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Book 16: The Nihilum Zone Chapter 16: Returning to the Grand Xia

Yu Wei's demonheart tribulation persisted for an extremely long period of time. Patriarch Lu, however, just stood there quietly atop the nearby mountain peak, watching in complete calmness.

Suddenly...

A sound rang out in the world, a sound which symbolized Heaven and Earth. It was incomparably profound, majestic, and intoxicating. As this Immortal melody rang out, rainbow-colored clouds began to appear in the sky, and the ground became filled with golden lotus flowers. It seemed as though the very center of the world was this black-robed maiden that sat in the lotus position.

Yu Wei's eyes were already open. A deep, longing love was in her eyes, but a hint of a smile was on her lips.

A flood of natural energy was gathering around her, and her body was beginning to emanate with an Immortal, spiritual aura.

"Heaven has bestowed propitious clouds, and Earth has given birth to golden lotuses." The distant Patriarch Lu smiled, then clapped his hands lightly. "From now on, you shall no longer be subject to the Three Calamities or Nine Tribulations. A fine Celestial Immortal...a fine Celestial Immortal!"

As for Yu Wei, she flew towards the distant Patriarch Lu.

"Well done." Patriarch Lu was very satisfied. "This tribulation is the greatest tribulation an Immortal cultivator shall ever face. After having overcome it...you have now ascended to the skies in a single step. Your life shall now last as long as the heavens themselves." Of course, although one would no longer be bothered by heavenly tribulations and one had a truly unlimited lifespan, if other, more powerful Immortals or Fiendgods killed you, there was nothing for it.

Even True Gods and Daofathers...even Pangu...would perish.

"If not for your tutelage, Master, your disciple definitely wouldn't have overcome this Celestial Tribulation." Yu Wei fell to her knees, respectfully pressing her head downwards and kowtowing in thanks. She had been very strong in her past life, but she hadn't even been able to withstand six nine-sets of thunder tribulation, much less seven nine-sets. She had advanced at an astonishingly rapid pace while accompanying Patriarch Lu.

Patriarch Lu nodded lightly. After Yu Wei rose to her feet, he finally said, "Yu Wei..."

Yu Wei was startled. Patriarch Lu very rarely referred to her by her name.

"There is something which I have been hiding for you, so as to prevent it from impacting your Celestial Tribulation. And now...it is time to tell you," Patriarch Lu said.

"Master, what is it?" Yu Wei hurriedly asked. In her heart, however, she had a bad feeling. So as to prevent it from impacting her Celestial Tribulation? Her Dao-heart was incredibly strong; what sort of

matter could possibly make Patriarch Lu worry about her Celestial Tribulation being affected? A major matter, for sure...and one which involved something she truly cared about.

"Is it...my junior apprentice-brother, Ji Ning?" Yu Wei looked at Patriarch Lu. Her parents had died long ago; the only person she truly cared about in this world was her Dao-companion, Ji Ning.

"Right. It is Ji Ning." Patriarch Lu nodded.

Yu Wei's face changed slightly.

Patriarch Lu continued, "Just as you were preparing for your tribulation, the Xia Emperor of your Grand Xia world informed me of something. He said that Ji Ning fought a battle against nine Celestial Immortals of his hated foes, the Youngflame clan, in their Oldjade mountain range. That battle had severe repercussions; in fact, a number of Fiendgods that had been imprisoned there for countless years were released as well. However...the main event was still the battle between Ji Ning and the Celestial Immortals of the Youngflame clan. Two of the Celestial Immortals of the Youngflame clan perished; Celestial Immortal Goldclock and Celestial Immortal Flamefish. Ji Ning had the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] protecting him, and so the Youngflame clan was completely unable to do anything to him. Thus...they played a trick. They caused Ji Ning to accidentally kill ten billion mortals."

Yu Wei's face instantly turned ashen!

She didn't have any time to feel astonished by the Youngflame clan having nine Celestial Immortals, or to feel stunned by the fact that Ning had killed two of them. She didn't have any time to feel amazed by the fact that he possessed the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] either. In her mind, a single phrase echoed repeatedly: 'Accidentally kill ten billion mortals'.

"He accidentally killed ten billion mortals?" Yu Wei mumbled to herself.

The Dao of the Heavens were without compassion.

It judged karmic virtue and karmic sin according to its own rules. Even if one killed by accident, one still had to shoulder an appropriate amount of the karmic blame...and the amount of sin generated by killing that many mortals was utterly terrifying to even think about.

"His sin towered to the skies, causing karmic sinflames to descend," Patriarch Lu continued. "The Ancestor of the Youngflame clan, Immortal Venomfreak, used the Protocosmic spirit-treasure, 'Worldhold Pagoda', to teleport the still-burning Ji Ning outside of the world of the Grand Xia, to an undoubtedly dangerous location. The seven days have long since passed; Ji Ning was able to successfully endure the karmic sinflames, but he still hasn't returned to the world of the Grand Xia. This means he should be trapped in some extremely dangerous place which he cannot return from."

Yu Wei's heart shook, falling and rising and falling again.

Upon hearing that Ning had survived the karmic sinflames, she had let out a sigh of relief...but upon hearing that he had yet to return, she grew nervous again.

"Master...is there anything you can do?" Yu Wei immediately asked.

"Nothing." Patriarch Lu shook his head. "The Worldhold Pagoda is a Protocosmic spirit-treasure with unfathomable power; it is even capable of sending someone to the infinite Void outside of the Three

Realms. The Void outside the Three Realms contains many danger zones, and Greater Teleportation is useless within many of those danger zones. In fact...there are some places where even I would die if I were trapped there. Since Ji Ning has not yet returned, he definitely must be trapped there. The longer he stays there, the more dangerous it will be...and perhaps one day, he shall die.”

Yu Wei’s body shook.

“There’s nothing I can do. There’s nothing you can do either.” Patriarch Lu shook his head. “The danger zones of the infinite Void...most likely, only True Gods or Daofathers would dare to enter those places. However...those danger zones are far too vast! Even if a Daofather was to personally go out and investigate them, some danger zones would take tens of thousands of years, or even millions of years, to search through.”

The Nihilum Zone of the Primordial Ruinworld, for example, surrounded and covered the entire Primordial Ruinworld. If a Daofather wanted to search it...he would have to spend an extremely long period of time.

“Then...then...” Yu Wei found it hard to accept this.

“You can only wait.” Patriarch Lu continued, “Ji Ning has trained in the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]; his master is definitely a Daofather. Only a Daofather has even a hint of a chance of finding him within the infinite Void. However...it’s hard to say how long that would take. I hope that his master will find him while he is still alive.”

Yu Wei bit her lips.

“What are your plans now?” Patriarch Lu looked at Yu Wei.

“I wish to return to the Grand Xia,” Yu Wei said softly.

“Mm.” Patriarch Lu nodded slightly.

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The world of the Grand Xia. Black clouds filled the skies above Stillwater City. Thunder and lightning were flashing within the dark clouds, occasionally striking downwards. Thunderclaps rang out incessantly, and an enormous amount of rain was falling.

Within the lightning and the rain, a black-robed woman exited from a spatial tear that she had created above Stillwater city.

“Junior apprentice-brother, I’ve returned...so why aren’t you here?” The black-robed woman looked downwards at Stillwater City, but only felt pulses of sadness and worry. In her past life, her heart had been encased in ice; after her parents died in this life, her heart had only grown even colder. The only person she truly cared about in her heart was Ji Ning; for Ning’s sake, she would even be willing to annihilate the heavens themselves without any hesitation.

In fact...when she had faced the demonheart tribulation of the Celestial Tribulation, she had relied on the love and affection she felt for Ning to help her endure that extremely long tribulation. This had caused the love she bore for Ning to grow even deeper. Within the illusions of the demonheart tribulation, she and Ning had experienced three thousand years of life together.

Whoosh.

Yu Wei flew downwards into Stillwater City, into the Black-White College.

She scanned the Black-White College with her coresense.

Rumble...

Another strand of coresense touched hers.

Whoosh.

Immortal Diancai instantly appeared in the air above his residence. Raising his head, he saw the distant black-robed maiden who was flying in his direction. He couldn't help but call out with surprise and delight, "Yu Wei, you overcame the Celestial Tribulation?"

Immortal Diancai could hardly believe it; he wouldn't have been surprised by Ning overcome the Celestial Tribulation, but Yu Wei?

