

Desolate 371

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 13: Tristar Crescent Abode Chapter 4: Divinity Palace, Three Realms Palace

Ji Ning walked out of the Daoist monastery. Outside of it was the white-robed Lord Jiang, Little Qing, and Uncle White.

“Master.” Little Qing had already transformed into an azure-robed maiden. She immediately called out in delight upon seeing him.

The white-robed Lord Jiang smiled as he looked at Ning. “I should now address you as junior apprentice-brother.”

“Senior apprentice-brother,” Ning called out in response.

The two novitiates outside the Daoist monastery all revealed looks of surprise. The white-robed Lord Jiang said with a laugh, “Clearwater and Whiteriver, Master has just accepted junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning as his disciple. The two of you need to remember this.”

“Greetings, uncle-master,” the two novices both said towards Ning.

“Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning,” Lord Jiang said with a laugh, “Clearwater and Whiteriver are the personifications of two Protocosmic spirit-treasures who always serve him. Normally, even if I wish to meet with Master, I must first notify him and receive his permission, but the two of them are always by his side. They are able to see Master far more often than disciples like ourselves.”

Ning, the Whitewater Hound, and Little Qing were all greatly shocked. Protocosmic spirit-treasures?

“Greetings, apprentice-nephews.” Ning naturally didn’t dare to show any hint of arrogance.

“No need to be so courteous, uncle-master. We are merely two Protocosmic spirit-treasures; it is incomparably difficult for us to even train in cultivation. How can we possibly compare to the two of you? Your training speed far surpasses us,” the novitiate named Clearwater said.

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Protocosmic Fiendgods were the Fiendgods who had been born by the heavens and the earths after Pangu had created the universe.

Protocosmic spirit-treasures were the magic treasures that were born by the heavens and the earths after Pangu had created the universe!

Immortal cultivators were generally only capable of making Mortal-ranked, Earth-ranked, Heaven-ranked, Immortal-ranked, and Pure Yang magic treasures! Even major powers were only capable of creating Pure Yang magic treasures; this was the limit for manufactured treasures. However, Pure Yang magic treasures possess souls; they could absorb energy from the natural world, comprehend the profound mysteries of the universe, and have a very tiny chance of breaking through to become a Protocosmic spirit-treasure.

“Junior apprentice-brother, the scenery here is quite beautiful, and it is also quite secluded. This can be your home, here at Mount Innerheart. Junior apprentice-brother, you can place your Immortal estate here.” The white-robed Lord Jiang looked at Ning as they arrived within a secluded region. Creeks could be seen nearby, as well as ripe red spirit-fruit hanging from the branches of trees, as well as some fairy birds flying past.

Ning nodded. “Fine. Here it is, then.”

He had come to the Tristar Crescent Abode in order to study the Dao. It didn’t really matter where he lived. In addition, this place which Lord Jiang had helped him choose was indeed worthy of being an abode for an Immortal.

Whoosh. The Immortal estate descended, landing upon the grassy region.

“Mount Innerheart has spirit-fruit and wells. You can eat and drink from them as you please,” Lord Jiang said. “There are many Diremonsters in this mountain, but you must remember that they cannot be killed. Those ordinary animals that are merely at the Houtian level, however, can be hunted, cooked, and eaten.”

“Right.” Ning nodded his head.

“We can only eat ordinary animals?” Little Qing was mumbling by herself.

“Senior apprentice-brother, Master told me earlier that Mount Innerheart has two Dao-Palaces that include everything within them,” Ning said.

“Right.” Lord Jiang nodded. “I’ll take you three over.”

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The place in the entire Tristar Crescent Abode with the most Fiendgods and Diremonsters was the Divinities Palace.

“That’s the Divinities Palace, one of the two Dao-Palaces.” Lord Jiang pointed to a nine-layered palace in the distance. “The Divinities Palace is divided into nine levels, each one containing all sorts of techniques, including those for formations, golems, the Dao of the Sword, evasion, lightning, magnetism...all sorts of divine abilities and secrets arts are within it. The higher up you go, the more profound the mysteries are. The ninth floor naturally has the most profound techniques.”

“Anyone can come to the Divinities Palace. All living creatures within Mount Innerheart can enter and learn. However, the Dao cannot be casually taught; there is a simple test that must be taken before studying a technique or secret art. Only after passing the test can you learn it,” Lord Jiang said.

Ning nodded and immediately asked, “Then my two spirit-beasts can study here as well?”

“Of course.” Lord Jiang nodded. “The techniques and arts within the Divinities Palace might not be the most profound and arcane ones possessed by the Tristar Crescent Abode, but they vastly surpass the Dao-Repositories of your Grand Xia world.”

“Do you have techniques and secret arts of the Grand Dao of Qiankun1?” Little Qing was extremely delighted.

“Do you have many formations here?” The Whitewater Hound was excited as well.

“Far more than exist in your entire world of the Grand Xia,” Lord Jiang said confidently. “Even Daofather Crimsonbright is inferior to my master in terms of how many techniques he possesses. If you want to learn Ki Refining, Body Refining, formations, the Grand Dao of Qiankun, the Grand Dao of Taiji...you can learn all these things. All you need to do is pass that simple test.”

Little Qing and the Whitewater Hound instantly realized that their chance had come.

Actually, everyone within Mount Innerheart had some sort of connection to Daofather Subhuti. Some were his disciples or grand-disciples, while others were his disciples’ servants, spirit-beasts, etc. In short, they were generally all under Patriarch Subhuti’s command, which was why it made sense that everyone here within Mount Innerheart was permitted to learn these techniques.

“There are many humans here, but even more Diremonsters and Fiendgods.” Ning saw many figures on the ground outside the Divinities Palace. There were even avian Diremonsters flying about, as well as some Fiendgods that had extremely strange appearances.

“Senior apprentice-brother, what’s the other Dao-Palace?” Ning asked.

“Two Dao-Palaces – the Divinities Palace, and the Three Realms Palace. All living creatures within Mount Innerheart are permitted to enter the Divinities Palace, but only personal disciples of the Patriarch or those with special dispensation from the Patriarch are allowed to enter the Three Realms Palace!” Lord Jiang continued, “Junior apprentice-brother, since you are still weak, you are technically only an honorary disciple for now. However, Master treats you as he does his other personal disciples, and so you can enter the Three Realms Palace. Your two spirit-beasts, however, cannot.”

Ning nodded in understanding.

“The Three Realms Palace holds some of the most truly supreme divine abilities of the Three Realms, as well as some terrifying secret arts. These things cannot be casually taught. Even personal disciples are only permitted to learn a few, at which point Master forbids them from learning any more,” Lord Jiang said. “To be able to learn a few is already a tremendous fortune; after all, for normal Empyrean Gods, being able to learn even one of these techniques is already enough to allow them to roam the Three Realms fearlessly.”

This caused Ning’s heart to be filled with a blazing fire. The power to roam the Three Realms without fear!

“And generally, when a student leaves his tutelage, Master will bestow a divine ability or secret art that is very suited to him,” Lord Jiang said with a laugh.

Ning now remembered...that his master had said that when he left, he would be given two great gifts.

“Divinities Palace, Three Realms Palace.” Lord Jiang sighed, “Junior apprentice-brother, you must remember that you must have the ability to acquire one of the techniques or secret arts from the ninth level of the Divinities Palace before you can enter the Three Realms Palace.”

“If you can’t even acquire the ninth level techniques, then you naturally aren’t qualified to enter the Three Realms Palace,” Lord Jiang said. “As for the other living creatures of Mount Innerheart, generally

speaking, after they have the ability to learn ninth level techniques, they will eventually be shooed off the mountain.”

Ning nodded. This was something that was different for personal disciples! And although Ning was only an honorary disciple, his treatment was completely in line with that given to personal disciples.

“The Three Realms Palace.” Ning felt an itchiness in his heart.

“Junior apprentice-brother, spend some time and look around. If there’s anything you need, just come find me. I live just up the mountain; you can ask anyone and they’ll tell you where I am,” Lord Jiang said.

“Thank you, senior apprentice-brother,” Ning said with gratitude.

“A minor matter.” Lord Jiang left gracefully. He had long ago ascended past his apprenticeship and had reached the Pure Yang True Immortal level. The main reason he continued to live at Mount Innerheart was because he liked the peaceful quiet of this place, and because he could occasionally listen to Patriarch Subhuti expound on the Dao. After all...at his level, everyone’s main goal was to become a Daofather.

Daofathers were truly the most supreme figures of the Three Realms!

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“The Three Realms Palace is so tiny,” Little Qing mumbled. “It looks completely unremarkable. It’s a place that holds the most supreme divine abilities and most terrifying secret arts of the Three Realms; this Dao-Palace should be built to look a bit more imposing and have at least a bit of Immortal majesty.”

Ning blinked as well. The distant ‘Three Realms Palace’ was just an ordinary little building, just ten or so meters high. Outside the building, there was a skinny old man that was lying down taking a nap, a fan across his chest. His slumbering snores were quite loud; even at this distance, Ning could hear everything clearly.

The Divinities Palace.

Ning, Little Qing, and the Whitewater Hound arrived at the Divinities Palace. The humans, Diremonsters, and Fiendgods outside the Divinities Palace all looked at the three with curiosity.

“Who are these three? Why haven’t I seen them before?”

“I’ve never seen them either. They must’ve just come to the mountain.”

“I saw Patriarch Jiang leading them around earlier. Perhaps that fur-clad youth is a disciple which Patriarch Jiang accepted as a disciple.”

“Their auras are very weak. It seems these three are at the Wanxiang level.”

“Right. Quite weak.”

The humans, monsters, and Fiendgods chatted amongst themselves, clearly not recognizing this group.

In front of the entrance to the Divinities Palace, there was a handsome man in a white robe and who held a white fan in his hands. The handsome man languidly barked, “Hush.”

Instantly, everyone fell silent. All the humans, Diremonsters, and Fiendgods all fell silent. This handsome man was in charge of the Divinities Palace; of course they respected him! In addition, he was also an incredibly, terrifyingly powerful Primordial Fiendgod. His power was incomparably great, far greater than any of theirs.

“Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.” The handsome man smiled and nodded towards Ning. “My name is Silvermoon. You may simply refer to me as senior apprentice-brother Silvermoon. I already know of your affairs.”

“Ji Ning greets you, senior apprentice-brother.” Ning could sense an incomparably terrifying aura emanating from this handsome man’s body, an aura comparable to the one which Empyrean God Seatopple had.

All of the humans, Diremonsters, and Fiendgods were completely stunned.

Junior apprentice-brother? That old demon Silvermoon had actually addressed the fur-clad kid as junior apprentice-brother? That meant...this fur-clad kid was Patriarch Subhuti’s disciple! For a mere Wanxiang Adept to become Patriarch Subhuti’s disciple...there was no question that the Patriarch viewed him with great favor. If he was to become a Celestial Immortal, he would definitely become a personal disciple.

“Right.” The white-robed, fan-holding man glanced at the many distant humans, Diremonsters, and Fiendgods. He said calmly, “All of you, listen up. This Ji Ning is the new disciple the Patriarch has just accepted. All of you need to be respectful. Those of you who should address him as uncle-master, do so. Those of you who should address him as Patriarch, do so as well.”

“Respectful greetings, uncle-master.”

“Respectful greetings, Patriarch.”

All of these mighty humans, Diremonsters, and Fiendgods were all calling out to him with respect.

Ning stared at these figures. There were all at least at the Primal or Void levels. There were even quite a few Void-level Fiendgods and Godbeasts. Void-level Fiendgods...these were figures on the level of that Fiendgod he had met in the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains. For all of them to be obediently calling out to him as ‘uncle-master’ and ‘Patriarch’...Ning felt this was quite bizarre.

“Come in, junior apprentice-brother,” the white-robed man said.

Ning immediately turned and entered the Divinities Palace. The very first floor was filled with bookshelves and countless books. Atop one of the bookshelves, there was a line of large characters: “If you clean the mountain path of Mount Innerheart once, you can choose a technique at will.”

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 13: Tristar Crescent Abode Chapter 5: Trials

“That’s the requirement for learning these techniques and secret arts?” Ning stared in amazement at the line of characters above the bookshelf.

The Patriarch had told him previously as well that a simple trial would have to be passed before one could train in these techniques. Ning had already been prepared for this, and had the feeling that the trial would be easy, but...this was too easy. Just clean the mountain path once? It must be understood

that everyone with access to the Divinities Palace was extraordinary; most likely, they'd be able to clean the mountain path in the amount of time needed to boil a kettle of tea.

Ning pulled out a sword-arts manual and flipped through it. He was instantly astonished. This was definitely at the level of the [Lesser Five Elements Sword] manual.

"Wow, this is an Immortal-ranked Ki Refining Technique!" Little Qing called out.

"This book on formations is definitely not inferior to the [Nine Scrolls on Formations]!" The Whitewater Hound grew excited as well.

Ning swept his gaze forward. The enormous bookshelves were simply brimming with books, and above all of them were the same line of characters – "If you clean the mountain path of Mount Innerheart once, you can choose a technique at will." Clearly, the requirement for choosing any book on this first floor of the Divinities Palace was the same.

The handsome white-robed man shook his head and laughed. "In Mount Innerheart, there is an old saying...the techniques and secret arts of the Divinities Palace, when learned, shall allow you to become a Celestial Immortal or Empyrean God. The divine abilities and secret arts of the Three Realms Palace, however, shall allow you to be able to roam and dominate the Three Realms."

"Master learns of the affairs of the Three Realms through his dreaming, and so he is naturally incredible in collecting divine abilities and secret arts. The number of techniques and arts he has collected here in the Divinities Palace from ancient times til now is simply uncountable. Even at the lowest level here on this first floor, the techniques present are considered quite excellent in ordinary worlds," the white-robed Silvermoon said.

Ning nodded gently. Indeed. Through the [Dream of the Three Realms], his master was indeed quite astonishingly good at collecting various sorts of techniques.

"Senior apprentice-brother, so this is the trial for learning first level techniques?" Ning pointed at the line of characters.

"Right. When cleaning the mountain paths, you have to personally sweep it using a broom. Most likely even Immortal cultivators will need half a day to clean the many levels and layers," Silvermoon said.

Ning nodded. If one could use techniques it would be much faster, but if one had to use a broomstick, it would indeed take considerably more time.

"The first level is too simple. Junior apprentice-brother, follow me," Silvermoon said.

"Alright."

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Ning, the Whitewater Hound, and Little Qing all followed Silvermoon, the manager of the Divinities Palace, up the stairs and to the second floor of the palace.

The bookshelves of the Divinities Palace also all had a line of characters above them. The line said: "Wipe down every single table within the entire Divinities Palace and you can choose a technique at will."

“...so easy.” Ning blinked, lowering his head to stare at the sword-arts manuals. “These are already comparable to some of the supreme manuals the Black-White College has.”

“What a precious place.” The Whitewater Hound was completely stunned as well.

“And this is just the second level? I’ve never even seen such deep and profound techniques!” Little Qing’s eyes were completely crimson.

“Hahaha, come, let’s go see the third level,” Silvermoon laughed.

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They arrived at the third level. Above the bookcases were a line of characters: “Get rid of the weeds within a hundred kilometers and you can choose a technique at will.”

The nearby Silvermoon said, “You have to pull up every single weed manually. To pull up all the weed within a hundred kilometers, one weed at a time...that should take at least a month or so.”

