

## Desolate 421

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### Book 14: Return to the Grand Xia Chapter 18: The Ba-Serpent and Ji Ning

“A Ba-Serpent?”

“Ning, son!”

Immortal Fivecraze and Uncle White were both shocked, especially Uncle White, who knew exactly how powerful Ji Ning had become. And yet, even he had been unable to resist that devouring force, and he had been swallowed by the Ba-Serpent in one gulp!

Although Ning’s Primaltwin was safe, they all knew that in terms of long-term potential, the true body was far superior to the Primaltwin; after all, the Primaltwin was merely a Ki Refiner, and so it was much weaker comparatively.

“What a terrifying Ba-Serpent!” The Scion of the Blood God, located within the cabin of the small black warship, was able to see what was going on outside. The heaven-shaking Ba-Serpent in particular caused him to feel completely stunned. “The power of this Ba-Serpent...its aura is even more powerful than that of that old bastard Hunchmont. Why has a force suddenly emerged to act against Ji Ning? Is this a force that comes from outside the world of the Grand Xia?”

The Scion knew his own limits; clearly, these twelve white-robed figures that had suddenly appeared out of nowhere were far more powerful than him! That Ba-Serpent alone...it was capable of suppressing Celestial Immortal Patriarchs!

“A peerless genius of this generation, Ji Ning, has most likely just perished,” the Scion murmured to himself. “Hmph. Hmph. It’s for the best. Now, I shall let your master join with you.”

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As the Scion of the Blood God began to charge towards the grand sealing formation. Within the ‘body’ of the Ba-Serpent.

Whoosh. An incomparably ferocious devouring force, one which Ning was completely unable to fight back against, had drawn Ning into the giant bloody maw of the serpent.

After being swallowed...the entire world turned dark. Ning just felt that he was constantly sinking downwards...

“Transform.” As he began to sink, Ning immediately executed the [Three Heads, Six Arms] divine ability. Six Immortal swords appeared within his hands as well; they were the Thousandbull Sword, three of his Darknorth swords, and two of the Wavebreaker Godshark Swords! This was primarily because Ning no longer had other Immortal-ranked flying swords on him; the Wavebreaker Godshark swords were top-grade Heaven-ranked flying swords he had acquired from the Treasure Hall of the underwater estate, and so they weren’t that much weaker than low-grade Immortal-ranked flying swords.

“Hahaha, Ji Ning, now that you’ve entered the body of the Ba-Serpent, you are dead for certain.” A wild laughter could suddenly be heard.

“Hahaha, you are dead.”

“Stop struggling.”

“Even Celestial Immortals will perish in here.”

Voices rang out from every direction. At the same time, quite close to Ning, a long awl suddenly shot out from a meaty ‘wall’. The awl flashed with a sinister light and moved lightning-fast. It even manifested the faint illusion of an azure hornet as it stabbed towards Ning.

Clang!!!

One of Ning’s six arms which wielded a Darknorth sword knocked the awl flying away.

Immediately afterwards, other types of magic treasures and secret arts attacks began to fly towards Ning from every which way. Because Ning was within the body of the Ba-Serpent, and the attacks were suddenly coming from the fleshly ‘walls’ within the body as well as the bones of the serpent, the attacks came from a very short distance, repeatedly catching him off guard. This caused Ning to find things quite difficult for now.

“Waters of Heaven!” Ning’s six swords struck out simultaneously, and illusions of water streams began to appear, one after another. A large amount of water began to swirl around Ning, causing the world around him to seem to change into a world of water.

This technique also came from the ninth floor of the Divinities Palace, and it was also created by a Daofather. This was a sword-art on par with the [Heavenraker] – the [Waters of Heaven]!

[Heavenraker] was well-suited for group attacks, and also against single-target foes.

[Waters of Heaven] was most suited for defense.

“No, I won’t be able to block this way.” Ning found defense to be incredibly difficult. As the saying went, two fists found it hard to fight against many hands. Although Ning currently had six arms, he was facing twelve opponents right now! The opponents each controlled many magic treasures, and every single attack was quite fearsome. The fact that the attacks were launched from such close range also made it so that Ning had very little reaction time.

“It seems I’ll have to rely on the Thousandbull Sword.”

Ning had been wanting to keep this supreme technique of the Thousandbull Sword hidden, so as to suddenly annihilate all his enemies in a surprise attack. However...these wild, chaotic attacks from his foes were already enough to force him to unleash this attack, an attack which Ning’s true body had only grown capable of unleashing after reaching the late Void-level.

“Primordial Nightriver...emerge!”

Savagery filled Ning’s eyes, and the pure, late Void-level elemental ki within his body flowed into the Thousandbull Sword, completely activate the formation-diagram within the sword! Instantly, the sound of waves could be heard as an enormous, wide river suddenly appeared in the area surrounding him. When the river appeared, part of it manifested within the body of the Ba-Serpent, while part of it manifested outside of the body!

This was because the entire Nightriver was fully ten thousand kilometers long!

Activating the Nightriver effect required a very high amount of elemental ki...but its might was similarly powerful to the extreme.

Rumble...

The waves of the river bellowed forth, sweeping across the entire region. The twelve white-robed members that made up squad 'Earthnine', hidden deep within the body of the Ba-Serpent, were all shocked. As the waters of the primordial river known as the Nightriver crushed upon them, and as the river water outside the body of the Ba-Serpent ground down upon it, their Ba-Serpent Formation began to creak and crack.

"Don't panic. This is the power of a formation-diagram of an Immortal sword; it only has the power to constrict and suppress. A single formation-diagram won't be able to do anything to the Ba-Serpent!" The leading white-haired man immediately sent mentally to the others.

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The outside world.

The Scion of the Blood God had been trapped within the formation. Although he could see the distant Immortal Diancai and Whitewater Hound, he wasn't able to draw any closer to them!"

"That whitewater hound is merely using the Fuxi Staff Formation; how is it that his formations are this powerful?! I've trained for hundreds of thousands of years, and I have some insight into the art of formations, but I haven't been able to find a single flaw in this formation at all." The Scion of the Blood God was completely stymied.

Right at this moment, the sound of massive explosions could be heard from afar.

The Scion turned to look in that direction. He could still see the giant Ba-Serpent in the outside world; he was simply unable to fly over there.

"The Ba-Serpent?"

"A river?"

Uncle White and Immortal Fivecraze turned to look as well.

From afar, a three kilometer Ba-Serpent had been completely swept up into an enormous, awe-inspiring river that was more than ten thousand kilometers long. The waters of the river were furiously churning around the body of the Ba-Serpent.

And then, the massive river began to rapidly shrink, from ten thousand kilometers to a hundred kilometers, then down to ten kilometers.

The ten kilometer river was now roughly comparable in size to the three kilometer Ba-Serpent. The power of the river grew as it shrank, and it continued to coil and churn around the Ba-Serpent. There was even water flowing in and out of the Ba-Serpent's body, nose, and mouth.

ROAR!!! The Ba-Serpent raised its head, letting out a furious growl as it twisted and turned, struggling to free itself. But the river didn't budge in the slightest.

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"Captain, the pressure from the waters of the river is too great, and it has covered every single part of the Ba-Serpent's body. We're using up far too much elemental ki in maintaining this Ba-Serpent Formation."

"Captain, what should we do?"

They were beginning to grow nervous. Normally speaking, once a foe entered the body of the Ba-Serpent, there was no way the foe would be able to find the twelve of them. They could attack as they pleased at a close distance from the 'flesh' and 'bones' of the Ba-Serpent, with attacks that would be very difficult to defend against. Thus, the enemies would usually be quickly dominated and destroyed! However, despite being trapped within the Ba-Serpent, this Ji Ning actually had a method to deal with the entire creature at once!

"A formation-diagram? A formation-diagram?! Generally speaking, only Pure Yang treasures have formation-diagrams. Even if this Ji Ning does have a Pure Yang treasure...logically speaking, he has to be at the Celestial Immortal level to use it. How could a formation-diagram have appeared?!" The captain was puzzled and frantic as well.

The Nightriver Painting of the past was something which required one to first draw the enemy into painting before being able to use the river to suppress and weaken the enemy.

However, after the countless years of refining by the spirit of the underwater estate, the Nightriver Painting had already become the formation-diagram of the Thousandbull Sword. Once the formation-diagram was activated, the Nightriver would instantly appear.

This was what made formation-diagrams so special! And this was also the reason why the Thousandbull Sword could be described as comparable to a Pure Yang treasure!

"This Ji Ning definitely has some sort of powerful treasure on him. However...following that principle, once we kill him, that treasure will become ours," the captain sent mentally. "We must kill Ji Ning at all costs. Activate the forbidden technique!"

"The forbidden technique?"

"But..."

"Captain, do we really have to activate it?" These were Immortal cultivators, not Deathsworn; they naturally felt a degree of self-interest.

The captain shouted mentally towards them, "This treasure is capable of allowing a Void-level Earth Immortal to command the power of a formation-diagram, which means that it is no less valuable than a Pure Yang treasure in might! Ji Ning definitely has many treasures on him; once we acquire them, then hmph...all of us will benefit from it. Even if you suffer harm to your foundations, it will be worth it. Don't hesitate; the more time we waste, the more elemental ki we will have wasted. If you continue to hesitate...don't blame me for being merciless!"

“Fine. Let’s do this!”

“Kill Ji Ning!”

Upon hearing their captain’s threat, they no longer hesitated. They simultaneously executed the forbidden technique.

The ‘Ba-Serpent Formation’ was an ancient, powerful formation which had been passed down by the Bloodcloud Hall that required twelve Immortals to execute. Aside from normal attacks, it also possessed three levels of forbidden techniques.

These three levels of techniques were extremely complicated; given the insights into the Dao which the members of squad ‘Earthnine’ possessed, only the activation of the first level was possible.

However, this first level already possessed nigh-limitless power.

The twelve white-robed men, hidden within the body of the Ba-Serpent, all used the same forbidden technique simultaneously. The runic formations that had been hovering in the air around them slowly began to turn a bloody color, and additional blood-colored runes began to appear as well. These bloody runes hung there in the air, and once the forbidden technique was activated...

“Ba-Serpent Hell – Godslayer!” The white-robed leader with the bloody scar let out a low growl, his voice echoing within every part of the Ba-Serpent’s body.

All of the bloody light and the bloody runes began to suddenly move about at high speed. They flowed forth from those twelve locations within the Ba-Serpent, moving towards the direction of the Ba-Serpent’s abdomen. Immediately afterwards, within the dark abyss of the abdomen of the Ba-Serpent, a region of blood suddenly appeared. The bloody light and the bloody runes all swirled around each other within this region.

Whoosh.

Ning’s three-headed, six-armed form was gripping a total of six mighty swords as he strove to block the suddenly attacking magic treasures. “I have to come up with a way to flee from the Ba-Serpent’s body. If I’m unable to escape...I’ll be like fish meat on the chopping board.”

“Eh? Why have the attacks stopped?” Ning found out to his amazement that the weapons and arts that had been attacking him had suddenly disappeared.

But suddenly afterwards...the devouring force increased dramatically in power, and with a swoosh, Ning once more sank downwards.

Plonk. Ning fell straight into a bloody lake.

This was a lake of blood located within the abdomen of the Ba-Serpent. Above the lake of blood were bloody runic symbols which hovered and shimmered. Upon falling into the lake, Ning immediately struggled to try and fly out, but the sucking power of the lake was simply too great. Ning was firmly trapped within it, completely unable to escape. At the same time...Ning could sense a powerful corrosive force begin to be applied to every single part of his body.

“Captain, is Ji Ning dead?”

“This forbidden technique, ‘Ba-Serpent Hell’, has very powerful corrosive properties. Even ancient Void-level Fiendgods which are legendary for how powerful their bodies are will be corroded and dissolved, then perish. There’s no way this Ji Ning will be able to survive it.”

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#### **Book 14: Return to the Grand Xia Chapter 19: A Spatial Tear**

This time...they were ridiculously wrong!

By relying on this technique, they could indeed corrode and melt away even a Void-level fiendgod, and even ordinary Celestial Immortal Patriarchs would perish to this technique. Unfortunately...the person trapped within the Ba-Serpent Hell was Ji Ning. Ji Ning, who had reached the Third Cycle of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]! Ji Ning’s flesh was comparable to Immortal-ranked magic treasures. Although their Ba-Serpent Hell technique was very corrosive, there was no way it could corrode Immortal-ranked magic treasures!

“I can’t just let myself remain trapped in here. I have to get out.” Ning executed the [Heavenly Transformations], causing his body to expand enormously. The bloody lake was now only able to reach Ning’s kneecaps.

Six Immortal swords in his hands, Ning began to wildly and wantonly hack away at the stomach-walls of the Ba-Serpent.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The Ba-Serpent was trembling.

“This guy didn’t die yet?”

“How can this be?”

“How could it be that the Ba-Serpent Hell is unable to kill him?!” The twelve were all stunned. They hurriedly sent out their divine senses to investigate, and as they did, they discovered...that there was an enormous three-headed, six-armed youth who was standing in the middle of the bloody lake, whose fur-clad body was glowing with a hazy golden light. The bloody lakewater was completely unable to harm him at all.

The giant was even wildly hacking away at the stomach-walls of the Ba-Serpent, each strike containing enormous power. Given that the surging waves of the Nightriver filled every part of the Ba-Serpent, crushing down upon it...the twelve white-robed figures were using up elemental ki at an enormously fast rate in order to maintain the Ba-Serpent.

“This kid has trained for less than a century; he’s merely a Void-level Earth Immortal. How is it possible that he can withstand the Ba-Serpent Hell?” None of them could believe it. This was something which they had executed only after paying a heavy price, damaging their Goldlotus Primals. They were confident that this would definitely succeed...but who would’ve expected that the end result would be failure?

“It must be that golden light on his body! That golden light...it must be the aura of a protective magic treasure. It’s precisely because of that magic treasure that he’s able to resist the Ba-Serpent Hell!”

“Right. He’s probably taken on a True Immortal or Emphyrean God as his master; he must’ve been given a protective treasure.”

“That must be it.”

“Protective treasures won’t be able to be maintained for too long. After its energy is used up, this Ji Ning shall die for certain.”

Their level of experience was limited, after all; although they knew some of the powerful divine abilities of the Three Realms could allow one’s body to become comparable to magic treasures, Ji Ning was only at the fifteenth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]. They felt that even if Ning trained in protective divine abilities such as the [Pentabolt Vajra], there was no way he could use them to resist their Ba-Serpent Hell.

Thus, they guessed that it must be a protective treasure.

A protective treasure bestowed by a True Immortal or Emphyrean God...upon being activated, it could protect the bearer for a time, but once the energy and power within it was used up, it would become useless.