Yu Wei had failed at the Conclave of Immortal Destiny, during the trials within the Brightmoon Diagram of the Mountains and Rivers. There was no way her talent compared in any way to Ning's. It had only been a few short decades; Ning hadn't undergone his tribulation yet, so how was it that she had overcome hers? Could it be that Yu Wei's Celestial Tribulation had been extremely weak? Or perhaps that Patriarch Lu was so formidable at teaching disciples that Yu Wei had been successful in overcoming her tribulation?

"Yes." Yu Wei nodded gently.

Immortal Diancai nodded repeatedly in excitement. "Good. This is a chaotic era; for our Black-White College to now give birth to another Celestial Immortal is wonderful. Wonderful!" But suddenly, Immortal Diancai thought of Ji Ning, and the fact that he had become Dao-companions with Yu Wei. His smile instantly vanished; in fact, a hesitant look appeared on his face.

Should he tell her?

"Uncle-master Diancai..." Yu Wei said.

"No need to call me 'uncle-master'," Immortal Diancai immediately said. Given Yu Wei's current level of power, the two could converse as equals; after all, for Immortal cultivators, age didn't really matter. For example, Yu Wei had reawakened her former memories, and if one counted her past life, she was much older than Immortal Diancai.

"You are Ji Ning's master; I naturally need to address you as 'uncle-master'," Yu Wei said. "Are you about to tell me about Ji Ning?"

Immortal Diancai was startled. "You...you already know?"

"Before I returned to the Grand Xia, my master informed me," Yu Wei said.

"Will Patriarch Lu be able to do anything?" Immortal Diancai asked frantically, "Does he know where Ji Ning was exiled to?"

“He doesn’t know.” Yu Wei shook her head.

“Then we should...?” Immortal Diancai had been worrying about Ning this entire time.

“Wait,” Yu Wei replied.

Immortal Diancai suddenly thought of something. He hurriedly instructed, “Ji Ning killed two of the Youngflame clan’s Celestial Immortals; they are utterly enraged by this. Although they’ve exiled Ji Ning, they aren’t going to let it rest! Any members of the Ji clan who dared to leave Swallow Mountain have all been killed by the Youngflame clan. You are Ji Ning’s Dao-companion; once they learn that you are back, they’ll probably act against you. You just became a Celestial Immortal; it’s unwise for you to fight against the Youngflame clan head-on for now.”

“Act against me?” A hint of a cold, murderous look flashed past Yu Wei’s eyes.

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The Nihilum Zone of the Primordial Ruinworld.

Ning was knocked flying backwards. After stabilizing himself, he looked at his surroundings, then suddenly began to laugh. His laughter was filled with madness, but it was also filled with a hint of longing and apology; longing for his loved ones, and an apology for leaving them.

“I won’t be able to accompany you any further,” Ning murmured to himself. His divine power had been almost completely used up.

However, the distant violet-caped warrior who had been battling Ning actually retreated.

The group of horned, violet-caped warriors began arguing amongst themselves.

“Tonto finished his contest; let me go next.”

“No, let me go.”

“Why should you be the one to go?”

“It’s rare for us to encounter an alien that can’t be killed, no matter how hard we hit him. This is a perfect chance for some training and tempering. Let’s take it slow. Don’t be in a rush!” The golden-caped general added, “And it looks to me like the alien is pretty much exhausted. Let him rest for a bit. After he recovers, you can go challenge him one-by-one. As long as he doesn’t die, you’ll all have a chance.”

Ning was speechless.

He had thought that he was definitely going to die...but they were going to let him recover?

“The warriors of the Snaphorn world...really like to fight. Are they...are they treating me as a training dummy?” Ning was puzzled.

The general and his violet-caped warriors, however, were quite resigned.

Liked to fight?

Yes, they liked to fight. However, their innate nature was such that they would generally slaughter their foes; why would they let a fight drag on like this? However, this was the order of the Queen Mother, and in fact the Queen Mother's mind was riding with them, ordering them to fight against Ji Ning one by one. How could they possibly dare to disobey?

"Forget them. Every extra day alive counts." Ning stood there within the vacuum of space, immediately beginning to attune himself to those two supreme stellar bodies in the deepest reaches of the Void, the Solar Star and the Lunar Star. He began to draw energy from them, converting it into divine power.

Within the underwater estate. A black-robed Ning sat there in the lotus position. Suddenly, the giant yellow bear appeared, then hurriedly said, "Ji Ning, Ji Ning!"

"Senior bear." The black-robed Ning looked at the giant yellow bear.

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Book 16: The Nihilum Zone Chapter 17: The Seventeenth Stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]

"What happened just now?" The giant yellow bear immediately asked, "I clearly sensed that you were at your limit, but were still unable to defeat that violet-caped fellow. How is it that suddenly...?"

The black-robed Ji Ning knew what the big bear was asking. He didn't seek to hide anything from the big bear; after all, there were a good number of individuals in the Three Realms who used heartforce. He immediately replied, "Senior bear, previously, when my divine power was almost used up, I felt as though things were hopeless. Ignoring all else, I poured everything into executing my most powerful sword-arts...but who would've thought that the power of my sword-arts would exceed even my own expectations? Only then did I realize that my heartforce had actually flowed into my sword-arts and had been slightly depleted."

"Heartforce?" The giant yellow bear was surprised. "You were able to use your heartforce through your sword-fingers?"

"Yes." Ning nodded.

"But but but..." The giant yellow bear didn't dare believe it.

In truth, the giant yellow bear actually knew less about heartforce than Ning himself did. Ning, after all, had trained in [Houyi's Archery], and had read a good number of books at Mount Innerheart regarding the Three Realms. As for the giant yellow bear, all he knew, he had learned while accompanying Daoist Threelives.

"You...you were able to use your heartforce through your sword-fingers...but you haven't even undergone your tribulation, right...?" The giant yellow bear was still in a stunned state. Within the Three Realms, those who could control heartforce were all quite famous; every single one of them was a terrifying force, generally at the True God or Daofather level. Even the weakest of them were generally at least Empyrean Gods or True Immortals.

"It has nothing to do with the tribulation." The black-robed Ning shook his head. "It has everything to do with your level of insight into heartforce. According to the system which mighty Houyi established, heartforce can be divided into five levels. Thanks to the descent of the karmic sinflames, as well as the

experiences I have undergone here in the Nihilum Zone...my heartforce actually ended up reaching the third level, 'ruler'. Given that I've been training in [Houyi's Archery] almost every day for the past half year while floating about in the Nihilum Zone, my mastery over my heartforce has been improved. Perhaps because I established a foundation through training [Houyi's Archery], as well as due to my heartforce reaching the third level...I was lucky enough to execute the technique successfully."

"The third stage?" The giant yellow bear didn't really understand; he didn't have any insight into Houyi's systemized levels for heartforce.

"However...what's the usage?" The black-robed Ning shook his head. "Even if I do understand how to apply heartforce to my sword-fingers...I still haven't undergone my tribulation. I'm completely unable to defeat this Snaphorn world of the Primordial Ruinworld, much less escape the Nihilum Zone."

"Don't be discouraged," the giant yellow bear said. "You've gained quite a lot, learning how to apply heartforce through your sword-fingers."

"I'm not depressed." The black-robed Ning was actually quite calm.

"Right; that massive army of the Snaphorn world has arrived, and they can easily capture you. Why aren't they attacking? Why are they letting you recover?" The giant yellow bear was puzzled by this.

The black-robed Ning shook his head. "I don't know the answer either. From the sound of it...they seem to want to use me as a target dummy for training. Perhaps there is another reason as well...but who cares? As long as I have a chance to stay alive, I'll take it. The longer I can stay alive, the better a chance Master might have to find me. This is a chance to survive...I naturally have to seize it."

"Right." The giant yellow bear nodded as well.

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Within the misty, void-like region within the underwater estate.

The giant yellow bear had just returned here. He looked at the seven powerful experts.

"Well?" The beautiful, black-armored woman asked impatiently.

"Ji Ning says that the reason why the army of the Snaphorn world has only trapped him rather than killed him is because they apparently want to use him as a training dummy to temper and train some of their more powerful warriors." The giant yellow bear continued, "However...the reason really isn't worth over-analyzing. What matters is that Ji Ning is currently not in a life-or-death situation. There's no need for you to reveal your presences for now; let's just wait patiently. The longer this drags out, the better; if Patriarch Subhuti is able to find Ji Ning, then everything will be well."

