning's attacks are the most powerful amongst the top twelve! Just because he didn't reveal his fangs doesn't mean that he isn't powerful; rather, he was just being cautious against whip-type weapons. Who would've thought that Youngflame Zhan, frantic to achieve victory, would have immediately used this divine ability as soon as he held the upper hand. He wants to use the whips to try and entangle and bind Ji Ning...but in reality, he's doomed himself!"

Pure Yang True Immortals had exceptional judgment. They saw right away, as soon as Youngflame Zhan executed this unnamed divine technique, that the divine technique was meant to make one's arms soft and boneless, so as to allow the movements of the whips to become even more insidious and softer as well. However, this caused the strength of the attacks to actually drop.

In this battle between Ning and Youngflame Zhan, Youngflame Zhan was already at an absolute disadvantage in terms of strength! And now, he was being so hot-headed as to execute this divine technique and further lower his own strength...wasn't this the same as dooming himself?!

.....

Ning had started off quite cautious, and his six Immortal swords flowed like water in an airtight defense. Youngflame Zhan, upon seeing this, had immediately used a divine ability to make his arms soft and boneless, making his whip movements even more softer and insidious as well. He thought to himself, "Although my strength will lessen slightly, the movements of my whips will become even more unfathomable and insidious. So long as I can tie him down, I'll definitely win."

Youngflame Zhan had gone completely berserk; in the face of this opportunity to become the disciple of a Daofather, even someone as cold and calm as him had grown hot-headed.

"Eh?" Ning was surprised and speechless. "I haven't even started fighting at full power; I've just been carefully guarding. I wasn't trying to seize an advantage, just working to ensure I didn't suffer a loss. This would allow me to get a clear look at the secrets of his whip techniques. Why has this Youngflame Zhan suddenly lowered his own strength?" Upon discovering the changes in Youngflame Zhan's whips, Ning felt surprised and perplexed. "He's dooming himself!"

Ning trained in the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]!

His divine ability was the [Starseizing Hand]!

In terms of raw strength, he had an absolute advantage! He was just being very careful and cautious, but his opponent actually lowered his own strength in a frantic rush towards victory...

"He's delivering a present to my door." Ji Ning suddenly exploded with power.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Six brilliant streaks of sword-light flashed through the air, each one incredibly dominating and savage! The power of the [Starseizing Hand] and his Fiendgod-like body simultaneously exploded forth!

BOOM!

A black whip was blasted away as soon as Ning's sword-light brushed past it. The difference in power between the two was simply too great, causing the whips to be blasted away. Although Youngflame Zhan managed to keep his grip on it, the skin between his thumb and forefinger had split apart and blood was leaking out.

The six streaks of sword-light, carrying extraordinary savagery and ruthlessness, swept, chopped, and slammed against the whips, blasting all of them apart.

Whoosh. Ning instantly charged right next to Youngflame Zhan.

Youngflame Zhan was tremendously shocked. His face instantly turned ashen as he realized that he had acted too impetuously and rashly. He had completely underestimated Ji Ning. Previously, he had watched Ji Ning's other battles, but only now did he realize how savage and powerful Ji Ning's attacks actually were. At the very beginning, when his hands were turning slightly numb from the colliding blows, Ning had actually been fighting very carefully and conservatively; he hadn't exploded forth with full power at all.

He now knew how utterly terrifying Ning was when fighting him head-on. Unfortunately, it was too late. Ning had already reached him.

"I admit defeat!" Youngflame Zhan's face was ashen as he called out these words loudly. His six arms brandished his whips as well as he frantically tried to create a wall of whips in front of him.

Whoosh! Slash! Ning's six rays of sword-light streaked out before Youngflame Zhan's voice actually rang out. As soon as he spoke out, Ning immediately came to a halt. This was in accordance with the rules of the duel. Anyone who dared violate them would be killed by the Grand Xia Emperor.

Even though Ning had halted, Youngflame Zhan's body had already been chopped into several sections. His body quickly began to pull together and reconnect.

"I lost." Youngflame Zhan rose to his feet, a look of self-mocking in his eyes. "I, Youngflame Zhan, have always felt myself to be an extremely cold and calm person. I didn't imagine...that this time, I was defeated because I wasn't calm enough. The allure of becoming a disciple of a Daofather combined with your ability, Ji Ning...they put me under too much pressure. I wanted to win too badly."

Ning also felt that this battle had been too easily won.

In his previous battle against Saberslave, he had to go all out in order to win. This battle against Youngflame Zhan, however, he had won easily. He had actually been fighting very carefully and conservatively, for fear of the unpredictable movements of the whip.

In truth, amongst the top twelve, all of the Pure Yang Immortals including the Xia Emperor and Lu Dongbin felt the most favor towards the Sloppy Daoist, Ji Ning, Xiamang Zishan, Adept Blackstone, Adept Woodpass, Cangwu Jiu, and Adept Goldcrow. As for Youngflame Zhan...they actually didn't hold in much favor. Still, any of the top twelve, no matter how weak, shouldn't have been defeated so calamitously.

If he hadn't been in a rush to win, and had instead moved to make the blows of his whips more powerful, so as to counter his disadvantage in strength...Ning probably would've had to first understand and familiarize himself against the whip technique.

"Useless thing!" Patriarch Arcanum gave Youngflame Zhan a glance, his gaze filled with nothing but ice. "You knew that his attacks were powerful, but still lowered your own strength...you are utterly useless."

Youngflame Zhan sat down in the lotus position silently.

Patriarch Arcanum felt like his belly was filled with fire...but he had forgotten that all the things he had told Youngflame Zhan earlier had actually also contributed to Youngflame Zhan being insufficiently calm.

"Calm...even in the face of a tremendous stroke of fortune, one still must be calm."

"This was a tremendous fall for me. Patriarch Arcanum even cursed me as 'useless'. I imagine that upon my return to the clan, the other high-level clan members will also be filled with endless rage."

Youngflame Zhan came to a decision. "Since I would have to endure the mockery and insults of others within the clan...after this Conclave concludes, I shall leave the clan and go adventuring."

He had always been an extremely calm person. This rare case of hotheadedness had caused him to lose his chance. This was a tremendous loss to him.

But one learns wisdom from each setback. He became even calmer as he coolly reflected on the path he should take in the future.

.....

The Xia Emperor had originally viewed seven favorably. He had been forced to decide on having the Sloppy Daoist and Adept Ninedeaths fight, but then Cangwu Jiu had unexpectedly made a breakthrough. The number of people the Xia Emperor viewed favorably had suddenly risen to eight as a result.

Of the eight, the Sloppy Daoist and Adept Ninedeaths had already fought. But what should his next arrangements be?

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In the fourth duel, Adept Woodpass battled Adept Primalback! Adept Woodpass was like a human-shaped tree; he was too sturdy and resilient, seemingly even tougher to deal with than the Sloppy Daoist. He, too, was a terrifying foe that was extremely, extremely good on defense. He forced Adept Primalback to use up all of his divine power...and in the end, forced him to admit defeat.

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In the fifth duel, Adept Blackstone battled Adept Unicosmo! The bald, bare-footed youth, Adept Blackstone, was indeed extremely powerful. He executed the Fuxi Staff Formation, then relied on it to launch sudden attacks and then vanish. Adept Unicosmo was thoroughly abused until he was finally forced to admit defeat.

.....

In the sixth duel, Xiamang Zishan battled Adept Goldcrow!

.....

The most vicious, bloody battle was the sixth duel; that between Xiamang Zishan and Adept Goldcrow! Both of them were viewed favorably by the Pure Yang True Immortals. Per the Xia Emperor's original plans, Xiamang Zishan was going to fight Adept Whitedragon, while Adept Goldcrow was going to fight Cangwu Jiu. But Cangwu Jiu's sudden breakthrough had transformed him into an extremely formidable figure.

There was nothing for it. The second duel had become Cangwu Jiu against Adept Whitedragon. The sixth one had thus become Xiamang Zishan against Adept Goldcrow.

"That Adept Goldcrow is truly formidable; he will be a test for Zishan. If he cannot even defeat Adept Goldcrow, how can he possibly become Master's disciple?" The Xia Emperor was quite harsh in dealing with with the disciples of his clan.

And thus, this battle was an exceptionally violent one!

Xiamang Zishan was even more powerful than he had been when battling Ji Ning; his staff techniques were now even more overbearing and dominating than before. As for Adept Goldcrow, his speed and agility were second only to Cangwu Jiu, while his attacks were even more savage vicious and savage.

The two battled until their blood flowed like rivers. It was an incomparably savage sight. In the end, because Adept Goldcrow had been badly injured and had used up almost all of his divine power, he had been forced to admit defeat!

In this battle...Xiamang Zishan had won!

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And so, the six finalists of this Conclave of Immortal Destiny had finally emerged from the crucible.

They were the Sloppy Daoist, Cangwu Jiu, Ji Ning, Adept Woodpass, Adept Blackstone, and Xiamang Zishan!

"Two of the top six are actually of the Black-White College of Stillwater Commandery."

"But but but...what sort of a place is this Black-White College? Two of these six peerless monsters are actually from them?"

"I hear that the Black-White College is merely a school within Stillwater City that takes up a very small amount of land. They have a total of just a few hundred disciples."

“What?! They only have a few hundred?! Our school has nearly a million, and is one of the most supreme, large schools of the entire Grand Xia Dynasty, but we didn’t even make it into the top ninety-six. But they actually have two in the top six?!”

Of the top six finalists, two came from major clans; Xiamang Zishan and Cangwu Jiu. Two were unaffiliated wanderers; Adept Blackstone and Adept Woodpass. Two came from a school...and they both actually came from the same school, the Black-White College; Ji Ning and the Sloppy Daoist.

“Ahaha, ahahaha...” Immortal Fivecraze was laughing so hard his jaw was turning crooked. He was utterly beside himself with delight. “Haha, I didn’t expect that an old alcoholic like myself would actually be showered with such glory before dying. Even if I die right now, it would be worth it. Ji Ning, little Sloppy, well done, well done, ahahaha! If that little girl Yu Wei had also entered the top six, things would be even better!”