“But we are only going to be able to sustain the Ba-Serpent Hell via our forbidden technique for the time needed to boil a kettle of tea.”

“If the power of Ji Ning’s protective treasure is used up, then we’ll have won. But if the Ba-Serpent Hell is dispersed first...are we supposed to use the forbidden technique again?!”

“Captain, what should we do next?”

The others were all awaiting the captain’s order. None of them wanted to use the forbidden technique again.

“Disciples with backers and sects behind him are always difficult,” the white-robed man muttered back mentally. “There’s nothing we can. Carry out the backup plan.”

“Fine.”

“Let’s do it.”

They all immediately acknowledged the order.

This ‘backup plan’ was to borrow strength from another party...but as a result, the rewards they would get for killing Ji Ning would have to be divided up as well.

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The Whitewater Hound used the Fuxi Staff Formation to tremendously powerful effect. The Ba-Serpent might be able to forcibly break through and threaten his formations, but the leader of the Blood God Church, the Scion of the Blood God, was hidden within that black warship; he wasn’t willing to go all-out, and so he definitely wasn’t able to break open the formation.

Uncle White and Immortal Fivecraze watched the outside world with worry.

High in the air, a giant river was twisting and coiling around an unfathomably powerful Ba-Serpent. The Ba-Serpent was struggling and roaring with rage.

“Break apart!” The Ba-Serpent spoke out in the human tongue, then let out another enraged roar as its tail struck out hard.

Rumble...

Space itself was torn apart, and on the other side a sea could vaguely be seen.

It must be understood that this minor world was very close to the Grand Xia major world. The entrance to the volcano was a stable corridor between worlds, but some sufficiently powerful experts were absolutely capable of opening a corridor through their own power. For example, Patriarch Arcanum had done just that in ripping a tunnel into the world of the Witchriver Immortal Estate.

This strike by the Ba-Serpent was absolutely comparable to a blow from Patriarch Arcanum.

Swoosh. After ripping apart the fabric of space...although the Ba-Serpent remained entangled within the Nightriver, it charged into the spatial tear and returned to the world of the Grand Xia.

The minor world grew quiet.

“They are gone?”

“They disappeared?”

Uncle White and Immortal Fivecraze were all quite flabbergasted. They hadn’t expected that the enemy would tear open the fabric of space and depart from this minor world. They both looked with concern towards the black-robed Ning, who was fairly close to them. It must be understood that it was Ning’s true body that had just been taken away! His true body was far more important than his Primaltwin.

“Ji Ning,” Immortal Fivecraze said.

“No need to worry about me.” The black-robed Ning shook his head, then sat down in the lotus position, quietly protecting his master, Immortal Diancai.

No matter what, he absolutely wouldn’t permit anyone from disturbing his master’s tribulation. His Primaltwin had to stay here and protect his master! As for his true body...his true body had the underwater estate. If he truly did encounter a life-threatening situation, he could go ahead and hide into it, even though that meant revealing the existence of the estate. After all, his true body was very important; only his true body was capable of executing techniques such as the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] and the [Starseizing Hand].

The air above the Darknorth Sea.

The vast sea was incomparably quiet. From far away, one could see a ship advancing through the seas, a merchant vessel from a surrounding island.

Rumble...

The air above the sea split apart, and an enormous monstrosity came hurtling through the spatial tear.



It was an enormous serpent that was three thousand meters long. Its body was entangled by a surging river which coiled around it like a rope.

“What’s that?!”

“Good heavens!”

“A Diremonster?!”

The many mortals who were aboard that merchant vessel, as well as a few ‘powerful’ Xiantian experts, all stared in stupefaction. However, with but a single movement, that massive, three kilometer serpent disappeared into the horizon.

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Ning was able to clearly sense what was going on outside, thanks to the Nightriver which the Thousandbull Sword had created.

“Eh? We’re at the world of the Grand Xia? And this should be the Darknorth Sea,” Ning guessed to himself. At the same time, he continued to wildly brandish his six swords, hacking and slashing at the stomach of the Ba-Serpent. The Ba-Serpent trembled repeatedly as the elemental ki of the twelve white-robed figures was used up at a rapid pace. They were forced to take out some spirit-pills and swallow them to replenish their energy.

Swoosh. The Ba-Serpent easily used a spatial teleportation, arriving at the air above a wide mountain range located within the vast continent of the Grand Xia Dynasty.

“A mountain range? This is the place the Ba-Serpent’s spatial teleportation took it to?” Ning mused to himself, still trapped within the Ba-Serpent’s body.

Instantly, the incomparably imposing waters of the Nightriver began to expand wildly, from ten kilometers to its normal ten thousand kilometer size! The endless amounts of river water instantly filled the mountain range below. However, Ning remained quite careful; he didn’t wish to let the waters of the Nightriver harm any mortals by accident. He mainly wanted to test the surrounding environment.

“Formations!” Ning was shocked by what he discovered. A fog had instantly appeared within the great mountain range, completely ensconcing the Nightriver within it.

“Not good. We’re trapped within a formation. My ten thousand kilometer Nightriver is only able to test a small portion of this formation; clearly, this is an absolutely enormous formation. It seems this mountain range must be a secret base.” Ning realized that this must be a place like his own homeland, Swallow Mountain, which was now protected by layers of grand formations.

Powers such as the Skysplitter Sword Sect, for example, all had many great formations protecting their headquarters. It was the same principle.

The mountain range which this Ba-Serpent had descended into was assuredly a similarly dangerous place.

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Grand Xia Dynasty. Flamedoor Commandery. The Eastwoods mountain range.

The Eastwoods mountain range was the location of a sect known as the Eastwoods Sect!

“General.” The leader of the Eastwoods Sect spoke with incomparable respect. “A Ba-Serpent has suddenly appeared within the Eastwoods mountain range, and around it is a river that is ten thousand kilometers long. It is extremely powerful. Are these the people from Bloodcloud Hall which you previously mentioned, general?”

At the front of the hall was seated a tall, muscular, handsome, silver-armored youth. The silver-armored youth’s aura was very powerful, at the Celestial Immortal level.

“It seems those useless pieces of crap at Bloodcloud Hall were unable to kill Ji Ning, so they brought him here to my place,” the silver-armored youth laughed disdainfully. “They weren’t even able to kill a kid like Ji Ning, who has trained for less than a century. How embarrassing! Mm...sect leader of the Eastwoods Sect, this is your territory. You go ahead and control the grand formation to help the Ba-Serpent and deal with Ji Ning.”

The sect leader of the Eastwoods Sect said respectfully, “Yes, General.”

In his heart, however, he was sighing. He was the sect leader of a supreme sect, but over the course of a single night thirty years ago, the entire Eastwoods Sect had become completely ‘brainwashed’. Even he himself was sealed with a Reincarnation Seal and forced to become an obedient servant.

“Big Han,” the silver-armored youth suddenly called out.

Whoosh.

A shadow materialized within the darkness; it was a man with sideburns. He said with tremendous respect, “Master.”

The silver-armored youth said, “Bloodcloud Hall sent people to assassinate Ji Ning. They agreed with me before doing so that if they were unable to do anything to Ji Ning, that they would come here to the Eastwoods mountain range...and just a short while ago, the forces of Bloodcloud Hall used their ‘Ba-Serpent Formation’ to bring Ji Ning here. Accompany the sect leader of the Eastwoods Sect; when the time comes, you can act to help.”

“Yes,” the sideburned middle-aged man said with respect.

“Mm. I’m going to go take a look in the ‘forbidden area’. If there’s nothing critical, don’t bother me,” the silver-armored youth instructed.

“Yes,” the sideburned man repeated once more.

The leader of the Eastwoods Sect assented as well, but in his heart he felt puzzled. Ever since this mysterious power had descended thirty-plus years ago and took over the entire Eastwoods Sect, they had first set down increasingly, terrifyingly powerful formations around the mountains, then had designated one particular region within it as a ‘forbidden region’. The original members of the Eastwoods Sect were completely forbidden from entering the region; if they did, they would definitely die!

Only the silver-armored general and his subordinates were able to enter that place. As for what was within it? Not even the leader of the Eastwoods Sect knew.

Rumble...

The flows of the distant Nightriver were still furiously smashing downwards, crushing some nearby mountains and shattering giant trees. The Ba-Serpent continued to struggle to escape from the confines of the Nightriver.

“Come with me, leader of the Eastwoods Sect.” The face of the sideburned man changed, and he let out a sharp bark as he led the leader of the Eastwoods Sect away to go help the forces of Bloodcloud Hall.

The silver-armored general stared towards the distance, then shook his head. “This Ji Ning is actually this hard to kill...he truly lives up to his reputation as the champion of the Conclave of Immortal Destiny.” He took a single step forward, then vanished. He was going to the forbidden region.

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#### **Book 14: Return to the Grand Xia Chapter 20: Trapped**

The sideburned man and the leader of the Eastwoods Sect moved as fast as lightning. They soon arrived at the place where the Ba-Serpent was located.

“Uh...”

The sideburned man sighed in amazement at what he saw. The massive, ten thousand kilometer river seemed to be like a living creature. It struck out with wanton abandon; how could the local mountain peaks, gorges, and trees possibly withstand its strikes? They were all instantly shattered and broken apart. As for the Ba-Serpent that was trapped within the massive river, it appeared to be even less restrained; clearly, the river was only able to somewhat bind its power.

“Earthnine, do you need my help?” The sideburned man called out loudly. Filled with elemental ki, his voice echoed within the heavens.

“Activate the formation. Don’t let Ji Ning escape,” the massive Ba-Serpent roared furiously.

“Don’t worry!” The sideburned man chortled merrily, then glanced sideways at the leader of the Eastwoods Sect. “No problem handling a small request like this, right?”

“Rest your mind, milord,” the leader of the Eastwood Sect said respectfully.

The distant Ba-Serpent suddenly opened its giant bloody maw. Rumble...a human-shaped figure was suddenly spat out from within it. It was a three-headed, six-armed youth.

Ji Ning did a somersault in midair, then stood there in the sky, six swords in his six arms. Laughing loudly, he said, “It seems this is all you are capable of. Earlier, you were bragging about how even Celestial Immortal Patriarchs would die when trapped...but didn’t I come out in perfectly fine shape?”

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As soon as he came out, Ning noticed the formations in the surrounding area. Formations were everywhere, making it difficult for even his divine sense to search the area.

“[Torch-Dragon’s Eye].” Ning’s eyes began to glow with torch-light. He stared at the surrounding area, only to discover that he could still only see to a distance of a thousand kilometers. This was because of the fog in the area blocking much of the light; even the [Torch-Dragon’s Eye] was only able to penetrate to a certain extent through the fog. If he didn’t have this divine ability...he’d probably only be able to see to a distance of one kilometer.

Whoosh...

The Ba-Serpent hung in the air in the distance, its golden eyes focused on Ning. It spoke in the human tongue: “Ji Ning, today you shall most certainly die.”

“You shouldn’t talk so big,” Ning smirked.

“You are trapped within our formations; are you going to be able to escape?” The Ba-Serpent growled, “Even if you have a Greater Teleportation Dao-seal...once we join forces, you can forget about teleporting away.”

Ning stood there in midair, pondering. Dao-seals and magic treasures weren’t absolutely failproof. Lesser Teleportation Dao-seals were precious protective treasures for Xiantian lifeforms and Zifu Disciples, but if combat caused the surrounding space to be disturbed or locked when one attempted to use them, then there would be no way the Lesser Teleportation Dao-seals could be activated.

The same principle applied to Greater Teleportation Dao-seals as well; they, too, had their limits!

Greater Teleportation Dao-seals were indeed powerful, and they even allowed one to teleport from one world to another. However...the process of actually activating the Dao-seal and releasing the power within it involved the person merging with space itself. If one suffered an extremely powerful attack that disrupted the energy of the Dao-seal, then the Greater Teleportation would be disrupted and unable to complete!

A Dao-seal could ignore a weak disruption attempt, such as those from ordinary Primal Daoists or Loose Immortals. Thus, for Primal Daoists and Void-level Earth Immortals and Loose Immortals, these Greater Teleportation Dao-seals were extremely valuable protective treasures.

But a powerful disruption attempt would render Greater Teleportation impossible. At the Celestial Immortal level, their attacks were more than enough to disrupt the energy of a Greater Teleportation Dao-seal.

As for True Immortals and Empyrean Gods, they were able to completely disintegrate a Greater Teleportation Dao-seal!

Daofathers? Such seals were nothing more than a joke in the face of a Daofather’s might.

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When Ning had been within the Ba-Serpent, he had been suffering attacks nonstop. And the attacks of these foes were all at the Celestial Immortal level! They were more than enough to disrupt a Greater Teleportation Dao-seal.

“If they push me too far, I’ll just go hide inside my Immortal estate. Although the defensive power of the mobile one I carry with me isn’t that strong, it’s still enough to withstand their attacks for a brief

moment. That will be more than enough for me to use a Greater Teleportation Dao-seal to escape! However...that's as good as throwing away my mobile Immortal estate." Ning felt his heart ache.

This Immortal estate had been given to him as a gift by the giant yellow bear! It was used to hide his underwater estate. In terms of price, it was on a slightly higher level than even the Goldlight Immortal Estate which he had given his cousin. It was most likely worth five million kilograms of liquefied elemental essence or more!

In order to flee, Ning would have to sacrifice both a Greater Teleportation Dao-seal and his mobile estate. Unless absolutely necessary, he wouldn't choose to do this.

"Old Han, why haven't you activated the formation to attack Ji Ning yet?" The Ba-Serpent roared angrily. "He has a protective treasure on him, but after its energy is used up...I want to see how much longer he'll be able to hold on after that!"

"Hahaha, fine."

Big Han, who had been watching from afar, laughed and assented. He instructed the nearby Eastwoods sect leader, "Go ahead. Bring out everything you have; broaden the horizons of those useless pieces of crap from Bloodcloud Hall."

"Yes," the Eastwoods sect leader said respectfully.

This mountain range was the headquarters of the Eastwoods Sect; it naturally was protected by many layers of powerful formations. As the sect leader, he was capable of actively unleashing their power! However, he didn't know anything about the even more powerful formations which the silver-armored general, that Celestial Immortal, had laid down.

Generally speaking, the original formations of the Eastwoods Sect were more than enough.

"Divine Ashfire!" The Eastwoods sect leader immediately brought out one of the most powerful techniques of his sect.

Instantly, a grand formation that was tens of thousands of kilometers in size began to activate the natural energy of the world. A large amount of fire elemental energy began to gather, circulating through the formation and becoming transformed in midair to dull red tendrils of flame that seemed ready to go out at any moment. The dull red tendrils of flame began to appear everywhere, quickly forming an enormous firebird.

Whoosh!