The seven Fiendgods all nodded in agreement.

"There's one other important matter. Ning said that he's been able to develop a way for him to apply his heartforce through his fingers," the giant yellow bear suddenly said. "That's why his power increased so dramatically."

"A way for him to apply heartforce?!"

All seven of the Fiendgods simultaneously cried out in shock.

Red-hair said in disbelief, "He...he...you said heartforce...heartforce!!! How could he have developed..."

"Ji Ning trained in [Houyi's Archery], and so he had a set of heartforce techniques to begin with. Perhaps this helped inspire him? In addition, his heartforce has reached the third level," the giant yellow bear said. "He said something about the third level of heartforce, with Houyi having divided it up into five levels, but I didn't really understand it."

"The third level?"

"What a monster."

"He's absolutely..."

The seven of them were all stunned. The giant yellow bear had never needed to participate in any of the battles of Pangu's World, but the seven of them had followed Daoist Threelives in one battle after another. They naturally knew a great deal of information regarding the most powerful figures of the Three Realms. If you knew yourself well and your foes well, you would live longer; they naturally knew that heartforce was divided into five levels, and that reaching the third level was considered a very high accomplishment, even in Pangu's World.

"Humans truly live up to their reputation." Of the seven figures, the child suddenly let out a sigh. "The comprehension ability of humans...they truly are the champion of the myriad races! I wonder how in the world Maiden Nuwa was able to develop a race with such comprehension abilities. Compared to humans, we Fiendgods have an all but non-existent level of comprehension abilities."

"Humans rose up from a weak starting point to become the masters of Pangu's Primordial World. Even amongst the ranks of the Daofathers, humans are the most numerous race! In fact, the power of humans as a race is capable of equaling the combined power of all the other myriad races. This young master of ours...he is a peerless monster, even amongst humans. There's no way we can compare to him. No way!" The elder sighed as well.

All seven of them were true Fiendgods. The youngest of them had been born when Pangu's World had just been created.

How long had they lived for?

They had watched with their own eyes as humanity became powerful. When the human race had first been created, they were an extremely weak race; most likely, any random, powerful Fiendgod would have been able to annihilate the entire race. But humans had been created by Maiden Nuwa, and after Pangu perished, Nuwa became the most powerful figure of the Primordial Era. Naturally, no one would go and wipe out her human race for no good reason. Humans bred at a very fast rate, had incredible comprehension abilities, and grew up very quickly. They gave birth to Celestial Immortals...Pure Yang True Immortals...and even even Daofathers of the Great Firmament! They grew nonstop, and their status became higher and higher. And now...their single race was capable of withstanding all of the myriad other races combined! Even the Fiendgods of Primordial Chaos had to acknowledge humans and their status.

If anyone dared to act against humanity...the major powers of the human race would wipe them out!

“He lives up to being our young master, the successor to the Godking.” A friendly, amiable-looking youth said with a sigh, “He was actually able to come up with a way to apply heartforce, even though he hasn’t even undergone his Celestial Tribulation. Combined with the [Starseizing Hand]...our young master has most likely become the most powerful figure amongst all Void-level Fiendgods. In fact, he’s extremely close to being as powerful as an Empyrean God!”

“Not just yet, but...still, he does indeed have a chance at becoming nearly as powerful as an Empyrean God.” Snow Scorpion nodded.

There was naturally an enormous difference between Void-level Fiendgods and Empyrean Gods.

Still...how many Empyrean Gods had a monstrously powerful divine ability like the [Starseizing Hand]?

And how many were in control of heartforce?

These two points alone were able to make up for many weaknesses. Still...despite that, it could only be said that Ning stood a ‘chance at becoming nearly as powerful as an Empyrean God’; one couldn’t actually say that he truly already had the combat power of an Empyrean God. This was because when Fiendgods underwent their Empyrean Tribulation and become an Empyrean God, their divine bodies would undergo an earth-shaking change. In addition, their divine power would also skyrocket in quality and quantity. The difference in divine body and divine power was simply too great! The [Starseizing Hand] alone was not enough to make up for a difference of this magnitude; even if one added heartforce into the mix, it would be hard to say.

And in addition...

Empyrean Gods also had very high levels of insight into the Dao.

Thus, ever since the creation of Pangu’s World, there had never been anyone who, as a Void-level Fiendgod, could be said to have truly reached the power of an Empyrean God. Of course...Ning was a monster the likes of which had never been seen, even in Pangu’s World. First of all, he was the only person who knew the [Starseizing Hand], with the other practitioner, Daoist Threelives, having died long ago. And secondly, although there were a few who knew how to apply heartforce, there were almost none at the Void-level; after all, even Ning had only developed this technique after first training in [Houyi’s Archery], then undergoing karmic sinflames, then suffering in the Void and reaching the third level of heartforce.

To be able to possess both the [Starseizing Hand] and be able to apply heartforce...Ning truly was an absolute monster.

Thus, even these seven Fiendgods who had been alive since the days when Pangu had established the universe had to sigh at the fact that Ning was extremely close to the level of Empyrean Gods.

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“What is this alien doing?”

“He seems to be training.”

The general and the 801 violet-caped warriors stared at the distant human youth. At this moment, above Ning’s head had appeared two miniature stars; they were a miniature Solar Star and a miniature

Lunar Star. Above the miniature Solar Star, flames blazed and a tiny Golden Crow flew about, while above the Lunar Star, an osmanthus tree was growing. Both the miniature Solar Star and the miniature Lunar Star were quite detailed; they seemed to truly be identical to the true Solar Star and Lunar Star, albeit countless times smaller.

His divine power was continuing to recover.

Ning was training quite calmly.

A long time later...

After his divine power had completely recovered, Ning was once more at peak power.

Whoosh. Ning opened his eyes, sweeping the warriors of the Snaphorn world with his gaze.

“He stopped. It seems he’s recovered.” The general smiled. “Baloni, you go.”

“Yes.” A desire for battle blazed in the eyes of a violet-caped warrior. He was so excited, he let out a hiss with his slender little tongue. “Alien brat, I’m not as useless as the likes of Tonto and the others. Ahaha...” His ear-piercing laughter rang out as he transformed into a black streak of light, charging straight for Ning.

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One massive battle after another.

Each time, a violet-caped warrior would fight against Ning by himself. Some had lower attack power than Ning, but were superior in speed and so could still give him a good fight. The violet-caped warriors also had particularly superb warriors who were superior to Ning in every aspect.

Each time, Ning fought until his divine power was completely exhausted, then would stop fighting and calmly focus on recovering through the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]! The aliens, in turn, permitted Ning to recover.

Fight! Train!

Fight! Train!

The aliens came in a steady stream, forcing Ning to squeeze out every bit of potential he had. The three Queen Mothers, through these constant engagements, were able to sense Ning’s heartforce rippling. They, in turn, were working hard to hypothesize how heartforce was to be used.

Time flowed on...and in the blink of an eye, more than twelve years had gone past.

Ning had completely forgotten the flow of time, losing himself in battle. During the past twelve years, he had completely focused all of his attention on the application of heartforce; every single battle was a test for him, and he constantly tried and tested new methods. His method of applying heartforce to his fingers became more and more exquisite; by now, Ning was actually able to use up nearly 3% of his total heartforce through a single sword-finger. This was quite astonishing...but clearly, he hadn’t reached his maximum potential yet.

Rumble...

Rumble...

Two miniature versions of the Solar Star and the Lunar Star were hovering above Ning's head.

A large amount of divine power was circulating through his body. During the past twelve years, Ning's divine power had grown nonstop, becoming thicker, denser, and more perfect. And today...Ning had truly reached the peak of power possible for the sixteenth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens].

BOOM!

His divine power finally began to transform.

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Book 16: The Nihilum Zone Chapter 18: Eighteen Stormy Years

Ji Ning's breakthrough to the seventeenth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] didn't cause too much of a disturbance; in fact, the nearby soldiers of the First Army of the Saphorn world didn't even realize that he had made a breakthrough. This was how the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] worked; only when one made a major breakthrough to a new level would the Solar Star and the Lunar Star transmit Solar Truefire and Lunar Truewater. Lesser breakthroughs caused a much smaller disturbance.

Whooooosh. Within Ning's divine body, the increasingly pure Crimsonbright divine power began to transform into tiny little rivers that flowed through his veins, causing his divine body to grow even stronger.