“Patriarch, you want senior apprentice-sister Yu Wei to make the top six as well? This...is a bit too ambitious, isn’t it?” Upon hearing this, the nearby Mu Northson’s eyes couldn’t help but twitch.

“You think this is ambitious? Nope...in fact, I’m still hoping for little Sloppy and Ji Ning to both make it into the top three. That would be even better. Ahahaha! Two of the top three finalists of this entire Conclave of the Grand Xia Dynasty both belonging to the Black-White College...I’d wake myself up laughing whenever I fell asleep. When I die and go to the Netherworld Kingdom, I’d be able to brag a bit with the Judges of the Dead.” Immortal Fivecraze was indeed absolutely overjoyed.

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The imperial citadel plaza was incomparably lively right now, but the atmosphere in the main hall of the Skylight Palace was rather stifled.

This was because the top six had been determined! Next would come the top three! One of the top three would definitely become the disciple of a Daofather.

“Top three...” Xiamang Zishan’s gaze was crackling with hidden thunder.

“Top three...” Cangwu Jiu was seated, head lowered. He murmured these words to himself.

Ji Ning, the Sloppy Daoist, Adept Woodpass, Adept Blackstone...they were all silent.

In fact, they weren’t even talking to the people nearby them. An invisible pressure had completely surrounded the six of them. With one more fight, it would be determined whether or not they would make it into the top three.

Six people. Three duels. Three eliminations. Three victors!

Who would be eliminated? Who would remain?

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 12: Immortal Destiny Chapter 28: The Sloppy Daoist Battles Adept Woodpass

The Xia Emperor sat above all others atop his throne. Staring downwards, he said calmly, “This is the most crucial point of this Conclave of Immortal Destiny. Xiamang Zishan. Cangwu Jiu. Ji Ning. Sloppy Daoist. Adept Woodpass. Adept Blackstone.”

Ning and the other six all looked towards the Xia Emperor.

“This next round will determine which three of you six will have the chance to be chosen by Master as a disciple.” The Xia Emperor’s voice was calm, but his gaze swept past Ning and the other of the six. He knew very well that if the Grand Xia Dynasty’s world was to produce a peerless hero in this upcoming period of upheaval for the Three Realms, it would most likely be one of the six! In addition, it was guaranteed that one would be taken on by Daofather Crimsonbright as a disciple, while a second one was already a disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu.

“First, spend two hours calming your minds. After two hours, the final, crucial battles shall begin,” the Xia Emperor said calmly.

Ning and the rest of the six were instantly stunned. Calming their minds for two hours? The pressure of making it into the top three had already made it hard for them to even breath. They were all prepared to start beginning their one-on-one duels...but who would have imagined that the Xia Emperor would instruct them to spend two hours calming their minds.

“After two hours, the duels shall begin. These duels shall be the fulcrum on which your destinies shall turn,” the Xia Emperor said calmly, then fell silent.

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“Xiamang, you are quite the tormenter,” Lu Dongbin said with a smirk. “As the saying goes, death isn’t frightening; the terror you feel right before dying is what is frightening. If they were to compete right away, that’d be one thing, but you insisted on delaying for two hours...during these two hours, the invisible pressure they are feeling will most likely torment all of them.”

“How can a chance to become a Daofather’s disciple be so easily given?” The Xia Emperor said calmly, “The nine of us all encountered countless life-and-death tribulations before making it to our present levels. They, however, are merely Wanxiang Adepts. They must be tempered a bit, and the invisible pressure created by this chance of becoming a Daofather’s disciple is an excellent form of tempering.”

“Everyone, which one amongst the six do you think the Daofather will choose?” The Immortal Elder of the Northlands said.

“The Sloppy Daoist won’t have any problems entering the top six, but he is already the disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu. There’s no way the Daofather will choose him. Mm...it might be Xiamang Zishan. Xiamang Zishan’s dominating aura is bone-deep, and he is most likely being assisted by the karmic luck that surrounds the Xiamang clan. As long as he can become the Daofather’s disciple, his future potential will be limitless.”

“I favor that bald, bare-foot youth. I keep on feeling as though I can sense the shadow of the Shennong clan on him.” 1

The human race was the most powerful of the countless races of the Three Realms. In the Primordial World which Pangu had established after creating the universe, after Maiden Nuwa created humanity, the human race began to flourish nonstop. They learned, they grew powerful, and they began to embark upon the Immortal path...and so even as far back as the era of the Primordial World, mankind had already given birth to countless supreme powers.

The Emperor of Mankind, the Divine Farmer Shennong, was one of them.

“Mahāsthāmaprāpta, is something wrong with your head? That bald, bare-foot lad uses the Fuxi Staff Formation; if anything, he arguably has a connection to the Fuxi clan.”

“I favor Ji Ning. This Ji Ning has trained for just thirty years, but he’s already such a monster; his talent is limitless. Perhaps the Daofather shall choose Ji Ning.”

“I think Adept Woodpass is not bad.”

“I favor Cangwu Jiu.”

The Xia Emperor and the rest of the nine Pure Yang True Immortals each had their own favorites amongst the top six, aside from the Sloppy Daoist.

Ji Ning, Yu Wei, Yuchi Xiyue, and the Sloppy Daoist were currently seated together. Yu Wei and Yuchi Xiyue looked at each other, not daring to say a word. As for Ning and the Sloppy Daoist, they were silent as they meditated calmly.

“Yu Wei, the two of them are...” Yuchi Xiyue sent a worried mental message.

“Don’t worry about them. Although both their Dao-hearts are formidable, the allure of becoming a Daofather’s disciple is simply far, far too great. In addition, this is the final, critical battle. It’s good for them to sit quietly for a time and temper their Dao-hearts,” Yu Wei said. Her training experience was, comparatively speaking, much greater; after all, she had her memories from her past life.

Although Ning also had memories from his past life, not only was his past life a short one, he had also been an ordinary mortal.

Time flowed on. In the blink of an eye, two hours passed.

“The fourth round. The most important round.” The Xia Emperor’s voice suddenly rang out.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

Ji Ning, the Sloppy Daoist, Xiamang Zishan, Adept Blackstone, Cangwu Jiu, and Adept Woodpass; their gazes turned scorchingly hot as they simultaneously turned to look towards the Xia Emperor.

“After careful consideration, the six of you shall fight these three battles.”

“In the first battle, the Sloppy Daoist shall fight Adept Woodpass.”

“In the second battle, Adept Blackstone shall fight Cangwu Jiu.”

“In the third battle, Ji Ning shall fight Xiamang Zishan.”

His voice was deep and resonating. It echoed throughout the hall.

Ning and the rest of the six instantly turned their gazes towards their respective opponents.

The Sloppy Daoist and Adept Woodpass both appeared to be simple, honest, good-natured individuals...and yet these two good-natured individuals had both battled their way into the top six. Only

one of the two could enter the top three. Their gazes turned towards each other...but both were very calm. However, behind the calmness, an unshakable resolve could be seen.

Adept Blackstone and Cangwu Jiu were both unconventional. The bald Adept Blackstone always walked around barefoot, leaning on his staff. Cangwu Jiu, in turn, always appeared to be like a hawk, his gaze predatory and devouring. The two gave each other a glance, and their eyes both seemed to spark with fire.

Ji Ning and Xiamang Zishan were the two most ferocious individuals of the six. Xiamang Zishan's domineering, tyrannical temperament was bone-deep, and his staff techniques were similarly overbearing. Ji Ning, in turn, was the number one Sword Immortal of this Conclave; although he looked like a handsome, delicate youth, in terms of strength, he was the strongest of them all.

.....

Good-natured against good-natured.

Unconventional against unconventional.

Savage against savage.

"The first battle. Sloppy Daoist, Adept Woodpass, the two of you can go to the grand sealing formation. You can begin now," the Xia Emperor instructed.

"Yes." The Sloppy Daoist and Adept Woodpass both responded with respect, then immediately both moved towards the outside of the hall.

"Xiamang, your arrangements truly are like pitting the point of the nail against the tip of the needle." Lu Dongbin shook his head. "Not even I would dare guess as to which of them shall become the top three. I can't tell, I truly can't tell."

"It's precisely because we can't tell that makes this intriguing." Although the Xia Emperor was chatting with Lu Dongbin, his gaze was focused on the grand sealing formation outside the palace. He had to pay extremely close attention to each of these three battles...after all, watching with his own eyes was completely different from watching using a water scrying technique.

Water scrying techniques only transmitted images. Watching with his own eyes, however, allowed him to sense the ripples of the Dao.

"Ji Ning, which of the two will win?" Yuchi Xiyue was extremely nervous.

"I don't know." Ning shook his head, then gave a sideways glance towards the nearby Xiamang Zishan.

Xiamang Zishan seemed to feel his gaze, as he turned to look back at Ning as well. Their gazes met...and then both turned away to look towards the battle outside that had just begun.

The Sloppy Daoist and Adept Woodpass; one of them would make it into the top three.

Who would it be?

.....

Within the grand sealing formation.

The Sloppy Daoist and Adept Woodpass were staring at each other from far away.

“You are the most powerful foe I have encountered so far in this Conclave.” Adept Woodpass normally looked quite amiable, but right now his eyes were as sharp as knives. He said seriously, “I watched you defeat Adept Ninedeaths, but...you will be defeated by me.”

“Oh. Just saying the words is nothing; if you have any formidable techniques, bring them out,” the Sloppy Daoist said with a chortle.

Boom! Boom!

The two simultaneously transformed into towering giants, each with three heads and six arms.

Each of the six arms of Adept Woodpass clutched a giant hammer, while the Sloppy Daoist remained barehanded. However, with the Grand Black Tortoise divine ability, he truly didn't need any weapons at all. Actually, Ning didn't need to use any weapons either; his [Starseizing Hand] made his hands comparable to Immortal-ranked magic treasures, after all. But the implications of the [Starseizing Hand] were simply too great; Ning didn't dare to casually reveal this technique.

If he revealed it in front of Daofather Crimsonbright, that was one thing, but the Conclave of Immortal Destiny had too many eyes and ears present. Once he revealed the technique, news would surely spread like wildfire, and most likely many individuals within the Three Realms would learn of it. Perhaps some of the major powers who held grudges against Daoist Threelives would decide to wipe out Ning, the successor to Daoist Threelives' legacy!