“Getting harder.” Ning nodded. He was beginning to notice that each progressing level had a higher level of difficulty. Although it was all just manual labor, it took up time.

“Pulling up a hundred kilometers of weed for a single technique...then pulling ten or a hundred would need...” Little Qing muttered to herself.

“Let’s look at the fourth floor.” Ning led them upwards once more.

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The bookshelves here had a new line of characters above them: “Personally plant ten thousand fruit trees, and you can choose a technique at will.”

“This seems a bit easier than the weeding,” Little Qing said in a puzzled manner. Ning nodded as well. Weeding had to be done within a hundred kilometers; there would definitely be far more.

“Ah, you don’t understand. These fruit trees are not the fruit trees of the mortal worlds. These are fruit trees that bear Immortal fruit or spirit-fruit; they naturally require tremendous care when planting. Even though Immortal cultivators have incredible abilities, for them to carefully plant one tree at a time by hand...ten thousand will take at least half a year,” Silvermoon said.

“Half a year?”

“So much hard work for half a year, just to learn a single technique? And this is just the fourth level, right?” Little Qing stared.

Ning was quite calm; he continued to the fifth floor.

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One floor after another.

The trial of the first floor only required half a day’s worth of work.

The trial for the second floor required three days.

The trial for the third floor required a month.

The trial for the fourth floor required half a year.

The trial for the fifth floor required three years.

The trial for the sixth floor required twenty full years.

The trial for the seventh floor required a century.

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“And here is the eighth floor.” Although Ning was filled with questions, he still looked calm on the surface as he arrived on the eighth floor of the Divinities Palace.

The number of books on this floor was clearly much lower. The Ki Refining techniques here had already surpassed the Pure Yang level and were at the Daofather level.

The divine abilities and secret arts here...any one of them could serve as a foundational treasure for the likes of the imperial Xiamang clan.

Ning, the Whitewater Hound, and Little Qing simultaneously turned their gazes towards the line of characters above the bookshelves. The line of words read: “Serve as novitiate guards for the Tristar Crescent Abode for a thousand years and you can choose a technique at will.”

“The seventh floor only required a hundred years, but this one requires a thousand.” Little Qing couldn’t help but say, “How long are we going to have to stay here at the Tristar Crescent Abode before we can leave it?”

“But the techniques and secret arts here...I imagine that not even the most treasured techniques of the Youngflame clan or the Northmont clan are so deep and profound.” Ning was still quite calm. “Come. Let us go to the ninth floor.”

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The ninth floor was the final floor of the Divinities Palace.

On this floor, there were only three bookshelves, and they didn’t have that many books on them. Clearly, however...these were truly standouts. Any book here would allow the practitioner to become a powerful expert of the Three Realms. They could absolutely serve as pinnacle techniques...and for normal disciples here at Mount Innerheart, these were the ultimate techniques available!

Only personal disciples and those with special permission from Patriarch Subhuti could go to the Three Realms Palace!

“Eh?” Ning discovered to his astonishment that the bookshelves were completely black, with no characters above them.

“Why aren’t there any characters? Can it be that the techniques here on the ninth floor cannot be taught?” Little Qing was puzzled.

Ning turned his head to look towards the nearby Silvermoon. "Senior apprentice-brother, the trials for the first eight floors of the Divinities Palace require increasingly longer periods of time to complete...can it be that there is no trial for the ninth floor? And...can it be that the only way to learn the techniques of the Divinities Palace is to engage in manual labor? The eighth floor requires one to be a novice for a thousand years to learn a technique...does that mean if you want to learn ten techniques, you would have to spend ten thousand years?"

Ning had been planning to train for just a few decades or a century and then return to the world of the Grand Xia. This was his agreement with Yu Wei! To spend ten thousand years here at Mount Innerheart? He would be arriving far too late!

"Haha...you are quite clever, junior apprentice-brother." Silvermoon waved his feather fan, then said leisurely, "The Divinities Palace actually has two types of trials. The first type consists of manual labors which naturally are not difficult at all; all one needs to do is spend some time. For those slightly dumber cultivators with poorer comprehension abilities, this is usually the type of trial they will choose. A thousand years as a novice to learn the powerful techniques of the eighth floor? It is worth it."

Ning nodded. After one became a Primal, one's lifespan became limitless; all one had to do was be able to overcome the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations. To spend a thousand years on a single technique was indeed worth it.

"You can view this as a gift which Master gave to Mount Innerheart. Although it is said that the Dao cannot be casually taught, Master only required these simple 'trials' be passed," Silvermoon said. "But of course, for truly peerless geniuses who have superior comprehension there is naturally no need to engage in all this manual labor. There are other trials for such individuals."

"What trials?" Ning asked.

Silvermoon laughed. "Junior apprentice-brother, didn't you notice that in the empty region outside the Divinities Palace, where all those humans, monsters, and Fiendgods were congregating, there were some restrictive formations and spells?"

Ning thought back to what he had seen, then nodded. "Right. That region was indeed marked with some formations and restrictive runes."

"That place is the place for battling," Silvermoon said. "Master created nine golems at nine different of power. Anyone who is capable of defeating the first golem is allowed to pick a technique from the first level of the Divinities Palace at will."

"If you defeat the second golem once, you can choose a technique from the second floor at will. If you beat it twice, you can choose two techniques. Three times, pick three...and so on."

"If you beat the third golem, you can choose from the third floor."

"The principles are the same for the ninth golem; if you defeat it, you can naturally choose a technique from the ninth floor."

Silvermoon smiled as he looked at Ning. "Understand, junior apprentice-brother?"

“This trial is quite simple as well. Understood.” Ning nodded, then asked with suspicion, “If you beat it once you will gain one technique, if you beat it twice you will gain two...can it be that the more times you fight, the more powerful the golem will become?”

“When you actually go fight them, you’ll know the answer.” Silvermoon no longer gave any more information on this. “But remember; these fights are meant to test your insights into the Dao! Thus, all divine abilities are forbidden, as well as any formations, forbidden arts, etc. I hear you are a Sword Immortal. If so, then you are only permitted to use your sword and sword-arts. Unleash the full power and sharpness of your sword-arts.”

Ning nodded.

“By doing manual labor, one can learn techniques up to the eighth floor. Only by defeating the ninth golem, however, can the ninth floor techniques be learned.” Silvermoon looked at Ning. “Junior apprentice-brother, once you defeat the ninth golem and learn a ninth floor technique, you can go to the Three Realms Palace.”

“Right.” Ning nodded, then asked, “Senior apprentice-brother, which golem should I test myself against for now?”

“There isn’t much point in acquiring those weaker sword-arts manuals; it’s best to start from a higher place! Since Master was willing to accept you as his disciple, I imagine that you are a rare, peerless genius as well...how about this? Why don’t you give the sixth golem a try?” This was Silvermoon’s best guess, as he didn’t know anything about Ning’s level of power. Still, he could guess that Ning was most likely a supreme genius.

“The sixth golem? The sixth floor?” Ning thought back to the sixth floor; the sword-arts manuals there were already even more profound than the full nine stances of the [Three-Foot Sword]! Every sword-arts manual there surpassed the best that the Black-White College had to offer.

“But I’m only at the Wanxiang level,” Ning said, a bit worried. “Isn’t that a bit...”

“Don’t worry. The nine golems which Master created are extraordinary. They will release different levels of power, based on the strength of their foes. Since you are at the Wanxiang level, the elemental ki these golems will use shall also be at the Wanxiang level. If you were a Void-level Earth Immortal, then the elemental ki these golems would use would also be Void-level. This is why I said this is a test of your comprehension of the Dao! It doesn’t matter if you are a Wanxiang Adept, a Primal Daoist, or a Void-level Earth Immortal,” Silvermoon said.

Ning instantly felt reassured. “Good. Then I’ll give the sixth golem a try.”

“Come, let’s go to the testing ground.” Silvermoon immediately lead Ning down from the ninth floor of the Divinities Palace to the empty field outside.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 13: Tristar Crescent Abode Chapter 6: Puny

Outside the Divinities Palace.

“All of you, step back,” Silvermoon instructed. All of the disciples of Mount Innerheart present all hurriedly departed from the empty region.

Silvermoon waved his arm, and a golem that was more than three meters tall appeared out of nowhere. The golem’s body seemed completely metallic, and its arm had six hoops around it.

“Junior apprentice-brother, this is the sixth golem,” Silvermoon said.

“Thank you, senior apprentice-brother.” Ning was filled with anticipation.

Silvermoon, the Whitewater Hound, and Little Qing immediately left the dueling grounds. As for the other Mount Innerheart disciples, they all revealed looks of amazement and curiosity.

“Uncle-master is going to duel a golem.”

“The Patriarch is about to show his power!”

“The Little Patriarch is immediately challenging the sixth golem upon arriving at the power. I imagine that he’s pretty confident in being able to defeat it. He’s only a Wanxiang Adept, but he actually dares to fight the sixth golem. What level of insight into the Dao must the Little Patriarch have reached?! No wonder Patriarch Subhuti took him as a disciple. He truly is a peerless monster.”

“I’ve been on the mountain for thousands of years, but I’m still unable to defeat the sixth golem. I had to serve as a novice in order to acquire an eighth level Divinities Palace technique,” an old Void-level Diremonster growled.

“Challenging the sixth golem as soon as he comes up the mountain? Formidable, formidable indeed. Even in the major world from whence I come, it is rare for such a peerless genius to come in countless lifetimes.”

These humans, monsters, and Fiendgods all spoke out in praise. As they saw it, since Ning had been chosen by Patriarch Subhuti as his disciple, he was assuredly extraordinary. In addition, that old demon Silvermoon, the manager of this Divinities Palace, was also a personal disciple of Patriarch Subhuti. Since he chose the sixth golem for Ning, he probably felt confident that Ning could beat it.

“Formidable.”

“A peerless genius.”

“Incredible.”

The disciples of Mount Innerheart were all filled with eagerness as they waited to watch.

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The trial grounds. Ning was exchanging stares with the distant sixth golem. From far away, Little Qing was cheering, “Master, master, beat the snot out of that golem!”

“Little Wanxiang kid, if you want to beat me, bring out your power.” The three meter tall golem growled, then waved his hand as a longsword suddenly appeared within it.

“Good.” A Darknorth sword appeared in each of Ning’s hands as well.

“Kill!” Ning instantly charged forward.

All of the disciples of Mount Innerheart present, as well as the old demon Silvermoon, were watching this battle carefully.

After having mastered the Dao-Path of the Gale, Ning’s speed had become incredibly fast; he blew forward like a gust of wind and arrived before the sixth golem, and his Darknorth swords instantly struck out like two streaks of dazzling sword-light.

After experiencing the [Thousand Year Dream], Ning’s sword-arts had clearly become firmer and more stable, and his movements were more pure and exquisite as well.

Bang!

The golem struck out with its longsword, and the earth itself seemed to tremble. The longsword actually came smashing down with the weight of a mountain, and Ning could even see with his naked eyes the vague illusion of massive mountains appearing around it. The might and aura of this sword stance caused Ning to feel completely awestruck.

“Not good. The difference in power is too great!” Ning, upon seeing the illusion of massive mountains which had manifested around the golem’s sword-chop, instantly felt completely unable to resist. The profoundness of the attack’s formless Dao...

His own two chopping streaks of sword-light became as thin as silken, becoming incomparably soft.

BOOM!!!

The golem’s longsword smashed down upon Ning’s twin Darknorth swords. A surge of invincible power crushed downwards, and Ning was sent flying through the air like a meteor. He only stopped when he arrived at the edge of the trial grounds, where a nearly invisible barrier hovered in the air. The barrier blocked Ning’s fall, but his two Darknorth swords were also sent flying into the air, and they then smashed against the restrictive barrier and fell to the ground.

“I admit defeat,” Ning hurriedly called out. The flesh on his two hands had been completely split open, and blood was leaking everywhere.

Just a single exchange of blows...but his sword had actually been knocked flying. This difference in power was simply too enormous.

“Uh...”

“Um...”

“But...”

The many disciples of Mount Innerheart who were watching outside the trial grounds, be they human, monster, or Fiendgod, all were completely flabbergasted at what they had just seen. They blinked.

As they saw it, Ning was the chosen of Patriarch Subhuti, and so he surely must be extraordinary! Even when these other disciples had first arrived on the mountain, they were generally able to defeat the second or third golem. Some of the more powerful ones were able to defeat the fourth or even the fifth

golem. None of the ones present had been able to defeat the sixth golem right away, but over the course of Mount Innerheart's many years of history there had been some who had defeated the sixth golem upon arriving.

The statuses of these disciples were far lower than Ning's. Ning was the Patriarch's disciple! All of the other disciples believed that Ning was going to make a miracle happen.

But unfortunately...this 'exceptionally extraordinary' Ji Ning was actually defeated in one blow. He wasn't even able to fight back!

"Master!" Little Qing looked towards Ning, tight feelings appearing in her chest. Her master was the number one figure in his Conclave, and she had thought for certain that her master was going to dazzle everyone with his power upon arriving at Mount Innerheart. But he had actually been defeated so miserably. "Master must be feeling horrible right now! And there were so many Mount Innerheart disciples watching! That despicable old bastard, Silvermoon...he's the one who told Master to fight against the sixth golem!"

"Ning, child..." The Whitewater Hound had not expected this either.

"Uh." The fan-wielding Silvermoon hastily waved his arm, collecting up the sixth golem. He hurriedly ran over. "Junior apprentice-brother, this, uh, I didn't, I...I didn't know exactly how strong you were, but since Master took you on as a new disciple, I..."

Silvermoon hadn't done this on purpose. He knew exactly how stringent and exacting Patriarch Subhuti's requirements for accepting new disciples were. Those who were accepted as disciples before becoming Celestial Immortals or Empyrean Gods were all incredible talented, so monstrously skilled as to cause utter terror! Thus, he had guessed that this new junior apprentice-brother of his, Ji Ning, should be able to give the sixth golem a good fight. Even if he were to be defeated, he should have been able to fight for quite a long time before losing. He hadn't expected at all that Ning would be defeated with a single blow and that he wouldn't be able to fight back at all.

"It isn't your fault, senior apprentice-brother." Ning shook his head. He could tell that the spectating humans, monsters, and Fiendgods all had a look of surprise, puzzlement, and even hidden disdain in their eyes. Clearly, these Immortal cultivators cared about strength the most; even though his status was high, if he wasn't strong enough, others would still look down on him in their hearts.

"It was simply that I was not strong enough," Ning said. "The sixth golem truly does vastly surpass my current limits."

"It was my fault," Silvermoon said hurriedly. This junior apprentice-brother had suffered such a huge defeat in his first trial upon coming up the mountain...and he had been the one who had chosen the opponent. He naturally felt extremely ashamed. He hurriedly said, "Given the sword techniques you displayed, you definitely would have no problems defeating the third golem, and as for the fourth golem...you have a chance as well. Which one would you like to choose?"

"The fourth golem," Ning said.

"How about you take a break, then fight?" Silvermoon asked.

Ning shook his head and chuckled. "I was instantly defeated in that earlier battle. I used up almost no divine power at all, as a result. There's no need to rest."

Silvermoon, seeing the smile on Ning's face, couldn't help but nod mentally to himself. This junior apprentice-brother had an impressive mentality; he had been defeated in front of so many watchers during his very first trial, but he remained quite calm.

"Alright." Silvermoon nodded, then waved his arm. Yet another golem, a fiery red golem, appeared within the battlefield. This golem had four circlets around its arm.