The seventeenth stage!

This was the limit of power for his true body, before it underwent the Celestial Tribulation; if he dared to raise himself to the eighteenth stage, then the tribulation would descend at a moment's notice afterwards. Although he now controlled heartforce and felt more confident in his chances...he was still surrounded by karmic sinflames and was a tremendous sinner. Most likely, the power of his Celestial Tribulation would be even more terrifying. If he could survive here and leave this place, the Nihilum Zone...Ning couldn't even imagine what the scene of his tribulation would be like.

"I'm the sole heir of the [Starseizing Hand], the disciple of Patriarch Subhuti, a Fiendgod Body Refiner, and surrounded by karmic sinflames." Ning truly couldn't imagine it.

It was quite common for ordinary Fiendgod Body Refiners to undergo nine nine-sets of thunder tribulation. Upon overcoming the Celestial Tribulation, they would have become Emphyrean Gods!

And he...he was no ordinary Fiendgod.

"I heard that some particularly monstrous geniuses amongst Ki Refiners will also encounter nine nine-sets of thunder tribulation," Ning mused to himself. "I, on the other hand, am a Fiendgod Body Refiner. My Celestial Tribulation..."

To this very day, no one had ever fully understood which elements were taken into account in determining the power of the Celestial Tribulation. However, there were many past precedences; for example, Lu Dongbin was a Ki Refiner who had undergone nine nine-sets as a Ki Refiner.

Ordinary Fiendgods would often have to undergo nine complete nine-sets of thunder tribulation.

As for some truly monstrous geniuses, the most elite of the Fiendgods of the entire Three Realms...their backgrounds were so extraordinary that their tribulations were not like ordinary tribulations. Ning had the feeling...that he would probably be treated as one of the most peerless of Fiendgods of the Three Realms in this regard.

“Forget about that for now...I have so many enemies to battle, and I don’t have to hold anything back as I train in heartforce. I can’t waste this opportunity.” Ning opened his eyes, halting his cultivation.

“It seems he’s recovered. It’s my turn this time!” A muscular, violet-caped warrior roared with laughter, four giant warhammers in his four arms. Leaping through space, he charged towards Ning.

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Although he was in a dire situation...since there was nowhere to run, Ning didn’t think about anything, completely focusing on battle. As he gained more experience with the application of heartforce, Ning’s power began to rise continuously. The more heartforce his sword-fingers were able to unleash, the more powerful his blows would become. This caused the violet-caped warriors to feel unspeakable misery.

After the twelfth year, which is to say after Ning broke through to the seventeenth stage, more than half the violet-caped warriors were at a disadvantage when fighting Ning.

As his control over heartforce grew increasingly powerful, Ning began to be able to suppress one violet-caped warrior after another. However, the difference in power wasn’t that great; they were more than capable of staying alive.

By the fifteenth year, Ning was confident in being able to kill in battle some of the enemies who matched up poorly against him, but he did not kill them. He was afraid that if he did kill the violet-caped warriors, they would be enraged; that wouldn’t be worth it! The most important thing for him right now was to delay; ideally, he would delay for a few decades or a century. The more time passed, the better the chances that his master, Patriarch Subhuti, would be able to find him.

By the sixteenth year, Ning was able to use up nearly a twentieth of his heartforce in a single blow of his sword-fingers. This was him using full power in a single hand; there was no way he could reach this level when using all six arms.

By the seventeenth year, Ning was able to use up a sixteenth of his heartforce in one stroke.

By the eighteenth year, Ning was able to use up a fifteenth of his heartforce in one stroke! By now, his application of heartforce was perfect, in that not a single bit of his heartforce was wasted or leaked out to the outside world. Ning could no longer come up with any way to further improve it. Although it was still a bit inferior compared to the amount of heartforce he could use when using [Houyi’s Archery]...there naturally were some differences between close combat and archery.

Aside from mastering the application of heartforce, Ning had also grown even more formidable in sword-arts.

Within the Nihilum Zone, there were no Daos to disturb him, allowing Ning to focus even more purely attuning with his sword-arts, causing him to just barely touch upon the true essence of the sword.

Ning had been fighting this entire time within the Nihilum Zone. His life was a very calm one...but within the distant Three Realms, the world of the Grand Xia was no longer calm.

Stillwater City. The Black-White College.

Night.

Within a mountain of the Black-White College, a black-robed maiden was seated opposite a black-haired, black-robed man. Both were quietly, pensively drinking wine.

“The Seamless Gate has grow more and more bold.” Immortal Diancai’s eyes were filled with anger...but he then shook his head and sighed. “However, they are indeed formidable. They were actually able to cause the Northmont clan of Stillwater to fracture internally. So many high-level members of the Northmont clan actually desired to throw their support to the Seamless Gate...but fortunately senior Unity was enraged and moved to slaughter them.”

Just two hours ago, this very day, Celestial Immortal Unity had struck out in rage, wiping out more than half of the Void-level experts of the Northmont clan! All the traitors were killed!

“After senior Unity made his move, the Seamless Gate sent a diplomatic note; if he doesn’t throw his support to the Seamless Gate, then they shall become mortal enemies.” Immortal Diancai looked at Yu Wei. “Yu Wei, what do you think we should do?”

“It doesn’t really matter what we think; the one which the Seamless Gate truly cares about is senior Unity. According to the stories, senior Unity has power comparable to that of a Pure Yang True Immortal,” Yu Wei said. “And this is precisely the reason why the Seamless Gate has spent so much effort on our Stillwater Commandery; they want to pull senior Unity over to their side.”

“The Seamless Gate truly has spent quite a bit of effort on us. The other commanderies might be in a state of chaos, but they aren’t nearly as bad as our Stillwater Commandery is. Still...senior Unity truly is resolute and decisive. The Northmont clan had fractured to the point where nearly half wanted to surrender to the Seamless Gate; even Celestial Immortal Hunchmont ended up being abducted by the Seamless Gate! He actually slaughtered more than half of his Void-level kinsmen. Even if it meant Hunchmont’s death, he still insisted on standing by the side of the Xia Emperor.” Diancai sighed. “Now that the Seamless Gate has sent that diplomatic note...a disaster is about to befall Stillwater Commandery.”

When he thought about this disaster...Immortal Diancai thought of Ji Ning.

That disciple of his who had wrought so many miracles.

That peerless disciple of his who had assaulted the headquarters of the Youngflame clan, slaughtered two mighty Celestial Immortals, and was capable of resisting karmic sinflames.

“I wonder how Ji Ning is doing. It has been eighteen years, but he still hasn’t returned.” A hint of urgency was in Immortal Diancai’s eyes.

“Eighteen years.” Yu Wei looked at the bright moon in the night sky, her heart filled with countless thoughts.

Junior apprentice-brother...

When will you return?

“It’s better for him to return later; he might be able to dodge this storm.” Immortal Diancai was still angry. “The Seamless Gate is acting with such wild abandon, and senior Unity continues to stand by the side of the Xia Emperor, but the Xia Emperor hasn’t even come to help out.”

“The entirety of the Grand Xia is in a state of chaos. Every area is asking for his help. How is he supposed to accomplish it all?” Yu Wei sighed. “In addition..how do you know, uncle-master, that the Xia Emperor hasn’t been helping out in secret?”

.....

It had only been eighteen years...but the situation of the Grand Xia was more than a hundred times worse than it had been when Ning was present.

When Ning had been present, although the various commanderies throughout the Grand Xia all saw some disturbances, on the whole things were still fairly calm. But soon after Ning slaughtered the two Celestial Immortals of the Youngflame clan, a series of Celestial Immortals began to perish throughout the world of the Grand Xia. It was either done by the Seamless Gate, or by the Xia Emperor in his furious reprisals.

All sorts of battles were carried out in secret!

One Celestial Immortal after another perished!

The Grand Xia’s various marquisdoms, supreme clans, and major sects also began to engage in reprisal killings!

The storm was growing more and more violent. Even the number one assassin’s guild of the Grand Xia, ‘Bloodcloud Hall’, had revealed its true face. It struck out time and time again, assaulting and killing some of the tougher foes of the Seamless Gate!

Nine years ago...