Ning didn't dare to make this gamble. Thus, he had never used his bare hands to block magic treasures, even though his hands were even more powerful than the Darknorth swords!

“Growl...”

An enormous Turtle-Snake had appeared. It was even letting out a slight growl. The Sloppy Daoist, in the very center of the Turtle-Snake, came crushing downwards towards Adept Woodpass with an absolutely dominating air.

“This is my world...” Adept Woodpass narrowed his eyes, a look of intoxication appearing on his face. Instantly, fruit tree saplings began to appear and grow throughout the sealed region. The saplings quickly grew into towering trees which died, transformed into ash, then gave birth to new saplings. Countless saplings were growing, and the three-headed, six-armed Adept Woodpass was himself like a human-shaped tree, with his six arms like tree branches and the giant warhammers in his hands like fruit.

BANG! The Sloppy Daoist's attack had arrived. His fist smashed down like thunder, crushing downwards. Adept Woodpass, in turn, waved a great warhammer.

BOOM! The warhammer met the fist. Adept Woodpass just took one heavy step back after another, deflecting the force of the collision. He continued to look like a human-shaped tree as he brandished about those six giant warhammers.

"I couldn't break through?" The Sloppy Daoist was surprised. "He truly is a peerless genius who was famous even as far back as three centuries ago who insisted on stifling himself for three hundred years as he waited for this day."

The Sloppy Daoist's attack form changed. He immediately executed the 'Wavefolding' secret art, and his attacks began to seem to turn into the waves of the sea, each wave more savage than the last as power continuously accumulated! Even Adept Woodpass, legendary for his defense, was finding it increasingly difficult to handle.

"For trees to grow, they need water!" Adept Woodpass' face changed slightly as he suddenly spoke out in a gravelly voice.

Rumble...

The trees that had sprung up within the sealed region began to be surrounded with a large amount of water. The vast amount of water swirled around the trees...and the feeling which Adept Woodpass gave off changed. He previously seemed like a man-shaped tree, but now he seemed more agile, with perfect dexterity.

"Two Grand Daos?"

"He actually has embarked on two Grand Daos?"

Lu Dongbin, the Xia Emperor, and the rest of the Pure Yang True Immortals were instantly shocked. During the previous duels as well as when he was within the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers, Adept Woodpass had always used the Grand Dao of Verdant Wood. This Grand Dao of the Watersource, Adept Woodpass had never before revealed.

The Grand Dao of the Verdant Wood. The Grand Dao of the Watersource. These were two Grand Daos that reinforced and supported each other. For a Wanxiang Adept to simultaneously train in two Grand Daos to such an extremely high level, at very least at the Grand Dao Domain level...in this entire Conclave, only Adept Woodpass had accomplished such a thing.

This seemingly amiable and honest Adept Woodpass had never before revealed this, and upon doing so, he shocked everyone.

1. Shennong, lit. 'Divine Farmer', is the name of one of China's legendary Emperors from thousands of years ago. He was supposedly also the father of Chinese medicine, as he tested countless plants for their medicinal properties, then wrote them all down.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 12: Immortal Destiny Chapter 29: Ji Ning Enters the Fray

"It's hard to say who will win and who will lose." Watching the battle, Lu Dongbin said softly, "The two of them really are similar...their battle styles are both majestic, using absolute power to crush their foes."

"Right." The Xia Emperor and the others nodded as well. Adept Woodpass and the Sloppy Daoist were indeed quite similar. And both were extremely skilled at defense!

As for attacking? The Sloppy Daoist had always used his bare hands, while Adept Woodpass used six large warhammers. But in reality, those six large warhammers were just bigger fists! Since Adept Woodpass didn't have the Grand Black Tortoise divine ability, he naturally didn't dare to actually use his bare hands to fight. The Sloppy Daoist's fists were definitely no weaker than the large warhammers in power.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The two were clashing head on. The Sloppy Daoist was like a wave that was growing increasingly savage and powerful. Adept Woodpass, in turn, seemed incredibly resilient. His six arms swung about those six giant warhammers, counterattacking again and again.

Warhammers and fists. Boom, boom, boom! They slammed against each other repeatedly!

"They really are similar." Ji Ning, seated behind King Yan, couldn't help but mumble to himself, "Eldest apprentice-brother and Adept Woodpass are both so majestic in their attacks...and the more majestic their attacks, the harder it is to defend against them."

Both of them had extremely strong defenses and would fight opponents head on! Other peerless geniuses, when encountering them, would most likely use up all of their divine power and then be forced to admit defeat.

"Eldest apprentice-brother seems like a black tortoise divine beast."

"Adept Woodpass seems like a mobile, man-shaped tree."

Just as Ning and the others were watching and pondering, suddenly...

The Sloppy Daoist, whose aura had been growing increasingly wild and explosive, suddenly came to a halt. The folding waves of attacks came to a halt as well. Adept Woodpass immediately noticed this weakening, and with a grand hammer blow, he directly caved in the Sloppy Daoist's chest.

BOOM! This hammer blow was incomparably heavy, and cracks appeared on the turtle shell runes on the Sloppy Daoist's body as he spat out a mouthful of blood.

BOOM BOOM BOOM! Adept Woodpass struck out repeatedly with his great hammer, showing no mercy at all in seizing the advantage. The Sloppy Daoist was smashed by multiple hammers in virtually the same instant. Heavily wounded, he struggled to defend while calling out: "I admit defeat!"

Whoosh! Adept Woodpass immediately retreated, the giant hammers in his hands disappearing as he returned to a normal size.

The Sloppy Daoist returned to a normal size as well. He looked at Adept Woodpass with a hint of resignation. "I lost...but I'm convinced by my defeat."

"Your attacks clearly had me at a disadvantage. Why did you suddenly stop?" Adept Woodpass asked, puzzled, "Your earlier attacks were becoming increasingly berserk...if that continued, I probably would've lost."

"If the 'wavefolding' secret art can continue to explosively increase in power into perpetuity, wouldn't that make me invincible?" The Sloppy Daoist shook his head.

Adept Woodpass now understood. Right. If the power of this wavefolding technique could increase without end...how crazy would that be?

“The length of time I sustained in using this secret art today...it is already the longest I have ever used it in all these years.” The Sloppy Daoist shook his head and laughed. “But no matter what, this Conclave has proven to be a tremendous tempering experience to me, and my wavefolding abilities have increased dramatically as well.”

Adept Woodpass instantly began to feel admiration for the Sloppy Daoist.

The top three...they had a chance of becoming a Daofather’s disciple. Losing such a supreme chance was something that would definitely cause a major mental setback towards one’s self-confidence. And yet, this Sloppy Daoist was actually able to recover from it almost instantly; he was even able to laugh. This sort of Dao-heart alone was already enough for Adept Woodpass to feel endless admiration.

In addition, when they fought earlier, Adept Woodpass also noticed that both their personalities and their paths were quite similar!

The path of Immortal cultivation was an incomparably difficult one. Upon finding a powerful figure that was very similar to one’s self...they were practically bosom friends now. Adept Woodpass felt tremendous affection and admiration for him.

“Congratulations, fellow Daoist Woodpass,” the Sloppy Daoist said with a laugh.

“This duel with you, fellow Daoist Sloppy, was a truly joyful one for me. It is rare for a person to encounter a bosom friend on the Immortal path, but you, fellow Daoist Sloppy, feel like a bosom friend to me...if you are free, you must come to the South Seas. When I’m free, I’ll definitely visit the Black-White College of Stillwater Commandery,” Adept Woodpass said.

“Definitely.” The Sloppy Daoist nodded as well. Over the course of this battle, he had also come to feel very positively towards Adept Woodpass.

There were some people who had never met before in the past, but upon meeting a single time would become bosom friends with each other! The Sloppy Daoist and Adept Woodpass were two such people...their Dao-hearts, their beliefs, and their ideas were all very similar. It was rare to encounter such a similar bosom-friend!

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The Xia Emperor, Lu Dongbin, and the rest of the Pure Yang True Immortals all nodded silently. When Adept Woodpass had suddenly demonstrated yet another Grand Dao, they had all come to believe that the results of this battle had become hard to predict.

Adept Woodpass winning was reasonable.

“Wavefolding has a limit...upon reaching it, it will collapse and become uncontrollable.” Lu Dongbin nodded. “This is true even when Grand Emperor Xuanwu personally uses the technique. Although it might not actually collapse, upon reaching the limit, there will be no way to increase the power of the wavefolding any further. For this Sloppy Daoist to be able to use this technique for so long is already quite rare.”

“This Adept Woodpass is a rare talent as well. He was actually able to defeat the disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu,” Mahasthamaprapta said. His gaze was focused on Adept Woodpass; clearly, he felt quite positively about him.

“For the Sloppy Daoist to be defeated makes sense,” the Xia Emperor said. “This Sloppy Daoist, when entering the Black-White College of Stillwater Commandery, was a fairly ordinary disciple in the sect. However, he grew increasingly formidable; in training, he’s one of those that becomes increasingly brilliant as time goes on. His late-blooming potential is tremendous. In terms of amount of time spent training, the Sloppy Daoist has trained for much less time than Adept Woodpass has. For him to lose by a stroke isn’t strange. I imagine...that if we were to give them another century, most likely the Sloppy Daoist would be able to defeat Adept Woodpass.”

“Right.”

“Tremendous late-blooming potential.”

They all nodded.

There were far too many ‘geniuses’ in the Three Realms that were exceptionally brilliant early bloomers. Much rarer were those who were not only dazzling in the early stages, but were also able to train all the way through the Primal and Void levels, or even all the way up to the Celestial Immortal and True Immortal levels! Those who grew more formidable as more time passed...these late-bloomers were the true, unpolished jade. After being ‘sculpted’ properly, they would become even more dazzling. Clearly, the Sloppy Daoist was one such person.

When he was young, he was very unremarkable. Afterwards, he entered the Black-White College but was still just an ordinary disciple. After even more time passed, he became the number one figure amongst the Black-White College’s third generation disciples. And now, he was so incredibly dazzling in this Conclave for the entire major world.