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"This uncle-master, Ji Ning, seems to be ordinary in power. He was actually completely unable to fight back against the sixth golem."

"Right. He's quite puny."

"Puny my ass. When you came up the mountain, you probably would've been defeated by the sixth golem in one blow as well."

"I'm just my Master's spirit-beast, while Ji Ning is the Old Patriarch's disciple. I even have to address him as Patriarch! How can you compare the two of us? When I first arrived, I was also able to defeat the fourth golem."

"Look, it is starting."

"The Patriarch is starting to fight against the fourth golem."

The disciples of Mount Innerheart had all originally been filled with admiration towards Ning, but now they found out...that this Ji Ning was rather so-so! In fact, compared to the rest of them when they had first arrived in the mountain, Ning's performance was average at best. He was completely unremarkable!

Actually...many of these other disciples were the personal disciples that had been accepted by True Immortals or Empyrean Gods! They, too, were truly first-rate geniuses which the True Immortals and Empyrean Gods had chosen from throughout the Three Realms. Not even the likes of Adept Blackstone or Adept Ninedeaths would necessarily be chosen by True Immortals or Empyrean Gods; from this, one could imagine how much talent and comprehension ability these disciples possessed.

Some disciples were disciples of Celestial Immortals!

Some were spirit-beasts!

Others were Fiendgod servants!

Some of them had merely been at the Wanxiang level when arriving at the mountain. Some had already reached the Primal level. Some had even reached the Void level!

Some Void-level Fiendgods had lived for an incredibly long time, and were born with a very high level of insight into the Dao. It was normal for them to be able to defeat the fifth golem or sixth golem. As for

the disciples of Celestial Immortals, they were also quite extraordinarily talented, and could absolutely compare to the likes of Cangwu Jiu or Adept Blackstone.

Thus...the vast majority of these disciples who had to refer to Ning as 'uncle-master' or 'Patriarch' were, in reality, the peerless geniuses of the major worlds they came from! Some were even more monstrously formidable than that!

"But this Patriarch's sword-arts aren't bad. It seems he should be able to defeat the fourth golem."

"Right. He should be able to beat the fourth golem...but just barely."

"Right. Just barely."

The disciples of Mount Innerheart all gave their evaluation. Towards this Ji Ning, the disciple of the Old Patriarch who had an incredibly high status...they no longer felt too much reverence for him.

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Slash!

A streak of sword-light plunged into the golem's chest. It didn't even sink in a single inch before it became unable to go in any deeper.

The golem came to a complete halt. It stared at Ning unmovingly, then said in a low voice, "You won."

These golems were non-living creatures; even Void-level Fiendgods that fought against them would be unable to destroy them. Thus...being able to break through their outer layer of protection was enough to symbolize victory.

"Junior apprentice-brother, you can now go to the fourth floor of the Divinities Palace and choose a technique at will," the fan-holding Silvermoon said with a smile as he walked over. With a wave of his hand, he collected the golem again.

Ning smiled. Fortunately, he had experienced the [Thousand Year Dream] earlier; his sword-arts had indeed stabilized and become more firm, and his execution of them had become more profound and unpredictable as well. That was the only reason why he was able to defeat the fourth golem. Otherwise...he would have probably only been able to beat the third golem.

This was as he had expected. After all, he had been forbidden from using any divine abilities, resulting in his greatest source of power, the [Starseizing Hand], being unusable. His power would naturally be much lower as a result!

Although he had become the champion of his Conclave of Immortal Destiny, he was actually a bit weaker than Cangwu Jiu, Xiamang Zishan, and the others when it came to his comprehension of the Dao. He had only become champion thanks to the [Starseizing Hand].

"Senior apprentice-brother, when ordinary disciples of Mount Innerheart first arrive at the mountain, which golem are they generally able to beat?" Ning asked.

"The newcomers are sometimes a bit weaker while sometimes a bit stronger. On the whole, they are on par with you, I suppose. However, they have generally trained for centuries before arriving, while some

have trained for thousands or tens of thousands of years,” Silvermoon said. As they chatted, the sound around them was blocked from transmitting to others.

Ning laughed. “Given how many years the ordinary disciples have been in the mountain, they are definitely more powerful than they were in the past. It seems I am the weakest person here at Mount Innerheart.”

Still...Ning continued to feel complete confidence in himself. He had only trained for thirty years, and had just arrived at the mountain. After a hundred years, he would definitely be able to surpass them all! And he also had the [Starseizing Hand] in reserve! In these trials against golems, since his divine abilities were unusable, his greatest advantage had been neutralized.

Still...no matter what, compared to the ordinary disciples of Mount Innerheart, he was at the bottom of the barrel.

A thirty thousand meter tower starts from the ground. He still had to work hard!

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 13: Tristar Crescent Abode Chapter 7: Thirty Years at Mount Innerheart

“Junior apprentice-brother, how long have you been training for?” Silvermoon asked.

“More than thirty years,” Ji Ning said.

Silvermoon instantly began to laugh. “Ah, no wonder! That explains it. So you’ve only been training for around thirty years. For you to be able to defeat the fourth golem despite having trained for such a short period of time...I trust that in the future, here at Mount Innerheart, your rate of improvement will be similarly astonishing.”

Ning smiled. “Thank you for your kind words, senior apprentice-brother.”

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Under the gazes of the many humans, monsters, and Fiendgods, Ji Ning and Silvermoon stepped into the fourth floor of the Divinities Palace. The profoundness of any of the sword-arts manuals located on the fourth floor was comparable to the complete nine stances of the [Three-Foot Sword]!

“This truly is a blessed land for learning the Dao.” Ning flipped through the abridged versions of the sword-arts manuals, which included some of the preliminary parts to each technique. His eyes and eyebrows danced expressively as he read. “So many sword-arts...this place represents the collective enlightenment gained by countless Sword Immortals of the Three Realms. My own sword-arts will definitely improve dramatically after I draw from the wisdom of so many other Sword Immortals.”

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And so, Ning’s life of learning the Dao at Mount Innerheart had begun.

If he wanted to leave his master’s tutelage, he had to at least be able to defeat the ninth golem and acquire a ninth-level technique from the Divinities Palace. Only then could he enter the Three Realms Palace, and only then could he leave. This was a prerequisite! He had to be trained as a personal disciple would be trained, which meant that he had to be able to enter the Three Realms Palace and learn the

truly powerful divine abilities located within it. This was the most fundamental of expectations which Patriarch Subhuti had for Ning as his apprentice; Ning understood this quite well.

Ning and Yu Wei had agreed that they would reunite in the future in the Grand Xia world. And so...he had to enter the Three Realms Palace as soon as he could!

Ning didn't want to spend centuries or millennia here at Mount Innerheart; if he truly did spend thousands of years here, then what in the world would happen to the people he cared about in the Grand Xia such as Yu Wei, Autumn Leaf, Mu Northson, or Yuchi Xiyue?

"I have to defeat the ninth golem as soon as I can, ideally within a few decades." This was Ning's goal for himself, but he knew very well how incredibly difficult this goal would be. "I can't allow myself to be distracted whatsoever during this period of time at Mount Innerheart. Lotus techniques, divine will techniques...I'll put them all to one side for now. Here in the Divinities Palace, I will exclusively focus on sword-arts manuals!"

Sword-arts, focused on attacks! This was Ning's decision!

.....

Time slowly flowed on.

Ning, the Whitewater Hound, and Little Qing all spent their time training on Mount Innerheart. And in fact, the Whitewater Hound and Little Qing were even more excited than Ning to be here!

"What should I do? The third golem defeats us with utter ease," Little Qing said helplessly.

"It seems that we might not even be able to beat the second golem," the Whitewater Hound said helplessly as well.

The disciples of Mount Innerheart were almost all incomparably talented monsters who came from throughout the Three Realms. Some of the others were spirit-beasts of Celestial Immortals who had trained for a very long time. By comparison, the Whitewater Hound and Little Qing had trained for a very short period of time.

"There's nothing we can do. Let's go do manual labor," the Whitewater Hound said.

"That's our only option." Little Qing nodded as well.

And so, both of them went to accept the manual labor 'trials'. They spent nearly a full month manually deweeding the surrounding hundred kilometers of land. Only then were they allowed to choose a third level technique from the Divinities Palace.

The techniques on the third floor of the Divinities Palace...any one of them when placed within the Black-White College would become the most treasured technique of the College!

"Hahaha, so someone like me can actually acquire a technique like this!" Little Qing snatched up a copy of the [Qiankun Sword Song] with absolute excitement. "I can now finally, truly train on the Grand Dao of Qiankun."

“These are the writings of a Celestial Immortal on formations?” The Whitewater Hound was holding a book on formations. He, too, was incomparably excited.

Both of them were actually extremely gifted. Uncle White was a Whitewater Hound; although in other aspects he was rather ordinary for a Godbeast, in one aspect, he was exceptional – his intelligence!

Little Qing, in turn, had absolutely astonishing talent in the Grand Dao of Qiankun. She was even able to use the Void Blink (spatial teleportation) technique at the Xiantian level! Although at that point in time, there was no way Little Qing could actually understand the profound mysteries and principles behind spatial teleportation, this was her innate ability as a Godbeast. All she had to do was be able to touch upon just the slightest bit of this Grand Dao and she would be able to teleport. She didn’t need to actually understand it; just brushing against the Grand Dao of Qiankun allowed it!

However, neither of two had ever had a truly good teacher! Ning had the help of the Stellar Hall of the underwater estate, and also had the guidance of Immortal Diancai. Uncle White and Little Qing, however, had to work hard to study on their own!

Having arrived at Mount Innerheart, however, everything had changed! They had a chance to interact with so many talented humans, monsters, and Fiendgods. The Void-level Fiendgods in particular had lived extremely long lives, and their level of experience was definitely not inferior to Immortal Diancai’s. For the sake of giving Ning face, they would often give pointers to Little Qing and Uncle White. And occasionally, the two would even have a chance to ask the likes of the white-robed Lord Jiang or the old demon Silvermoon for some advice as well!

But most importantly of all...

Patriarch Subhuti had begun to lecture on the Dao!

Patriarch Subhuti rarely expounded on the Dao; sometimes, ten thousand years would pass without a single lecture. However, ever since he had taken on Ning as a disciple, Patriarch Subhuti immediately began to give far more open lectures on the Dao than before; in fact, he would expound on the Dao almost every month! This was a habit for Patriarch Subhuti; generally speaking, after taking in a new disciple, he would often expound on the Dao with great frequency for a time. But if he didn’t take in a new disciple? He would only expound on the Dao when he was in the mood for it.

After all, the Old Patriarch only truly valued his personal disciples enough to do it. As for the other disciples...they generally didn’t even have a chance to meet or speak with the Old Patriarch.

Thus, all of the disciples of Mount Innerheart were in a state of collective excitement. Even several True Immortals or Empyrean Gods would occasionally come over to listen.

“The Daofather lives up to his reputation.” The Whitewater Hound was currently filled with the utmost of excitement. “Listening to the Daofather expound on the Dao once is more helpful than me ruminating by myself for a century. So many of the questions in my mind have been explained, and I have now mastered a Dao-Path!”

“The Daofather must have completely mastered the Grand Dao of Qiankun. His casual mentions regarding it have caused me to comprehend so much. I can now even teleport out of a spacelocked region!” Little Qing was excited as well.

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One year after another passed. The two of them had spent another half year doing manual tasks and had acquired a technique from the fourth floor of the Divinities Palace.

These manual tasks just took up time; they didn't need to actually use up too much of their mental energy on them. They were able to completely focus on training in the Dao while carrying out the menial jobs!

They then spent another three years carrying out menial jobs, thus acquiring a fifth level technique from the Divinities Palace.

And then they spent another twenty years before finally acquiring a sixth level technique from the Divinities Palace!

The sixth level techniques would be considered amongst the most supreme of techniques in the Grand Xia Dynasty! Almost all of them were created by Celestial Immortals, and some were even created by Pure Yang True Immortals.

The twenty-sixth year at Mount Innerheart.

"AHAHAHA! I'm invincible! INVINCIBLE!" As rain poured down from the skies, Little Qing ran around wildly in circles around Ning's Immortal estate, her body flickering and flashing about. Her figure was very blurry as she repeatedly teleported about with high speed.

"Little Qing. Little Qing!" Ning stood there at the entrance to his Immortal estate. Just by standing there, he gave off the aura of an Immortal sword, causing others to feel an uncontrollable desire to submit to him. "How are you now 'invincible'? Can't you see it's raining? Stop running around like that!" Ning laughed.

"Little Qing." The Whitewater Hound spoke in the human tongue as well. "What is going on? Why are you so excited?!"

"Ahahaha..." Continuing to laugh, Little Qing suddenly appeared in front of Ning with a swish. "Master. Master!" Little Qing's eyes were filled with excitement. "I'm now able to use Greater Teleportation! I'm finally able to use Greater Teleportation!"

"What?! Greater Teleportation?" Ning revealed a look of surprise. When he had killed Youngflame Nong, he had once acquired a Dao-seal of Greater Teleportation. In the underwater estate, he had also acquired one as a protective item. Normal 'Void Blink' techniques or 'spatial teleportation' techniques...they were all classified as 'Lesser Teleportation'. They only allowed one to teleport around within a single region; at most, they would allow one to move a certain distance.

As one gained more and more insights into space, one would be able to teleport greater and greater distances, and even spacelock techniques would begin to become ineffective.

But upon completely mastering the complete Grand Dao of Qiankun, one would be able to use Greater Teleportation. Greater Teleportation...it could allow you to teleport from one world to another world.

For example, one might be located in the Netherworld Kingdom, but with a single Greater Teleportation, one could move straight back to Serpentwing Lake of the Grand Xia world!

This was why Youngflame Nong had been so confident despite having been trapped within the Witchriver Immortal Estate. He knew that no matter how dangerous things became, all he had to do was use the Greater Teleportation Dao-seal and he would be able to immediately flee back to his clan's headquarters in the Grand Xia world. But unfortunately, he had viewed Ning with complete contempt, and had believed Ning to pose no threat to him at all. By the time Ning released that black loop...there was no longer a chance for Youngflame Nong to escape!

"I've reached the Grand Dao Domain level of the Grand Dao of Qiankun!" Little Qing said excitedly, "I'm already capable of Greater Teleportation. Ahahaha...I'm now invincible. Who can kill me? Who can kill me?! Ahahaha, I can now escape from any formation, no matter how formidable."

Ning and the Whitewater Hound both laughed.

Azure Skysnakes possessed astounding talent and affinity for space. Upon reaching the Grand Dao Domain level, they could become as one with the Grand Dao, and thus they would be able to utilize Greater Teleportation. There was no point in even feeling jealous about it.

"Master, teach me some more about the sword. I now have a greater understanding of the Grand Dao of Qiankun, and my ability to improve my sword-arts will improve as well," Little Qing immediately said. She wanted for Ning to be able to teach her, and so she had chosen to learn the sword as well, fusing her Grand Dao of Qiankun into her sword-arts.

"Alright." Ning nodded.

Little Qing was improving, but his own rate of improvement was even more astonishing. After all...from the time when Ning established his Zifu region in the Grand Xia world to the day he entered Mount Innerheart, only roughly twenty years had passed!

Now he was training at Mount Innerheart, and he even had the chance to listen to his master, Patriarch Subhuti, lecture on the Dao. He also often went to meditate in the Stellar Hall, and also fought constantly against the golems, so as to further sharpen and refine his sword-arts. He also had countless exquisite sword-arts to analyze! How could his rate of improvement be slow?