The three hundred meter tall dull red firebird flew straight towards Ning. "Roaaaar!" The Ba-Serpent charged once more towards Ning as well, howling madly. The power of its tail was quite astonishing, and multiple Immortal-ranked magic treasures came flying out as well as some powerful techniques, all of which were aimed towards Ning.

"Ji Ning, the power of this Divine Ashfire is quite formidable; not even Celestial Immortals dare to take it head-on. Even if you have a protective treasure on you...how long will you be able to hold on for? After its energy is used up, you will die." The Ba-Serpent continued to attack while spitting out words in the human tongue, seeking to disturb Ning's concentration.

“Bring everything you have. Do you think this ‘Divine Ashfire’ will be able to do anything to me?” Ning stood there in midair, not caring at all.

When the dull red firebird drew near, a large amount of fire quickly swept forward to envelop Ning.

The Divine Ashfire technique was mainly dangerous for Ki Refiners. It might pose a threat to some Fiendgods that had weak defenses, and might be able to burn apart Earth-ranked magic treasures...but upon encountering Heaven-ranked magic treasures, it would begin to find breaking through to be onerous. At most, it would be able to damage an ordinary low-grade Heaven-ranked magic treasure. As for higher quality Heaven-ranked treasures, they were able to ignore the power of the Ashfire. As for a Fiendgod Body Refiner like Ning?

“Hahaha...” Ning laughed, his body once more emanating with that hazy golden light.

In truth, Ning was intentionally releasing that golden light from his body. He wanted the foe to think that he had some sort of protective treasure on him, so as to conceal the fact that he had trained in the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]. Although it would definitely be revealed at some point as they continued to fight...if the enemy was to misjudge his true strength, then he would have an opportunity to take advantage of that and perhaps wipe them out at one go!

.....

The Divine Ashfire blazed against him, and the massive Ba-Serpent struck at him repeatedly. Multiple Immortal-ranked magic treasures came crashing down upon him with the weight of mountains, and techniques in the shape of dragonsnakes, massive trees, and more also came hammering towards him. There was even skyfire and other techniques aimed his way! All of these attacks came flying towards Ning.

Ning caused the waters of the Nightriver to billow in every direction, suppressing and slowing down everything. At the same time, he sent his sword-light flying everywhere, knocking aside each attacking treasure in a truly valiant manner.

“Strange.”

“I’ve nearly exhausted my elemental ki twice, and I’ve eaten quite a few spirit-pills. How is this Ji Ning still able to hold on?”

“How is it that he’s been able to keep his protective treasure active this entire time? The energy of protective treasures generally come from True Immortals or Empyrean Gods filling the treasure with their own power; once the power is gone, the treasure is useless. How is it able to hold on for so long?”

.....

Big Han, watching the battle from far away, began to frown. “I believe your Eastwoods Sect has a ‘Seven Supreme Thunders’ formation, yes? Hurry up and activate it.”

The Eastwoods sect leader hurriedly said, “Yes.”

Instantly, a dark cloud appeared in the skies above the grand formation. Lightning appeared within the dark clouds, and bolts of lightning came hammering down, all striking towards Ning.

“Hahaha, these lightning bolts aren’t even enough to tickle me.” The three-headed, six-armed Ning stood there in midair, the waters of the mighty Nightriver surrounding him, the dull red flames blazing against him, bolts of lightning crashing down up him, the Ba-Serpent striking at him, and magic treasures swirling around him...but like Lord Buddha himself, Ning just stood there, his entire body glowing with golden light. His sword-light flashed everywhere, easily deflecting all of the oncoming attacks.

Seeing this, Big Han frowned. “This is trouble.”

“Is that all you have? Aren’t you guys always quite cocky in front of us, in front of Bloodcloud Hall? Why is it that you are completely useless right now?” The distant Ba-Serpent, growing frustrated, shouted angrily in the human tongue.

“Hmph.” Big Han gritted his teeth, then waved his arm. A strange golem appeared next to him, a golem that looked like a cat. Its body was feline, but it had three tails and just a single eye. This golem had a total of four legs, was thirty meters long, and there was actually an opening on its back. The sideburned ‘Big Han’ flew straight into the golem, and then with a clanking sound, the opening on the back became completely sealed.

This construct was similar to a ship, but it could be used to attack as well as defense. It was an incomparably precious golem.

“I refuse to believe a little brat that’s trained for less than a century can really be this tough.” The ‘Threetailed Thundergod’ construct let out a furious roar, then transformed into a streak of lightning that flew straight towards the distant Ning.

.....

Ning noticed the jagged bolt of lightning that was flying towards him from afar. His eyes were filled with blazing torch-light, and he instantly could tell that this was a strange construct of some sort. “It seems quite powerful; a construct of such power is rarely seen even in the Black-White College. I didn’t expect to encounter such a formidable construct in a place like this.”

“Still...although it’s powerful, it’s not a match for me.” To ‘greet’ this new opponent, Ning used the most powerful of his six swords, the Thousandbull Sword, to ‘welcome’ it to the fray.

“Die!” The Threetailed Thundergod construct slashed out with its sharp claws, its blow seeming to carry enormous power. Its knife-sharp claws moved lightning-fast as he clawed towards Ning. Where the claws passed, space itself split apart.

A streak of sword-light in the shape of a divine black dragon howled forth to meet the sharp claws.

Rumble...

The Threetailed Thundergod was knocked flying backwards. Only a few moments later did he manage to come to a halt. Then, with an enraged roar, it once more charged forward to attack.

No matter how wildly they all attacked, and despite the fact that Ning had only six arms to counter their tens of hands, resulting in an occasional attack striking him...his Fiendgod body, covered by that blurry golden light, was able to easily withstand all assaults without being damaged in the slightest. This caused the enemies to feel that Ning’s protective treasure was truly something remarkable.

“Big Han, stop fighting so madly. This Ji Ning has plenty of tricks up his sleeve; there’s nothing we can do to him at all. Hurry up and find your master! Let him come up with a solution. If even if he has nothing, then Bloodcloud Hall will be forced to resort to our final option, regardless of whether or not it succeeds,” the scarred white-robed leader within the Ba-Serpent sent mentally.

“Fine. I’ll notify my master,” Big Han immediately sent back.

### [The Desolate Era](#)

## **Book 14: Return to the Grand Xia Chapter 21: The Cauldron of Divine Venomflame of the Nine Heavens**

Ji Ning, protected by the Nightriver, was being attacked from every corner. But suddenly, the ‘Threetailed Thundergod’ construct turned tail and flew away.

“You want to go?” Ning’s eyes blazed with torch-light. He immediately executed the [Obscuring Wind of the Nine Heavens] divine ability. Although he had acquired it just recently, it was a technique-focused divine ability. In addition, Ning had already thoroughly mastered the Windwing Evasion, and thus he was quick to master part of the mysteries of this [Obscuring Wind of the Nine Heavens] technique. It could be said that he had gained a basic level of skill in it.

When this divine ability was executed, a wild wind began to howl around Ning as he chased after the construct.

“Construct, you want to leave?” The six Immortal swords in Ning’s hands repeatedly hacked down towards the fleeing construct.

One ray of sword-light after another came crashing down upon the body of the construct.

**BOOM!!!!**

The construct was slammed into the ground, and a spiderweb of cracks appeared in the ground beneath it.

“Earthnine, you useless pieces of crap, hurry up and help me stop Ji Ning. If you don’t stop him, I won’t be able to leave. How the hell am I supposed to inform Master?” Big Han sent a frantic mental message while muttering to himself, “This Ji Ning is way too fast. I was quite some distance away from him, but he was able to catch up in a flash.”

Squad Earthnine was also shocked by Ning’s speed. Still, they immediately moved to help. The enormous body of the Ba-Serpent came slithering over, coiling around Ning as multiple magic treasures began to assault him as well. As it did, the Ba-Serpent roared back, “You’re the useless piece of crap! Do you think it’s easy to deal with this Ji Ning? It’s not that we are weak, it’s that he’s too much of a monster. I have no idea what sort of treasure is generating that golden light, but no matter how we attack him, we aren’t able to do anything to him.”

Big Han seized this moment to hurry and flee. In truth, he knew that squad Earthnine wasn’t to blame; he had used his construct to launch attacks earlier, and he knew that Ji Ning truly was a monster.

Ning was like a rock, a hard bone that wouldn’t break or crack. What was one supposed to do to him?

.....



Whoosh.

After fleeing far away, Big Han was able to escape the field of battle, thanks to the obscuring fog in the area.

“Milord.” The leader of the Eastwoods sect came to greet him.

“I’m going to go see the general. You watch here. Don’t let Ji Ning escape,” Big Han instructed.

“Alright,” the Eastwoods sect leader said respectfully.

Big Han quickly departed, and the Eastwoods sect leader watched as Big Han disappeared into the distance. Only after he was gone did the sect leader mumble to himself, “So what if I don’t let him leave? None of you were able to do anything to him when attacking him.” He then lifted his head to once more stare at the besieged, three-headed, six-armed Ning. He couldn’t help but feel admiration for him.

This was a monster who had shocked the world more than thirty years ago, seizing the championship of the Conclave of Immortal Destiny. And now...he was truly formidable. Even squad Earthnine of Bloodcloud Hall was unable to harm him in the slightest.

The Eastwoods mountain range. The forbidden area.

Within a dark palace.

The silver-armored youth was seated in the host’s position, sampling fine wine. Before him was seated a red-robed elder.

“I’m almost out of patience. Qu Huan, you truly have disappointed me greatly,” the silver-armored youth said, a beaustskull goblet of wine in hand. He stared at the wind as he said these words calmly.

“General, don’t be impatient. Don’t be impatient,” the red-robed elder said hurriedly with an ingratiating smile.

“I’m not impatient, but the Master is!” The silver-armored youth said coldly, then raised his head to glance sideways at the red-robed elder. “You should know very well how important your mission is. You’ve spent more than ten years on it...how much longer before you complete it?”

The red-robed elder said hurriedly, “We’re already doing everything we can. If you send some more people to help us out, General, we might be able to go a bit faster.”

“More people?” The silver-armored youth shook his head. “Everyone is tight on personnel right now. The other generals all have their own assignments to carry out as well; where am I supposed to go find more people? The Master has already begun to push me. I’ll give you three more years. If you aren’t able to finish within three years...I won’t kill you myself, but you need to make your preparations for reincarnation.”

The red-robed elder was filled with worry. He hurriedly said, “It’s not enough. How can three years be enough? Given the number of people we have...we will need at least five years.”

“You must finish within three years. If you do not...” The silver-armored youth waved his hand. “Hurry up and beat it.”

“Yes.” The red-robed elder gritted his teeth. “Your subordinate shall definitely do everything possible to finish within three years.” He then left obediently.

The palace hall once more turned quiet.

The silver-armored youth drank some more wine, then shook his head helplessly. “Ever since I came to this major world of the Grand Xia, I’ve been living the life of a mouse. I’m always hiding. How irritating! I wonder when the battle will come. After taking over this major world, I’ll be able to live a carefree life.”

Suddenly...

“Master, Master.” A voice shouted from outside.

The silver-armored youth frowned, then barked, “Have you no sense of propriety? Stop screaming and kicking up a fuss.”

“Master.” Big Han came in, then hurriedly smiled, “Sorry, I was panicking.”

“What is it?” The silver-armored youth said.

“I went along with the Eastwoods sect leader to help out, and we used the protective formations the Eastwoods Sect has. I even personally intervened, but we weren’t able to do anything to that Ji Ning,” Big Han said hurriedly. “Squad Earthnine have no other options left. They are asking for your help, Master. If you are helpless as well, then they’ll prepare for their ‘final option’.”

“Final option?” The silver-armored youth snickered, “Those useless pieces of crap from Bloodcloud Hall. Whenever they fail in their assassination attempt, they’ll use that so-called ‘final option’.”

“But that option has killed quite a few Celestial Immortals,” Big Han couldn’t help but say.

“Those Celestial Immortals died due to stupidity!” The silver-armored youth shook his head. “No matter what...squad Earthnine of Bloodcloud Hall has always been on quite good terms with me. I’ll give them a hand. Go and summon nine of my Fiendguards and prepare to use the Divine Venomflame of the Nine Heavens Cauldron. If they can kill Ji Ning, that will naturally be a joyous affair, but if even this technique fails to kill him...then have squad Earthnine come up with another method. If they want to use their so-called ‘final option’, that’s up to them.”

“Alright,” Big Han said in a low voice, “But Master, aren’t you going to fight?”

“Me? Fight? Do you think it was easy for me to make it past all the tribulations and calamities, eventually becoming a Celestial Immortal? If a Celestial Immortal wants to stay alive for a long period of time, he needs to have a bit of judgment. He needs to clearly understand when to act and when not to act.” The silver-armored youth snickered, “This Ji Ning might have a True Immortal or Empyrean God behind him, or perhaps even a Daofather! If I were to personally intervene, what if the power behind Ji Ning were to come out and instantly crushing me to death. Wouldn’t that be a shame?”

“Now, of course, if I was given a good enough offer, I might be willing to risk it...but this mission only involves three piddling top-grade Immortal-ranked magic treasures. The main Bloodcloud Hall office is

keeping one of them, while squad Earthnine is taking part as well. How much can there be for me? They want me to take on such risks for just a tiny reward?”

The silver-armored youth shook his head disdainfully. “Big Han, you and the rest of the old brothers who accompanied me to the world of the Grand Xia for the purpose of enjoying ourselves. Naturally, when we need to fight, we shall...but we need to always consider whether it is worth it or not. As for this assassination mission of Bloodcloud Hall? Its success, its failure...what the hell does it have to do with us?”

“Right, right, right.” Big Han hurriedly said, “Master, you are wise.”

“The Divine Venomflame of the Nine Heavens Cauldron is the most powerful killing formation which has been set down here at the Eastwoods mountain range. Even amongst Celestial Immortals, only extremely powerful ones can withstand it. The vast majority will be annihilated in one blow,” the silver-armored youth said. “I’m giving them face by having nine of my Fiendguards activate this killing formation. Alright, hurry up and go.”

“Yes, yes, yes.” Big Han hurriedly left.

The silver-armored youth immediately stood up and walked outside of the palace hall. Soon, Big Han came back leading nine plainly dressed bronze-armored Loose Immortals and Earth Immortals.

“General,” the nine Fiendguards said respectfully.

“Big Han has told you everything, yes? Hurry up and go control the formation to kill Ji Ning,” the silver-armored youth instructed.

“Yes, General.” The nine Fiendguards assented respectfully, then quickly departed.

“Come, let’s go take a look as well. I want to see if this peerless genius of the Grand Xia world is able to survive within this grand formation of mine, or if he will be burnt to ash.” The silver-armored youth leisurely walked out.

.....

There were three figures atop a mountain peak. They were the silver-armored youth, big Han, and a black-robed youngster.