This sort of rise...was quite terrifying.

“And more importantly...his heart!” Lu Dongbin sighed. “I can tell that this Sloppy Daoist doesn’t actually know that Grand Emperor Xuanwu has taken note of him; he’s been working hard this entire time in the hopes of making it into the top three and apprenticing himself to Daofather Crimsonbright. But just now, after losing that battle...he should have felt a tremendous psychological blow. And yet, he was able to almost instantly grow calm again, and he was even able to laugh. A heart like his...incredible.”

“Right.” They all nodded. The more these Pure Yang True Immortals watched the Sloppy Daoist, the more strengths they discovered. No wonder Grand Emperor Xuanwu accepted him as a disciple.

In this first battle to determine the top three...the Sloppy Daoist had been eliminated!

This caused the members of the Black-White College, such as Immortal Fivecraze, Mu Northson, and Adept Vastriver to all feel tremendous regret. Ning shook his head and sighed as well. There was nothing to be done; there was nothing that could be said regarding this loss. These two fought each other in a completely head-on manner...and in the end, the Sloppy Daoist had lost.

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The second battle had begun!

Adept Blackstone against Cangwu Jiu!

“Sloppy.” Yuchi Xiyue began to chat with the Sloppy Daoist. “You have good judgment. Can you tell who is going to win in this fight between Adept Blackstone and Cangwu Jiu?” The two had already begun battling within the grand sealing formation outside.

“Let me watch for a bit first.” The Sloppy Daoist watched in a seemingly casual manner, but his eyes were very intent. After watching for just a brief moment, he gently nodded. “Adept Blackstone has a major advantage. He has a higher chance of winning.”

“Oh?” Yuchi Xiyue was puzzled. “But that Cangwu Jiu seems to be quite formidable, and he’s also astonishingly fast. Why do you think Adept Blackstone has a better chance of winning?”

Yuchi Xiyue actually wanted to ask Ning his opinion as well. But this was the second duel; the third would be Ning’s. She naturally didn’t want to disturb him.

The Sloppy Daoist laughed, “Adept Blackstone is skilled in the Fuxi Staff Formation. Through his usage of the formation...he has actually made it so that Cangwu Jiu is already unable to use his speed to its full potential. Adept Blackstone can just hide inside the formation, and there’s no way Cangwu Jiu can even find him. Adept Blackstone has complete control over the tempo of this entire duel. He can attack when he wants to and flee when he wants to!”

“Based on what you are saying, by relying on his formation, Adept Blackstone is now invincible?” Yuchi Xiyue was puzzled.

“No.” The Sloppy Daoist shook his head. “This sort of duel has to come to a conclusion. Although Cangwu Jiu is trapped within the formation, if Adept Blackstone doesn’t actually attack, Cangwu Jiu can just relax and wait within the formation. He wouldn’t need to use up any divine power at all, but Adept Blackstone needs to maintain that powerful formation. It definitely is consuming a large amount of elemental ki. And, as time passes, I imagine that the Xia Emperor will also order Adept Blackstone to attack. Otherwise, who knows how long this would drag out to?”

Yuchi Xiyue nodded gently.

“Thus, in the end, it is still Adept Blackstone’s close combat ability that will determine victory or defeat! But of course, he still benefits from the advantages of his formation. And, based on what I saw from their close combat previously, Adept Blackstone is definitely no weaker than Cangwu Jiu in close combat!”

“Comparable power in close combat, but with Adept Blackstone having the advantage of a formation, and Cangwu Jiu being unable to fully utilize his speed...in this battle, Cangwu Jiu is completely countered. He should lose.”

Just as the Sloppy Daoist’s words were concluding...

Within the formation, Cangwu Jiu was like a hawk that had been trapped within a cage. He was injured repeatedly until finally, Adept Blackstone saw his opportunity and seized it, suddenly delivering a heavy wound to Cangwu Jiu. Cangwu Jiu was unwillingly forced to call out, “I admit defeat!”

And so, the second of the three had been chosen...Adept Blackstone!

“Xiamang, are you trying to prevent this Cangwu Jiu from entering the top three? It wouldn’t have been so bad if he had encountered Ji Ning, Xiamang Zishan, the Sloppy Daoist, or even Adept Woodpass; he would’ve been able to make full use of his speed and agility. He’s at the greatest disadvantage when fighting against Adept Blackstone, a master of the Fuxi Staff Formation,” Lu Dongbin said with a smirk.

“The ambitions of the Cangwu clan are a bit too grand,” the Xia Emperor said calmly.

He was suppressing them by doing this! The other major clans all had extremely deep roots of power; if given a chance, they would be able to soar into the skies! And so, he let Ji Ning fight Youngflame Zhan while having Adept Blackstone fight Cangwu Jiu. In truth, this was his scheme to suppress them.

As for Ji Ning, Adept Woodpass, and the others, they didn’t come from major clans.

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The third duel was now beginning.

“Ji Ning, be careful.” Yu Wei held Ning’s hand and spoke gently to him.

Ning nodded lightly, then rose and began to walk towards the grand sealing formation outside the hall!

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Book 12: Immortal Destiny Chapter 30: Desiring To Accept a Disciple

Ji Ning and Xiamang Zishan both walked towards the outside of the main hall.

Within the main hall of the Skylight Palace. The nine Pure Yang True Immortals and nearly one thousand Celestial Immortals were all gazing towards these two young men. Two of the top three had been determined; Adept Woodpass and Adept Blackstone. Now, only the last one remained...

“Which of them will win?” Lu Dongbin said softly.

The Xia Emperor and the others were all silent. Only after a long moment did Truelord Chiji say slowly, “Their power is comparable, and both are extremely skilled in close combat. The end of this battle will most likely come when one side runs out of divine power and admits defeat.”

“Right.” Lu Dongbin nodded gently as well.

“Zishan has a better chance,” the Xia Emperor said.

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Yu Wei looked quietly at Ning. She knew very well that Ning wanted to seize this chance to become a Daofather’s apprentice and thus soar into the heavens. She was eager for his success...but she hoped even more that Ning would be safe.

“Ji Ning, be careful.” Yu Wei watched him nervously.

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“One last step before entering the top three.” Ninelotus was seated behind the Dongyan Forefather. In this moment, she was quietly hoping to herself, “Ji Ning, I hope you succeed.”

Although they had broken up, in her heart, Ji Ning would forever be a peerless genius. She didn't want to see him discouraged and defeated.

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“Master.” Little Qing raised her head, staring at the massive curtain of water and the scene within it.

“Ning, son...” The Whitewater Hound was even more restless.

“Senior apprentice-brother, you have to win!” Mu Northson called out in a high voice.

Atop the clouds, within the grand sealing formation.

Ning and Xiaman Zishan stared at each other from afar. Both of them just stood there with seeming tranquility. However, underneath the tranquility, there was a savage self-confidence...they had to win! Both of them felt incomparable desire for entering the top three, but to do so, they had to defeat the opponent before them.

One of them was a young man dressed in violet; the other was a youth dressed in furs.

Their auras were completely different. The violet-robed young man was born with a dominating aura, as well as an air of nobility that came from being born into an imperial clan.

By contrast, due to Ji Ning's sufferings in his former life as well as this life, Ning looked like just an ordinary, bumpkin-like youth...but due to having come from a world of peace, he showed neither subservience nor arrogance.

“We meet again.” Xiamang Zishan's voice boomed out heroically. “Last time, you were defeated by me. This time, you will be defeated again.”

“I have only trained for a bit more than thirty years,” Ning said calmly. “It has only been ten or so years since I became a Zifu Disciple...and during these ten years, I've reached my current level. That year of nonstop battling in the world of the Diagram was definitely equivalent to ten years of hard training in the outside world. The battle between us was more than half a year ago...and during that half a year, my power has vastly surpassed your imagination.”

Xiamang Zishan's pupils shrank. Indeed. Ji Ning's short period of training truly did cause astonishment.

“You improved during the past half year. So did I.” Xiamang Zishan's natural, inborn aura of arrogance caused him to release an angered laugh. “If you have any techniques to show, go ahead and show them. Otherwise...when you are defeated, you won't be thoroughly convinced.”

“Come.” Ning looked calmly towards Xiamang Zishan. This sort of calmness...masked an even more berserk desire for battle!

Xiamang Zishan's body instantly flickered as he transformed into a 60-meter tall giant that had three heads and six arms.

With regards to the [Heavenly Transformation], it was true that Ning had spent several fewer centuries training in this technique compared to Xiamang Zishan. However, unlike other divine abilities such as the [Myriad Hibernating Venoms], the amount of power the early stages of the [Heavenly Transformation] granted significantly weaker. In the early stages, other divine abilities were better than the [Heavenly Transformation].

However, the latter stages of [Heavenly Transformation], especially during the Empyrean God stage, were truly and terrifyingly formidable.

As for now?

Ning used the second Cycle of the [Starseizing Hand]; thus, [Heavenly Transformation] didn't increase the power of his hands in even the slightest.

"Taste my staff!" Xiamang Zishan bellowed with incomparable savagery.

Three black steel staves simultaneously smashed through the air, carrying an invincible aura as they slammed towards Ning.

Staves were heavy weapons. Only powerful experts with truly great strength would be able to unleash the advantages of staves. Compared to sabers and swords, staves were inferior in terms of agility. Compared to spears, which were also long weapons and even had sharp tips, staves naturally were naturally inferior in terms of piercing power.

But staves had a tremendous advantage as well. This was...in smashing as one pleased! In the Three Realms, especially amongst Empyrean Gods who were famed for their strength, there were very many people who used staves! The power of a single staff blow could pierce through the heavens...and could smash apart the earth!

These two were the same in terms of strength, level of cultivation, and divine abilities. A staff-wielder was naturally much more savage and overbearing than a sword-wielder; this was due to the differences in the weapons. The 'best' type of weapon was the weapon that was most suited to you...and clearly, Xiamang Zishan was best-suited for wielding staves.

BOOM!

The staves cleaved through the skies, causing the world to change in color.

Ning wielded six Immortal swords in his hands. Although it wasn't too suitable for him to brashly use Immortal swords to block head-on, Ning wanted to give it a try, given the power of his divine abilities. He blocked the attacks head on!