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With each defeat of a golem, Ning was allowed to choose a new technique. But with each fight, the golems would change as well. For example, during the first battle, the fourth golem had used overbearing, powerful sword-arts; during the second, third, and fourth battle, however, the golem had used different techniques. At the start, the golem only changed between different sword-arts styles, but afterwards it even began to use sabres, longswords, staves, and even flying swords, magic treasures, or formations to assist it. This made the fourth golem increasingly difficult to defeat.

However, Ning's own power was improving at an astonishing rate as well!

He had now analyzed more than a hundred sword-arts from the fourth level of the Divinities Palace, all of which were comparable to the complete [Three-Foot Sword].

Next, Ning had defeated the fifth golem more than thirty times and analyzed more than thirty sword-arts manuals from the fifth floor!

After that, Ning defeated the sixth golem more than twenty times and acquired more than twenty sword-arts manuals from the sixth floor.

And then, Ning had defeated the seventh golem eighteen times, acquiring eighteen sword-arts manuals from the seventh floor!

Although he had read and analyzed multiple sword-arts manuals, many of which had been written by Emyrean Gods or True Immortals and some of which had been written by Daofathers...Ning continued to spend most of his efforts on the [Three-Foot Sword], keeping it at the heart of his sword-arts. He infused the strengths and excellences of the other sword techniques in the [Three-Foot Sword], causing it to be continuously improved and perfected. There were now more and more differences between the current [Three-Foot Sword] and the one which Immortal Northwalker had originally created. In fact, it had now transformed into an even more formidable sword-art that belonged to Ning and Ning alone.

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And so, completely focusing on his training, Ning spent more than thirty years here within Mount Innerheart.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 13: Tristar Crescent Abode Chapter 8: The Ninth Stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]

Within a grassy area in the Tristar Crescent Abode. This was the location of Ji Ning's Immortal estate.

Within a courtyard inside the Immortal estate.

Ning was seated in the lotus position on the ground, eyes shut, completely unmoving. Next to him lay a large, snowy-white hound.

Whoosh.

An azure-robed maiden appeared out of nowhere. It was Little Qing.

"Don't make a sound." The Whitewater Hound opened his eyes, hurriedly sending her a mental message.

"What is it, Uncle White?" Little Qing looked puzzledly at Ning, seated in the lotus position with shut eyes. She sent mentally back, "Master is training? But doesn't he usually go into his private room when meditating? Why is he sitting here on the ground?"

When training, Ning actually spent most of his time within the Still Room in the underwater estate. This was a training room built by Daoist Threelives which truly did allow one to gain insights into the Dao at an astonishing rate. But of course, the very existence of the underwater estate was a huge secret; Patriarch Subhuti had also reminded Ning that he absolutely could not reveal its existence. Thus, not even Little Qing or Uncle White knew about it.

"He was taking a stroll in the courtyard but suddenly had a flash of insight, and so he immediately sat down in the lotus position to meditate on it," the Whitewater Hound sent back. "This flash of insight came suddenly; he didn't have any time to waste on running back to his private room."

“Oh.” Little Qing nodded. This was how sudden flashes of insights often worked; when they came, they had to be seized right away.

“During the past thirty years, Master’s sword-arts have improved at an astonishing rate. He’s even defeated the eighth golem nine times. He’s now gained a sudden flash of insight...his power is definitely going to improve dramatically!” Little Qing said excitedly, “He might even be able to beat the ninth golem!”

The ninth golem...even many Void-level Diremonsters and Fiendgods were helpless before it! From this, one could tell how utterly astonishing Ning’s rate of improvement had been during the past thirty years.

“My child Ning’s talent is extremely high, and his affinity for the Dao of the Sword is particularly exceptional,” the Whitewater Hound said. “When in the Grand Xia world, he had to divide up his attention amongst multiple types of techniques as well as engage in all sorts of battles! Here at Mount Innerheart, however, there is no infighting at all. In addition, Ning has completely focused his attention on his sword-arts for more than thirty years. His sword-arts have already exceeded an utterly inconceivable level.”

“Right. Truly inconceivable.” Little Qing nodded as well. During the past thirty years, Little Qing had improved dramatically as well, having mastered Greater Teleportation. The Whitewater Hound was more intelligent than Little Qing, with superb comprehension ability; thus, he had become a true grandmaster of formations.

But Ning’s improvement outstripped both of theirs!

Originally, the ordinary disciples of Mount Innerheart murmured amongst themselves about the strength of this new disciple, not feeling much respect for Ning. Afterwards, however, Ning began to focus all his heart and efforts on sword-arts, and his abilities began to dramatically rise without pause. He defeated the fifth, sixth, seventh, and even the eighth golem...causing all of the disciples of Mount Innerheart to be completely tongue-tied in shock.

Even the controller of the Divinities Palace, the old demon Silvermoon, had said with an emotional sigh, “Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning truly is a peerless future Sword Immortal. His improvement in his sword-arts has been utterly terrifying.”

Although Patriarch Subhuti helped by expounding on the Dao, as the saying went, the master might open the door, but cultivation depends on the self. The Patriarch could give some advice at critical moments, but most of Ning’s cultivation and insights came from himself. Clearly, he was extremely well-suited to the Dao of the Sword! Even the similarly peerless Sword Immortal, Lu Dongbin, had felt the desire to recruit him, and had made repeated requests to take him as his disciple.

Unfortunately, the Grand Xia Emperor had steadfastly refused! However, thanks to this ‘setback’, Ning had ended up arriving at Mount Innerheart and becoming apprenticed to Patriarch Subhuti.

“Quick, look!”

On the twelfth day of Ning sitting in the lotus position in meditation, sword-ki suddenly began to fill the pavilion area around Ning.

Swish! Swish!

Little Qing and Uncle White both hurriedly stepped back, moving to a distant pathway to watch from afar. They saw that more and more streaks of sword-ki began to appear in the area around Ning. Suddenly, Ning opened his eyes as well.

“Is this...the realm which senior Northwalker had reached in the past?” Ning murmured gently to himself as the countless streaks of sword-ki around him began to gather together, becoming extremely solid and dense and forming into a single, dazzling Immortal sword that glowed with white light.

“Chop,” Ning said.

SLASH!

The sword-ki that had formed into a sharp Immortal sword of light sliced through the air, and as it did so, the illusion of an enormous black dragon actually appeared above it! This illusory black dragon coiled around the flying sword of light, and in the eyes of the black dragon a look of wanton arrogance could be seen. The flying sword of white light sliced through the air, and the surrounding space completely exploded.

“The ninth stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]...” Ning murmured to himself, “Sword Roaming the Three Realms!”

“The most powerful sword technique left behind by senior Northwalker...I’ve finally mastered it. However, I feel as though this sword technique of senior Northwalker’s, this ‘Sword Roaming the Three Realms’, is too flamboyant and brash. It isn’t stately enough. If this technique could be altered to be slightly more reserved and not so brash, its power might rise even more.”

Ning’s own level of judgment was now extremely high.

It must be understood that the sword-arts manuals on the fourth floor of the Divinities Palace were already on the level of the complete [Three-Foot Sword].

The fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth floors...although Ning hadn’t chosen certain techniques that overlapped with techniques he had already chosen, he had still analyzed a total of more than a hundred sword-arts manuals! Ning had even chosen nine books from the eighth floor of the Divinities Palace, each of which had been written by major powers of the Three Realms. Although they were written rather casually, they were still unfathomably profound.

Given that Ning already had so many sword-arts for his perusing, how could he not have superb judgment by now?

Immortal Northwalker had roamed the world by himself and painstakingly taught himself. Ning, however, had become an apprentice to Patriarch Subhuti, and had the chance to analyze countless sword-arts that had been collected from throughout the Three Realms. Given that he was incomparably suited to be a Sword Immortal, how could he not be extremely astute in judging these types of techniques?

“I have now completely mastered all nine stances of the [Three-Foot Sword].” Ning nodded to himself. “However, I’ve modified the first eight stances to make them more suited to me. As for this ninth stance...I will need to modify it as well.”

With so many peerless sword-arts manuals available to him, Ning's foundation in the Dao of the Sword was indeed at an inconceivably sturdy level.

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"Master, Master." Little Qing flew over. "That sword technique just now...it seemed to be unfathomably profound. Did you make a breakthrough?"

"Yes. I've already mastered the ninth stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]." Ning nodded.

The nine complete stances of the [Three-Foot Sword] were: Lustrous Sword-Heart, Manifold Thistlethorns, Sudden Sword-Light, Sun in the Sky, Moonlight Hiding the Sword, Grand Dao Domain, Horizontal Sword Execution, Immortal-Devil, and Sword Roaming the Three Realms!

The nearby Uncle White also said with amazement and excitement, "Ning, child, I heard that by using this [Three-Foot Sword], Immortal Northwalker was comparable to a Celestial Immortal in power. There are even Celestial Immortals whose sword-arts are not as profound as this [Three-Foot Sword]. Your sword-arts are already now comparable to that of some Celestial Immortals?"

"Immortal Northwalker was comparable to a Celestial Immortal...but that was a bit of a misleading saying." Ning had often chatted with his fellow disciples here at Mount Innerheart, and he now naturally knew much more than he had in the past. "It is extremely hard for a person to overcome the Celestial Tribulation and become a Celestial Immortal. Some Void-level Earth Immortals have fairly simple tribulations, while others might have tribulations that are hundreds or even thousands of times harder. In fact, I've even heard that for some Void-level Earth Immortals, the Celestial Tribulation didn't even descend at all; it just dissipated. In addition, Celestial Immortals have trained for varying amounts of time, and some are unaffiliated individuals who train on their own while others are apprenticed to major powers. Naturally, they will all be at different levels of power."

"Thus, Immortal Northwalker being 'comparable to a Celestial Immortal' was only in reference to the most ordinary type of Celestial Immortals.

"For example, Loose Immortal Juhua had lived for many millions of years and was also referred to as being 'comparable to Celestial Immortals', just like senior Northwalker who had lived for a million years," Ning said with a laugh. "There are great differences in power between Celestial Immortals. Things are quite tricky. It's possible that monstrously powerful Loose Immortals who have lived for millions of years or ten million years might be able to kill weak Celestial Immortals, but the most powerful Celestial Immortals...I hear that some of them have already completely mastered the Grand Dao of the Sword or other Grand Daos, and are extremely close to becoming Pure Yang True Immortals. These are the geniuses of Celestial Immortals, and some are even able to compete against Pure Yang True Immortals."

"Thus, even amongst Celestial Immortals, there are still many varying levels of power. This thing about being 'comparable to Celestial Immortals'...haha, that's just a form of praise and flattery," Ning said.

Indeed.

At present, Ning has already reached the fifteenth level of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] as a Fiendgod Body Refiner, which was comparable to an early-stage Void-level Fiendgod Body

Refiner! Upon using his [Starseizing Hand], and his terrifyingly powerful sword-arts...he was definitely no weaker than the former Immortal Northwalker by now!

When Ning had first entered the Black-White College, he had felt incomparable veneration for Immortal Northwalker. Naturally, at the time, he had felt nothing amiss about the saying that he was comparable to a Celestial Immortal.

But now that Ning himself had already reached Immortal Northwalker's level, he felt a bit embarrassed upon hearing himself being praised as 'comparable to Celestial Immortals'. After all, Ning knew very well that he was currently merely on par with ordinary Celestial Immortals. If he were to run into slightly more powerful Celestial Immortals, they would probably be able to defeat and even kill him!

But Little Qing still said excitedly, "Master, stop being so modest. No matter what, your sword-arts are definitely at the level of a Celestial Immortal by now! In fact, you are even superior to ordinary Celestial Immortals, right?"

Ning was startled for a moment, then let out a resigned laugh and said, "True. But Little Qing, I'm still just a minor figure in the Three Realms; it's best for me to be a bit more low-key at my current level of power."

"Master, it can be said that at your current level of power, you are utterly invincible against anyone below the Celestial Immortal level." Little Qing didn't show the slightest hint of modesty at all.

Ning smiled. Invincible against anyone below the Celestial Immortal?

Most likely even monstrously powerful Loose Immortals who had lived for millions of years wouldn't be that much more powerful than the current Ning. It could indeed be said that he was at the very peak of power for those below the Celestial Immortal level. However...in the Three Realms, Loose Immortals were still just minor figures; only Celestial Immortals had some status. As Ning was the Old Patriarch's disciple, he had higher standards for himself.

"I haven't even accessed the ninth floor of the Divinities Palace or the Three Realms Palace," Ning mused to himself. "After I go to the ninth floor and to the Three Realms Palace...especially the Three Realms Palace...mm. My fellow disciples have all said that so long as I can acquire a single technique from the Three Realms Palace, I can rely on it to roam the entire Three Realms. By then, I'll probably be much more powerful than I currently am; I'll no longer be on Immortal Northwalker's level, and will probably be on Immortal Juhua's level. Even against fairly formidable Celestial Immortals, I should still be able to keep myself alive."

Ning was quite eager to see the Three Realms Palace.

"Little Qing, Uncle White," Ning instructed, "I am going to go into secluded meditation to further perfect my [Three-Foot Sword]. For now, continue to handle your own affairs; there's no need to pay me any attention."

"Alright." The Whitewater Hound nodded.

"Master, you are going into seclusion right after making a breakthrough? The gap in power between you and me is growing greater and greater," Little Qing said helplessly. But then she chortled, "Fortunately, I have Greater Teleportation. It will probably be a long, long time before you can do this, right Master?"

Ning shook his head. A 'long time'? He was a human; he had to completely master the Grand Dao of Qiankun before he could use Greater Teleportation. He was still extremely far away from mastering his Grand Dao of the Sword, much less the Grand Dao of Qiankun!

Rumble...

The stone door slid shut as Ning entered his private room. A rippling 'wall' could be seen in this private room, and as Ning stepped into the ripples, he arrived within the underwater estate.

"Ji Ning, you have finally mastered the ninth stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]." Within the underwater estate, the giant yellow bear was waiting with a smile on his face.

"Senior, will I now be capable of challenging the eighth level of the Wargod Hall?" Ning asked. More than ten years ago, he had already passed the seventh level of the Wargod Hall and chosen an Immortal-ranked magic treasure.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 13: Tristar Crescent Abode Chapter 9: Two Immortal-Ranked Magic Treasures

The giant yellow bear nodded lightly. "Your chances are quite good. You can give it a try."

Ning smiled, then walked towards the corridor.

At every distinct level of power, Fiendgod Body Refiners would have just two chances to attempt to pass the Wargod Hall's trials. Thus, Ning would generally ask the giant yellow bear for his opinion. Each trial represented a supreme treasure, and so Ning didn't dare to be too reckless in taking them. This was especially true now, as they represented Immortal-ranked magic treasures!

A short while later.

Whoosh. Ning walked out from the Wargod Hall.

"Success!" Ning let out a soft breath. On the eighth floor of the Wargod Hall, he had encountered an ancient, Void-level Fiendgod! Ning's own [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] was only at the fifteenth stage, and he was only comparable to an ordinary early-stage Void-level Fiendgod Body Refiner. If he was to be compared against real Fiendgods, he would probably only be equivalent to a peak Primal-level Fiendgod!

A Void-level Fiendgod was a full level higher than him in power! It also had its own divine abilities that allowed its might to increase even further!