“Disciple, you came with me, your master, to the world of the Grand Xia,” the silver-armored youth said with a laugh. “Today, Master is going to give you the chance to see...the person known as the number one peerless genius of the world of the Grand Xia. He’s trained for less than a century, roughly the same as you, but he is far more famous than you.”

The black-haired youngster said confidently, “How strong can he be?”

“You’ll know soon enough,” the silver-armored youth said.

Swoosh.

A figure suddenly flew over. It was the Eastwoods sect leader. He said respectfully, “I greet you, General.”

“Disperse the fog,” the silver-armored youth said with a laugh. “Let my disciple have a chance to see how powerful this Ji Ning is.”

“Yes.” The sect leader immediately obeyed the order. Instantly, the distant fog began to dissipate, allowing everything to become clearly visible. Even here, at the distant mountain peak, one could see an enormous three-headed, six-armed giant battling in the distance against the even more massive Ba-Serpent, as well as the surging waters of the Nightriver.

The silver-armored youth laughed. “Disciple, what do you think?”

The black-robed youngster stared intently into the distance. He could sense the terrifying power of the Ba-Serpent, capable of shaking the world itself, as well as the power of those many Immortal-ranked magic treasures. However...the three-headed, six-armed giant youth was able to block all of these attacks.

“So powerful.” The black-robed youngster was somewhat stunned. “He...can it be that he is already a Celestial Immortal?”

“Although he is not a Celestial Immortal, he has a Celestial Immortal’s power,” the silver-armored youth said with a sigh. “At the Wanxiang level or the Primal level, fighting someone of a higher level is fairly common...but the difference between a Void-level Earth Immortal and a Celestial Immortal is absolutely enormous. For him to still be able to fight those at a higher level, despite being an Earth Immortal...is something that is truly rare. More importantly, this Ji Ning has trained for less than a century. Disciple...do you see the difference, now?”

The black-robed youngster gnawed at his lips as he watched.

Right at this moment...

Rumble...suddenly, a mountain peak began to levitate into the skies at the southeastern horizons.

Rumble...suddenly, a second mountain peak began to levitate into the skies of the northwestern horizons.

One mountain after another began to levitate into the air. Fortunately, thanks to the grand formation protecting the entire Eastwoods mountain range, those who were outside the mountain range were completely unable to see this. They had no idea how vicious the battle within the mountains had grown.

Soon, a total of nine mountain peaks were hovering in the air, spread out in every direction. Each mountain peak was covered with swirling, fiery red runes, causing the aura of power emanating from the mountains to slowly grow more and more powerful.

This invisible aura quickly encompassed nearly the entire Eastwoods mountain range.

This was because this was the most powerful killing formation available to the Eastwoods Sect, capable of attacking any place within the mountain ranges. Even this mountain peak, where the black-robed youngster and the silver-armored youth were located, could be assaulted.

“Master, this killing formation...” The black-robed youngster’s face changed as he sensed the threat from this formation. “This formation is going to be used against Ji Ning?”

The aura from the formation alone was enough to cause the black-robed youngster to feel fear in his heart.

He knew exactly how powerful this killing formation was. Just a tiny portion of it was enough to annihilate him.

### The Desolate Era

#### **Book 14: Return to the Grand Xia Chapter 22: The Curtain Call?**

Ji Ning stood there in midair, commanding the flows of his Nightriver.

“Eh?” Ning’s face suddenly changed. He saw mountain peaks begin to levitate into the air in every direction. A total of nine mountains levitated upwards, each one covered with colossal, fiery red runes. Ning’s pupils contracted as he stared at them. “Using mountain peaks as formation-foundations...refining entire mountains into magic treasures...then joining them together into a formation?”

Ning wasn’t completely ignorant of formations. He understood them, and he knew that given how much effort had gone into this formation, this one was definitely an absolutely top-notch formation. Perhaps it was slightly weaker than the supremely ferocious killing formations of Swallow Mountain, but it was still most likely capable of threatening the lives of Celestial Immortals. As to exactly how strong it was...he would only know when he personally experienced it.

“Where did these assassins come from, for them to possess such powerful tools?” Ning still had no idea who exactly was trying to kill him.

He had some suspicions, but he wasn’t completely confident.

Whoooooosh.

The nine levitating mountains that lined the horizons were suddenly connected by a streak of runic light. It was as though chain links were joining the mountain peaks together. Soon, the countless fiery runes began to flow together into a cycle, causing the nine mountain peaks to join together into one.

Swoosh.

The Ba-Serpent, which had been battling against Ning this entire time, suddenly retreated and attempted to flee.

“You want to leave?” Ning, who had been battling in close combat against the Ba-Serpent for quite some time now, immediately let out a loud roar. “If I’m going to be attacked by this formation, then you can forget about leaving!” Ning immediately used the [Obscuring Wind of the Nine Heavens], moving at a much faster speed and instantly catching up to the Ba-Serpent. Ning immediately transformed into a three hundred meter tall giant, then plopped his butt down directly down onto the body of Ba-Serpent while grabbing onto its body.

No matter how the Ba-Serpent tried to struggle, and no matter how it tried to swing its tail, Ning kept a firm lock on it.

“If this grand formation is going to attack me, then I insist on us getting a taste of it together.” Ning roared loudly with arrogant laughter, his hair wild and unbound.

“This is troublesome.”

“Captain, this Ji Ning is too fast; the Ba-Serpent isn’t able to shake him off. He’s now seated firmly atop the Ba-Serpent’s body. When the formation attacks, we’ll probably be hit as well.”

“This killing formation the Eastwoods Sect is using is the ‘Divine Venomflame of the Nine Heavens Cauldron’; there’s no way we can withstand that.”

“Don’t panic. The general won’t act recklessly; he’ll definitely perfectly control the Cauldron and focus its power on Ji Ning. Just a small amount might end up hitting the Ba-Serpent,” the captain sent back.

Just as the members of Bloodcloud Hall were chatting amongst themselves, a vortex of flame began to appear in the air.

This flame was composed of two different colors. The flames were jade-green in color, but at the center was a violet flame!

Rumble...the flames continuously swirled, and the more they swirled, the more enormous they became. Soon, they reached the maximum size that could be supported by this formation, having become an enormous, mountain-sized conflagration. Crackling sounds could be heard within this conflagration; the sound came from the violet flames in the center, where flashing lightning could be seen.

Ning rode atop the Ba-Serpent, controlling the river while doing so. He raised his head. “So it is the Divine Venomflame of the Nine Heavens...”

He was of the Mount Innerheart League, after all; after having spent so much time on the mountain, he had naturally reviewed all of the publicly available ‘common knowledge’. He knew what the Divine Venomflame of the Nine Heavens was...it was a type of fire that was on the level of ‘truefire’ in terms of power. However...because it was too evil and chaotic, mixing too many different types of energy, there was no way an Immortal could nurture and cultivate this sort of fire within the body.

BOOM!!!!

The mountain-sized conflagration began to crash downwards.

The Ba-Serpent struggled frantically, but Ning rode atop the Ba-Serpent’s back, not letting it escape at all.

Whoosh...

The flames of the conflagration completely enveloped Ning. However, the flames were extremely agile; under the control of the nine Fiendguards, they only surrounded Ning, allowing the Ba-Serpent to escape virtually unscathed. But of course, Ning was striving against the Ba-Serpent, trying to pull it into contact with the flames.

“Hahaha, this Divine Venomflame of the Nine Heavens is quite hot, quite scorching. It feels just like taking a nice, warm bath in hot water.” Ning, bathed in flames, looked just like a Fiendgod. Roaring with laughter, the Ba-Serpent still in his clutches, he said, “Come, come, come, let’s bathe together!”

“What?!”

“How can this be?!”

“But, but...”

Both the forces of Bloodcloud Hall and the silver-armored general were all completely stupefied.

The silver-armored general was truly stunned. “He is actually using his body to resist it...he didn’t dodge or hide into his Immortal estate?” He had thought that Ning would hide within his Immortal estate; upon Ning doing so, Bloodcloud Hall’s forces would instantly tear apart space, immediately delivering it to a rather ‘dangerous location’. Within the Three Realms, there were naturally some extremely terrifying places; thus, after hiding into a mobile Immortal estate, one had to immediately use a Greater Teleportation Dao-seal. Otherwise, once one was shoved into one of the danger zones of the Three Realms, one would almost assuredly perish.

“Not even the Divine Venomflame of the Nine Heavens can harm him?” The nearby black-robed youngster was stunned as well. “How can this be? That’s the Divine Venomflame of the Nine Heavens!”

“Why can’t it be?” The silver-armored youth said in a low voice, “Don’t you see it happening before your very eyes?”

The nearby Big Han and the Eastwoods sect leader were both similarly stunned.

The Eastwoods sect leader gave an envious glance towards Ji Ning, who appeared like one of the invincible Fiendgods of legend. To him, both the Ba-Serpent and the terrifying Venomflame both seemed like naught but toys; they weren’t able to do anything to him.

“Is it a protective treasure? Or a protective divine ability?” The silver-armored youth stared into the flames, towards Ning, who was covered by faint golden light. “It is almost inconceivable for a protective item to be able to last for this long...but then again, perhaps a Daofather has given him a particularly unique treasure. But if he’s using a divine ability...I imagine the only possibility is the legendary [Eight-Nine Arcane Art].”

“If it’s the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]...the implications are terrifying. Only very, very few True Gods and Daofathers of the Three Realms possess it...and they will generally only transmit it to their personal disciples.” The silver-armored youth was secretly rather shocked.

Within the Three Realms, the True Gods and Daofathers were all scattered into various regions where they ruled like local hegemony. But even amongst their ranks, only very, very few were in possession of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]. The vast majority of True Gods and Daofathers, such as Grand Emperor Xuanwu or Daofather Crimsonbright, simply didn’t have the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], much less teach it to disciples. Thus, very few individuals in the Three Realms were in possession of this divine ability.

Only a personal disciple of a supreme Daofather could possibly possess this divine ability!

“Even if it is ‘just’ a protective treasure...someone capable of giving away a marvelous treasure such as this must have a terrifyingly great background,” the silver-armored youth mused to himself.

“Fiendguards, since you are unable to injure Ji Ning, then go ahead and disperse the Venomflame!” The silver-armored youth immediately sent the mental order.

“Yes.” The nine Fiendguards instantly assented to the order.

Right away, the nine mountains that were hovering in the skies began to call back their runes as they began to sink downwards to their original location.

“Earthnine,” the silver-armored youth sent mentally.

“General,” Earthnine sent back.

“Even this killing formation of mine is unable to do anything to Ji Ning. I’m giving up. As to whatever Bloodcloud Hall plans to do, I can’t be bothered to interfere,” the silver-armored youth sent.

Earthnine immediately sent back, “Understood. This mission is nowhere close to being worth a mere three top-grade Immortal-ranked magic treasures. Even ten wouldn’t be enough. I won’t bother you with this matter anymore, General. I have no other choices left, just the final option.”

“Mm.” The silver-armored youth assented.

.....

Ning rode atop the body of the Ba-Serpent, watching as the Divine Venomflames of the Nine Heavens dissipated. He couldn’t help but laugh; he knew long ago how powerful the flames were, and knew that his physical body was absolutely capable of ignoring those flames.

“Tell me, who are you people? Who told you to come assassinate me?” Ning barked. “If you tell me, I’ll release you. Otherwise...I’ll keep messing around with you. Although it’s hard for me to escape this formation, you’ll be trapped here alongside me.”

“Ji Ning, I admit that you are formidable, but...threaten us? Hmph!”

The Ba-Serpent spoke out in the human tongue, then suddenly flew off into the distance.

Ning rode atop the body of the Ba-Serpent, following its movements.

Trapped within this formation, Ning would probably have to rely on a Greater Teleportation Dao-seal to escape. However, if he kept a firm grip on the Ba-Serpent...unless the Ba-Serpent was willing to remain within the formation as well, once it left, Ning would be able to go out with it. This was the reason why Ning kept such a firm grip on the serpent.

Whoosh. The Ba-Serpent flew forward, flying through mountain forests as many formations automatically parted before it.

Suddenly...

**BANG!**

The massive Ba-Serpent suddenly disappeared into nowhere as the twelve white-robed figures re-appeared. The leader, the white-robed man with a bloody scar, waved his hand to collect all of the other eleven, then immediately flew towards a nearby location in front of him, his movements lightning-fast. On the ground in front of him, there was a pitch-black, fog-covered cave.

Swoosh!



When the Ba-Serpent disappeared, the white-robed man was already quite close to the entrance of the cave, and so he instantly charged into it.

Swoosh. Ning charged after the white-robed man, but a few meters away from the cavern entrance, he came to a sudden halt.

“Eh?” Ning stared at the black, foggy cavern entrance before him.

The entrance wasn’t that large, and it appeared quite ordinary. However...there was no way he could tell exactly what was within the cave. He couldn’t sense the aura of the white-robed man within it at all either.

“It seems...this cave is rather mysterious.” Ning stood in front of the cave, hesitating. Because he couldn’t sense any auras at all from the entrance, he had no idea what was inside.

.....

The Ba-Serpent had fled, but Ji Ning had remained atop the Ba-Serpent’s back. After the Ba-Serpent was dispersed, the forces of Bloodcloud Hall had all fled into the black cave. All of these things were seen by the silver-armored youth, the black-robed youngster, Big Han, and the others.

“So the forces of Bloodcloud Hall truly did use their ‘final option’.” The black-robed youngster had used a divine ability, causing spots of starlight to appear within his eyes. He could clearly see to a great distance. “I wonder if this Ji Ning will enter or not. If he enters, then he will definitely die.”

“True Immortals or Empyrean Gods might survive if they go in, but as for this Ji Ning...no matter how powerful his protective treasure is and no matter how formidable he is, he’ll definitely die,” the silver-armored youth said. “Of the Celestial Immortals who were killed by Bloodcloud Hall, quite a few died after they foolishly chased the Bloodcloud Hall assassins all the way into the cave.”

This cave entrance...

Was in reality a portal.

It led to a very mysterious place, a place that was countless times more dangerous than the Eastwoods mountain range.

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### **Book 14: Return to the Grand Xia Chapter 23: Celestial Immortal**

Ji Ning stared at the black, foggy cave entrance in front of him for a moment, hesitating. This clearly was no ordinary cave. Neither his divine sense nor his [Torch-Dragon’s Eye] and other senses were able to discover anything about the cave at all! However...Ning truly wanted to know who it was who was trying to kill him!

“The world of the Grand Xia is currently filled with dangerous undercurrents; it’s best to be cautious. It’s best if I don’t go into unknown places.” The reason why Ning had acted so arrogantly and brashly earlier was because everything was under control...but the depths of this black cave were beyond his understanding.