The three staves thundered forth with the power of a flood!

They were met by six dazzling sword-lights!

They smashed directly onto each other. They caused the surrounding area to tremble with the terrifying force of the collision...and the result of this head-on strike was that the two were actually on par with each other!

“We’re actually on par.” Ning was startled. “Last time, I was at an absolute disadvantage. I’ve made repeated breakthroughs...but this Xiamang Zishan has made some breakthroughs as well. It seems there’s no hope of defeating him in a head-on fight. In addition, the amount of divine power my [Starseizing Hand] uses up is quite astonishing; it can’t be used for prolonged combat!”

Ning knew exactly what his own weakness was. Although he was very powerful in the Grand Dao of the Sword, with regards to ‘ordinary’ Daos, he had mastered only two Dao-Paths.

Xiamang Zishan’s ‘Grand Dao of Lightning’ might be a bit weaker than Ning’s own ‘Grand Dao of the Sword’, but he had mastered four complete ‘normal’ Dao-Paths! In addition, after spending the past half year constantly infusing all four Daos into his staff technique, his staves had become increasingly powerful.

The power of Ning’s divine ability compensated for this weakness...but the power of his divine ability resulted in a similarly astonishing rate of using divine power. After fighting for a prolonged period of time, his divine power would probably be exhausted.

“I am a Sword Immortal; why should I fight him head-on?” Ning’s swordplay began to change. Previously, his six streaks of sword-light had flown out in straight lines, but they now changed. Ning’s sword-light became like an unending flow of water, constantly striking in a steady stream towards Xiamang Zishan. Xiamang Zishan continued to do as he normally did, releasing his staff strikes as he pleased, either smashing down, lashing out, or suddenly sweeping forth.

Ning’s swordplay was like water, flowing without an end. Xiamang Zishan’s staff techniques were unable to accomplish anything at all...but in turn, Ning was unable to leave even a single wound on Xiamang Zishan’s body.

“There’s no chance at all. It seems I’ll have to use that unfinished sword technique,” Ning mused to himself.

Whoosh!

Ning’s sword changed once again. Of Ning’s six Immortal swords...some of them suddenly blazed like fire, containing the fierce sharpness of the Dao of the Sword! Others flowed like an unbroken stream of water, continuously moving to entangle and hinder his foe! The rest fluctuated unpredictably with tremendous speed!

After, this sort of sword technique placed a great deal of strain on Ning’s mind and spirit upon execution.

This sort of combat technique was something Ning had thought up when he had watched the Sloppy Daoist battle with his ‘wavefolding’ technique. The Sloppy Daoist used four arms to defend and two arms to attack, and then formed a ‘folding’, circular wave of power...although Ning didn’t understand it, he had still been stimulated by the Sloppy Daoist’s combat method.

“The sword can be used as a spear, but it doesn’t have as much penetrative power as the spear. It can be used as a warblade, but it doesn’t have a warblade’s savage chopping power. It can be used as a staff, but it isn’t as heavy as a staff...”

“Swords have two edges; they are incomparably agile, and can be used in many different manners of battle. After using the [Three Heads, Six Arms] divine ability, if I were to use the six arms to fight in different manners...perhaps they might affect each other and cause a loss of power, but it’s also possible that just like with the Sloppy Daoist, the power will actually join together increase.”

Prior to this battle, Ning had been constantly visualizing and hypothesizing regarding this technique in his mind. Earlier, during the previous battle, he had been completely silent, partially because he had been spending part of his attention in pondering the [Lesser Five Elements Sword] that he had learned back at the Black-White College. Within the manual, there was a combination technique that used the Five Elements. Ning carefully reflected on these things, and had already come up with a vague technique in his mind. In this moment, he unleashed it.

Whooooosh.

Sword-light like water, sword-light like fire, and sword-light that fluctuated unpredictably...

Ji Ning was incomparably agile and graceful, occasionally advancing and occasionally retreating. His swordplay became similarly illusory and fluctuating as large amounts of sword-light howled everywhere. Suddenly, all sorts of different types of sword-light appeared...it was like a melody that was occasionally soft, occasionally bright, sometimes flowing, and sometimes explosive...

The Daos of Water, Fire, Wind, Space, and the Sword.

He infused all of his insights into the Dao of the Sword and into his hands. Ning had a wonderful feeling, as though many different types of sword techniques were cooperating together and supporting each other. It was all so natural that he didn’t even have to intentionally come up with next sword techniques; everything came out naturally, in accordance with this marvelous feeling.

He didn’t want to disrupt this sort of feeling; he wanted to flow with it and let it unleash what it could!

“Beautiful.”

“So beautiful.”

“So swordplay can actually become this beautiful!” The nearly one thousand Celestial Immortal Patriarchs within the main hall of the Summerlight Palace all felt a carefree, relaxed feeling in their heart as they watched. Ning’s three-headed, six-armed form executed various different sword techniques. It was just like he was painting a beautiful watercolor painting. The watercolor splashed everywhere, but it had a beauty that moved the heart.

In this moment, Ning’s form was like the wind. His six Immortal swords were graceful and agile, putting the exquisite essence of the sword on complete display.

The sword was by nature incomparably complicated. Even the most simple of sword techniques could be divided into thirteen different basic movements, which was far more complicated than the spear, the staff, and the saber. This sort of complicatedness...to a true expert, it represented many materials to work with, allowing him to produce a consummately beautiful product. For a weakling, however, too much complicated was actually a bad thing.

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“Genius!” Lu Dongbin, within the main hall of the Skylight Palace, couldn’t help but sigh in amazement. “He’s actually able to enter such a deep state during such a crucial battle. If my judgment is correct, he is currently in a state of no-thought, where everything simply flows from the heart...when executing swordplay in this state, the power is naturally going to be extraordinary. In addition, he will also firmly memorize these extraordinary sword techniques. After this battle ends, his insight into the Dao and into swordplay will both rise dramatically.”

“He is indeed a rare genius of the Dao of the Sword,” Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta couldn’t help but say. “We Buddhists are willing to accept this sort of genius.”

“He has only mastered two ordinary Daos, but his Dao of the Sword is at such a high level that he is absolutely the number one genius Sword Immortal of the Conclave.” Lu Dongbin couldn’t help but say, “He was indeed born to be a Sword Immortal. His talent in the Dao of the Sword is absolutely inconceivable. Xiamang...if you don’t accept this Ji Ning, can I take him on as my disciple?”

“Eastflower, is your heart feeling itchy?”

“Even the Buddhists are feeling itchy. Why can’t I?” Lu Dongbin looked back at the Xia Emperor.

The Xia Emperor shook his head. “All of the top six in this Conclave must first be given to my master and his many disciples for choosing! If no one picks Ji Ning, then you, Lu Dongbin, can be his master. What do you say?”

“Bullshit! Are you telling me that you guys won’t choose a potential peerless Sword Immortal like him?” Lu Dongbin immediately shook his head.

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Book 12: Immortal Destiny Chapter 31: Closed Door

The Xia Emperor laughed, saying nothing else. Ji Ning and the others were of the Grand Xia Emperor’s world to begin with; thus, as the saying goes, ‘fertilizing water must not be allowed to flow into the fields of another’. He naturally had to keep these individuals who had a chance of becoming experts of the Three Realms on his side. How could he release them?

“You old scallywag.” Lu Dongbin pursed his lips. “Look at how smug your smile is. Haven’t you noticed that Ji Ning’s power is currently increasing, and that his opponent Xiamang Zishan is at an increasing disadvantage? This is someone of your Xiamang clan.”

“Indeed, in this battle, Zishan is going to lose.” The Xia Emperor was extremely calm. “I have nothing to say if he is beaten by Ji Ning. In addition, given Zishan’s temperament...he’s too brash and wild, making him excessively hard and brittle. Given Master’s temperament, I imagine that he would choose Ji Ning even if both he and Ji Ning were in the running.”

“This guy Xiamang...”

The other Pure Yang True Immortals all shook their heads. Still...given that the Xia Emperor had spoken out, all of them had no choice but to give up any thoughts of acquiring Ji Ning. In truth, given how turbulent the undercurrents were in the Three Realms right now, and how the Grand Xia Dynasty’s major world was one that was exceptionally blessed by karmic luck, this world did indeed have a very good chance of giving birth to a future expert of the Three Realms.

However...not even they fully understood how enormous the impending tribulation would be.

The greater a tribulation, the more powerful major figures would be born from it. In fact, even multiple Daofathers might be born! However, they would be spread out throughout the three thousand major worlds and the trillion minor worlds. It was very hard to say exactly how many experts the Grand Xia Dynasty's major world would give birth to.

"The Sloppy Daoist, as a disciple of Grand Emperor Xuanwu, must be blessed with luck."

"Of the top three...one of them will become a disciple of Daofather Crimsonbright. He too will be blessed by luck. For this single Conclave of Immortal Destiny to give birth to two future experts would be quite remarkable."

And precisely because of this, their desire to acquire Ji Ning wasn't too burning; after all, Ning was still just a Wanxiang Adept. No one could tell how far he would be able to actually make it...

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Within the grand sealing formation.

Xiamang Zishan was growing increasingly surprised and worried. The Ji Ning before him wielded those six Immortal swords as though they were parts of a moving melody. They danced with tremendous beauty, and just watching them felt like a form of enjoyment! But this sort of 'enjoyment' wasn't something which Xiamang Zishan could withstand. He only felt increasingly stifled, and no matter how he fought back, he remained at a disadvantage!

Ji Ning's swords were simply too inconceivable. They were savage, gentle, fast, slow...Xiamang Zishan was unable to keep up, and wounds began to appear repeatedly on his body. Blood sprayed everywhere as his divine body had to heal repeatedly as well.

"No."

"I don't accept this. I'm going to win. I have to win." Xiamang Zishan's eyes were crackling with thunder as he grew increasingly berserk.

If before this, he could be described as 'dominating' in a heroic manner that subjugated his foes, then his current berserk status was like a sort of utter madness, a madness born from despair.