A dangerous situation had appeared within one of the headquarters of the Northmont clan; even Loose Immortals who went to investigate would perish. Celestial Immortal Hunchmont and Yu Wei had gone together to investigate; logically speaking, if they joined forces, the two of them should be able to escape from any danger without problems. However...the Seamless Gate had actually paid an enormous price to trap them there. Yu Wei, by using an escape technique which Patriarch Lu had bequeathed unto her, had been lucky enough to escape...but Celestial Immortal Hunchmont had been captured alive!

By the time Sword Immortal Unity learned of this, it was too late; Celestial Immortal Hunchmont had been sent off to the ‘Fifth World.’

In fact, it was the capture of Celestial Immortal Hunchmont that truly caused the Seamless Gate and Stillwater Commandery to begin fighting.

“Everyone in the Three Realms believes me to be dead, but the Seamless Gate actually knew that I am alive.” Sword Immortal Unity had a bad feeling as well; the Seamless Gate was even harder to deal with than he had expected. They used all sorts of methods to try and influence Sword Immortal Unity, be it through tribes, territory, or other methods.

However...given that Sword Immortal Unity had the mental fortitude to hide himself away for so many years, how could the Seamless Gate possibly change his mind so easily as this?

You want to seduce the kinsmen that I favor?

Seducing away the Void-level Earth Immortals that I wanted to teach?

Fine. All traitors...die!

Hunchmont? If you want to kill him, then kill him, Seamless Gate!

Sword Immortal Unity seemed to be without any weaknesses whatsoever. Over the course of nine years, they had engaged in several major battles, and even Yu Wei and Immortal Diancai had encountered grave danger. At the same time...the news that Yu Wei had become a Celestial Immortal finally began to spread out, and her strength became publicly acknowledged. However...when assaulted by the Seamless Gate, Yu Wei and Immortal Diancai received aid from Sword Immortal Unity as well!

Unity was indeed incredibly powerful.

He, all by himself...had forced thirty-six Celestial Immortals of the Seamless Gate to flee in disarray! This was what it meant to have power close to a Pure Yang True Immortal's!

Ever since Sword Immortal Unity had revealed his sharpness, not even the Youngflame clan had dared to cause trouble in Stillwater Commandery any longer. Although Immortal Venomfreak was also quite famous for his power...his strength lay in his cunning, in subterfuge, and in his many clones. As for Unity, known as the Supreme Sword Immortal, he had truly astonishing close combat power.

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Within the Nihilum Zone.

“The sword...so it is as simple and pure as this.” Ning was currently battling against one of the violet-caped warriors. His sword-fingers dimly glowed with a sharp, silvery-white shine. Clang! Clang! Clang! Ning's sword-fingers collided with the foe's greataxe, but actually knocked it flying back.

His sword-fingers now glowed with that sharp, silvery-white light...

This was the other thing Ning had gained during these eighteen years of battle, aside from learning how to use heartforce!

These eighteen years had resulted in hundreds of more battles than Ning had experienced in all his previous decades of life combined! This was because all of his time was spent either replenishing his divine power or fighting. Repeated battles. Endless battles! And there were no Daos present; in fact, not even the Dao of the Sword was present to influence him. Ning didn't have to think about what was the best way to summon the most amount of natural energy.

He didn't have to consider these things; all he had to think about was honing his instincts and using them to apply his sword-arts in battle.

And so...Ning's sword-arts had become more and more pure.

They guided to the very essence of swordplay itself!

The Desolate Era

Book 16: The Nihilum Zone Chapter 19: At The Scroll's End, the Dagger Appears

His swordplay became so pure that one day, the tips of Ji Ning's sword-fingers began to glow with that sharp, silvery-white aura. This silvery-white aura caused his sword-fingers to become even sharper and fiercer! They were now sharper and more penetrating than even actual swords!

Within the underwater estate.

The black-robed Ning was currently asking the giant yellow bear some questions. "Senior bear, do you know what the sharp lights surrounding my fingers are?"

"You don't know?" The giant bear was puzzled. "You know about heartforce, so how can you not know about...oh, right. Most likely, Patriarch Subhuti was worried that you would set your sights too high, and so he didn't tell you right away."

"What do you mean?" Ning asked.

The giant bear explained, "For Sword Immortals, fully mastering the Grand Dao of the Sword isn't the end of the road. After you completely master the entire Grand Dao of the Sword...you'll begin to focus on understanding the essence of the sword itself. When using sword-arts, your blade will naturally emit this sort of sharp light. This sort of sharp light is also referred to as 'swordforce'; generally speaking, peerless Sword Immortals who have thoroughly mastered the Grand Dao of the Sword will begin to slowly discover and cultivate this power. You've just barely touched upon it; I imagine you are at the lowest, most basic level of swordforce."

"Swordforce?" Ning now understood. "So that's how it is. When I was in Mount Innerheart, I saw some books which made note of the fact that when one completely mastered the Grand Dao of Taiji, one would begin to attune to the very essence of the Taiji itself, at which point a strange type of power would slowly be developed; taiji-force! It seems my swordforce is quite similar to this taiji-force in nature."

"Right." The giant bear smiled and nodded.

Ning now completely understood.

Taiji-force, swordforce...generally speaking, those who completely mastered the Grand Daos of Taiji or the Sword would be able to slowly work on controlling this type of power. It could be considered an additional supplement, making one a bit more powerful in battle.

"One of the greatest dangers for Immortal cultivators is being overly ambitious." Ning let out a sigh.

For example, when he first entered the Black-White College, the Primal Daoists, Loose Immortals, and Earth Immortals wouldn't even tell him that the Dao was divided up into Heavenly Daos, Grand Daos,

and ordinary Daos. This was precisely because they were worried about their disciples being excessively ambitious, resulting in them accomplishing nothing whatsoever! The same was true for Patriarch Subhuti; if he had told Ning about swordforce all along, it might've caused Ning to deviate when attuning to the Dao of the Sword, which would actually negatively impact his insights.

"I haven't even fully mastered the Dao of the Sword yet, but I've actually begun to be able to use a slight amount of swordforce already." Ning laughed in a gratified manner.

"The number of battles you have engaged in during the past ten-plus years was far more than the total number of battles you engaged in before you arrived here in the Nihilum Zone. The Dao of the Sword is an attacking Dao to begin with; if the Dao of the Sword or the Heavenly Daos were present here, I imagine that you would've advanced quite astonishingly fast in the Dao of the Sword." The giant bear added, "Since this place does not have the Dao of the Sword, you haven't been able to advance in the Dao of the Sword at all...which means you accidentally focused on attuning to the essence of the sword and ended up controlling a tiny thread of swordforce. This can be considered an unexpected benefit for you. I trust that in the future, the fact that you have started your quest for the essence of the sword will be of tremendous help to you in comprehending the Dao of the Sword."

"Right." Ning nodded lightly.

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"Monster. A true monster."

"No wonder Lu Dongbin felt so certain that he was born to be a peerless Sword Immortal, and even Patriarch Subhuti felt that he was extremely talented in this regard. Even before mastering the Dao of the Sword, he's already taken control of a tiny amount of swordforce. Clearly, he has an incredibly, unbelievably high level of aptitude towards the sword."

Within the blurry, void-like region within the underwater estate. The giant yellow bear had told them about his conversation, and the seven Fiendgods all signed in amazement.

However...Ning had only mastered the most basic, elementary level of swordforce at present; there was a limit as to how much it could help him. By comparison, his ruler-level heartforce had helped Ning increase his power much more.

Still...that tiny bit of mastery over swordforce was a testament to the fact that Ning truly was an unbelievable talent as a Sword Immortal.

"No matter how talented he is, it won't matter unless he can escape this Nihilum Zone." A muscular man whose entire body was red in color let out a sigh. "To date, the Snaphorn world hasn't truly gone all out against our young master...but if push comes to shove, then we will be forced to intervene. By then, we will have to deal with the master of the Snaphorn world...and we have no idea as to if we can beat him or not."

"The real question is, has the master of the Snaphorn world reached the Daofather level yet?"

"If not, he won't pose a threat."

"But if he is at the Daofather level...we'll probably be doomed."

“We have nowhere to run. Even if we don’t move to rescue our young master, the master of the Snaphorn world will eventually discover the Starseizing Manor. After discovering the Starseizing Manor...if he is at the Daofather level, he’ll definitely be able to find our world. By then...we’d still have to fight him.”

Technically speaking, Ning had yet to become an Empyrean God, and per the orders of Daoist Threelives, they weren’t supposed to save him; they were supposed to leave Ning’s fate up to himself, and if he died they were to go find another successor. Alas...they were now trapped within the Nihilum Zone and unable to depart from it, much less find another successor.