This truly had been a bloody, hard-fought battle. In fact, the Void-level Fiendgod had even unleashed three powerful clones as he transformed his single body into three mighty Fiendgods which surrounded and assaulted Ning! Ning had used the [Three Heads, Six Arms] ability, the [Star-seizing Hand], and had sent his sword-light flashing everywhere...and in the end, he managed to seize the upper hand, then force the Fiendgod to admit defeat.

"That was absolutely fantastic. After studying the Dao for thirty years here at Mount Innerheart, I finally defeated a Void-level Fiendgod!" Ning thought back to the past, when he had roamed the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains. Back then, he had been nothing but an ant in the eyes of that ancient, Void-level Fiendgod.

But now! He himself was on the same level of a Void-level Fiendgod! He was no weaker, and in fact, he had just defeated one!

“Strange. Why would a Void-level Fiendgod have appeared within the underwater estate?” Ning’s heart was filled with questions. He had asked the spirit of the underwater estate, that giant yellow bear, about some of these questions, but the spirit refused to say.

“Ji Ning, congratulations. You’ve defeated the eighth level of the Wargod Hall.” The giant yellow bear appeared out of nowhere. “In the past, even Immortal Juhua himself was only able to overcome the seventh level.”

Immortal Juhua, after becoming a Loose Immortal, had finally challenged and overcome the seventh level. A long, long time later, he became powerful enough to challenge and overcome the eighth level, but by then he no longer had any chances left to make the attempt!

“Senior, I’m going to choose a treasure now,” Ning said with a laugh. “Last time, when I overcame the seventh level, the book of treasures you brought out only included high-grade Immortal-ranked magic treasures; there wasn’t a single top-grade Immortal-ranked magic treasure to be found.”

“This time, there definitely will be,” the giant yellow bear said. “And during your third selection, the number of treasures will be even greater.”

Ning felt resigned. This was in accordance with the rules of the Treasure Hall. In principle, one had three chances to acquire Immortal-ranked magic treasures! They would come when one challenged and overcame the seventh and eighth levels of the Wargod Hall, and when one reached the sixteenth level of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] and entered a brand new and distinct level of power!

But the number of Immortal-ranked magic treasures available for the choosing during the first chance was quite limited.

The second choosing saw more choices.

As for the third...all of the Immortal-ranked magic treasures which Daoist Threelives had left behind would be put on display. Naturally, many exquisite specimens would be made available then.

“You know, it is a minor matter for you, as the controller of the Treasure Hall, to pull out those other treasures and let me choose from them, right?” Ning felt resigned.

“Can’t do it.” The giant yellow bear shook his head. “Not even I can change the rules which Master left behind. In the past, it was because you had just entered the Wanxiang Adept level, the level at which a cultivator is most likely to perish, that Master’s rules allowed for an exception to be made and for you to choose some protective treasures. As for now? You are sufficiently strong enough already; we must follow the rules now.”

Ning nodded.

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Ning entered the Treasure Hall.

An amount of time equal to boiling a kettle of tea passed.

He left the Treasure Hall, another Immortal-ranked magic treasure in his hands!

“Hahaha...” Ning laughed as he walked out of the Treasure Hall. He was indeed much happier with what he chose during this second choosing than he had been for the first.

“Senior, I’m going to go to the Still Room for a period of closed-door meditation,” Ning said, then headed to the underwater estate’s Still Room.

Rumble! The door to the Still Room swung open, then once more swung shut.

Ning sat down in the lotus position atop that enormous bed of netherwater jade. The inky-jade bed emanated an astonishing aura of coldness, causing even the soul to feel chilled! The very first time he had sat atop this bed of netherwater jade, Ning had felt as though his soul had been completely frozen. However, Ning was now far more powerful.

His insights into the Dao were at a high level. His Dao-heart was firmer. His soul was more powerful! Even the bed of netherwater jade was only able to make Ning feel extremely cool and relaxed.

Rumble...

The Grand Bodhi Stillheart Formation began to emanate ripples of power.

Ning’s heart turned completely calm. With a wave of his hand, Ning caused two treasures to appear and levitate before him. One treasure was a golden circlet! As for the other, it was a set of nine black Immortal swords that seemed to flutter in and out of existence in a transient manner.

The golden circlet was the item Ning had chosen when he had overcome the seventh level of the Wargod Hall. It was known as the Tripartite Immortal-Locking Circlet. It was a high-grade Immortal-ranked magic treasure that was meant to trap or restrain foes. Once a foe was caught by it, it would become very hard for the foe to escape, and in fact some weaker foes would be restrained and absorbed into the circlet itself. There was a stand-alone dimension within the circlet, and it could be used to collect living creatures or inanimate objects. Upon being trapped within it, even the likes of a Pure Yang True Immortal would be unable to depart from it.

But of course, Pure Yang True Immortals wouldn’t be so stupid as to just stand there and allow it to draw them in!

As for the nine black Immortal swords, they were the set of Immortal-ranked magic treasures which Ning had just chosen after having overcome the eighth level of the Wargod Hall. They were known as the Heavenraker Swords. All nine of them were top-grade Immortal-ranked flying swords. These nine swords...although they were individually still inferior to the Thousandbull Sword, which had reached the very peak of top-grade Immortal-ranked magic items and was almost comparable to a Pure Yang Immortal sword in power, there were nine of these Heavenraker Swords! Taken as a whole, they were not weaker than the Thousandbull Sword at all!

Most importantly of all, Ning had once seen a sword-arts secret manual on the ninth floor of the Divinities Palace which was known as [Heavenraker].

Ning had previously asked the giant yellow bear, “Senior, on the ninth floor of the Divinities Palace, I saw a sword-arts manual titled [Heavenraker]. The abridged version stated that this technique was a sword-art created by a major power of the Three Realms known as Daofather Heavenrake. Might I ask if there is a connection between the Heavenraker Swords and Daofather Heavenrake?”

“Hahaha, this set of Heavenraker Swords were specially designed to be used to execute the Heavenraker sword technique! The Heavenraker sword technique was already tremendously famous back in the Primordial World of Pangu, and is still an extremely famous sword-art in the current Three Realms!” The giant yellow bear had said with a laugh.

And so, Ning had immediately chosen this set of swords!

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Ning sat there atop the netherwater jade bed, staring at the two mighty Immortal-ranked magic treasures before him. He nodded gently. “After I defeat the ninth golem, I’ll immediately go to the ninth floor of the Divinities Palace and choose the [Heavenraker] sword technique.”

“In the future, I will need to slowly perfect the [Three-Foot Sword] by absorbing many of the best points from other techniques. As for [Heavenraker]...if things are as I suspect, it will become yet another technique that I can use to defeat my foes.

The sword-arts which Immortal Northwalker had created was...more than a bit lacking compared to some of the powerful sword-arts contained within the Divinities Palace.

Ning had already completely overhauled and perfected the first eight stances! As for the ninth stance, he had improved and perfected it. He himself would have to go create a tenth stance and an eleventh stance for this technique.

The sword-arts which Ning himself created would be the sword-arts that were best suited to him, and which would be the most powerful in his hands!

However, before he actually created his own sword-arts, the [Heavenraker] technique could be used for a period of time.

“This Tripartite Immortal-Locking Circlet...after Uncle White becomes a Void-level Earth Immortal, I’ll give it to him,” Ning murmured to himself. This circlet wasn’t of great use to him, and when he had chosen it, it was with the intention of giving it to Uncle White. Uncle White was a grandmaster of formations, but he was lacking in attacking techniques. This Tripartite Immortal-Locking Circlet could transform into the tripartite powers of Heaven, Earth, and Man. It was incredibly difficult to use, but it was very well-suited for Uncle White, who was a grandmaster of formations. It didn’t even require Uncle White to go fight in close combat. It was indeed quite well suited for him!

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This closed-door session lasted for more than a month. Ning completely and thoroughly overhauled this ninth stance of the [Three-Foot Sword], ‘Sword Roaming the Three Realms’, making it more reserved and stately while also making it even more ferocious and fast!

For Immortal Northwalker, the ninth stance of 'Sword Roaming the Three Realms' represented the pinnacle, but for Ji Ning, the ninth stance was just a midway point; he was definitely going to go create a tenth and an eleventh stance.

"It's already summer?" When Ning walked out of his Immortal estate he saw the sun hanging high in the sky, blazing with incomparable heat.

Every single world was illuminated by the Solar Star and the Lunar Star.

This was even true for the estate-world of the Tristar Crescent Abode. Every single world would see the projections of the Solar Star and the Lunar Star. For example, within the world of the Grand Xia, there was also a Solar Star and a Lunar Star! Because the Solar Star was a bit closer to the world of the Grand Xia, in that world, the Solar Star was a bit larger while the Lunar Star appeared a bit smaller.

Although they were only 'projections' of the Solar Star and the Lunar Star, they still possessed utterly terrifying power. Clearly, the power of these two stars, the most supreme and exalted of celestial bodies, was utterly inconceivable.

"Uncle-master."

"Patriarch."

"Patriarch."

Many disciples of Mount Innerheart were currently congregated outside the Divinities Palace. Some were quietly training in the Dao, others were discussing it, and still others were relaxing. Upon seeing Ning arrive, they all hurriedly rose to their feet and called out with respect.

During the course of these thirty years, these disciples of Mount Innerheart now felt true esteem for Ji Ning, an admiration which came from the depths of their heart!

"Mm." Ning just nodded lightly, then stepped into the Divinities Palace. He started from the first floor and walked all the way to the ninth.

On the staircase to the side of the ninth floor, the white-robed Silvermoon was seated, leaning against the banister. There was some Immortal wine, roasted goose, and other roasted meat next to him. His feather-fan was covering his stomach as he just lay there napping.

Ning was in no hurry. He first walked to a nearby bookshelf, then picked out the sword-arts manual titled [Heavenraker].

The secret manuals located here on the ninth floor were all extraordinary.

Ning flipped through the abridged version, then nodded gently, revealing a hint of a smile.

[Heavenraker] was indeed created by Daofather Heavenrake of the Three Realms. It required nine Immortal-ranked flying swords to be used, and ideally the nine swords would all be infused with the 36-Layered Heavenrake Sword Formation.

"This [Heavenraker]...it uses the profound mysteries of the elements of Water and Earth, has also been infused with the secrets of the Grand Dao of Qiankun, and is unleashed through the Grand Dao of the Sword." Ning nodded to himself. He was quite skilled in Water, Qiankun, and the Sword. As for

Earth...Daofather Heavenrake had clearly prepared some more elementary sword techniques amongst the many sword techniques.

Although Ning had few to no insights regarding the element of Earth, he could still use those sword-arts that didn't include the Earth-element. In the future, he would probably advance in Earth as well as a result.

"Senior apprentice-brother, senior apprentice-brother." Ning put down the abridged version, then walked next to Silvermoon and called out to him. In fact, he even gave him a little push. "Senior apprentice-brother!"

"Huh?" Only now did Silvermoon open his eyes. "What, what is it?"

"Senior apprentice-brother, I want to challenge the ninth golem," Ning said.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 13: Tristar Crescent Abode Chapter 10: The Senior Disciples

"The ninth golem?" Silvermoon immediately rose to his feet. Feather-fan in hand, he began to laugh in surprise. "Junior apprentice-brother, do you feel confident?"

"Haven't fought it before, so hard to say," Ji Ning said.

"Junior apprentice-brother, you are always so modest. Come, come, come. Let's hurry. Show me what you have." Silvermoon immediately led Ning down from the Divinities Palace and to the empty testing grounds.

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Many of the disciples of Mount Innerheart were gathered in the empty area. Even Little Qing and Uncle White had hurried over here. Because Ning had sent his two spirit-beasts a mental message earlier, telling them that he was going to challenge the ninth golem, Little Qing and Uncle White had paused their training and hurriedly ran over to watch the fight.

"Can it be that Patriarch Ji Ning is going to challenge the ninth golem? He's already defeated the eighth golem nine times by now, right?"

"He might really be challenging the ninth golem!"

"There are so many of us here, including some monsters that have lived here for tens of thousands of years, but none of us have ever defeated the ninth golem."

The other disciples were all stealthily chatting amongst themselves. In fact, some of them even spoke out towards Little Qing or Uncle White.

"Azure Skysnake, Whitewater Hound, which golem is Patriarch Ji Ning challenging?"

"Little sister Qing, don't tell them, just tell me alone."

Over the course of the past thirty years, Little Qing and Uncle White had become quite familiar with these disciples.

Uncle White smiled. Little Qing just raised her head proudly. "Just keep watching and you will find out."

The distant Ning and Silvermoon were currently chatting with each other. These two both had very high statuses, and generally speaking the normal disciples of Mount Innerheart wouldn't dare to speak to them too often.

Whoosh. Silvermoon waved his hand, and a golem appeared out of nowhere.

This golem's entire body was a white jade color. Around his right arm were nine circular loops, and the invisible aura of power emanating from him was quite strong.

"The ninth golem!"

"The ninth!"

"Uncle-master Ji Ning is actually challenging the ninth golem!"

Instantly, a series of startled cries rang out as everyone felt excited.

Life here at Mount Innerheart was too relaxed and peaceful. Normally, everyone just focused on quietly training in the Dao. Thus, when someone went to challenge the ninth golem, many of the other disciples would cluster around to watch. And this particular challenge...was issued by Ji Ning, who had just become a member of Patriarch Subhuti's school around thirty years ago, and who had been selected as the Old Patriarch's future personal disciple. This naturally caused great excitement.

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Within the testing grounds. Ning and the ninth golem stared at each other from afar.

"This is your first time challenging me, but your Fiendgod body is only at the peak Primal level," the ninth golem said, his eyes flashing with hidden sharpness as he carefully inspected Ning.

Ning knew that this ninth golem had been personally forged by his master, Patriarch Subhuti, and that it was comparable to a Pure Yang treasure in power. It had its own soul and possessed intelligence.

A pair of Darknorth swords appeared in Ning's two hands. "Enough chit-chat. Show me your most powerful sword attacks."

"Hmph." The ninth golem let out a cold snort as a wide, heavy sword appeared in his hands. "Then I'll play with you for a bit." As soon as his words came out, the ninth golem took a single step forward, causing the ground to tremble as he suddenly appeared in front of Ning. He had moved so fast that Ning couldn't help but raise his eyebrows. Ning's feet moved just slightly as he simultaneously sent the twin swords in his hands blocking upwards.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh....

A massive illusory wave that seemed to fill the heavens suddenly appeared. Ning's sword-arts had reached a high enough level that it could call upon the aid of a large amount of natural energy, thus generating this sort of manifestation.

The illusory wave swept forward, Ning's sword-light within it.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

The ninth golem's heavy sword carried incomparable savagery and dominance, and with each stroke the heavy sword smashed against the wave!

Ning's sword technique was more tenacious and powerful, and it came out in a steady, unbroken stream. By contrast, the ninth golem's sword technique was more savage and ferocious. However, in the face of Ning's unbroken, flowing string of attacks, the ninth golem was finding it increasingly hard to hang on.

"So you have a bit of talent after all. If I don't bring out some of my true power, I won't be able to beat you." The ninth golem produced a second heavy sword in his other hand as well.

Boom. Boom. The two heavy swords began to whirl out, seeming to have transformed into an enormous windmill and creating the massive illusion of a whirlpool above it! The enormous whirlpool illusion clearly represented an enormous amount of natural power had been summoned...and the ninth golem's sword technique clearly became even more savage and dominating! It carried a crushing, grinding power that was able to completely suppress Ning!