Whoosh.

Ning instantly departed from this region, but he was still surrounded by layers of formations.

Ning casually chose a mountain peak at random, sitting down in the lotus position atop it, then laughed loudly, "If you have any other abilities, use them to your heart's content! If you don't attack me...I'm going to use my Greater Teleportation Dao-seal to leave now."

His voice echoed within the skies, but no one came to attack him.

"It isn't the time to leave yet," Ning mused to himself. "Master is still undergoing his tribulation in that minor world. If the assassins wish to continue to assault me and lose track of me, they'll probably go back to that minor world. I might as well stay here then!"

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"Master, he didn't go in," the black-robed youngster said.

"Because he's not an idiot," the silver-armored youth said, shaking his head. "The Celestial Immortals who went in previously were all overconfident; they felt that their power was more than enough to ensure that they would survive. But how could they have known...that the tunnel leads to one of our true headquarters. Even True Immortals or Empyrean Gods would at most be able to escape with their lives from that place."

Both the black-robed youth and Big Han nodded. They had both been there before; they naturally knew exactly how terrifying that place was. As their headquarters...it was naturally far more dangerous than this Eastwoods mountain range.

"Master, Ji Ning is in our formation. Shall we attack him?" Big Han asked.

"What's the point of attacking him?" The silver-armored youth looked towards him.

Big Han laughed awkwardly. "There's no point to us attacking him, but if you were to attack, Master, wouldn't you be able to easily capture him?"

"Stop flattering me," the silver-armored youth snickered. "I, your master, know my own limits. This Ji Ning is quite mysterious; his protective abilities alone are enough to ensure that all of you weren't able to do anything to him with your many frenzied attacks. Even the Divine Venomflame of the Nine Heavens was unable to injure him. Although I dislike Bloodcloud Hall, they aren't weak...and yet even squad Earthnine in their Ba-Serpent Formation was unable to harm him in the slightest! I'm not able to kill him."

Big Han just chortled. He knew that his master tended to be very low-key...but that his master was in truth enormously powerful. More than ten Celestial Immortals had died to his master's hand!

The silver-armored youth quietly stared at the distant Ning, speculating internally, "This Ji Ning's background must be significant. If he trained in the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]...then his background must be utterly shocking! I wonder whose disciple he is?"

"When divinities battle, mortals suffer. Compared to those major powers...people like me are like mortals, while they are divinities."

“Low-key. Stay low-key.” The silver-armored youth had lived for a very long time, and had experienced very many things. Thus, he knew very well...

That Celestial Immortals might seem to be very powerful, but in the context of the entire Three Realms, they were actually nothing more than chess pieces. There were many danger zones that could cause Celestial Immortals to perish. Someone like Ji Ning, who had such a terrifying background...

True, if he killed Ji Ning, any Daofather behind Ji Ning most likely wouldn't lower himself to act against a Celestial Immortal like the silver-armored man. After all, for a Celestial Immortal to kill someone like Ji Ning wouldn't be considered a strong person bullying a much weaker person. But there were some madmen in the Three Realms who were wholly unreasonable, and who would fly into a rage and seek vengeance for any slain disciples!

“Although there are very few such madmen...perhaps one of Ji Ning's uncle-masters or fellow apprentices number such a madman amongst them,” the silver-armored youth mumbled to himself. “It wasn't easy for me to stay alive for so long; I endured countless dangers before becoming a Celestial Immortal. I plan to survive this storm. Careful. Have to be careful; that's more important than anything else!”

“Master, then are we going to just let Ji Ning stay in the formation? Should we...?” Big Han looked towards the silver-armored youth.

“Just keep him trapped within the formation. If Bloodcloud Hall wishes to continue their assassination, let them. We won't participate any further,” the silver-armored man said calmly. “If he wants to use a Greater Teleportation Dao-seal to leave, there's nothing we can do about that! As for attacking him? Forget it. Attacking him is a waste of elemental ki.”

“Yes,” Big Han assented respectfully.

Time passed, one day after the other.

The third day after the failure of the assassination attempt. Patriarch Arcanum was once more invited to Bloodcloud Hall. He was brought to that secluded garden once more, and it was still that same silver-robed maiden who welcomed him.

“How'd it go?” Patriarch Arcanum sat down, looking at the silver-robed youth facing him. “Did you kill Ji Ning?”

“No.” The silver-robed maiden shook her head.

“No?!” Patriarch Arcanum was shocked...and then enraged. “I've already given you the treasures, so you should go and kill him. If you weren't able to kill him in your first wave of attacks, you should send out a second wave. In short...you should do what you promised and ensure that you kill him within the year. As for how you accomplish it? I don't give a damn. But you need to do what you promised! This was a deal! My Youngflame clan has paid the price; you need to hold up to your end of the bargain.”

The silver-robed maiden nodded. “Your words are correct.”

Patriarch Arcanum was startled.

“Per our contract, if Bloodcloud Hall is unable to accomplish the mission, then we are to return your treasures to you.” The silver-robed maiden produced a storage ring. “This is what you gave to me previously; everything is here. Bloodcloud Hall lost money on this deal, but we’re still giving you everything back.”

“You...you...” Patriarch Arcanum couldn’t believe it.

A contract was a contract. If the assassination couldn’t be carried out, then the treasures would have to be repaid! This was something Bloodcloud Hall prided themselves on...but they rarely actually did this.

“Is Ji Ning very hard to kill?” Patriarch Arcanum frowned.

“If we truly had to kill him, Bloodcloud Hall could indeed do it.” The silver-robed maiden nodded.

“Then why don’t you?!” Patriarch Arcanum asked.

“The price isn’t high enough.” The silver-robed maiden looked towards Patriarch Arcanum.

“What’s the needed price?”

“Twenty top-grade Immortal-ranked magic treasures,” the silver-robed maiden said. “If you pay this price in treasures, Bloodcloud Hall will go and kill Ji Ning. We erred in our estimation of his power, and so we set too low a price last time.”

Patriarch Arcanum’s face turned completely crimson with rage. “Why don’t you just go ahead and rob me?! You dare to name a price of twenty top-grade Immortal-ranked treasures? That’s equivalent to two Pure Yang treasures! That’s enough to invite even a True Immortal or Emphyrean God to come and help out! How dare you name such a price?!” This price was indeed quite excessive; it would pose an enormous burden towards the Youngflame clan.

“Invite a True Immortal or Emphyrean God?” The silver-robed maiden chuckled. “Go ahead and give it a try. Let’s see who would be willing to kill Ji Ning for you.”

Patriarch Arcanum gritted his teeth.

He knew very well that the more powerful an expert was, the more cautious they tended to be. Perhaps a Celestial Immortal killing Ji Ning wouldn’t be considered a strong person bullying a much weaker person, but a True Immortal or Emphyrean God killing him definitely would be. If there truly was a Daofather standing behind Ji Ning...

If the Daofather was able to discover what was happening and was able to rescue Ji Ning before he died, things wouldn’t be too bad; the Daofather would at most teach the offender a lesson! But if the Daofather didn’t make it in time, or if he found out only after Ji Ning died...in his rage, the Daofather might truly go and slaughter the True Immortal or Emphyrean God in question!

How many True Immortals or Emphyrean Gods would be willing to risk their lives for the sake of two low-grade Pure Yang treasures?

“There should be some powerful Celestial Immortals that can kill Ji Ning, right?” Patriarch Arcanum growled.

“If you wish to invite Bloodcloud Hall to assassinate Ji Ning, then please hand over twenty top-grade Immortal-ranked magic treasures, or treasures of an equivalent value. If you aren’t willing, then please leave. Our business is concluded,” the silver-robed maiden said.

Patriarch Arcanum ground his teeth. Twenty...

Suppressing his anger, Patriarch Arcanum asked in a growl, “How powerful is Ji Ning?”

“You want to know?” The silver-robed maiden said, “This is a bit of valuable intelligence. If you are willing to return the storage ring and its contents to me, I can tell you.”

“Hmph!” Angered, Patriarch Arcanum rose to his feet, turned, and left.

What a joke.

An intelligence report worth three top-grade Immortal-ranked magic treasures?

After watching Patriarch Arcanum leave, the silver-robed maiden shook her head. “You idiotic fool. If you ask Bloodcloud Hall to kill Ji Ning, all you need to do was pay us enough treasures. But if you want to do it yourselves? Even if you were to summon your ancient Patriarch who first arose in the Fiendgod Era, and even if he was able to kill Ji Ning when using all his power...the price you would pay would be a price vastly beyond what your clan is capable of withstanding.”

“Master wouldn’t lie to me. He’s suspected of having learned the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]! Not even Master was qualified to learn such a technique.” The silver-robed maiden was stunned by this bit of news.

From the detailed intelligence report they had gained from their assassination attempt, Ji Ning either had an unearthly powerful protective item or had trained in the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]! Either possibility had tremendous, extraordinary implications.

However...

Bloodcloud Hall specialized in carrying out extraordinary tasks. If the price was high enough, they would still dare to kill Ji Ning!

Time passed, one day after the other.

Within the minor world. The scorched, cracked, barren earth here would cause any who saw it to feel despair towards life.

“Why hasn’t Master woken up yet?” The black-robed Ning stared at the nearby Immortal Diancai.

“The demonheart tribulation will last for at least seven days, but at most...it’s hard to say.” Immortal Fivecraze shook his head. “Your master has only spent ten days in the demonheart tribulation. Don’t be impatient.”

“Right.” The black-robed Ning nodded.

“And how is your true body doing? Is it in any danger?” Immortal Fivecraze asked, worried. The nearby Whitewater Hound looked towards Ning as well.

The black-robed Ning laughed helplessly. "Don't worry. I really am not in any danger at all."

But Immortal Fivecraze and Uncle White couldn't help but worry. If Ning's true body truly was completely safe, it would've already returned to this minor world. And yet, it hadn't. What they didn't realize...was that Ning was intentionally keeping his true body in the Eastwoods mountain range, so as to draw the attention of his foes and prevent disaster from befalling his master.

"Let me out. Ji Ning, Fivecraze, just let me out. You won't be able to kill me; what's the point of keeping me trapped here?" Trapped within the formation, the Scion of the Blood God, still within his little black ship, was calling out loudly. He truly felt regret for coming here. Although by relying on his ship, he made it impossible for them to harm him...he was trapped within this formation and unable to escape. He had no idea that the enemy included such a formidable formations expert.

The black-robed Ning, Immortal Fivecraze, and Uncle White couldn't even be bothered to look at the Scion.

They were just going to keep him locked up in here!

If he was permitted to leave, he might stir up more trouble. It was best to keep him trapped here! That way, they wouldn't worry about him disrupting Immortal Diancai's tribulation later.

"Eh?" Suddenly, the black-robed Ning, Fivecraze, and Uncle White all turned their heads to stare at Immortal Diancai, still seated in the lotus position.

Immortal Diancai had already opened his eyes. Within them could be seen two things; infinite ancientness, and a hint of tears.

"Master!" The black-robed Ning called out excitedly.

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### **Book 14: Return to the Grand Xia Chapter 24: Whither the Immortal Treasure?**

"Junior apprentice-brother!" Immortal Fivecraze looked excitedly towards Immortal Diancai.

All of them just stared with bated breaths.

Immortal Diancai's eyes were open. He remained seated in the lotus position, but rainbow-colored clouds suddenly began to appear in the skies. These fortuitous clouds descended around Immortal Diancai, and in the ground around him there began to manifest petals of a golden lotus flower. It seemed as though Immortal Diancai was seated atop an enormous golden lotus. Murmurs of what sounded like celestial music could be heard from the world around him. Of course, this wasn't an actual melody; rather, it was the sound of the Heavens and the Earth. Just listening to it, one would feel as though it was filled with infinite mysteries.

At the same time, a terrifying aura of power began to descend, completely enveloping Immortal Diancai.

"Such terrifying power." The black-robed Ji Ning and the others all felt their hearts tremble, even though they were barely touched by the power itself.

Whoosh...

An enormous flood of natural power began to gather around Immortal Diancai. His body now began to manifest the 'aura of an Immortal soul', something which one would have only after becoming a Celestial Immortal. His energy was transforming on a fundamental level as well.

From the Zifu stage to the Void stage, one merely had 'elemental ki'.

After becoming a Celestial Immortal, the power of the soul and all other powers would completely merge into one power. The lotus-bud at the top of the Goldlotus Primal would draw in the essence of all the other types of power, fusing them into one and then refining them into a single brilliant golden pellet, a 'Jindan'. 1

This new power could be described as either dharmic energy or Immortal energy.

"The great path of the Jindan, the great path of the Jindan...once the golden pellet enters my flank, then my destiny shall no longer be subject to the Heavens." Immortal Diancai laughed softly, "All shall become one, a perfect, flawless whole...from this day forth, there shall be no more Three Calamities, no more Nine Tribulations. I have truly become a carefree Immortal, having escaped the rules of the Three Realms and the binds of the Five Elements."

"Congratulations, Master. Felicitations, Master!" The black-robed Ning walked over.

"Haha, junior apprentice-brother, oh, junior apprentice-brother...you didn't let us down! Ahahaha..." Immortal Fivecraze was the most excited person right now. "After countless years...our Black-White College has finally produced a second Celestial Immortal. A Celestial Immortal! True immortality, an infinite lifespan...a Celestial Immortal!!! And one who overcame six nine-sets of the thunder tribulation! Haha, even if this crazy old man was to die right away, it would be worth it!"

There were differences in power amongst Celestial Immortals as well. Ordinary thunder tribulations, such as those with two nine-sets or three nine-sets, wouldn't be too powerful. By contrast, some extraordinarily powerful Fiendgod experts might be capable of overcoming nine nine-sets and become Emphyrean Gods, immediately comparable to Pure Yang True Immortals in power.

"Eh? What's going on here?" Immortal Diancai was startled. He asked in surprise, "What's that little black ship inside this formation?"

"Celestial Immortal Diancai, congratulations to you!" A person emerged from within the little black ship; it was the sect leader of the Blood God Church, the Scion of the Blood God. Laughing loudly, he said, "It's quite rare to be able to see the birth of a Celestial Immortal. Still...you have to thank this fine disciple you have here. He killed seven of my Law Protectors, then trapped me here. If it wasn't for the fact I wanted to see if you would become a Celestial Immortal, Immortal Diancai, I would've left long ago. Alright...no more playing around with you."

The Scion returned to his ship. Then, with a rumble and a ripple...he disappeared into thin air.

He had been clenching a Dao-seal when he he was speaking.

"Made him waste a Greater Teleportation Dao-seal. Worth it." Immortal Fivecraze laughed and nodded.

"What's this he said about killing seven Law Protectors?" Immortal Diancai frowned. "And Ji Ning, this is your Primaltwin, yes? Where's your true body?"