This day, Ning engaged in dozens of battles before coming to a halt, acting as though he needed to replenish his divine power. In reality, Ning still had half of it left; after all, now that he had reached the seventeenth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], his divine power was much thicker than it had been in the past. For the sake of being prepared for all eventualities, he always came to a halt when he only had half of his divine power left.

In turn, the violet-caped warriors always let him replenish his divine power as needed.

As he replenished his energy...three mighty minds were conversing within the darkness of the Void.

“Ever since this human began fighting against our Firstborn, he’s continuously improved his mastery over his heartforce. Less and less of it leaks out, and the ripples it causes are harder and harder to discern. Recently...he’s leaked out no heartforce in his battles whatsoever. Although we can vaguely sense that he is using it, we are unable to sense any of the heartforce ripples now. This poses no use to us in our attempts to develop a heartforce technique at all.” The first Queen Mother’s thoughts held a hint of resentment.

“Two elder sisters, what should we do?” The third Queen Mother asked.

“During this period of time, tens of thousands of battles have been carried out. We’ve developed a few ideas, while you, little sister, have actually managed to coalesce some heartforce. You’ve developed a basic level of skill in heartforce; this can be described as a merit for this human.” The second Queen Mother continued, “However, our elder sister and I have yet to be able to coalesce heartforce, much less figure out a way to apply it.”

“Although I’ve managed to coalesce heartforce, I still need to slowly work away at a method for applying it.” The third Queen Mother’s thoughts held a hint of resentment as well. “If he continues to leak heartforce...a few more centuries of battle should be enough.”

A hundred years, a thousand years...these were very short periods of time for them.

Alas, Ning had only given them eighteen years of ‘bliss’. By now, Ning had very perfect control over his heartforce. When using his sword-arts, his heartforce didn’t leak outwards at all; the Queen Mothers knew that Ning was using heartforce, but there was no way for them to analyze it. After all, the more that leaked out, the more easy it was to analyze.

“But we aren’t able to hypnotize him...and he’d rather die than let us search his memories. Let’s kill him,” the second Queen Mother said.

The third Queen Mother opposed this. "Let's capture him alive first, then imprison him within our bodies. Let us slowly torment him, slowly torture him...and perhaps one day we'll be able to search his memories."

"Capture him and imprison him within third sister's body." The first Queen Mother agreed as well.

"Fine." The second Queen Mother accepted this outcome.

And so...

They gave the order.

The Nihilum Zone. The golden-caped general and violet-caped warriors of the Snaphorn world were all relaxing and chatting amongst themselves. Although they had always felt that letting this alien stay alive wasn't really in keeping with their nature, and they truly wanted to slaughter him...how could they dare disobey the orders of their Queen Mothers?

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

The mind-strands that had been attached to the golden-caped general and the hundreds of violet-caped Firstborn warriors began to transmit orders from the Queen Mother.

"Children, capture this alien right away and send him to our sacred palace."

Instantly, the bored, golden-caped general and his many violet-caped warriors grew excited, their eyes lighting up.

Perfect.

They were finally going to be allowed to make their act. For the entire First Army to be idle here...the millions of Snaphorn warriors were utterly bored senseless.

"The Queen Mother commands that the alien is to be captured alive and sent to the sacred palace." The general sent mental messages to each and every one of the violet-caped warriors; after all, the Queen Mothers had only been able to send direct messages to the Firstborn. There were many violet-caped warriors who didn't know the news yet. "This time...there's no need for the rest of you to intervene. I'll handle him myself."

"Yes." No one would disobey.

This was because the general hadn't fought a single time yet!

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Although Ning was in the middle of replenishing his divine power, with a miniature Solar Star and Lunar Star floating above his head, transmitting energy to him to be converted into divine power...Ning was still keeping a very close watch on his surroundings. However, he didn't realize that the distant general was about to make his move...but the giant yellow bear did, and immediately warned him: "Ji Ning, that alien general is about to make his move."

"What?!" Ning was startled awake, instantly opening his eyes.

Torch-light blazed within his eyes.

He immediately saw the golden-caped general charge towards him from ten thousand kilometers away. The golden-caped general had always been Ning's greatest source of fear...but he had never fought against Ning, not even once. In the past, he had always just watched from far away. In addition, during the past eighteen years, as long as Ning was in the process of replenishing his divine power, the enemy would not act against him.

"General." Ning sent his divine sense out in a ripple. "After waiting for so many years...it seems you are finally going to make your move."

"Our warriors have been tempered enough, given how many times they've fought you." The general strode through the void as he spoke. His appearance was identical to that of the other horned warriors, but his eyes were older and wiser, and his invisible aura of power was far more menacing. "Alien...you should forget about resisting. If you do so, you might be able to stay alive."

"You won't kill me?" Ning asked.

If he could stay alive somehow, then he would do so, trying to buy as much time as he could.

"Follow me to the Saphorn world. I won't kill you," the general said.

Ning's heart trembled. To the Saphorn world? It must be understood that this region of space was simply a part of the Void that was under the control of the Saphorn world. The true territory of the Saphorn world was within the Primordial Ruinworld. By comparison, the Nihilum Zone was safer; the Primordial Ruinworld was truly the main headquarters of the enemy. If he entered there...his chances of escape would be even lower. How could Ning possibly go in?

"Impossible." Ning shook his head, staring at the general.

"Heh heh heh..." The general laughed, but four long whips suddenly appeared in his hands.

"Your resistance is futile." The general was very calm. His self-confidence came from his overwhelming power. Instantly, his four arms lashed out simultaneously, and the four long black whips lashed out many tens of thousands of meters like four enormous black serpents. They reached Ning in almost an instant.

Ning used two arms to guard in front of him, while the fingers of his other four arms transformed to become three thousand meters long, using sword-arts to block the attacks.

Bang!

Ning was already doing his utmost, simultaneously using 3% of his heartforce with each strikes of his four sword-fingers. In fact, he was clearly able to block the long black whips...but the whips trembled and somehow arrived in front of Ning's head.

Although Ning hurriedly moved to block, those four black whips had completely entangled Ning. If the violet-caped warriors could be described as supreme Celestial Immortals, then this golden-caped warrior had already reached the Empyrean God level.

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Within the misty, void-like region inside the underwater estate.

“That golden-caped general has made his move.” The giant yellow bear had a serious look on his face as he watched what was happening in the outside world. “Ji Ning is fighting back...but he’s already become trapped by the whips.”

“Move.” The red-haired Empyrean God gave the order to their group of seven Fiendgods. “Completely wipe out the entire First Army.”

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 16: The Nihilum Zone Chapter 20: Seven Mighty Empyrean Gods Emerge

The black whips snaked out in circles, completely entangling Ji Ning. Ning gritted his teeth and struggled, but was unable to break free. This caused Ning to feel both rage as well as a hint of sorrow.

“I am a practitioner of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], and am incomparably close to the Empyrean God level in power. I don’t even hold those violet-caped warriors, each of which is comparable to a supreme Celestial Immortal, in any regard. Who would’ve thought that in just a single exchange, I would be captured?” Ning gave a cold look towards the golden-caped general and the group of violet-caped warriors.

“Haha, look at the alien! He still seems untamed and unruly.”

“He thought that just because he gave us a good fight, that he could overcome our general?”

“The general has completely transcended the Heaven-level long and has truly reached the Saint-level. In addition, as the general of the First Army, he’s one of the most powerful of Saint-level experts; how could this alien possibly overcome him?”

The violet-caped warriors were all chatting amongst themselves.

The Saint-level; this was equivalent to the Empyrean God level of the Three Realms!

They had extremely high statuses within the Snaphorn world, and were qualified to bear the golden cape. The Elders of the Palace of Elders and the generals of the armies were generally all at this level! In addition, a general who commanded the First Army, the border army that often engaged in wars, was definitely a god of war amongst the Snaphorn world, someone venerated by countless kinsmen!

“Imprison him and take him back to the sacred palace,” the general ordered.

“Yes.” The group of violet-caped warriors all assented. They glanced towards the captured Ning with looks of disdain and pity. After countless ages of war, the only thing the warriors of the Snaphorn world felt towards all aliens was enmity.

“Let’s go back.”

“Our entire First Army has been dawdling here for so long. It’s been boring.” The countless horned warriors were all dancing in joy. These past eighteen years truly had been extremely boring for these warriors.