"Sword Roaming the Three Realms!" Upon being suppressed, Ning instantly changed his sword technique. He immediately executed 'Sword Roaming the Three Realms', which he had perfected while in closed-door training. Two streaks of dazzling sword-light flew out like a pair of black dragons that were swimming through the air. These two roaming black dragons twined around each other as they pounced towards the enemy.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Their respective sword-lights clashed out three times.

Suddenly, everything came to a halt.

The ninth golem and Ning had moved past each other while exchanging blows. Their backs were to each other, and the ninth golem was completely unmoving. As for Ning, he put away the Darknorth swords in his hands.

On the golem's chest, there was a wicked, savage-looking wound!

During their three clashes, Ning's sword had clearly been a slight bit faster. Although it was only faster by a small amount...it had been the deciding factor in this battle.

The ninth golem lowered his head to look at the wound. The wound on his chest disappeared in the blink of an eye.

"You win." The ninth golem turned, giving Ning a glance. "You beat me in our very first fight; you can now enter the ninth floor of the Divinities Palace."

"Jadesuffer, this is my junior apprentice-brother; it is only natural that he beat you." Silvermoon walked over.

"Junior apprentice-brother? The Old Patriarch took on a new disciple?" The ninth golem looked towards Ning in surprise.

“The more disciples who defeat you, the closer you are to freedom. You should be happy. Alright, time for you to go back to your place.” Silvermoon waved his hand, instantly collecting the ninth golem again.

“Junior apprentice-brother, congratulations.” Silvermoon smiled towards Ning. “Come, let’s go into the Divinities Palace.”

“Right.” Ning nodded. He immediately followed Silvermoon into the Divinities Palace.

The disciples of Mount Innerheart watched this all happen in a daze. They stared as Ning and Silvermoon entered the Divinities Palace.

“He won!”

“He actually won!”

“Patriarch Ji Ning defeated the ninth golem.”

“What a dominating sword-art...what a terrifying sword-art!”

“Uncle-master truly is a peerless Sword Immortal.”

All of them sighed in endless amazement.

“It has only been thirty years, right?”

“It has only been about thirty years since the Patriarch became the Old Patriarch’s disciple, right? Thirty years ago, the Patriarch was just barely able to defeat the fourth golem, but after thirty short years, he has actually defeated the ninth golem. I’ve been here on this mountain for nearly a million years!” A six-armed Fiendgod whose body was wreathed in dim flames muttered to himself, then shook his head and sighed. “You humans truly do have a ridiculous level of comprehension.”

“I’m a human and I’ve been on the mountain for a thousand years, but I haven’t beaten the ninth golem.”

“Not even Celestial Immortals are necessarily capable of defeating the ninth golem. Thirty years...no wonder the Old Patriarch chose him as a disciple.”

“The personal disciples of the Old Patriarch truly are all formidable.”

“Little sister Qing, can you ask the Patriarch to lecture to us on the Dao sometime?”

“Brother White, your master’s sword techniques are truly formidable. I have many questions with regards to the sword; can we have your master provide us with a few pointers sometime?”

Everyone was discussing what had just happened. Little Qing and Uncle White both felt their hearts filled with delight.

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After just thirty years, Ning had defeated the ninth golem. This caused all the ordinary disciples of Mount Innerheart to sigh in amazement at how inconceivable this was. However, for the personal disciples such as the old demon Silvermoon, this was as expected.

Ning and Silvermoon were walking up the stairs in the Divinities Palace, striding upon the wooden steps as they moved upwards.

“Junior apprentice-brother, for you to be able to defeat the ninth golem after thirty years is quite impressive,” Silvermoon laughed. “All of those ordinary disciples below us are completely shocked right now.”

“Eh.” Ning didn’t feel as though there was anything to be proud of. He had the guidance of his master, Patriarch Subhuti, as well help from the Stellar Hall of the underwater estate. He would often sit atop the bed of netherwater jade within the Still Room in the underwater estate, and constantly attune to the Dao within the Grand Bodhi Stillheart Formation. Thirty years? His original goal had always been to defeat the ninth golem within a few decades.

“Might I ask, how did my senior fellow disciples do? How many years did they spend in order to defeat the ninth golem?” Ning asked curiously.

“Amongst Master’s many personal disciples, your performance can be described as normal,” Silvermoon said with a laugh. “Ruling out the ones who were already extremely strong when they first followed Master...there have been a total of twelve who were very weak when they first followed Master. The fastest one took one year, while the slowest one took more than 13000 years.”

Ning was amazed. “The fastest one took one year? The slowest one took more than ten thousand?” A personal disciple of the Old Patriarch who had taken more than ten thousand the years...this was too ridiculous. And just a single year for the other? This was also too crazy!

“Master has a total of nineteen disciples. There were seven who were already extremely strong when they accepted him as their master, while there were twelve who accepted him as master when they were weak,” Silvermoon said. “Amongst them...ninth junior apprentice-brother had an exceedingly high level of comprehension. Back then, Master’s avatar was roaming the ancient Primordial World. He ran into ninth junior apprentice-brother, who at that time was nothing more than an ordinary child who loved to paint. Master just provided him with a single line of guidance...and ninth junior apprentice-brother transformed overnight from an ordinary child who had never before engaged in cultivation to the level of having completely mastered an entire Dao-Path, the Dao of Inkwater. He then followed Master to Mount Innerheart. After a year, he defeated the ninth golem.”

Ning blinked. To transform overnight from an ordinary child who loved painting...to someone who had completely mastered a complete Dao-Path?

To defeat the ninth golem after a single year?

“Next are third senior apprentice-brother and sixth junior apprentice-brother,” Silvermoon said. “Both of them only spent a few years to defeat the ninth golem, and when they first joined the school neither had engaged in any cultivation training. However...they have extraordinary heritages. Third senior apprentice-brother was blessed with tremendous luck when he was born, as he is a Golden Crow who was born on the Solar Star. As for sixth junior apprentice-brother, he is also incredible; he is a spirit-monkey who was born from one of the stones which Lady Nuwa used to repair the Heavens.” [1. The sixth person is obviously Sun Wukong/Monkey King, who was born from a holy rock and was also known as the ‘stone monkey’.]

Ning was startled. A spirit-monkey born from a stone that was used to repair the Heavens? This caused Ning to think back to a story recorded in a novel back from his own lesser world of Earth. [2. This 'story' is obviously Journey to the West.] He wondered if this so-called spirit-monkey was similar to the one mentioned in the story he had read.

“After those two are the ones who trained for dozens of years,” Silvermoon said. “In short...humans have extremely high levels of comprehension, while third senior apprentice-brother and sixth junior apprentice-brother were born as extraordinary living creatures who also had extremely high levels of comprehension.”

“All of the disciples under Master’s tutelage who defeated the ninth golem in under a century were humans and those with extraordinary lineages.”

“There are several who are monsters like me who are under Master’s tutelage. For example, I had to train for more than three thousand years before I defeated the ninth golem. There are some who were even slower than me. On the whole, monsters have a much lower level of comprehension than humans do.”

Ning nodded.

Monsters had poor levels of comprehension, and Fiendgods had it even worse! However, the heavens had made it up to them in other ways. Humans at the Zifu level had a lifespan of five centuries, while those at the Wanxiang levels had a lifespan of eight centuries. Monsters, however, were different. Xiantian-level Diremonsters were capable of living up to a thousand years, and Wanxiang-level Diremonsters were able to live more than ten thousand years. As for Fiendgods, their lifespans were even more ridiculous. Fiendgods were innately ageless, and they didn’t even have to worry about the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations. However, their levels of comprehension were pitifully low; it was possible for them to spend a trillion years without improving even a tiny bit.

“Truly, all of the senior fellow disciples under Master’s tutelage are extraordinary. Some were born incredible, while others met with incredible luck and destiny. I myself was only able to enter his tutelage due to having acquired the legacy of Daoist Threelives.” Ning understood that amongst his fellow disciples, he was quite ordinary.

Still, there was a difference between him and the others. He was the disciple of both Patriarch Subhuti and Daoist Threelives...and his divine ability, the [Starseizing Hand], was the ability which Daoist Threelives had relied on to dominate and roam the Primal World. Not even Patriarch Subhuti had ever created a divine ability on this level.

“The ninth floor.” Silvermoon reached the ninth floor, then said with a laugh, “After you choose a technique from this ninth floor, you can go to the Three Realms Palace! After you learn a single technique from the Three Realms Palace, if you can train in that technique to its limit, you’ll absolutely be able to roam the Three Realms fearlessly and become an awe-inspiringly famous figure.”

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[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 13: Tristar Crescent Abode Chapter 11: Houyi’s Archery

Ji Ning walked to the bookcase that only held sword-arts manuals, carefully flipping through the others. After confirming his decision, he then picked up the abridged version of the [Heavenraker].

“Senior apprentice-brother, I choose this one, [Heavenraker],” Ning said.

With the Heavenraker Swords in his hands, he would of course choose [Heavenraker].

“Fine.” Silvermoon nodded, then waved his hand. A series of thick tomes appeared within his hands; this was the full version of the [Heavenraker] technique which Daofather Heavenrake had created. Ning’s eyes immediately lit up as he accepted the tomes. As he opened them up, he couldn’t help but lose himself within their contents. Ning couldn’t be bothered to move around, and so he just sat down right there on the ninth floor of the Divinities Palace and began to analyze this sword-art.

.....

Summer left, winter came. A full year had passed.

During this past year, Ning didn’t immediately go to the Three Realms Palace. After all, it wasn’t as though the palace would run away. During this year, Ning defeated the ninth golem three more times, acquiring two more sword-arts manuals alongside the [Heavenraker]. These were all created by Daofathers, and were all some of the most supreme sword-arts of the Three Realms!

Ning carefully analyzed the techniques, gaining quite a bit from them. He mastered thirteen sword-stances in a row of the [Heavenraker]!

“It is time to go to the Three Realms Palace.”

It was already night, but Ning set out from his Immortal estate. Over the course of this past year, he had further perfected his [Three-Foot Sword], and his level of insight into the [Heavenraker] had already reached a very high point. It would be hard for him to improve significantly within a short period of time, and so he decided to go to the Three Realms Palace.

.....

The Three Realms Palace was an ordinary building that was just ten meters high...but it was the one of the most mysterious places in Mount Innerheart!

Ordinary disciples of Mount Innerheart could occasionally enter Patriarch Subhuti’s Daoist monastery and listen to him expound on the Dao, but they would never, ever have the chance to enter the Three Realms Palace. Almost every single person allowed into the Three Realms Palace was an extremely famous figure of the Three Realms.

Snoooooore.

A ringing, snoring sound rang out, occasionally high, occasionally low. Outside this palace was a skinny old man who was lying on the ground, his fan across his chest as he slept. When Ning had first arrived at Mount Innerheart, he had seen this old man sleeping. It had been thirty years, but Ning had never seen him wake up.

It was as though this old man would slumber for ten thousand years at a time!

“Second senior apprentice-brother,” Ning walked over, then called out respectfully.

After having lived here for a period of time, Ning now knew about this second senior apprentice-brother.

As Lord Jiang had said, “Of the many disciples which Master has accepted, his true heir is our second senior apprentice-brother! Second senior apprentice-brother trains in both the Dao and in Buddhism, and is a master of all techniques. He’s even the only one who has ever learned Master’s greatest divine ability, [Dream of the Three Realms]. I once asked Master to teach me this divine ability, but Master said that I cannot learn it. Of his students, only second senior apprentice-brother was able to learn it!”

Silvermoon had said something similar. “Don’t be fooled by the fact that second senior apprentice-brother is always there sleeping. In reality, his avatars are roaming throughout the Three Realms, leaving behind countless legacies. There are very few mysteries in the Three Realms which can deceive second senior apprentice-brother. As I see it, under Master’s tutelage, eldest senior apprentice-brother might be the most powerful, but the second most powerful is definitely second senior apprentice-brother!”

Patriarch Subhuti had also praised him. “Your second senior apprentice-brother has done countless good deeds and accumulated nigh-infinite amounts of karmic merit. He truly wishes to do good, and has been like this since the era of the Primordial World. His karmic luck has already reached an utterly inconceivable level. Both the Buddhists and the Daoists have invited him on multiple occasions to join them.” Even Patriarch Subhuti felt proud when mentioning his second disciple. Clearly, he was very satisfied with him!

After learning more about his second senior apprentice-brother, Ning also felt extreme admiration.

Because of the [Dream of the Three Realms], Ning’s second senior apprentice-brother’s avatar had visited almost all of the lesser worlds, and had left behind legacies in countless places. Thus, his name was extremely famous! Even in Ning’s own world of Earth, his second senior apprentice-brother’s reputation was as resounding as the thunder.

“Second senior apprentice-brother? Senior apprentice-brother Crazy Ji?” Ning called out. 1

“Who is calling my name?”

The skinny, napping old man rubbed his name, then opened his eyes languidly, seemingly to still be half-asleep. Beaming merrily, he said, “Oh, you are the disciple which Master just took in, that Ji Ning of the Grand Xia world?”

“Just so,” Ning immediately said.

Of the figures the Old Patriarch’s command, eldest senior apprentice-brother was unfathomably profound in power and without question the number one figure.

Second senior apprentice-brother’s reputation was known throughout the Three Realms, and he had accumulated tremendous karmic merits and had tremendous karmic luck. Both the Buddhists and the Daoists desired to take them into their leagues...but he continued to wander the Three Realms by himself, doing countless good deeds but belonging to neither the control of the Daofathers or of Lord Buddha.

“Master told me long ago that you would come, but I didn’t expect you to come so soon. Just thirty years after joining, you have already come to my Three Realms Palace.” Crazy Ji held that ragged fan in his hands as he nodded slightly. “Go in, then. You can choose from the divine abilities and secret arts inside as you please...but the Dao cannot be casually taught. You will have to pass some simple tests in order to learn them.”

“I understand,” Ning said. He had similarly had to pass some tests in order to acquire each of the sword-arts manuals he had chosen in the Divinities Palace.

.....

Crazy Ji watched as Ning entered the palace, a hint of light flashing through his half-asleep eyes. “This junior apprentice-brother...he has a pure and innocent heart, and is surrounded by karmic merit. And that sword-heart of his...ohoho, it really is not bad at all! But why has Master chosen him as a disciple?”

Crazy Ji understood Patriarch Subhuti more than anyone else, and he had learned more of Patriarch Subhuti’s abilities than anyone else as well.

When Patriarch Subhuti chose a disciple, he always had a reason for it; he wouldn’t just randomly pick someone. Perhaps the disciple was surrounded by tremendous karmic luck! Perhaps the disciple had an extraordinary heritage! Perhaps the disciple had an unearthly level of comprehension! There was always something!

“But it seems this junior apprentice-brother doesn’t fit any of the usual criteria. Can it be that there is a huge secret regarding him?” Crazy Ji smiled, then walked in as well. He was going to see what Ning would choose.

.....

Upon entering the building, Ning saw three tables scattered within it. These tables all had various abridged books placed in a casual manner atop of them. In total, there were only nineteen books. There were divine abilities, there were formations, there were secret arts...

“The complete [Torch Dragon’s Eye]?!” Ning immediately picked it up. Back in the world of the Grand Xia, Ning had only learned the first part of the technique. So the Three Divinities Palace had the full version!

He flipped the abridged version open. Atop the first page was listed a simple trial: “Go and clean the mountain paths of Mount Innerheart and you can learn this technique.”