He was struggling to hang on! And it was lucky for Ning that he did. His struggle to hang on allowed Ning to continue to stay immersed in this wondrous state for even longer. This sort of level of no-thought didn't actually mean that one had lost all consciousness; rather, it allowed one to unleash one's full potential and be guided by the invisible hands of the heavens...simply put, it was as though gods were helping him reach a perfect state that he normally would find it hard to enter.

For example, some poets might suddenly feel divinely inspired and write a line of poetry that would be passed down for ages...but for the rest of their lives, they would never again be able to write something to match it.

This was the wondrous state which Ning was currently immersed into.

"I admit defeat!" Suddenly, an unhappy, dissatisfied voice rang out.

Only now did Ning come back to his senses. Whoosh. Ning came to a halt. The area around him was completely splattered with blood, and half of Xiamang Zishan's body was lying off in the distance. His two halves quickly flew to each other and began to fuse together, but his bloodshot eyes remained filled with discontent.

"A pity that it ended so soon." Ning understood how rare it was for him to have entered such a state just now. If Xiamang Zishan had been able to hold on for a bit longer, it would've been even better for him. However, more than half of Ning's divine power had been used up as well; it was enough for him to have battled for so long.

And then...a look of wild joy appeared in Ning's eyes. "I won!"

"I won."

"Won."

"The top three. The Xia Emperor will send a recording of my battle to Daofather Crimsonbright. He might choose me as a disciple." Ning was filled with eager expectation. "But ideally, I shall become number one in this Conclave of Immortal Destiny. That way, I'll have a better chance of being chosen."

"I won."

The imperial citadel plaza was filled with delegates from the 3600 commanderies. Amongst them, many of the delegates from Stillwater Commandery began to call out in celebration. Although they each belonged to different powers within Stillwater, they were all from the same commandery! They had all felt regret when the Sloppy Daoist had been defeated, but now that Ji Ning had successfully entered the top three, they all felt incomparably proud.

"Senior apprentice-brother, senior apprentice-brother, I knew you'd do it! Haha, and to think the Heavenly Treasures Mountain ranked Xiamang Zishan at number one. He still got taken care of by my senior apprentice-brother!" Mu Northson was incomparably delighted. He called out loudly, "Number one! Number one! Take number one in this Conclave!"

"Take number one!" Little Qing spoke out in the human tongue as well as she called out in excitement.

The Whitewater Hound grinned as well.

A series of joyful shouts swept the plaza.

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Yu Wei watched from afar as Ning walked out from within the grand sealing formation. In this moment, all of the Celestial Immortal Patriarchs within the main hall of the Skylight Palace were watching Ning. Ning was the most dazzling figure of them all at present.

Yu Wei felt a surge of excitement as well. Excitement for Ning. "Right. He's entered the top three. Perhaps Ji Ning shall become the Daofather's disciple."

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Ninelotus was watching from afar as well. A hint of a faint smile appeared on her face. In this instant...her heart and soul suddenly became tranquil. With regards to Ning and Yu Wei being together, she still felt jealousy, but with regards to Ning himself...she was filled with nothing but hopes for the best for him.

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With the most important top three victors of this Conclave being now chosen, all three of them advanced to stand shoulder-to-shoulder in front of the main hall of the Skylight Palace, awaiting the Grand Xia Emperor's orders.

Even the Celestial Immortal Patriarchs had a hint of envy in their eyes.

"One of the three will definitely become the Daofather's disciple."

"Such luck...and yet, we can't touch that luck."

"Perhaps in the future, one of them shall become a figure which we must revere with tremendous respect." The Celestial Immortal Patriarchs all sighed with emotion.

Still...only one of the three would become a Daofather's disciple. The other two by comparison wouldn't be nearly as well-off. If they were lucky, they might become a disciple of a Pure Yang True Immortal, but there was an enormous difference between becoming the disciple of a Pure Yang True Immortal and a Daofather's disciple.

Upon becoming a Daofather's disciple, it was virtually assured that one would become a Celestial Immortal.

However, far too many disciples of a Pure Yang True Immortal would fail in their Celestial Tribulation. It could only be said that compared to ordinary cultivators, they had a much higher chance. Perhaps not even one out of a hundred thousand Void-level Earth Immortals would successfully pass the tribulation. If a Pure Yang True Immortal patiently taught his disciple, then perhaps one out of ten might become a Celestial Immortal.

And individual variables mattered as well. Some were very skilled at training disciples, while others were not.

For example, in terms of training disciples, Lu Dongbin was clearly far superior to the Xia Emperor. Lu Dongbin's disciples even included another Pure Yang True Immortal. This was often spoken of and praised in the Three Realms.

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The Xia Emperor looked down upon the three youths, revealing a smile. "I have to congratulate you. You are all extremely fortunate...and in the future, many years from now, you will understand how special this Conclave of Immortal Destiny was for you! This is a critical turning point in your lives. It is clear that all three of you shall soar into the heavens. Only, it's hard to say exactly how high you shall each soar."

Ning, Adept Woodpass, and Adept Blackstone all listened obediently.

“One of you three shall definitely become the Daofather’s disciple,” the Xia Emperor said. “As for the other two...I can promise you that you shall both become disciples of a Pure Yang True Immortal.”

Whoooosh. The nearly thousand Celestial Immortals were all stunned. What?! For a Daofather to take a disciple was one thing, but the other two would also become the disciples of a Pure Yang True Immortal? Pure Yang True Immortals didn’t casually take on disciples either. Why would two suddenly be taken on today?

“It seems this Conclave truly is special. First a Daofather chooses a disciple, but then even Pure Yang True Immortals will take on disciples.” These Celestial Immortals now all realized how unique this was.

In truth, because they didn’t have a high enough status, they only came to realize this now. As for the experts and major powers of the Three Realms, they had long ago understood that a storm was coming...and that this storm would most likely be a major one. Naturally, these major powers would have to plan early in advance!

“A Daofather’s disciple.” Ji Ning, Adept Woodpass, and Adept Blackstone all wished to become a Daofather’s disciple.

As for a Pure Yang True Immortal? There was a thousandfold difference between a Daofather and a Pure Yang True Immortal! For Ji Ning, in particular...since he had already received the legacy of Daoist Threelives, and the Stellar Hall provided guidance in multiple Dao-Paths and Grand Daos...what was a Pure Yang True Immortal? They weren’t that attractive for Ning. He still felt more desire for becoming a Daofather’s disciple.

“But of course, all of you will desire to become the Daofather’s disciple, and so these final battles are still very important,” the Xia Emperor said. “Two hours from now, the three of you shall engage in the final duels, divided into three sets.”

Ji Ning battling Adept Blackstone.

Adept Blackstone fighting Adept Woodpass.

Adept Woodpass battling Ji Ning.

Three duels...each person would compete twice against the others.

“I shall use a water scrying technique to record all three duels and give it to Master. Master shall watch all three of your duels, then choose who his disciple will be,” the Xia Emperor said. “In these three competitions, you need to display out all of your abilities; after all, the number one victor in this Conclave isn’t necessarily going to be the person the Daofather shall choose. The choice is his. But of course...if you become number one, the chances the Daofather shall choose you might be a bit higher.”

Ning and the other three all waited quietly.

“Now, all three of you shall enter the world of the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers. Two hours in the outside world shall be equivalent to a month of quiet training in the Diagram,” the Xia Emperor said. “In this month, you need to reflect on the experiences you have gained in this Conclave and prepare for the final competition.”

“Yes,” Ning and the other three all said.

The Xia Emperor waved his arm, and the Diagram floated up into the skies. Ning, Adept Woodpass, and Adept Blackstone were all sucked into it.

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Within the Diagram. The moonlight continued to shine everywhere. Atop a mountain peak, Ning seated himself in the lotus position. In two other corners of the peak were Adepts Blackstone and Woodpass, also seated in the lotus position.

These three were the most powerful competitors in this Conclave. Of the three of them...only one could become a Daofather's disciple.

"Mm...?" Ning sat there in the lotus position, beginning to reflect on what he had learned and gained during his battle against Xiamang Zishan. Many insights began to fill his mind...

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 12: Immortal Destiny Chapter 32: Number One

In terms of appearance, Ji Ning appeared the youngest of the three, like a youth. However, although that was younger than his actual age of over thirty, the other two had trained for more than a century.

"This is...?" Adept Blackstone and Adept Woodpass both turned their heads to stare at Ning. They saw Ning sit there in the lotus position as sudden gusts of wind began to swirl around him. At the same time...ripples of the Dao descended.

"What? He broke through?" Adept Woodpass and Adept Blackstone both felt shock. They could naturally tell that Ning should've completed an entire Dao-Path pertaining to wind.

"He was actually able to master yet another Dao-Path at such a critical moment. Ji Ning was formidable to begin with. In close combat, Adept Saberslave and Xiamang Zishan were both very powerful, but both were defeated by him. For him to make a breakthrough now...his close combat ability will most likely be superior to even me." Adept Blackstone made some calculations. Instantly, he began to grow nervous.

During the competition in the world of the Diagram, he had somewhat of an advantage. This was because the most important part in that competition was to stay alive and have enough talismans! Naturally, he was able to put on full display all of his advantages gained from his mastery of formations. But in a one-on-one fight, where one side had to win, he was at a disadvantage. The aid provided to him by his formations skills wasn't as significant.

"However, the Daofather isn't necessarily going to pick the number one winner for his disciple," Adept Blackstone mused to himself. "When the duel comes, I'm going to unleash all of my insights in the art of formations so as to let the Daofather see my full potential...and I believe he will choose me."

He was very powerful in close combat as well, close to Xiamang Zishan's level. But he was more confident in his formations ability! He had spent far, far too much of his blood and sweat on formations.

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Ning could sense the ripples of the Dao from around him. He opened his eyes, revealing a hint of a smile. The Dao of the Gale...he had finally mastered this Dao-Path!

Actually, long ago when he had mastered the Dao of the Raindrop, his Dao of the Inferno and Dao of the Gale had already been close to mastery. These two Daos had been just slightly lacking...but the many battles over the past year had been very helpful towards him. In the end, he had finally mastered both the Dao of the Inferno and the Dao of the Gale.