Rumble...

A golden warship flew over from the distance.

The general was holding a whip with but a single hand, and was dragging the entangled, bound human youth, Ji Ning, behind him. He looked back at Ning. "You are fairly strong; your sword-arts, at least, are close to the Saint-level in power. A pity for you that you met me."

Ning glanced at the general, then ignored him.

He knew himself that with the Fourth Cycle of the [Starseizing Hand], his ruler-level heartforce supporting him, his swordforce, and his seventeenth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], that he should have in theory reached the threshold of Empyrean Gods! However, the mere 'threshold' represented a weak Empyrean God...and this golden-caped general was a very strong one!

Suddenly...

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

Without any warning, four figures suddenly appeared out of nowhere around Ji Ning. Their explosively powerful auras caused Ning's face to instantly change. He couldn't help but turn his to look, and when he did, he saw ten figures with utterly astonishing auras. There was a bald elder with narrowed eyes, an amiable-looking youth, a bewitchingly beautiful woman with snow-white eyebrows, and...

"Senior Redsnow?" Ning was amazed.

The seven figures included a tall, muscular man with red hair and golden armor. It was the red-haired Empyrean God who Ning had met in the past!

These seven figures had equally powerful auras; they were all on the same level.

"What?!" The general, who had been pulling Ning behind him with the whip, turned his head and saw those seven figures as well. His face also changed. "Who are you!"

Danger!

The general suddenly felt a powerful sense of danger in his heart. At the same time...he couldn't figure out how these seven powerful figures could've suddenly arrived within the space territory controlled by his Snaphorn world.

"Hahaha..." Of the seven figures that had appeared around Ning, one was the child who was wearing a neck-circlet. The child suddenly let out a laugh as his body began to rapidly grow in size. Just before, he had been smaller than even Ning, but now he transformed to become thirty thousand meters tall, becoming even larger and more muscular than the warriors of the Snaphorn world.

The massive child roared with laughter...and suddenly, a pillar of golden light shot out from his eyes.

"DIVINE GOLDBLAZE LIGHT!"

The child let out a loud shout.

The eye-beams of light swept out in every direction. Whoosh...the pillars of light shot out from his eyes expanded to cover an area of a hundred thousand kilometers. All the horned warriors and black-caped

warriors touched by the pillars of light all let out agonized cries. They all began to melt, like snowmen under the sun...with the only difference being that they melted far faster!

“No!”

“It hurts!”

“What is this?!”

Wherever those eye-beams swept past, the horned warriors and black-caped warriors died, melting into death without being able to resist at all.

In the blink of an eye, more than ten thousand Snaphorn warriors had perished.

“But, but, but...” The general was stunned for a moment, but he then immediately gave an order.

“Quick, assemble the formation!”

“Yes!” The 801 violet-caped warriors were shocked awake by this order. If they were going to join into a powerful formation, the 801 of them had to take the lead! A small war-formation needed a single black-caped warrior and ten ordinary Snaphorn warriors, while a medium war-formation needed a violet-caped warrior, a hundred black-caped warriors, and a thousand ordinary warriors.

The largest formations, however...required a general, a hundred commanders, ten thousand black-caped warriors, and a hundred thousand ordinary warriors joining forces! Thus, these violet-caped warriors had to lead the way; otherwise, the unorganized masses would be completely unable to resist that terrifying divine light.

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The gaze-attack of the child had stretched out to a hundred thousand kilometers.

“You want to flee?” The beautiful woman with the snow-white eyebrows transformed into a streak of white light...and then in her stead, an enormous, snowy white scorpion appeared within the Void. This snowy white scorpion was like an enormous island, a full ten thousand kilometers in size. Its face, however, was the face of a human woman, and it also had those strange-looking white eyebrows.

This titanic snow-white scorpion almost instantly charged into the group of those 801 violet-caped warriors.

The snowy white eyebrows of the scorpion were even longer than its tail. They fluttered forward, one of them transforming into countless white strands of silk that wrapped around those violet-caped warriors. Luckily enough, they had been fleeing in many different directions, and so when the snowy white scorpion had appeared, they had already begun pulling away from each other, and so part of them were able to escape.

Of the 801 violet-caped warriors, over six hundred were instantly entangled by those eyebrows!

Sssssss....

In the same instant that they were entangled by the eyebrows, a layer of frost began to appear on their bodies. And then...like ice cracking, they were completely chopped and broken apart by the white eyebrow-strands. Even their cores were destroyed, causing them all to perish.

.....

This took time to describe...but in reality, as soon as the seven figures had appeared, the child and the black-armored beauty had immediately struck with utterly devastating power. This completely enraged the general.

“Damn you, aliens!”

The general no longer paid Ning any mind. He transformed into a streak of light, charging towards the now-titanic child.

The titanic child looked down at the general, letting out a laugh.

Clang!

The child held his neck-circlet in his hands, smashing it downwards towards the general.

The long whips in the general’s four arms expanded to become more than thirty thousand meters long, furiously seeking to entangle the neck-circlet.

“Oh, so you have quite a bit of strength.” The child gave it a tug, but wasn’t able to tug it free.

“Hmph.”

The golden-armored, red-haired Empyrean God watched this all happen. He immediately let out a cold snort, then stabbed forward with the longspear in his hands.

Rumble...

When the spear stabbed out, an enormous whirlpool appeared within the Void, with the center of the whirlpool being the tip of the spear.

“Not good.” The general immediately had a tremendous feeling of danger. He had the feeling that this red-haired fellow...was far more powerful than the child and the scorpion lady. In fact, the red-haired fellow might be strong enough to kill him!

“Flee.” The general no longer thought of fighting back.

That red-haired man alone was enough to make him feel helpless...and the general had six other foes at his level of power to worry about as well!

Swish!

Space suddenly seemed to have been thrown into chaos.

The general was stunned. He lowered his head, looking at his chest...and there was the tip of an enormous spear sticking out it. His core had been completely shattered.

“I...I just died?” The general couldn’t believe it.

But how could he know that this Fiendgod, Redsnow, had been the number one general under the command of Daoist Threelives? He had been awe-inspiringly famous, even back in Pangu's Primordial World, and was truly one of the most utterly supreme of Empyrean Gods.

"Red-hair, how could that little alien bastard have been a match for you? You didn't even give us a chance to act!" The gentle-looking youth complained with resignation.

"I was preparing to have a nice, big fight with him, but you killed him right away!" The child complained helplessly as well.

Ning just stared blankly at all this.

Good heavens...

Just now, he had felt utter despair...but these seven figures had suddenly appeared, and they were ridiculously powerful. Was this the power of a true Empyrean God? It was on a completely different level from the Celestial Immortals; most likely hundreds of Celestial Immortals would have to join together into a formation to be able to resist such power.

"Senior Redsnow," Ning hurriedly called out.

Redsnow glanced at Ning, then smiled.

Because he had a full head of red hair, his closest friends often simply referred to him as 'red-hair', but his name was indeed Redsnow. Thus, the spear-art he developed had also been named [Redsnow].

"Hurry up. This isn't the time to play around," Empyrean God Redsnow said. "Wipe them out as soon as you can; we need to come up with a way to escape this Nihilum Zone."

"Alright."

"Right."

The leader of these seven was Empyrean God Redsnow.

Redsnow had been very steady and reliable when they had followed Daoist Threelives, and he was also extremely powerful; everyone acknowledged his leadership!

.....

The Snaphorn world. The Palace of Elders.

"What?"

"Where did those aliens come from?"

"Impossible."

The nine mighty Elders who had been lazily watching the mirror were all shocked. The general of the First Army had easily captured that alien...but who would've imagined that seven mysterious figures would suddenly arrive? The seven had massacred their warriors with utterly overwhelming power, and even one of the top generals of the Snaphorn world, the general of the First Army, had actually been killed by that red-haired foe in their first exchange of blows.

This caused them to feel enraged...and also horrified!

Although they were Elders and were also at the Saint-level like the general...their responsibilities lay in the governance of the Saphorn world. By comparison, their combat abilities were inferior. In an actual battle, they probably would be weaker than the general.

.....

Within the infinite darkness of the Void, three minds were conversing.

“What?!”

“The Fiendgods of the Three Realms have arrived as well?”

“Damn!”