After having known Ji Ning for so long, Immortal Diancai knew quite well that Ning himself liked to wear furs, while his Primaltwin usually wore black robes.

Ning laughed. "These are all just minor matters."

"Let me be the one to tell you." Immortal Fivecraze called out excitedly, "Junior apprentice-brother, you have no idea. When you were undergoing your demonheart tribulation, everything happened just as you predicted; someone came to attack you. First came the Scion of the Blood God; he came in person, commanding his seven mighty Law Protectors to assault you. This precious disciple of yours showed of all his might..."

Immortal Fivecraze was in an absolutely divine mood as he blabbered on and on. Finally, he finished his tail.

Immortal Diancai looked towards Ning, feeling a hint of guilt in his heart. "Disciple, sorry for the trouble."

"It's fine. My true body is fine as well. In addition, the second group of assassins, the stronger ones, they came for me, not for you, Master," Ning said.

Immortal Diancai shook his head. "Because I was undergoing my tribulation, you were distracted and had to worry about me; that's the reason why they chose this opportunity to assassinate you. In a normal situation where you didn't have to worry about me...you probably wouldn't even have had to fight. You could've slipped away long ago."

"Enough, enough! No need for the two of you, master and disciple, to stand on such ceremony," Immortal Fivecraze laughed loudly. "Our Black-White College now has a Celestial Immortal. This is a joyous event! Come, come, come. Hurry back to the Black-White College and let all of our fellow disciples learn of this and celebrate. You became a Celestial Immortal! That is the dream of every Immortal cultivator."

"Are we going to just publicize the fact that Master became a Celestial Immortal?" Ning asked.

Immortal Fivecraze laughed. "We would like to keep it a secret, but since even the Scion of the Blood God knows about it, news will quickly spread. Thus, we should still inform the Earth Immortals and Loose Immortals of the Black-White College. We should also notify Celestial Immortal Hunchmont of the Northmont clan of Stillwater."

"Celestial Immortal Hunchmont?" Ning was puzzled.

"There is a deeper meaning in this. The reason why our Black-White College is established directly within Stillwater City is because we long ago decided to share weal and woe with the Northmont clan of Stillwater," Immortal Fivecraze said. "The reason why the Black-White College can recruit all the geniuses we want from throughout the entire Stillwater City and not be impeded in the slightest is because of the Northmont clan; without their permission, how could this be possible?"

Ning now understood.

"Junior apprentice-brother, now that you are a Celestial Immortal, the Northmont clan will definitely want to further deepen the relationship between themselves and our Black-White College," Immortal



Fivecraze laughed. "And of course...our Black-White College has toiled so hard on their behalf. Now that you became a Celestial Immortal, they need to prepare a valuable gift to congratulate you. Junior apprentice-brother, aren't you lacking in formidable Immortal swords? Now let me think...where should we get such precious treasures? How about...from the Northmont clan of Stillwater?"

Ning nodded. Compared to those ancient clans, Ning was a bit lacking in treasures; after all, his Primaltwin needed all the Heavenraker swords for the [Heavenraker] sword-formation, while his true body needed six Immortal-ranked swords, but didn't have them! If he wanted to help out his master, he ideally had to offer five formidable Immortal-ranked swords; after all, his master already had five Immortal-ranked swords, just somewhat weak ones.

However, the Northmont clan had existed for countless generations after obtaining the marquisdom for Stillwater Commandery back during the Fiendgod Era. They had given birth to a number of Celestial Immortals, and they definitely had quite a few treasures. The Youngflame clan was capable of bringing out even twenty top-grade Immortal-ranked magic treasures if necessary; although the Northmont clan was a bit weaker, they still had quite a deep foundation.

"Let's go. Back to Stillwater City," Immortal Fivecraze urged.

"Let's go."

This time, they didn't need to so carefully creep into the dimensional corridor; rather, they tore a hole through space and returned straight to the world of the Grand Xia, then immediately used a spatial teleport to return to Stillwater City.

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The Eastwoods mountain range. One particular mountain, surrounded by layers of formations.

Ning was seated in the lotus position here.

"Master became a Celestial Immortal." Ning's face was covered with delight; he felt as though his heart and soul had just become much less burdened. "I want to prepare a valuable gift to congratulate master as well, but alas...all of the Immortal-ranked treasures I obtained from killing those seven Law Protectors were quite ordinary."

The seven Law Protectors had previously all been ordinary Loose Immortals, after all; it was only thanks to a secret technique that in the past twenty to thirty years, they had increased their levels of power to that of a five hundred thousand year old Loose Immortal. But although their power levels had risen, their magic treasures hadn't changed much yet.

"Time for me to go back now."

The reason why Ning had allowed himself to be pummeled like a beanbag without fleeing was because he didn't want to disrupt his master's tribulation. Now that the tribulation was over, it was time for him to go back.

Whoosh. Ning rose to his feet, staring at the surrounding area.

"Where exactly am I, and what is this place? Where in the Grand Xia Dynasty is it? Why is such a terrifyingly strong power hidden here?" The twelve white-robed figures who had attacked him...the

terrifying killing formation, 'Divine Venomflame of the Nine Heavens Cauldron'...that mysterious, foggy black cave entrance...Ning could tell from these things that this place was definitely quite extraordinary!

"I need to investigate. After suffering for so long, I need to at least ensure that I know who it is that caused me so much trouble."

"In addition...the world of the Grand Xia is in a state of chaos right now. This hidden power is most likely one of the causes of it. Only when one knows both one's self and one's foe can one win a hundred battles without fail," Ning mused to himself. Perhaps investigating this place might bring him some danger, but by relying on the 'Seventy-Two Transformations' of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], I can infiltrate and investigate this place. Not even True Immortals or Emyrean Gods would be able to discover who I truly was, unless they have a special divine ability that can see through the 'Seventy-Two Transformations'...but those are far too rare."

"Time to go!" Ning immediately activated the Greater Teleportation Dao-seal he had taken out. Swoosh! Ning instantly disappeared.

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"General," the Eastwoods sect leader reported, "Ji Ning has already used a Greater Teleportation Dao-seal to leave."

"If he's gone, he's gone." The silver-armored youth didn't care one whit.

.....

A million kilometers east of the Eastwoods mountain range. Ning suddenly appeared out of nowhere.

By relying on his Greater Teleportation Dao-seal, he could've teleported straight back to Swallow Mountain or Stillwater City, but Ning had to find out just who it was that had trapped him in that location. Thus, he had only teleported a million kilometers! He refused to believe that the enemy base spanned a million kilometers.

Swoosh. Ning flew towards the air above an ordinary commandery city. Sweeping it with his divine sense, he instantly found the most powerful person within the city; a Zifu Disciple.

Whoosh. Ning used a spatial teleport to appear in the person's study.

There was an old man in the study, leafing through some books.

"Who are you?" The old man lifted his head, instantly shocked.

"I'm going to ask you some questions," Ning said, and the old man's gaze instantly turned lost and dull.

"Which commandery is this?" Ning asked.

"Flamedoor Commandery," the old man said.

Ning was startled. Flamedoor Commandery; it wasn't too far away from Stillwater Commandery, just two commanderies away.

"What is the name of this city?" Ning asked.

“Weirflow,” the old man said.

Ning frowned. There were far too many commandery cities, and they often changed names. Once a tribe took over a commandery city, they would often change its name. For example, the first commandery city the Ji clan had taken over, they had renamed to the City of Ten Thousand Swords. Precisely because commandery cities changed names so often, maps generally wouldn’t even have city names written down for most of them.

“Which mountains and rivers are nearby?” Ning asked. “Large-scale ones.”

“More than a hundred thousand kilometers east of the city, there is a vast mountain range that spans tens of thousands of kilometers known as the Goosewine Mountains,” the old man said.

Ning’s eyes immediately lit up. The Goosewine Mountains?

Ning had long ago memorized a map of the entire domain of the Grand Xia Dynasty. He quickly ascertained his current, exact location! Upon doing so, Ning quickly was able to calculate who was located a million kilometers away from him: “The Eastwoods mountain range...the Eastwoods Sect! So that’s where they were hiding!”

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### **Book 14: Return to the Grand Xia Chapter 25: The Old Patriarch of the Northmont Clan of Stillwater**

After calculating that the mysterious mountain range had been the Eastwoods mountain range, Ji Ning didn’t immediately go to verify it. Instead, he used a spatial teleportation to return to Stillwater City. His master had just broken through to become a Celestial Immortal, after all; he had to be present for the announcement. If his true body wasn’t, his master and Immortal Fivecraze would probably still feel uneasy.

Stillwater City. The Black-White College.

Although it was noon, and although there had just been a big blizzard, the Headmaster’s Hall of the Black-White College was a place of joy right now.

“I am going to tell everyone a piece of earth-shatteringly good news. Our Black-White College...has given birth to a Celestial Immortal! This is the second Celestial Immortal our Black-White College has had since our founding!” Immortal Fivecraze spoke out loudly from the front of the hall, his voice echoing within it. The entire hall suddenly turned silent, a queer, shocked silence. All of the Void-level Earth Immortals and Loose Immortals were staring at Immortal Fivecraze in disbelief.

“Ten days ago, Ji Ning and I guarded junior apprentice-brother Diancai as he underwent the wind tribulation, the fire tribulation, the thunder tribulation, and the demonheart tribulation. After overcoming these four great tribulations, junior apprentice-brother Diancai has become a Celestial Immortal.” Immortal Fivecraze’s voice continued to echo out within the hall.

“Celestial Immortal?!”

“Junior apprentice-brother Diancai!”

“Senior apprentice-brother Diancai!”

“Ji Ning, has your master truly become a Celestial Immortal?”

“You idiots! Do you think I’d lie to you about something like this?!”

“Everyone, I have indeed become a Celestial Immortal, thanks to the protection of Ji Ning and senior apprentice-brother Fivecraze.”

Instantly, the entire Headmaster’s Hall turned into a storm of joy. Everyone called out in celebration, especially after Immortal Diancai personally released his aura of might. After everyone felt the aura of a Celestial Immortal coming from him, they began to rejoice even more!

To become a Celestial Immortal...the implications were extraordinary.

It must be understood that back in the annals of history, when the Black-White College gave birth to a Celestial Immortal, its status had risen to become equivalent to the Northmont clan of Stillwater and the local branch of the Raindragon Guard. Celestial Immortals were truly unaging. They would live for a very long time, and so long as they were alive, the entire sect would have a firm foundation..

As all the Loose Immortals and Earth Immortals were celebrating with wild agitation and excitement, Immortal Fivecraze sent Immortal Jadesea to the Northmont clan of Stillwater. He personally went to request a meeting with Celestial Immortal Hunchmont to notify him of this matter.

“Did you just say that Immortal Diancai has become a Celestial Immortal?” Celestial Immortal Hunchmont was very stable and solid, but even so he revealed a look of astonishment.

Celestial Immortals were far too rare.

Normally speaking, it was extremely rare for even a single one to appear in a million years within the world of the Grand Xia Dynasty. Even now, with the Three Realms in a state of chaos, they still were very, very rare.

“Senior Hunchmont, I wouldn’t dare lie about something like this,” the former headmaster, Immortal Jadesea, said with a laugh. “When senior apprentice-brother Diancai underwent his tribulation, he had Ji Ning and senior apprentice-brother Fivecraze protecting him.”

“Good, good, good.” Celestial Immortal Hunchmont leaned on his wooden staff, laughing as he spoke. “This is good news for the entire Stillwater Commandery. Go back now; I’ll make some preparations, then head to your Black-White College.”

“Yes. I’ll leave now.” Immortal Jadesea bowed respectfully, then immediately departed.

Celestial Immortal Hunchmont hesitated slightly within the room, then quickly departed, moving to a palace that the Northmont clan usually used for discussing major affairs. As he did, he barked, “Shut the palace doors. Everyone, depart.”

“Yes.” The guards all respectfully acknowledged the order.

Rumble...

After the palace door was shut, the enormous palace became shrouded within darkness.

Celestial Immortal Hunchmont waved his hand, and eight enormous candles suddenly began to blaze, lighting up the palace.

“Elder brother,” Hunchmont called out.

Instantly, the eyes of a sculpture of a strange beast that was located above the throne at the front of the hall suddenly lit up. It glanced towards him, and then the beast sculpture’s mouth moved as well.

“Hunchmont. What is it?”

“Elder brother, our Stillwater Commandery has given birth to a Celestial Immortal,” Hunchmont said hurriedly.

“Who?” The strange beast sculpture asked.

“Immortal Diancai of the Black-White College,” Hunchmont replied.

The strange beast sculpture said, “The Black-White College has the closest of relationships with our Stillwater Commandery. This has been true for countless years. After becoming a Celestial Immortal, Immortal Diancai will naturally stand on the side of our Northmont clan of Stillwater. Especially during a time like this...the more powerful the Northmont clan’s forces are, the better. This is absolutely wonderful news.”

“Right.” Hunchmont nodded. “That’s what I thought as well. But elder brother, Diancai has just made his breakthrough; what sort of gift should we give him? His sword-arts are based on the Five Elements; he is most suited for using five Immortal swords. Why don’t we give him a gift of five high-grade Immortal-ranked flying swords?”

“Do you remember how, back in the Fiendgod Era,” the strange beast sculpture said, “I battled against Patriarch Fiveghosts at the Yuchang River, then slew him? I acquired a set of five Immortal swords from that battle. I still have them. Give them to this Immortal Diancai.”

“But those are five top-grade Immortal-ranked swords!” Hunchmont was shocked.

“Times are changing,” the strange beast sculpture said. “In a normal era, a gift of five high-grade Immortal-ranked flying swords would already be quite an incredible gift...but you know as well as I do that the entire world of the Grand Xia is shaking right now. Even I can vaguely sense in my subconscious that a storm is coming...and it is very possible that our Northmont clan of Stillwater shall perish within it. Thus, it is important that we not be stingy at a time like this. Only when you are willing to give some things up are you able to gain even more important things!”

“After we give him a set of five top-grade Immortal-ranked flying swords, he will naturally feel grateful towards us...and thus we will have firmly pulled this Celestial Immortal Diancai under the Northmont clan’s war-banners. The Northmont clan of Stillwater currently only has two Celestial Immortals; if we count in Diancai, then we shall have three! That will make the foundations of the clan to be even more secure.”

“Elder brother, your plans are far-sighted,” Hunchmont said respectfully.

This elder brother of his had lived for far longer than he had.

In truth, this 'elder brother' was born unfathomably many generations before he had been. However, because both were Celestial Immortals, they considered themselves to be of the same generation in addressing each other. Still...Celestial Immortal Hunchmont revered this person greatly, because this person was the true foundation for the strength and prosperity of the Northmont clan.