“But but but...” Ning was speechless. “How can this be a trial?! And this is the same as for the techniques on the first level of the Divinities Palace!”

A supreme divine ability that could rank in the top hundred of the Three Realms...could actually be so easily learned? Just by cleaning the mountain paths? That wouldn’t even take half a day!

“It was Master who collected these divine abilities and secret arts in this Three Realms Palace,” Crazy Ji said as he walked in, a smile on his face. “He did this to teach them to his disciples. Naturally, he wouldn’t make the trials too hard.”

“But...this is still too easy. Even the trials for the seventh and eighth floors of the Divinities Palace are far more difficult than this,” Ning said.

“It is true that the ‘test’ for this [Torch Dragon’s Eye] is a bit too simple,” Crazy Ji agreed. “However, the Torch Dragon died a long, long time ago, after all. After he died, quite a few of the Daofathers acquired this divine ability! This is the first reason why the test is so simple. The second reason is that the [Torch Dragon’s Eye] is best-suited for Fiendgods like the Torch Dragon to train in. As for other living creatures...to this very day, I’ve never heard of anyone who could reach a level of power in the [Torch Dragon’s Eye] that the Torch Dragon had.”

Ning now understood. This technique was not only difficult to train in, it was also fairly common amongst the various Daofathers, and so the ‘trial’ was made a simple one.

“This is the easiest of all trials,” Crazy Ji said. “Junior apprentice-brother, keep looking at the others carefully. There are some truly supreme techniques here...and in fact, there are some that are unique in the Three Realms, to be found nowhere else.”

Ning immediately began to look carefully at the others.

Soon...

Another manual suddenly caught his attention. The words atop the manual caused Ning’s pupils to contract. The words were: [Houyi’s Archery].

“Houyi?” Ning had naturally heard of this major power before. He immediately picked up the copy of [Houyi’s Archery] and started to flip through it.

The name of this technique was very simple...but [Houyi’s Archery] was indeed an incredibly powerful divine ability! In fact, it was even more powerful than the [Torch Dragon’s Eye].

“Ever since Pangu established the universe, this divine ability has always been ranked in the top ten,” Crazy Ji said. “This was created by True God Houyi, who used it to roam and dominate the Primordial World. However...the trial to acquire it is also the most difficult trial here in the Three Realms Palace!”

“Master actually has the main divine ability of Houyi?” Ning was astonished. This was ranked in the top ten! That meant it was on the same level as Ning’s own [Starseizing Hand]?! Not even Patriarch Subhuti had ever developed a divine ability on this level.

“This trial truly is difficult.” Ning immediately frowned upon seeing it. This trial was indeed the hardest of the nineteen trials here in the Three Realms Palace. Ning then looked at the contents of the abridged book. “So this is what [Houyi’s Archery] is all about...”

Ning immediately understood. Although [Houyi’s Archery] and the [Starseizing Hand] both ranked amongst the top ten divine abilities of the Three Realms, they were diametrically different.

The [Starseizing Hand] was used to make one’s hands even more terrifyingly powerful than magic items. By the Second Cycle, one’s hands would already be comparable to Immortal-ranked magic treasures. By the Third Cycle, they would be comparable to Pure Yang magic treasures! The raw power and strength of the [Starseizing Hand] was utterly astonishing!

But [Houyi’s Archery] was a skill-type ability!

It was just like the [Windwing Evasion], in that it was a matter of skill and finesse. It required enlightenment and it required slow comprehension. Although it did include some clever ways to use divine power...it was more about skill and technique! Even Ki Refiners were capable of learning [Houyi's Archery], so long as they could comprehend the mysteries within it.

"It is much simpler to train in the [Starseizing Hand]; all I need to do is procure enough Five Elements essence, and my hands can become even more terrifyingly powerful, to the point where in the future I will even be able to crush stars with my hands," Ning mused to himself. "But this [Houyi's Archery]...it requires enlightenment!"

They truly were completely different. As a result, [Houyi's Archery] was extremely hard to train in. To this very day, aside from Houyi who had dominated the Primordial World with this divine ability, there had never been any other individuals who had been able to completely master this divine ability.

"Don't read it," Crazy Ji said, shaking his head. "Quite a few of Master's disciples have chosen this archery technique, but most of them were only able to gain a basic understanding of it. None of them have reached the level which the primordial Houyi once did. Go look at the other techniques first...and in the future, when you have some more free time, you can try and learn [Houyi's Archery]."

"Alright." Ning nodded.

No matter what...this simple archery technique was still ranked in the top ten of the divine abilities created since Pangu established the universe! He had to learn it sometime! But of course, there was no rush.

Ning immediately began to read through the other tomes...and suddenly, yet another technique caused his eyes to light up. The words written atop this abridged tome were: [Eight-Nine Arcane Art].

1. This person is Ji Gong, aka Daoji, aka Li Xiuyuan. He was an eccentric monk that lived 800+ years ago that was famous for being extremely kind, seeming to have magic powers, but lived a life in violation of Buddhist rules due to eating meat and drinking wine. He is an incredibly famous semi-mythological figure in China that everyone has heard of. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ji_Gong

2. As explained long ago, Houyi is a mythological Chinese archer and an incredibly famous god. According to Chinese legend, long ago there were ten suns that baked the Earth and nearly killed everyone. Houyi ended up shooting down nine of the suns, sparing only the last one. He was acclaimed by mankind as a hero, but was punished by the heavens because the suns were the sons of a powerful God, and was later banished from the heavens. He was also the husband of Chang'e, who later became the goddess of the moon. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Houyi>

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 13: Tristar Crescent Abode Chapter 12: The Choice Within the Three Realms Palace

"The [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] is the number one divine ability in the Three Realms for those below the True God level." This line of characters on the abridged version instantly drew Ji Ning's attention.

Number one in the three realms?

Ning had never before heard anyone bold enough to claim that a particular divine ability was number one in the Three Realms. This claim couldn't even be made regarding the [Starseizing Hand] or [Houyi's

Archery]. But this [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] actually dared to claim itself the number one divine ability in the Three Realms for those below the True God level!”

“The [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], also known as the [Nine Cycles Arcane Art] or the [Seventy-Two Transformations]1. This divine ability allows one to completely and perfectly control one’s Fiendgod body. A basic level of skill in this art allows one to transform into anything in the world; this is why this divine ability is also referred to as the [Seventy-Two Transformations].”

Ning understood that this didn’t mean that the technique was really just limited to seventy-two transformations; rather, ‘seventy-two’ was another way of referring to the original name of ‘Eight-Nine’. It was a figurative number!

“This divine ability allows one’s divine body to become akin to a magic treasure, to the point of being like an unbreakable vajra! At its peak of power, the user can allow Pure Yang magic treasures or even supreme Protocosmic spirit-treasures to chop against the user’s body. At most, there might be a few sparks; the body itself won’t be harmed at all!”

Ning’s gaze turned heated as he read. Even Pure Yang magic treasures and Protocosmic magic treasures would only be able to cause a few sparks to fly? This was insane!

“This divine ability places tremendous stress on the body. Thus, only Fiendgod Body Refiners can train in it. You have to at least have reached the Primal level as a Fiendgod before you can train in the First Cycle.”

“At the Primal level, you can train in the First, Second, and Third Cycles.”

“At the Void level, you can train in the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Cycles.”

“At the Empyrean God level, you train in the Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Cycle.”

“Once the Third Cycle is mastered, then the body will be comparable to an Immortal-ranked magic treasure! Even ordinary Celestial Immortals would find it difficult to wound you.”

“Once the Sixth Cycle is mastered, then the body will be comparable to a Pure Yang magic treasure! By relying on it, one can become truly famous in the Three Realms!”

“Once the Ninth Cycle is mastered, the body will be comparable to the most supreme of Pure Yang magic treasures, comparable to a Protocosmic spirit-treasure! It can truly be described as an unbreakable vajra at that point, and one can truly roam about the Three Realms without fear. Aside from major powers, no one can harm you at all. Even major powers will have to use special techniques in order to break your vajra-like body.”

The description on the manual caused Ning to pant in excitement. This was far too formidable. Manmade magic treasures were divided into Mortal-rank, Earth-rank, Heaven-rank, Immortal-rank, and Pure Yang rank, with the Pure Yang rank being the limit. Above Pure Yang magic treasures were Protocosmic spirit-treasures!

Protocosmic spirit-treasures were born from the natural universe itself. However, this didn’t necessarily mean that all Protocosmic spirit-treasures were superior to all Pure Yang magic treasures. After all, amongst manmade Pure Yang magic treasures, there were treasures which truly possessed insane levels

of power. In fact, some were created by fusing the extracted essence of multiple Protocosmic spirit-treasures, such as the Starseizing Manor itself, which had used quite a few Protocosmic spirit-treasures in the forging!

Thus, there were grades of Protocosmic spirit-treasures as well. They were also divided into low-grade, middle-grade, high-grade, and top-grade.

Supreme Pure Yang treasures were generally comparable to middle-grade Protocosmic spirit-treasures!

Ning couldn't help but sigh in amazement. "Protocosmic treasures!" To make one's body comparable to a Protocosmic spirit-treasure! No wonder one's body could be described as unbreakable as a vajra, and why even major powers of the Three Realms would have to use special methods in order to break past this divine ability.

Whoosh! Ning continued to flip through the pages and read.

"This divine ability was jointly developed by the spiritual leaders of both Buddhism and Daoism, who wished to create a divine body that was comparable to that of the great Pangu's."

"Per the predictions of the spiritual leaders of Buddhism and Daoism, this arcane art should have a total of Twelve Cycles."

"The first three were for the Primal level; the next three were for the Void-level, and the Seventh to Ninth Cycles were for the Empyrean God level, while True Gods would train in the Tenth to Twelve Cycles. The True Gods of the Three Realms, when using this divine ability, should theoretically have divine bodies that were comparable to Pangu's. Unfortunately, although their predictions were idealistic, despite spending countless amounts of effort and time on this technique, they were still unable to come up with anything past the Ninth Cycle..."

"And so, this divine ability only has Nine Cycles!"

Upon seeing the description within the tome, Ning couldn't help but sigh in amazement yet again. So the [Seventy-Two Transformations] had such an illustrious history. It had been jointly developed by the spiritual leaders of Buddhism and Daoism!

"Pangu...the same Pangu who established the universe?" Ning sighed in amazement. If one could use a divine ability to strengthen one's body to Pangu's level, that would be utterly insane. However...even the most supreme of experts in the Three Realms were only able to develop a total of nine of these Cycles. Mm...it truly can be described as the number one divine ability in the Three Realms for those below the True God level." Ning couldn't help but nod to himself.

It lived up to its reputation!

.....

After reading the description, Ning noticed that the [Seventy-Two Transformations] was quite similar to his own [Starseizing Hand].

The Second Cycle of the [Starseizing Hand] made one's hands comparable to Immortal-ranked magic treasures.

The Third Cycle, Pure Yang magic treasures.

The Fourth Cycle, supreme Pure Yang magic treasures or middle-grade Protocosmic spirit-treasures.

The Fifth Cycle, supreme Protocosmic spirit-treasures.

The Sixth Cycle...it allowed a pair of hands to effortlessly seize and crush stars! One truly could use one's bare hands to annihilate an entire world. As far as the major powers of the Three Realms were concerned, the reason why Daoist Threelives had become so famous and powerful was only because he had managed to develop the Sixth Cycle of his [Starseizing Hand]; only then had he been able to kill so many Fiendgod Daofathers during that great tribulation!

"My [Starseizing Hand] only focuses on a pair of hands, while the [Seventy-Two Transformations] trains the entire body." Ning realized what the difference was.

Because the [Seventy-Two Transformations] was only designed for the Empyrean God level, it could only be described as the number one divine ability in the Three Realms for those below the True God level.

The [Starseizing Hand], however, had a level meant for True Gods. Thus, it could be described as one of the top ten divine abilities in the Three Realms.

After reading this [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] tome, Ning set it aside and began to flip through the other books.

[Xingtian's World-Destroying Axe] 2

This was an axe-technique developed by one of the major powers of the Three Realms known as Xingtian, the Castigator of Heaven. However, it was ranked as a divine ability, because just like [Houyi's Archery], it largely involved profound and arcane ways to apply divine power. This complicated way of applying divine power, when matched with the axe technique, would produce the true power of [Xingtian's World-Destroying Axe]!

This divine ability was ranked as one of the top hundred in the Three Realms.

.....

[Vairocana Guardian Halo].

This was a protective divine ability developed by the spiritual leader of Buddhism, Lord Buddha. It was extremely powerful, and at the True God level it was even slightly more powerful than the [Seventy-Two Transformations]. However, the [Seventy-Two Transformations] required a large amount of magic artifacts, and so the number of people who had ever trained in the [Seventy-Two Transformations] all the way to the Ninth Cycle was very low. Although at the same level, this [Vairocana Guardian Halo] was a bit weaker in power, it didn't require as many magic treasures; one only need to focus on comprehending and mastering it.

.....

[Thundergod's Eye].

This divine ability attracted Ning's attention as well. This was because Ning had previously trained in the [Divine Thunderbolt Eye], which was a simplified version of the [Thundergod's Eye]. Upon training in the [Thundergod's Eye], when the user unleashed the eye, it could be used to see even the ghosts in the Netherworld Kingdom. Nothing could escape the gaze of this divine eye, and when mastered to an extremely high level, one could unleash 'Divine Lightning of the Violet Skies'. Not even someone with an unbreakable, vajra-like body would dare to take a blow from this divine lightning!

But of course...just like the other supreme divine abilities, to train in this one to the point of unleashing the 'Divine Lightning of the Violet Skies' was harder than hard.

.....

[Buddha-Realm Within the Palm].

This was a truly powerful divine ability of Buddhism, which could be trained all the way up to the True God level. If one mastered it, then an entire major world could be stored on one's palm! When one struck out with one's palm, one would be striking out with the entire power of a major world. If any enemy were to land atop the massive palm, even if they flew for an extremely long time, they would still find it difficult to fly out from this palm. 3

This was because the palm itself was the size of an entire major world!

But of course, compared to the [Starseizing Hand], it was still a bit weaker. The [Starseizing Hand], when trained to its limit, could effortlessly annihilate an entire major world.

.....

[Heavenslayer Sword Formation].

This was a true sword-formation technique. The [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] was also a true sword-formation technique, but compared to this [Heavenslayer Sword Formation], it was much weaker. The [Heavenslayer Sword Formation] was incredibly complicated, and it required the forging of a Heavenslayer sword-diagram, as well as a total of eighty-one Immortal swords...but it was extremely powerful, ranked as one of the supreme skills of the Three Realms. However...only someone with the power of a Daofather could produce the required sword-diagram.

.....

Ning's gaze burned hotter and hotter as he continued to read.

There were a total of nine divine abilities: [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], [Houyi's Archery], [Xingtian's World-Destroying Axe], [Vairocana Guardian Halo], [Thundergod's Eye], [Buddha-Realm Within the Palm], [Torch Dragon's Eye], and two more.

There were also a total of ten secret arts, formations, and other varied techniques.

"Eh? There are actually no manuals focused exclusively on sword-arts, saber-arts, archery, axecraft..." Ning was surprised by this. For example, [Houyi's Archery] wasn't purely archery; it also included a very complicated way of activating and transforming divine power. This was why [Houyi's Archery] was considered a divine ability! The same was true for [Xingtian's World-Destroying Axe].