“Three Daos. Rainwater, Inferno, Gale. I’ve mastered them all.” Ning had primarily been spending his time meditating on these three Daos, and they had all advanced in unison. It wasn’t too strange that by the time of the Conclave, he would have mastered all three.

“My Dao of the Sword improved tremendously as well,” Ning celebrated. During his earlier battle with Xiamang Zishan, his insights into the Dao of the Sword had indeed increased significantly. However...there was a huge gap in difficulty between the seventh, eighth, and ninth stances of the [Three-Foot Sword].

After all, the eighth stance was comparable to an ordinary Celestial Immortal’s technique, while the ninth stance was a skill that allowed a Loose Immortal like Immortal Northwalker to unleash the power of a Celestial Immortal!

Ning’s current level of insights into the Dao of the Sword was between the seventh and the eighth stance. He had yet to be able to unleash the eighth stance...but he had still improved enormously. His combat power had risen by a large amount.

“The Xia Emperor gave us a month. During this month, I need to fuse the Daos of Rainwater, Inferno, and Gale into my Dao of the Sword, making the power of my sword increase even further,” Ning mused to himself, then calmed down and began to meditate.

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The main hall of the Skylight Palace. Everyone was waiting for the two hours to conclude, and for the three final duels to begin. These three final duels would be recorded and given to Daofather Crimsonbright to watch.

“In his battle with Xiamang Zishan, Ji Ning entered a state of no-thought; I imagine that he must’ve improved considerably. By the time they have left their secluded meditation, Ji Ning’s power will most likely have risen significantly yet again. In terms of attack power, he is most likely the absolute number one in this Conclave. As for Adept Woodpass, he should be the absolute number one in terms of defense. Adept Blackstone...he’s a bit worse off. If this was a battle in the outside world, his skill in formations would make it difficult for others to slay him. But this is a duel in the Conclave in which a victor must be determined,” Truelord Chiji said calmly. “As I see it, the number one position should go to either Ji Ning or Adept Woodpass.”

“Mm.”

“Right.”

“It’ll be a bit harder for Adept Blackstone.”

Lu Dongbin and the others all nodded in agreement. Even the Xia Emperor nodded as well. “Ji Ning has mastered yet another Dao-Path in secluded meditation in the world of the Diagram. This should be part of what he gained during the previous battle with Xiamang Zishan.”

“No-thought, no-self; as expected, he has gained power after having entered that state of mind.” The Pure Yang True Immortals were all quite calm.

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Comparatively speaking, in the final three duels, who won and who lost wasn't as important. This was because the Daofather wouldn't necessarily choose the top-ranked person. However, without question...the victor would have a better chance of being chosen. After all, over the course of history, victory and defeat usually determined who would be acclaimed as the hero.

In the blink of an eye, two hours passed.

Swish swish swish! Three figures flew out from the world of the Diagram, appearing on the main hall.

“Your Imperial Majesty.” Ning and the other two both called out in unison with respect.

“With regards to these three duels, the first shall see Ji Ning against Adept Blackstone,” the Xia Emperor instructed. “After these three duels, I'll arrange for all of you to go to the imperial treasury of my Grand Xia Dynasty and pick out a divine ability of your choice. However, compared to becoming the disciple of the Daofather, choosing a divine ability is naturally a small matter.”

Ning and the other two just listened quietly.

“Let it begin, then,” the Xia Emperor instructed.

“Yes.” Ning and Adept Blackstone exchanged a glance, and then both walked towards the outside of the hall.

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By now, Ning and the other two no longer had any more tricks up their sleeves. They had long ago unleashed all of their abilities, which was why Lu Dongbin and the others were able to get a very good picture of what would happen!

Adept Blackstone was clearly a master of formations, but Ning just stood there without moving, just using a Waterflame Lotus to protect himself. As soon as Adept Blackstone moved near him, Ning would fight him...but if he didn't, then Ning wouldn't move about randomly.

And so...

Adept Blackstone began to put on his 'performance', unleashing all of his abilities as a master of formations. The seemingly simple Fuxi Staff Formation unleashed one mighty formation after another. Some were illusory, others were meant to kill, while still others were meant to seal. In fact, the formations actually were layered atop each other, causing the area to be filled with illusions and killing intent.

But Ning didn't even try to break the formation; all he had to do was wait for Adept Blackstone to move close to him and start fighting.

Only after putting on a show of displaying his formidable formations did Adept Blackstone begin to actually fight with Ning. And indeed...in close combat, now that Ning had improved even further, he ended up defeating Adept Blackstone!

In the first battle...Ji Ning won!

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As for the second battle, Adept Woodpass and Adept Blackstone fought against each other. Adept Woodpass was even more shameless than Ning! Although Ning had stood there without moving, he had still at least engaged Adept Blackstone in a frenzied battle.

Adept Woodpass, however, had just stood there as unmoving as a mountain. Like a giant, human-shaped tree, he just stood there and let Adept Blackstone whale on him. No matter how Adept Blackstone attacked, Adept Woodpass was still able to withstand it...and he didn't even counter-attack! And so, just like that...Adept Blackstone's divine power ended up being exhausted. He was forced to admit defeat!

In the second battle, Adept Woodpass had won!

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The third duel was between Ning and Adept Woodpass. This battle was clearly much more exciting than the last two. In the two previous battles, Ning and Adept Woodpass hadn't dared to run about randomly within Adept Blackstone's formations. In this battle, the two fought each other head on!

Ji Ning was the most powerful attacker in this Conclave! His [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] was at the twelfth stage, his Dao of the Sword was at an extremely high level, and he had three complete Dao-Paths as well as the [Starseizing Hand]!

In this battle...

Ning put his sword arts on full display, wildly unleashing all of his attacking abilities. At the beginning, Adept Woodpass had attempted to counter-attack, but he was quickly forced by Ning into a point where he was spending 90% of his efforts on defense, with only the occasional counter! This was because Ning was different compared to the Sloppy Daoist; the Sloppy Daoist's wavefolding technique would eventually collapse, whereas Ning's sword arts would not. His sword arts came out in an endless series, causing Adept Woodpass to begin to be injured. With each injury, he would have to spend divine power to heal it...and in the end, Adept Woodpass was forced to admit defeat!

"I used up more than 70% of my divine power in wild attacks before he admitted defeat." Ning felt cold sweat trickle down his back as well. His [Starseizing Hand] used up far too much divine power. If Adept Woodpass had been able to hold on for a bit longer, Ning's own divine power probably would've been used up.

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Three duels. Ning won two! Adept Woodpass won one! Adept Blackstone won none!

"He won!"

“Ahaha, won, won, WON!!!” The Stillwater Commandery delegation in the imperial citadel plaza let out an incomparably excited roar of delight. They all called out jubilantly and their roars of laughter rang out.

There were more than a million delegates present from the 3600 commanderies and the Four Seas, but the number of them who knew that the Daofather would choose a disciple could be counted on one hand. To them...seizing the number one position in the Conclave was a matter of the utmost glory.

“Number one, number one!” Mu Northson was so excited, his entire face was red. He was incomparably delighted as he said, “My senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning is number one!”

Adept Vastriver sighed with emotion. “In the past, when I saw junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning kill Youngflame Nong, all sorts of worries had appeared. But unexpectedly, after such a short period of time, senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning actually became number one in this Conclave. This is really...a miracle. A real miracle!”

“NUMBER ONE!” Immortal Fivecraze was so excited that he actually tossed his gourd of wine to the ground. He seemed to have gone mad, and was so excited he seemed berserk. “Ahahaha! A disciple of my Black-White College has become number one in this Conclave! This has never before happened in the entire history of my Black-White College, never ever! Haha, the champion of the Conclave...belongs to a disciple of my Black-White College! Haha, wonderful, wonderful, wonderful!”

“Ji Ning truly is incredible.” Northmont Baiwei’s breathing was rather ragged. He was simply too excited. “He actually became number one in the Conclave. I didn’t even dare imagine this happening. This is truly unfathomable.”

“Master is so amazing.” Little Qing’s eyes were glowing.

“Big brother...” The Whitewater Hound thought back to the scenes of Ji Yichuan and Yuchi Snow teaching Ji Ning swordplay. “Can you see this? You taught him movement arts...taught him swordplay...and now, sword in hand, he has become the champion of the Conclave of Immortal Destiny of this entire vast Grand Xia Dynasty! Can you see it? Can you see it?!”

The Whitewater Hound’s tears began to fall. He was incomparably agitated.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 12: Immortal Destiny Chapter 33: Grand Emperor Xuanwu

Deep within the void of the Three Realms. There was a world here that had been born from chaos, filled with endless, fathomless amounts of seawater.

The fathomless oceans had several islands within it, and Immortal cultivators as well as Immortals were very common.

At the very center of this ocean world, atop an island surrounded by the waters of the sea, there were a series of indescribably beautiful palaces. Immortal maidens, celestial generals, and celestial soldiers were everywhere to be seen. On the top of the highest palace, there was an enormous diagram of a yin-yang taiji symbol that hung high up in the air, constantly emanating boundless amounts of white and black light...

An old black-haired man was seated atop a bed formed from clouds, and the enormous yin-yang taiji diagram was directly above him.

“Mm?” The old black-haired man opened his eyes. “Novice,” he said calmly.

Beneath him were a pair of male and female novices, who were obediently awaiting his orders. The golden-robed male novice immediately responded obediently, “Patriarch.”

“Go and call out your uncle-master, Seatopple,” the black-haired elder instructed.

“Yes.” The golden-robed male novice acknowledged with respect, then took a single step forward through a ripple in the air that had appeared. He teleported away and disappeared.

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Deep within the sea of this world, there was an underwater palace. The golden-robed novice teleported straight into the depths of the sea, and where he passed by the waters of the sea parted, allowing him to go straight to the jade-colored underwater palace. There were many soldiers and guards protecting this underwater palace, and upon seeing this person approach, they immediately moved to block him.

“Uncle-master Seatopple,” the golden-robed novice called out. His voice echoed within the sea.

Within the underwater estate. There was a tall, skinny man dressed in deep green armor whose eyes flashed with deep green light and a gaze that caused the hearts of others to quiver. In front of him was a white-robed cultivator. The two were happily drinking and chatting with each other.