"When you bring those five Immortal-ranked flying swords over, invite Celestial Immortal Diancai and that Ji Ning to come. I wish to see them both," the strange beast sculpture said.

"Elder brother, you wish to see them?" Hunchmont was amazed; even within the Northmont clan, the vast majority of the many generations of marquises had no idea that there was such a powerful Patriarch who was still alive. This was the reason why the generations of marquises were so cautious and reserved, not causing any trouble; they didn't know exactly how powerful their clan was.

"I certainly have to see Celestial Immortal Diancai; after all, in the future, when the storm truly erupts, he will be fighting alongside us, shoulder-to-shoulder. As for Ji Ning? His background is extraordinary, and in the end, he might prove to be even more important to us than Celestial Immortal Diancai," the strange beast sculpture said.

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The Headmaster's Hall of the Black-White College.

The many Loose Immortals and Earth Immortals, along with Immortal Diancai, were all gathered here. There was a feast ongoing. Just as the feast was halfway through and as everyone was celebrating, a hunchbacked old man entered the hall, leaning on a wooden staff.

"Senior Hunchmont."

"Senior Hunchmont."

Everyone immediately rose to their feet. Even Ning rose.

"Congratulations, fellow Daoist Diancai," Celestial Immortal Hunchmont laughed. "You've overcome the four tribulations of wind, fire, thunder, and demonheart; you are now a Celestial Immortal."

"I've only brought one thing with me. I've heard, fellow Daoist Diancai, that you are skilled in a Five Elements sword-art. Our Northmont clan just so happened to have a set of five top-grade Immortal-ranked flying swords in our treasury, and so I brought them to give them to you, fellow Daoist. Fellow Daoist Diancai, you absolutely must not decline."

"Top-grade Immortal-ranked??"

"Five of them?"

"Am I hearing things?"

The Loose Immortals and Earth Immortals of the Black-White College began to send mental messages to each other. They had all guessed that the Northmont clan would bring congratulatory gifts, but they hadn't expected that the gifts would be so valuable.

Ning was shocked upon hearing this as well. He had guessed that the gift would be five high-grade Immortal-ranked flying swords, not top-grade! The Northmont clan truly was generous!

Immortal Diancai was similarly shocked. Naturally, he hurriedly moved to refuse; this gift was far too valuable, bringing great pressure to bear down upon him.

“Diancai, don’t refuse!” Celestial Immortal Hunchmont feigned anger. “If you keep refusing, I’m going to turn and leave!”

Only then did Immortal Diancai accept the gift.

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The celebratory banquet continued until past midnight, when it finally concluded. Celestial Immortal Hunchmont stealthily sent a mental message to both Ji Ning and Immortal Diancai, and so after the banquet, the two of them both headed towards the Marquisate of Stillwater.

The Marquisate of Stillwater.

Ji Ning, Immortal Diancai, and Celestial Immortal Hunchmont were walking together.

“Senior Hunchmont,” Ning laughed, “We’ve arrived at the Marquisate. Senior, you can tell us what this is about now, right?”

Celestial Immortal Hunchmont laughed. “Patriarch Unity of our Northmont clan wishes to see you two.”

“Patriarch Unity of the Northmont clan?” Ji Ning and Immortal Diancai were both startled; where did this additional Northmont clan Patriarch come from?! When Ning had been weak, he had even thought that perhaps the Northmont clan didn’t have so much as a single Celestial Immortal; it was only later on that he learned of Hunchmont’s existence. He hadn’t expected them to have a second one!

Ning couldn’t help but sigh in amazement. The roots of an ancient clan such as this one truly were extremely deep.

“Can it be...the Supreme Sword Immortal, Celestial Immortal Unity?” Immortal Diancai cried out in shock.

“Right.” Celestial Immortal Hunchmont chortled.

“Master, who is this ‘Supreme Sword Immortal’, this ‘Celestial Immortal Unity’?” Ning asked, puzzled. Immortal Diancai explained, “I learned about him by accident. The Northmont clan of Stillwater has had quite a few Celestial Immortals in its history, but over the course of countless ages, most are presumed deceased. The most dazzling one of them all was this Supreme Sword Immortal! He existed back during the Fiendgod Era, and he submitted himself to the Xia Emperor’s rule, battling and fighting on the Xia Emperor’s behalf. Countless Fiendgods and countless Immortals died to his sword, and in the end, he won a marquisdom for the Northmont clan; the marquisdom of Stillwater Commandery. However...according to the legends, he perished during the Milky Way War. How is it that he is still alive?”

Ning, upon hearing this, was stunned. This old fellow had existed as far back as the Fiendgod Era, and had won the marquisdom for the Northmont clan?

“Haha, Patriarch Unity was indeed badly wounded during the Milky Way War, but he didn’t actually die. Still...that battle was a major blow for the Old Patriarch. The Old Patriarch felt so much grief, it was as though he had died. He never showed his face in the world again. Countless years have passed, but there has never been any word regarding the Old Patriarch as far as the outside world has been concerned, and so that’s why everyone believed him to have perished,” Celestial Immortal Hunchmont explained.

Immortal Diancai now understood.

“The five Immortal swords gifted to you came from Patriarch Fiveghosts, who Patriarch Unity slew back during the Fiendgod Era.” Celestial Immortal Hunchmont laughed. “It was the Old Patriarch who personally instructed for those swords to be given to you.”

Immortal Diancai nodded, then said to Ji Ning, “Ji Ning, when you see senior Unity, you must not behave improperly.”

Ning nodded.

He felt tremendous curiosity towards this Patriarch Unity; this was a truly legendary figure, one who had led his clan to rove the world in the Fiendgod Era, fighting and conquering countless foes before suddenly vanishing for seemingly all eternity. It must be understood that for a person to hide himself so thoroughly as to completely sever all contact with all other Celestial Immortals was quite a painful choice. Not everyone had an ability like Ning’s ‘Seventy-Two Transformations’, after all.

“Here we are. My elder brother is right inside.” Celestial Immortal Hunchmont stood outside a seemingly ordinary courtyard.

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### **Book 14: Return to the Grand Xia Chapter 26: The State of Affairs**

He pushed open the door to the courtyard. This was a very large courtyard, with grapes, willow trees, apple trees, and other types of trees within it. However, because it was winter, it naturally appeared a bit desolate.

Upon entering, Ji Ning felt as though this was the residence of an ordinary mortal.

Soon, Ning locked his gaze upon a distant gray-robed youth. The gray-robed youth’s head was raised, and he was looking at a willow tree. “It’s been a long time since I’ve returned to the Grand Xia...but this courtyard is still laid out the same way it was in the past. It hasn’t changed at all. Hunchmont...thank you.”

“This is the only place you like to stay in, elder brother. I naturally had to keep it in good shape,” Celestial Immortal Hunchmont said.

The gray-robed youth turned his head to look at them.

Ning and Immortal Diancai were both startled. The gaze of this gray-robed youth was as deep and penetrating as the waters of an icy pool. His aura was extremely profound. Although the two knew very little about him, both Ning and Immortal Diancai could feel...that if they were to fight, they probably would be far from being a match for this figure.



“It seems he is a supreme figure amongst Celestial Immortals,” Ning mused to himself. There could be huge differences in power amongst Celestial Immortals, much like how Ning, despite being merely a Void-level Earth Immortals, could effortlessly sweep groups of Loose Immortals and Earth Immortals with his power.

“Greetings to you, senior Unity,” Ning said.

“Greetings to you, fellow Daoist Unity,” Immortal Diancai said.

Ning was still technically at the Void-level, after all; since he was unwilling to reveal his status as a Daofather’s disciple, he naturally addressed Celestial Immortals the way most ordinary Void-level Earth Immortals would; as ‘senior’.

“Diancai? Ji Ning?” The gray-robed youth looked at the two of them, a hint of a smile on his face. He then casually pointed at nearby wooden chairs. “Sit.” With a gesture from his hand, all the dust disappeared from the chairs.

The gray-robed youth was the first to sit down. He even produced a tea kettle and teacups, pouring each of them a cup. “This is green tea. You can drink it after boiling it; it is a fairly common refreshment in many major worlds. However, it’s a bit rarer in our world of the Grand Xia. Have a taste. I personally planted this tea tree and personally collected the tea leaves.”

Ning and Immortal Diancai were both rather startled. They immediately tasted it.

Ning could sense a thick aroma waft into his mouth and spread throughout his entire body, the flavor limitless. “Good tea.”

“Ji Ning, you like to drink tea as well?” The gray-robed youth asked curiously.

Ning was startled. He hurriedly replied, “I occasionally drink it.”

In truth, just now Ning was unconsciously drawing from his tea-drinking experiences from his past life on Earth.

“Tea is quite flavorful. I took on many masters to study this art, to study various types of tea trees, how to plant tea trees, how to select the right soil, and use the proper type of water...” The gray-robed youth laughed. “Haha, enough of that. I’m happy to talk about this all day, but I imagine that you would be bored senseless by it.”

Immortal Diancai asked curiously, “Fellow Daoist Unity, you’ve taken on many masters?”

“All mortals,” the gray-robed youth laughed.

“Mortals?”

Immortal Diancai and Ji Ning both felt startled; a Celestial Immortal who was willing to take on a mortal as a master? Not just anyone could do something like this!

“I invited the two of you over for a nice chat,” the gray-robed youth said with a laugh. “A storm is about to befall the Three Realms, and the world of the Grand Xia is naturally not going to be able to avoid it. In addition, there are some hidden powers who are making use of this storm to cause waves of their own.

In truth...ever since the Milky Way War, I've been living the life of an ordinary mortal. I've been quite relaxed...but this can no longer continue."

"The life of an ordinary mortal?" Immortal Diancai frowned.

"If you wish to live a longer live, then you need to avoid being stained by karma," the gray-robed youth said with a laugh. "What is karma? If you have a friend, and your friend falls into danger, you will naturally go help him; this is karma! If someone like me always hides within a minor world of mortals and doesn't interact with any Celestial Immortals, with all my friends and enemies believing me to be dead...then they naturally won't come bother me. This can be considered 'severing karma'."

"I live a carefree life. Naturally, I'm able to live a long, long life." The gray-robed youth looked towards Immortal Diancai, then laughed, "After this storm ends, fellow Daoist Diancai, you should also set up a 'false death' then hide yourself in a minor world of mortals. You can live for trillions of years and still probably wouldn't perish...unless, of course, you encounter yet another storm like this one, which no one will be able to avoid."

Ning and Immortal Diancai were speechless upon hearing this.

They understood...that this was indeed a fine way to 'live a long life'. However, not everyone had this sort of willpower, to go live the life of a mortal despite being an exalted Celestial Immortal.

"Senior Unity, you say that no one will be able to avoid this coming storm?" Ning hurriedly asked.

"Perhaps the truly exalted Daofathers will remain safe," the gray-robed youth said, "But for Celestial Immortals like us, and perhaps even for True Immortals and Empyrean Gods, I wager...it will be hard to avoid this storm. Based on what I know, this storm is about to envelop the entire Three Realms. A small place like our Stillwater Commandery has also been thrown into chaos. For example, the rise of the Blood God Church!"

"Senior, you should be able to eradicate the Blood God Church, right?" Ning asked.

"Eradicating them would naturally be easy. If I made a trip, they would be immediately wiped out. But if I did that, then the Northmont clan of Stillwater will most likely be viewed as a dangerous source of trouble for that hidden power," the gray-robed youth said. "Thus...we shall simply continue the low-level struggle against them. We'll slowly play with the Blood God Church. The biggest benefit of going with the flow is that when the true storm comes, we'll all be able to join together to fight side-by-side."

Immortal Diancai asked, "A hidden power? Which power?"

"I don't know either. I imagine you, Diancai, also know that the Grand Xia Dynasty is currently in a state of great chaos. Clearly, the various evil or berserk clans and sects now all have hidden supporters," the gray-robed youth said. "In fact, I suspect...that some marquises have already thrown their support to the hidden power."

"The marquises have changed their loyalties?!" Ning and Diancai were both shocked.

"The waters are far too muddy right now. No one knows exactly what is going on. Not even the Xia Emperor dares to truly exert his power right now. Everyone is building up their power, waiting quietly to fight," the gray-robed youth said. "It is the Xia Emperor's job to deal with the hidden power; as for us, all

we need to do is survive. To allow our clans and sects to survive! Thus, I hope that both of you, Ji Ning and fellow Daoist Diancai, shall stand together alongside myself and Hunchmont. If we join forces...we'll be able to protect the Black-White College, protect Swallow Mountain, and protect the Northmont clan of Stillwater."

Ning and Immortal Diancai exchanged a glance.

"Alright."

"Of course."

Both of them nodded, agreeing to this alliance.

One chopstick is easily broken. A bundle of chopsticks are hard to break!

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Because the Black-White College had a long-standing relationship with the Northmont clan, Ning and his master naturally decided to fight on their side and ally with them!

"I wonder if you two seniors are aware...of any powers within the world of the Grand Xia who are skilled in the Ba-Serpent Formation?" Ning asked.

"Ba-Serpent Formation?" Looks of puzzlement appeared on the faces of the gray-robed youth and Hunchmont.

"There are some powers in the Three Realms that are skilled in the Ba-Serpent Formation, but as for the world of the Grand Xia...I truly haven't heard of any." The gray-robed youth shook his head.

"Hunchmont, have you heard anything? You are often here at the Grand Xia; you should know more than me."

"I haven't heard of anything either. The Ba-Serpent Formation is no ordinary formation." Celestial Immortal Hunchmont shook his head as well.

The next dawn.

Ji Ning arrived at the Heavenly Treasures Mountain of Stillwater City. One of the Diremonster Immortals of the Mountain, a Celestial Fox Immortal, personally came to greet him. She was the highest-ranking member of this branch of the Heavenly Treasures Mountain.

"Fellow Daoist Ji Ning, might I ask why you have come to my Heavenly Treasures Mountain?" The Celestial Fox Immortal was astonishingly alluring, and her bewitching body was sinuous and curvaceous beneath the gauze she wore.

Ning said, "I wish to investigate regarding a technique known as the Ba-Serpent Formation."

"Ba-Serpent Formation?" The Celestial Fox Immortal was startled. "Alright. Fellow Daoist Ji Ning, wait a moment. I'll go look."

"Alright." Ning nodded.

He ended up waiting nearly a full hour.

Ning stared in astonishment as a silver-haired man suddenly appeared before him.

When he had gone to the imperial capital of the Grand Xia to sell off that arrow, he had encountered this individual, 'Skyfox'. The reason why many of the branches of the Heavenly Treasures Mountain of the Grand Xia Dynasty were all managed by Celestial Foxes was precisely because the main Heavenly Treasures Mountain was established by this individual, Patriarch Skyfox – the silver-haired man before him.