If the unique methods of employing divine power were stripped from these divine abilities, then [Houyi's Archery] and [Xingtian's World-Destroying Axe] would most likely only be placed on the ninth level of the Divinities Palace.

Crazy Ji beamed merrily as he watched. He could tell that Ning had been completely captivated by these techniques.

There were five techniques Ning wanted: [Buddha-Realm Within the Palm], [Thundergod's Eye], [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], [Houyi's Archery], and [Torch Dragon's Eye]!

For one's palm to be able to encompass an entire major world, a major world that completely belonged to him and him alone...how could Ning not feel desire for this technique?

[Thundergod's Eye]...Ning had long ago started to train in the elementary version of this divine ability.

The [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] was even critical! After all, the path of Immortal cultivation was a difficult and dangerous one. To reach the Empyrean God level meant that one would be comparable to figures like Lu Dongbin and be an expert of the Three Realms. It was far too difficult to reach the True God level and become a major power like Daoist Threelives.

Thus, this number one divine ability for those below the True God level, this [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], was absolutely necessary.

"Junior apprentice-brother," Crazy Ji said.

"Second senior apprentice-brother." Ning turned to look at him.

"Are you aware that you are not permitted to simply learn as many techniques within the Three Realms Palace as you please? Every single fellow disciple is limited to just a few," Crazy Ji said.

"I know." Ning nodded. "Silvermoon and Lord Jiang both spoke to me of this."

Generally speaking, each person could only learn two or three divine abilities or secret arts from the Three Realms Palace before Patriarch Subhuti would forbid them from learning more!

"Right. To be greedy is unwise!" Crazy Ji nodded. "Any one of these techniques, when trained to the peak, will allow you to roam and dominate the Three Realms. Even the seemingly unremarkable [Thundergod's Eye], when trained to the limit, will allow you to control 'Divine Lightning of the Violet Skies'. Thus, if you are too greedy, the end result will be that you will be unable to train any technique to its limit and end up an ordinary figure. If you focus on training in one, however, you will be able to train to the limit and dominate the Three Realms."

Ning nodded. He understood this principle.

Ning pondered for a time...then picked up an abridged version. "This is my choice from the Three Realms Palace." This book was of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]!

The number one technique for those below the True God level. Ning had to choose it!

Crazy Ji laughed and nodded. "Alright. Look at the trial first."

“Right.” Ning immediately flipped to the first page of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], carefully looking at the trial details. Ning immediately frowned upon doing so. This trial was many times more difficult than the trial for the [Torch Dragon’s Eye]; after all, that trial was just to sweep the mountain paths.

1. The Seventy-Two Transformations is the name of the legendary ability which Sun Wukong learned from Patriarch Subhuti and which made him into the badass that he was.
2. Xingtian is one of the early gods in Chinese mythology. He was decapitated by the Yellow Emperor, the legendary forefather of the Chinese race, but he remained alive and continue to fight with axe and shield, transforming his nipples into eyes and his navel into his mouth – seriously.
3. This is yet another reference to Journey to the West and Sun Wukong; when fighting with Lord Buddha, Sun Wukong and Buddha made a bet where Buddha bet him that Sun Wukong would be unable to jump out from his already quite large-looking palm in a single leap. Sun Wukong, capable of leaping 108,000 kilometers in a single bound, accepted the bet...and lost. Buddha then transformed his massive hand into a mountain, trapping Sun Wukong beneath it until his future master, the Tang Monk, came to rescue him.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 13: Tristar Crescent Abode Chapter 13: Void-Level

The trial was explained in just two simple lines of words:

Go and take on a disciple of great karmic virtue, surrounded by at least three hundred meters of golden karmic light.

Go and kill ten Earth Immortals or Loose Immortals who have committed great sins, surrounded by at least three hundred meters of bloody sin light.

“This...” Ning frowned.

To take on a disciple? To go kill?

Someone who had accumulated so much karmic virtue as to be surrounded by three hundred meters of golden karmic light was far too rare. Generally speaking, such individuals would have tremendously good luck, and so they would have joined a school long ago, and most likely a major school at that. After all, the larger a clan or sect, the more they would desire to take on a disciple with that much karmic virtue. This would bring the entire sect fortune!

Was he supposed to steal a disciple from someone else?

As for killing someone...the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations which Earth Immortals and Loose Immortals had to face were of frightening power. The more sin one had accumulated, the greater the power of the calamities and tribulations. Thus, most Earth Immortals and Loose Immortals would limit the amount of sin they would accumulate; they wouldn’t dare act in excessively sinful ways, and would in fact try to do good as much as they could. Only truly fiendishly demonic figures who truly had formidable Dao-hearts and unearthly levels of power would dare engage in wanton slaughter and draw countless amounts of sin to them! This type of Earth Immortal or Loose Immortal definitely wasn’t easy to deal with.

And he didn't have to just kill one...he had to kill ten!

"Taking on a disciple and killing others...second senior apprentice-brother..." Ning looked towards Crazy Ji.

"To take on a person with great karmic virtue as a disciple and to teach that person is in and of itself an act of karmic virtue. Killing great sinners, in turn, is also an act of karmic virtue. Both of these things are good for you." Crazy Ji nodded. "Although it might take a bit of time...there's no need for you to rush. Go down into the world and spend some time searching. If you haven't succeeded in one year, then go ahead and take ten."

Ning nodded. "The so-called going 'down into the world'...where am I supposed to go? The three thousand major worlds and the trillion minor worlds?"

"You haven't left Master's tutelage; you are not permitted to leave this estate-world," Crazy Ji said. "The so-called going 'down into the world' refers to this estate-world itself. It is absolutely not inferior to a major world in any way. You can spend a million years wandering it without seeing everything within."

"Alright." Ning immediately said, "Thank you for your guidance, second senior apprentice-brother. I'm going to leave now."

"Go ahead." Crazy Ji waved his fan.

.....

Ning didn't immediately go into the rest of the estate-world; first, he returned to his own Immortal estate.

Within the Still Room in the underwater estate.

Rumble...the stone door swung shut.

Ning sat in the lotus position atop the netherwater jade bed, his heart quickly calming down. The excitement he had felt upon previously seeing so many divine abilities in the Three Realms Palace gradually dissipated. After he was completely calm, Ning began to ponder.

"Although there are many divine abilities and secret arts in the world, it is true that one should focus on a few. If you learn many of them but are unable to focus on them, there's no point." Ning calmly reflected on each divine ability and secret art he had learned.

"Learning the [Vairocana Guardian Halo] is a waste of time; it is of very little help to me. Although the [Buddha-Realm Within the Palm] technique is quite powerful, I already have the [Starseizing Hand]; training in that divine ability won't increase my power by much." Ning quickly began to mentally discard one divine ability after another as he focused on which techniques were worth his energy and which ones would bring the maximum amount of power to him.

"There are two I must train in."

"The first is the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]. Once I train in it, my body will be as unbreakable as a vajra, just like a magic treasure. I won't need to waste any divine power; most divine abilities require divine power to be used, such as my [Starseizing Hand], which uses up a shocking amount of it. The Nine Cycles of the

[Eight-Nine Arcane Art], however, causes the body itself to be made as hard as a vajra. The fact that this does not consume divine power in battle is a tremendous advantage! I can just stand there, and my foes will be unable to do anything to me.”

Ning mentally discarded all of the other techniques within the Three Realms Palace.

The [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] focused on defense! It made the body as unbreakable as a vajra, and it didn't use up any divine power.

[Houyi's Archery] focused on long range combat! It was one of the top ten divine abilities of the Three Realms.

The [Starseizing Hand] focused on close combat! It was also one of the top ten divine abilities of the Three Realms.

“Defense, long range combat, close combat...that's enough.” Ning nodded gently. “If Master permits it, I will also choose the [Torch Dragon's Eye].”

The [Torch Dragon's Eye] was neither defense, nor long range combat, nor close combat; it was an extremely powerful support technique! And not only was it able to provide support skills, it was also a divine ability with an extremely simple 'trial'; to simply clean the mountain roads a single time. However, Ning didn't dare choose it just yet. After all, no one could say how many techniques Patriarch Subhuti would choose from the Three Realms Palace.

If Ning were to choose the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] and the [Torch Dragon's Eye] and the Old Patriarch then forbade him from choosing any more, he would feel miserable.

First, the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]. Then, [Houyi's Archery]. Lastly, if possible, [Torch Dragon's Eye].

“But why is it that the Three Realms Palace doesn't have a single evasive divine ability?” Ning furrowed his brows. The Windwing Evasion was just the simplified version of the divine ability [Garuda's Wings]; after having spent thirty years at Mount Innerheart, he now felt that the Windwing Evasion was far too weak and wasn't suitable for him to use at all.

He had already completely mastered the Windwing Evasion, but the technique itself was far too low-level.

“When I next see Master, I'll ask him to provide me guidance and teach me an evasive divine ability,” Ning mused to himself. “If there are no other options...then I'll go find one in the Divinities Palace.”

The Divinities Palace had quite a few divine abilities. Ning had completely focused on studying sword-arts, and hadn't chosen a single other type of manual from the Divinities Palace. He had wanted to choose his other techniques from the Three Realms Palace, but who would've expected that the Three Realms Palace wouldn't even have one evasive technique? He would first go ask his master; if his master wasn't able to provide him with one, then he would go to the Divinities Palace to find an evasive divine ability. Although those techniques were fairly average amongst the upper tiers of the Three Realms, they were still hundreds to thousands of times better than the likes of the Windwing Evasion.

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“Whew.” Ning seated himself atop the netherwater jade bed, a mist arising around his body. The mist condensed into a figure; it was the black-robed Ji Ning. Ning’s Primaltwin!

“It is time for my Primaltwin to become a Void-level Earth Immortal.”

During the past thirty-one years at Mount Innerheart, Ning’s Primaltwin had remained at the peak Primal stage. The reason he didn’t advance further was because his master, Patriarch Subhuti, had warned Ning: “Ji Ning, I know that you acquired five million kilograms of liquefied elemental essence during the Conclave of Immortal Destiny, but you should not be in a hurry to make your Primaltwin break through to the next level. Your Primaltwin was formed from the Sole-Ki of Primalwater, and has an extremely high level of aptitude for understanding the element of Water. Even though both are at the Primal level, there is a difference between your true body and your Primaltwin in terms of how fast you will comprehend Water. Thus, you should have your Primaltwin remain at the Primal level for at least ten years.”

“Understood.” Ning had immediately acknowledged his master’s orders back then.

And indeed, it had been as his master had said; the Primaltwin’s aptitude for Water was quite incredible. Aside from the Dao of the Sword, Ning’s current highest level of attainment was in Water. Water far surpassed Fire...and the weakest were Wind and the Grand Dao of Qiankun!

Because he saw the aforementioned advantages, and because there were no fights on Mount Innerheart whatsoever, Ning had never been in a rush to make any breakthroughs. He wanted to let his Primaltwin remain at the Primal level for as long as possible. His master had said ten years, but Ning had spent more than thirty years at this level. But now, he was going to leave the mountain and go kill enemies.

He wasn’t going out to kill ordinary Loose Immortals or Earth Immortals; he was going to kill figures who were surrounded by sin, going to kill terrifying, demonic figures that were surrounded by three hundred meters of bloody sin light. Ning naturally was going to make ample preparations, and thus he was going to have his Primaltwin advance to the Void level.

Actually, during these past thirty-one years, the Primaltwin had also been training in the [Darknorth Sutra]. However, since this sutra was created by a Daofather of the Great Firmament, the Primaltwin remained at the peak Primal level and had not reached its limit, despite having painstakingly trained for all these years! If it had still been training in the [Flowing Watersource] of the Black-White College, most likely thirty or so years after reaching the Primal level it would have been time for a breakthrough to the Void-level and to become an Earth Immortal.

Given that Ning was training in the even more profound [Darknorth Sutra], if he had slowly cultivated as he had planned without using any spirit-pills or liquefied elemental essence, he would’ve had to spend at least eighty or ninety years before training to the early Void level.

Swoosh.

A jade bottle flew out, landing in front of Ning. The bottle’s stopper opened on its own.

“Fortunately, I have five million kilograms.” The Primaltwin Ning willed it, and with a swoosh, a flood of liquefied elemental essence flew out from the jade bottle. The mouth of the bottle was only as thick as a

finger, but as the essence flew into the air the stream became more than thirty meters thick. It flew straight towards the Primaltwin Ning, then formed into a vortex around him.

The essence vortex swirled into Ning, then disappeared.

Within the Sole-Ki Pearl of Primalwater inside the Primaltwin Ning's body, a blurry void of a Zifu region could be seen. Within this void, there was a sea of elemental ki which had an enormous Turtle-Snake within it. On the back of the Turtle-Snake, flames could be seen blazing. These flames were Primal Fire!

Rumble...

The Zifu sea began to surge and swell as refined elemental essence began to surge to the 'skies' above them. The countless stars in the sky shone down with rays of light, all centered upon the giant Turtle-Snake. The Primal Fire on the Turtle-Snake's back instantly and dramatically expanded!

Crackle...

The Primal Fire roared and blazed, causing the Turtle-Snake to begin hiss and screech.

Fifty thousand kilograms. A hundred thousand kilograms. A hundred and fifty thousand kilograms...more and more of the liquefied elemental essence was absorbed, and as Ning's level of power began to rise, his rate of absorption began to rise as well. The Primal Fire began to blaze with greater and greater fury.

A long time later...

WHOOSH.

It was like a planted seed suddenly sprouting up beyond the dirt. From within the blazing, heaven-towering flames on the back of the Turtle-Snake, a single, slender, delicate golden lotus emerged from the cracked turtle shell.

The turtle shell was like the soil. The Primal Fire was like the sunlight and water. The golden lotus slowly grew out and grew larger.

This golden lotus was extremely small; compared to the heaven-towering flames on the back of the massive Turtle-Snake, it was extremely unremarkable. However, elemental ki of unbelievable purity swirled arounded the golden lotus, far surpassing the purity of the elemental ki Ning had in the past. Then, the entire Turtle-Snake began to grow dim as large amounts of its essence began to flow towards the golden lotus, causing the lotus to continuously grow larger and larger. As it continued to grow, the luster of the shell of the Turtle-Snake began to disappear as it grew dark.

"The early Void level." Ning's Primaltwin soul had advanced from the Primal Turtle-Snake to the 'Goldlotus' level.

Earth Immortals and Loose Immortals all had Goldlotus souls for their Primal soul!

If one wished to become a carefree, unbound Immortal, one had to plant the seeds of the Goldlotus within the flames!

"Continue!" The Primaltwin Ning was like a black hole, absorbing as much liquefied elemental essence as there was on offer. Only after a long time did he stop.

The Primaltwin Ning pointed towards the distance. Instantly, the jade bottle on the ground became stoppered up again.

“The amount of liquefied elemental ki needed to train in the [Darknorth Sutra] is absolutely astonishing. However, my elemental ki is now up to two levels more pure than that of an ordinary Earth Immortal.” Ning didn’t feel sorry for how much he had used up. “I used a total of 2.5 million kilograms of liquefied elemental essence in training from the peak Primal stage to the late Void stage! Around two million kilograms remain in this jade bottle of mine. Right...I should leave it for Uncle White and Little Qing.”

The reason why he had halted at the late Void stage was because upon reaching the peak of the Void stage, the Celestial Tribulation would be impending.

“Time to go down into the world.”

Rumble...

The door to the Still Room slid open, and Ning’s true body walked out.