“It isn’t that I, your big brother, don’t want to help you. You must understand, I’ve been confined to this place by Master...I want to help, but there’s nothing I can do. But come, come, come, let’s stop talking about these unhappy things. Let’s drink.” The tall, skinny man in the deep green armor lifted up a large bowl of wine, drinking happily. That bowl contained at least a kilogram of wine, but he gulped it all down at once.

“Eh?” The green-armored man’s face suddenly changed. With but a thought...

Whoosh. The golden-robed novice that had been outside the underwater palace was instantly teleported inside.

“Uncle-master Seatopple.” The golden-robed novice bowed respectfully.

“Apprentice-nephew, why have you come to my place?” The green-armored man asked hurriedly. Although this golden-robed novice was merely a Celestial Immortal, he was permanently stationed by the side of Grand Emperor Xuanwu to carry out his orders. Thus, the green-armored man was very courteous to him and didn’t dare show him any discourtesy.

The white-robed cultivator next to him hurriedly rose to his feet as well. “I greet you, Immortal novice.”

The golden-robed novice glanced sideways at the white-robed cultivator, just nodding slightly at him, then said, “Uncle-master Seatopple, I have come per the orders of the Patriarch. The Patriarch wishes to see you.”

“Oh.” Upon seeing this, Seatopple immediately said, “Then I shall go right away.” Seatopple then immediately said to the white-robed cultivator next to him, “Master is ordering me to go to him. I must...”

“Big brother, no worries; go take care of your matters first. I won’t stay here any longer; I’m going to pay the Heaven Realm a visit and see if I can find anyone to help that poor child of mine,” the white-robed cultivator hurriedly said, then left gracefully.

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“Master!” The green-armored man called out with respect.

Above him was the black-haired elder, seated atop a cloud. He nodded lightly, then said with a smile, “Seatopple, there is something I am going to have you go do.”

“Master, please instruct me,” Seatopple said respectfully.

“A hundred years ago, I accepted a disciple in the world of the Grand Xia, one of the three thousand major worlds,” the black-haired elder said with a calm laugh. “In other words, a junior apprentice-brother for you.”

“A junior apprentice-brother?” Seatopple was amazed. A hundred years ago? When his master took on a disciple, it was a matter of tremendous importance. And yet, he had no idea of this whatsoever.

“His true name is Zhang Qi. He is learning the Dao in a small school known as the Black-White College within the world of the Grand Xia. He is currently just a Wanxiang Adept, and others refer to him as the Sloppy Daoist.” The black-haired elder said with a laugh, “The Grand Xia world has just held a Conclave of Immortal Destiny. Your junior apprentice-brother attended this Conclave, which has now concluded. Go to the imperial capital of the Grand Xia’s world and bring your junior apprentice-brother before me. Remember...on this trip, you absolutely cannot cause any trouble. All you need to do is bring your junior apprentice-brother back here.”

“Understood,” Seatopple said respectfully.

“Go then,” the black-haired elder nodded.

Seatopple immediately departed respectfully, and then he left this major world to go to the world of the Grand Xia.

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The world of the Grand Xia Dynasty. The imperial capital. The main hall of the Skylight Palace.

Ji Ning, Adept Woodpass, and Adept Blackstone were all standing there respectfully, awaiting the order of the Grand Xia Emperor.

“This Ji Ning truly is formidable.”

“He’s only trained for thirty or so years, and yet became number one in this Conclave. It seems he has an extremely good chance of becoming the Daofather’s disciple.”

“It’ll be soon. His Imperial Majesty is about to deliver the scryer recording of the duels to the Daofather.”

The nearly thousand Celestial Immortals were all chatting amongst themselves. The Conclave had come to an end, with Ji Ning number one, Adept Woodpass number two, and Adept Blackstone number three. However, right now what everyone was paying attention to was...who the Daofather would choose as a disciple! The ‘champion’ of the Conclave was nothing but a meaningless title; to become the disciple of the Daofather was what really matter and came with real benefits.

“The three of you.” The Grand Xia Emperor’s voice once more rang out. Ning and the other two immediately listened carefully.

“I have already recorded all three of the previous duels using the water-scrying technique. I am now going to go to my master’s place and offer them to Master for the viewing.” The Grand Xia Emperor’s voice once more rang out, and a second, white-robed Xia Emperor appeared by his side who looked identical to the main body of the Xia Emperor.

Swoosh! The white-robed Xia Emperor took a single step forward, entering the skies above them, then tearing open the void and departing from this major world.

Ning and the other two were incomparably nervous. The white-robed Xia Emperor was clearly the clone or Primaltwin of the Xia Emperor. Clearly, he had gone to visit Daofather Crimsonbright. Now, they were going to wait for the Daofather’s selection.

Who would be chosen?

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“My formations are even more formidable than my personal close combat strength. The Daofather will naturally have excellent judgment and will be able to see how special and blessed I am in formations.” Adept Blackstone was ranked number three. He had very complicated feelings in his heart right now. “Given my talent in formations...the Daofather should choose me.”

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“I became the champion. I did everything I could. Next, all I can do is wait for the Daofather’s decision,” Ning said to himself silently.

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“Let’s see if this destiny is mine,” Adept Woodpass silently mused to himself.

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The Grand Xia Emperor, seated up high, once more spoke out. “My Primaltwin has already headed towards Master’s place, but it is hard to say when Master will meet me and when he will choose a disciple.” The Grand Xia Emperor looked down at the three nervous individuals below him. Clearly, it was hard for Ning and the other two to feel at ease for even a second. “Since the three of you are the top three of this Conclave, you can go pick a divine ability of your choosing from the Grand Xia’s treasury.”

“King Qi,” the Grand Xia Emperor spoke out.

“Your Imperial Majesty.” King Qi immediately rose and acknowledged him.

“Lead these three to our Grand Xia treasury. Let them choose a divine ability,” the Grand Xia Emperor said.

How could Ning and the other two be in a mood to choose a divine ability right now? In a normal situation, yes, they would be incomparably excited at this chance to choose a divine ability from the Grand Xia’s treasury. But they were waiting for Daofather Crimsonbright’s decision. Their hearts felt suspended, and they only had one thought in their minds...

Who will the Daofather choose...who will be the one to be chosen...?

Choose me, choose me, choose me...

“Go. After my Primaltwin returns, I will naturally notify you of Master’s final decision,” the Grand Xia Emperor said.

“Yes,” Ji Ning, Woodpass, and Blackstone both responded respectfully. Then they moved to follow King Qi through a side corridor leading away.

The nearly thousand Celestial Immortals in the main hall, as well as the eliminated Wanxiang Adept geniuses, all watched the three leave with envious eyes...

The Grand Xia Emperor had already informed them all that one would be chosen by the Daofather as a disciple, while the other two would be chosen by Pure Yang True Immortals as disciples. In other words, all three of them would see their statuses suddenly and dramatically change. How could the eliminated contestants not feel envious?

“Yu Wei, Sloppy, do you two think Ji Ning will be chosen by the Daofather as a disciple?” Yuchi Xiyue was both excited and nervous. He was her most important family member; naturally, she hoped that Ning could ascend to the heavens with a single step. That way, it would also be much easier for Ning to deal with the Youngflame clan in the future.

“He will. The Daofather definitely will.” Yu Wei was holding Yuchi Xiyue’s hands.

“Sloppy?” Yuchi Xiyue looked towards the Sloppy Daoist, who shook his head. “I don’t know the Daofather’s temperament. It’s hard to say. Still...since junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning has become number one in this Conclave, and has trained for such a short period of time...he is indeed the most dazzling figure of the three. There is a very high chance that the Daofather will choose junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning. However...no one can be absolutely certain regarding this.”

Those who cared deeply about something would often find their thoughts in a jumble because of it. Both Yu Wei and Yuchi Xiyue cared far too deeply about Ning.

“But even if he cannot take on Daofather Crimsonbright as his master, he’ll be apprenticed to a Pure Yang True Immortals. There’s no need to be too nervous,” the Sloppy Daoist said with a sigh. “I wonder if I would have this same good fortune to become the disciple of a Pure Yang True Immortal one day.”

“Eldest apprentice-brother, you were also quite dazzling in this Conclave. You should be accepted by a Pure Yang True Immortal as well,” Yu Wei said.

“It won’t be as simple as that. Pure Yang True Immortals won’t casually accept new disciples.” Although the Sloppy Daoist did feel a hint of hope, he maintained a calm heart.

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Suddenly, a heroic but terrifying aura spread out from the main hall. At the same time, a voice rang out: “Xiamang, long time no see.”

Whoosh! Nearly a thousand Celestial Immortals, along with the eliminated Wanxiang Adepts, all turned to stare towards the outside in astonishment. This aura was so powerful and the words were so grandiose that this was clearly an extraordinary person.

“Hahaha...” The Xia Emperor rose to his feet, and the other eight Pure Yang True Immortals rose to their feet as well.

From the outside, a tall, skinny man dressed in deep green armor strode in. He had a heroic aura of vigor that caused all the surrounding Celestial Immortals to feel stunned.

“That’s Great Sage Who Topples the Seas.”

“Empyrean God Seatopple!”

“Demon King Seatopple!” 1

The nearly thousand Celestial Immortals all cried out in their hearts.

The Xia Emperor was now on his feet. He said with a laugh, “Seatopple, it has indeed been a long time. The Three Realms are currently filled with the stories of your heroics.”

“Seatopple, have you come to receive your junior apprentice-brother?” Lu Dongbin said with a lazy grin.

“Right.” Seatopple had an incomparably dominating aura, and his deep green eyes swept the surrounding figures. He immediately called out, “Who here is known as Zhang Qi? Who here is known as the Sloppy Daoist?”

The sloppy-looking fatty seated behind King Qi trembled with shock. What the hell?

1. This figure is a figure from Journey to the West. Early in the story, Sun Wukong (aka ‘Monkey King’) swore brotherhood with six other powerful demons. The Handsome Monkey King, Sun Wukong, took on the title of ‘Great Sage Equal to Heaven’, while this demon, the Flood Dragon Demon King, took on the title of ‘Great Sage Who Topples the Seas.’