"Fellow Daoist Ji Ning, you wish to learn about the Ba-Serpent Formation?" The silver-haired man looked towards Ning.

"Senior Skyfox, why have you come to Stillwater?" Ning asked, surprised.

The silver-haired man laughed. Ever since the Xia Emperor had become convinced that Ning had a huge background, the Heavenly Treasures Mountain had naturally elevated Ning's status in their eyes to an extremely high level. He was given more latitude than even most Celestial Immortal Patriarchs. When he made an intelligence request, this request was instantly relayed to the main headquarters, and once the main headquarters knew, Patriarch Skyfox had personally hurried to Stillwater.

"I know that you wish to learn of the Ba-Serpent Formation, and so I came," the silver-haired man said.

"Does this involve something major?" Ning asked, surprised.

"Yes." The silver-haired man nodded. "Very major. This intelligence report is very precious as well. The Heavenly Treasures Mountain wouldn't even give this report to most Celestial Immortals...but the Xia Emperor views you with great favor, and so we can give it to you."

Hearing that the Xia Emperor viewed himself with favor, Ning couldn't help but say in a rather helpless way, "The Xia Emperor isn't angry at me for not accepting Sword Immortal Evergreen as my master?"

"Your choice of a master is primarily your own affair. No matter what, you are still a member of the world of the Grand Xia; you are one of our own. How could the Xia Emperor be such a petty person?" The silver-haired man laughed.

Ning instantly felt relieved. He could tell that clearly, the Xia Emperor wished to befriend him.

"The Ba-Serpent Formation...?" Ning looked at him.

"The Ba-Serpent Formation. In the entire world of the Grand Xia, there is only a single power that knows how to execute it: Bloodcloud Hall," the silver-haired man said.

"Bloodcloud Hall?" Ning was puzzled; he had never heard of it before.

"This is a very secretive assassin's guild; the number one assassin's guild of the Grand Xia." The silver-haired man waved his hand, delivering a thick tome towards Ning. "There are a series of intelligence reports here regarding Bloodcloud Hall, as well as the links between them and some other hidden powers. All of these hidden powers, including Bloodcloud Hall, belong to a single mastermind, the great foe of the Grand Xia."

Ning was startled.

Almost all of the information regarding the powers serving this enemy mastermind had been recorded down in this book. This sort of intelligence report was indeed priceless; the Xia Emperor was actually willing to let him see it?

“What, don’t you want to read it? This is a detailed report that came at a price of countless lives. Although we aren’t able to completely uncover the face of the enemy mastermind...we can vaguely make him out now.” The silver-haired man continued to hold out that thick tome.

Ning laughed, then stretched his hand out and accepted it.

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### **Book 14: Return to the Grand Xia Chapter 27: The Sixteenth Stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]**

Roughly thirty years ago, mysterious organizations began to appear throughout the entire world of the Grand Xia. It seemed as though they had come from another world.

One of the organizations was known as Bloodcloud Hall.

Bloodcloud Hall was an assassin’s guild. It didn’t participate in any political struggles; whoever gave them treasures, they would help in carrying out assassinations! They would assassinate anyone from puny mortals to mighty Celestial Immortals! They could kill anyone in the entire world of the Grand Xia, aside from the Grand Xia Emperor himself. Ever since Bloodcloud Hall had appeared in the world of the Grand Xia, they had delivered talismans to the various supreme marquises, clans, tribes, and sects. Through the talisman, one could reach out to Bloodcloud Hall and go to the legendary ‘Bloodcloud Hall world’. There, they could offer treasures and sign agreements. Bloodcloud Hall would then go kill their targets.

If the mission failed, Bloodcloud Hall would try again. If Bloodcloud Hall chose to give up the mission, they would return all the treasures taken.

If they succeeded...neither side would owe the other anything.

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There was another power, one known as the Seamless Gate.

This was a power that was far more mysterious than Bloodcloud Hall. The Seamless Gate had also revealed traces of itself in the world of the Grand Xia roughly thirty years ago. They had furiously stirred up trouble throughout the entire world; for example, here in Stillwater Commandery, they had gifted the Blood God Church, which had always felt hatred towards the Northmont clan of Stillwater, with secret arts and treasures so as to help them grow much stronger.

In the past, the Blood God Church had been weak, and so the Blood God Church had suppressed its hatred for the Northmont clan. Now that they had grown powerful, and with the blandishments of the Seamless Gate...they had instantly begun to launch frenzied attacks.

The Seamless Gate had moved to seduce many powers in many places.

They would bestow treasures and secret arts...and would reward those who killed powerful figures! The more merits their supporters rendered, the more gifts they would bestow.

“What is this Seamless Gate trying to do?” Ning read through the intelligence report. He couldn’t help but feel dazed and tongue-tied. “They are causing so much trouble in the entire world of the Grand Xia...they are causing everyone to kill as many people as possible, and the more one kills, the more treasures and secret arts one would acquire?”

No one knew where the headquarters of the Seamless Gate was located.

In fact, no one had even located a gathering point for the Seamless Gate. The seduced powers all had to wait for the envoys of the Seamless Gate to personally come visit them.

The Seamless Gate was extremely powerful...their white-robed envoys were all Loose Immortals and Earth Immortals, while their golden-robed envoys were Celestial Immortals. More than three hundred different Celestial Immortals had already been verified!

“Three hundred?!” A look of utter shock appeared on Ning’s face as he read this figure.

Terrifying. Utterly terrifying!

During the Conclave of Immortal Destiny, just a thousand or so Celestial Immortals had come from throughout the Grand Xia Dynasty to the main hall of the Skylight Palace. Of course, there were even more who had remained at home, declining to participate, such as Celestial Immortals Hunchmont and Unity. The Youngflame clan, in turn, had only sent Patriarch Arcanum.

The entire Grand Xia Dynasty most likely had several thousand Celestial Immortals, perhaps even as many as ten thousand.

But...

They represented the full force available to all the marquises, schools, and sects. They weren’t necessarily part of the imperial clan’s power! There was a limit to how powerful the imperial clan was, and in fact there had even been rebellions led by marquises in the past. Even powers like the Northmont clan of Stillwater were acting in a low-key manner, watching passively as events unfolded. There was no way they would act in an insane manner and go serve as cannon fodder for the imperial clan.

“We have already discovered more than three hundred Celestial Immortals under this single organization, the Seamless Gate. In the entire Grand Xia Dynasty, aside from them, most likely only the imperial clan is this powerful. None of the other clans or tribes are so strong.’ Ning was secretly amazed by this. “No wonder not even the Xia Emperor dares to act rashly; after all, the three hundred-plus so-called ‘golden-robed envoys’ are merely ‘envoys’; they don’t represent the Seamless Gate’s full power.”

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Bloodcloud Hall was willing to kill anyone for treasures; even the imperial Xia clan could hire them to take on assassination missions.

The Seamless Gate stirred up trouble throughout the world, causing chaos everywhere. But no one knew anything about the true power, headquarters, or gathering points for the Seamless Gate.

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Aside from these two major powers, there were other hidden powers as well...but they were even more low-key, showing very few traces of themselves. These two major powers were too brash; naturally, there was a bit more information regarding them.

Be it the already-revealed Bloodcloud Hall and Seamless Gate, or those other hidden powers...

They shared a commonality.

They all appeared roughly thirty years ago!

"No wonder the Xia Emperor is being so cautious. Bloodcloud Hall and the Seamless Gate are already terrifyingly powerful...much less the other hidden powers," Ning mused to himself. By now, he had finished reading the book.

"Don't worry too much," the silver-haired man laughed. "The person who controls this world of the Grand Xia is still his Imperial Majesty! These powers that are causing trouble in secret, such as the Seamless Gate...if they truly had the power to shake the imperial clan, they wouldn't be hiding around furtively, not daring to show their faces, nor would they act in such indirect ways."

Ning was momentarily startled, but a moment later he nodded. "Right. I understand."

It made sense. Even the likes of the Northmont clan of Stillwater had secret powers behind them such as Patriarch Unity. As the controller of this entire major world, and as the Grand Xia Emperor who came from the Primordial Imperial Clan...how much power had the Xia Emperor built up over the countless ages? The control the Grand Xia Emperor had over this entire world was extremely deep. Just look at the Raindragon Guard!

Every single commandery city had a Raindragon Guard branch, and every single Raindragon Guard branch was comparable in power to the local marquis.

The Raindragon Guard, as a whole, possessed utterly enormous power!

"His Imperial Majesty was able to bring an end to the era of Fiendgods in this world; he's not someone that these minor powers are capable of shaking. The storm has yet to truly come; this is nothing but a bit of wind and a few sprinkles of rain." The silver-haired man smiled as he looked at Ning. "I imagine, Ji Ning, that you now understand things a bit better, and also see clearly the overall state of affairs here in the world of the Grand Xia."

"Right." Ning nodded. "Thank you, senior Skyfox. Oh...I should be thanking his Imperial Majesty for allowing me to see this intelligence report. If it wasn't for this report, I would have no idea about what Bloodcloud Hall was, to say nothing of the Seamless Gate."

"If there's anything you need, you can go to the imperial capital of the Grand Xia and seek me out," the silver-haired man said with a laugh. "I'll naturally do my best to help out."

"Definitely." Ning nodded, then suddenly asked, "Right, has there been any news of my senior apprentice-sister, Yu Wei?"

"After Yu Wei accompanied Patriarch Lu in leaving the world of the Grand Xia more than thirty years ago, she has yet to return. I imagine she is still training," the silver-haired man said.

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Ning led Uncle White out of Stillwater City, returning to Swallow Mountain.

On this trip to the Heavenly Treasures Mountain, he had gotten the answer he had come for; the Ba-Serpent Formation was a formation often used by the assassins of Bloodcloud Hall. The twelve who had tried to assassinate Ning were then most likely assassins of Bloodcloud Hall. As for who had invited Bloodcloud Hall to do the deed...the first thought Ning had was of the Youngflame clan. Aside from them, Ning could think of no others.

After returning to Swallow Mountain, Uncle White continued to lay down new formations. He had previously only laid down a single one of the supreme killing formations; there were two more that had yet to be laid down. As for Ning, he focused on comprehending the Dao and training. He would alternate between working on his sword-arts and training archery, in accordance with [Houyi's Archery].

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Ning was living a peaceful life, but the world of the Grand Xia as a whole wasn't peaceful at all.

In almost every commandery, and even in the four seas, the Seamless Gate continuously fanned the flames of chaos. Everyone, including the members of the imperial Xia clan as well as the various marquisates, began to grow cautious. This was because they couldn't tell who their enemy was; in fact, they couldn't even find out where their enemy was located.

And during this period of time...the Youngflame clan was investigating Ji Ning.

"Even Bloodcloud Hall demanded twenty top-grade Immortal-ranked magic treasures! Although they went too far in what they asked for, based on how Bloodcloud Hall usually prices their assassination missions, this high request suggests exactly how difficult the target is to deal with. Ji Ning's power must be even greater than what we believed it to be; otherwise, he wouldn't have been able to withstand Bloodcloud Hall's first attempt."

"In thirty or so short years, he has increased his power immeasurably, compared to back during the Conclave of Immortal Destiny. If he is permitted to continue to develop like this...I'm afraid that in thirty more years, it will be extremely difficult for our Youngflame clan to kill him."

"He has to be eliminated as soon as possible. Otherwise...he will cause a disaster."

"Since Bloodcloud Hall has named such a high price...let's do it ourselves. We have to succeed on our first try."

"Right. We have to plan this perfectly; we need to treat Ji Ning as we would a supreme Celestial Immortal."

Everyone within the Youngflame clan acknowledged the threat Ji Ning posed to them. In truth, ever since the Youngflame clan sent people to attempt to wipe out the Ji clan, the hatred between the two sides had increased to a very high level. The assassination attempt in the imperial capital of the Grand Xia caused this feud to become even more difficult to result.



As for this assassination attempt by Bloodcloud Hall, since Ji Ning had no other major enemies in the Grand Xia Dynasty aside from the Youngflame clan, he would probably quickly arrive at the right conclusion...

“Get rid of him.”

“Get rid of him as soon as possible.”

The Youngflame clan began their investigations, but Swallow Mountain was completely impregnable. The terrifying formations surrounding it were even more frightening than the ones surrounding the Youngflame clan’s headquarters.

“There’s no way to assassinate him within Swallow Mountain.”

“Ji Ning is in Swallow Mountain right now. We have to wait.”

“Let’s wait.”

.....

Ning’s life in Swallow Mountain was quite relaxed. No matter how much turmoil there was in the outside world, he just quietly trained at home.

Winter passed. Spring came. Then summer. Then late autumn.

Ning stayed at Serpentwing Lake of Swallow Mountain this entire time!

Actually, this entire time, Ning had wanted to make a trip to the Eastwoods mountain range; after all, he had suffered an attack there, and that was the only base belonging to the mysterious power that he knew about. In addition, based on what he saw, he believed that his opponents shouldn’t be able to do anything to him. He naturally wanted to go back! And by relying on his Seventy-Two Transformations, there was no need for him to worry about his identity being exposed; he could effortlessly penetrate their defenses.

But...

Ning hadn’t gone. This was because he was waiting for something; for his breakthrough in the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]! He had reached the fifteenth level of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] more than ten years ago; during recent years, aside from training in sword-arts and archery, he also trained in the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] every single day. Because of the power of his body, energy from the Solar Star and the Lunar Star was filling his body at a truly shocking rate...but at his current level, each new breakthrough required a similarly shocking amount of divine power. However, Ning could feel as though his breakthrough was coming soon.

This was why he had refrained from going to the Eastwoods mountain range; after he made a new breakthrough and his power increased dramatically, he would have a better chance in his investigations!

“Autumn Leaf, I’m going to rest a bit on the lake. I’ll come back at night. Prepare some good food,” Ning said with a grin.

“Right.” Autumn Leaf nodded repeatedly.

Ning was standing by the beach. As he waved his hand, a little boat appeared on the surface of the lake. Ning took a single step forward, stepping into the boat. The little boat then floated away towards the depths of Serpentwing Lake.

Autumn Leaf watched from afar. After watching for quite some time, she saw that Ning had completely disappeared within the distant mist. Only then did she turn and go back home.

.....

The boat floated on the lake. Ning lay down within the boat, almost subconsciously beginning to absorb energy from the Solar Star and the Lunar Star.

Suddenly...as if sensing something, Ning opened his eyes. He could sense that the divine power in his body had reached a limit. He was about to make his breakthrough! He immediately rose to his feet, then took a single step forward, leaving the little boat and coming to stand on the waters of the lake.

Rumble...

Rumble...

From infinitely far away, the two Supreme Stars in the void, the Solar Star and the Lunar Star, instantly began to transmit their power through the void, all the way down until it reached Ji Ning's body...