“That region of space was locked long ago; there’s no way they could’ve gone straight there. There’s only one possibility; those Fiendgods of the Three Realm have been accompanying that human this entire time in some sort of portable dimensional treasure. They hadn’t attacked because they were waiting for us to capture the human; only then could they no longer hold back.”

“These seven Fiendgods should all be at the Empyrean God level...only, that red-haired Empyrean God is a bit too ridiculously strong. Even my child, Habul, was instantly killed. Even in that ancient war, there were very few Empyrean Gods who were so terrifyingly strong.”

“Let us personally intervene to annihilate them.”

“Right.”

All three Queen Mothers began to emit a terrifying, killing intent...

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 16: The Nihilum Zone Chapter 21: Two Worlds Collide

The Nihilum Zone. Millions of horned warriors were fleeing in terror and despair.

“That enemy with the neck-circlet...all the warriors in the locations he looks at die. He’s too terrifying.”

“The general was killed on one blow.”

They had completely collapsed.

In a short instant, more than six hundred of the eight hundred commanders of the First Army had been wiped out, along with their general. The horned warriors were unable to assume their formations; naturally, they no longer even thought about fighting back. All they felt was utter terror and panic as they frantically fled in every which way.

But right at this moment, the exact same voice rang out from the deepest, innermost parts of every warrior’s heart, a voice that came from their very essence, their bloodline.

“Queen Mother’s Incarnation!”

“Queen Mother’s Incarnation!”

“Queen Mother’s Incarnation!”

The voice echoed repeatedly. The millions of fleeing horned warriors came to a halt at the same moment. The voice that rang out in their heart had been planted there on the day they were born! Every single warrior of the Snaphorn world, in the moment of their birth, was prepared for welcome the Queen Mother’s Incarnation. In fact, it could be said that the ultimate purpose for them being born was to welcome the Queen Mother’s Incarnation. This was the absolute most terrifying ability available to the Snaphorn world when fighting against other worlds!

“The Queen Mother.” The millions of horned warriors all raised their heads upwards, their foreheads splitting open as a streak of green light shot upwards from it.

Millions of streaks of light shot into the sky.

For a moment, a large section of the infinite emptiness of the Void had actually transformed into a field of green.

“What’s going on?”

The seven mighty Emphyrean Gods stared at this in amazement.

“This...” Ning felt something was off as well. The millions of horned warriors who had been fleeing in panic had suddenly stopped? What were they doing?

.....

The murmurs of the millions of horned warriors could be heard everywhere. Underneath the green light, their bodies began to dissolve, as though they were providing nourishment for the green light. The green light grew even brighter, and just like that...

The millions of horned warriors all completely vanished, leaving behind nothing within the Void save that enormous green glow. Within the green light, countless murmurs could still be heard, the murmurs of the horned warriors...

“Queen Mother.” “Queen Mother.” “Queen Mother.”

This was their most glorious moment.

Their murmurs were filled with pride and veneration. They willingly sacrificed everything for their Queen Mother and welcomed her Incarnation...and so they died.

Whoosh...

The awe-inspiringly enormous green glow in space split apart into three parts. The light of these three enormous green glows began to condense, transforming into three utterly enormous warriors with jade-green armor, curved blood-red horns, and an appearance that was extremely close to that of an ordinary Snaphorn warrior’s. However...their bodies were like mountain ranges in size, and their auras were completely different. Their auras were of chaos and utter savagery.

As the three titanic warriors took form...the seven Emphyrean Gods had a bad feeling.

“Attack. Join forces to kill the closest one,” Emphyrean God Redsnow ordered.

“Alright.”

“Let’s go.”

The millions of horned warriors had been quite scattered, as some had fled very far away by now. Thus, there was nearly a million kilometers of distance between each of the three enormous horned warriors; the seven had more than enough time to defeat them one by one.

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

Seven streaks of light charged towards the closest titan warrior.

“Fiendgods of the Three Realms...you seven Empyrean Gods, you actually dare to challenge ME?” The titanic warrior let out a loud laugh, a laugh which caused the Void itself to shudder. This was the Incarnation of the first Queen Mother; it could be considered her clone or avatar! There was an enormous price that had to be paid for the creation of this sort of clone, a price of many hundreds of thousands of horned warriors. In addition, this clone could only be maintained for a short period of time. The Queen Mothers rarely chose this option.

And yet...though the price was high, the combat power was utterly astonishing.

“Die.” The first Queen Mother raised her four arms high. The arms were as thick as the pillars that supported the heavens, and she slammed them down towards the seven mighty Empyrean Gods.

“WAAAAGH!”

An ear-splitting scream suddenly assaulted the first Queen Mother. The bald elder of the seven had transformed into a giant, winged black crow. The crow let out an ear-piercing screech, and the first Queen Mother’s clone movements turned slow.

“GO!” The child let out an angry roar, hurling forth the neck-circlet he had been holding. The neck-circlet transformed into a streak of golden light, expanding at an explosive pace until it became thirty thousand meters thick. It coiled itself around the first Queen Mother’s clone, seeking to bind it.

.....

Battle had instantly exploded.

Ning just watched as the enormous black crow attacked and the child threw out his neck-circlet. Next, a seemingly infinite amount of water and fire descended which was no weaker than Solar Truefire or Lunar Truewater. The fire and the water intermingled as they swirled around the first Queen Mother, completely blocking off Ning’s field of vision, making it so that he could no longer see what was happening.

“Such power.”

“So this is the might of an Empyrean God?” Ning was completely stunned by what he saw.

The Void itself was shaking.

The seven Empyrean Gods continued to battle viciously and savagely with the first Queen Mother's clone. Although Ning could no longer see the battle clearly with his eyes, the powerful ripples that emanated from this battle were enough to cause any and all Celestial Immortals to perish.

"Seven Planets Empyrean God Formation!" Suddenly, an angry roar rang out. Ning could tell that this was senior Redsnow's voice.

"Assemble the formation."

"KILL!"

A hoarse voice, a sinister voice, a crisp voice...several voices called out the word 'kill' at the same time.

Rumble...

A streak of blinding light appeared in the field of battle in the distant space of the Void. The streak of light instantly pierced through this entire region of space, then slowly dimmed. The fire and water had also completely dissipated, allowing Ning to see what was happening.

There were two enormous figures in the distance.

One was the Queen Mother's clone, many tens of thousands of meters tall, with jade-green scales and a savage, brutal aura.

The other was also many tens of thousands of meters tall. He was dressed in rainbow-colored armor, and he wielded a spear that was even taller than him. His appearance looked rather similar to Empyrean God Redsnow.

"Seven Planets Empyrean God Formation?" Ning nodded when he saw this.

This formation was an ancient Fiendgod formation that could only be executed when seven Empyrean Gods were joining forces! It merged the full power of all seven Empyrean Gods together into a single Empyrean God who served as the focus, resulting in an 'Empyrean God of the Seven Planets'. The Seven Planets Empyrean God who wielded the longstaff looked quite similar to Empyrean God Redsnow; clearly, the core of this particular formation was Redsnow, and everything was under his control.

"You are actually able to injure me?" An enormous hole had appeared in the chest of the first Queen Mother's clone. It had been created by an earlier thrust of the spear. The clone let out a loud laugh. "However...this is nothing more than a clone created by my countless children's bodies. It's useless; I have no weaknesses." The hole in the clone's body almost completely healed over.

"Big sister, it seems like we have to help out, eh?"

"These Fiendgods of the Three Realms aren't easy to deal with."

The other two Queen Mother clones were charging over at high speed.

Boom! Boom! Boom! The Empyrean God of the Seven Planets continued to battle wildly against the first Queen Mother's clone. Although the clone was injured, the injury was negligible. By now, the other two clones had also arrived, and instantly all three began to assault the Empyrean God of the Seven Planets in unison.

“Redhair, what should we do? The clones of these three we are fighting are already so strong; their true bodies are most likely at the Daofather level.”

“The seven of us joined together to transform into the Empyrean God of the Seven Planets, but we still aren’t able to kill even their clones; in fact, we aren’t even able to hold the upper hand.”

“This is trouble.”

“I’ve never encountered this sort of enemy before.”

The seven Empyrean Gods felt uneasy as well, because they were inexperienced in that they had never encountered foes like this before. Although these foes had appeared in that great, calamitous war all those eons ago, the seven of them had been sent off by Daoist Threelives well in advance, and so they didn’t participate in that war at all. Naturally, this meant that they had no experience in that regard.

.....

The three Queen Mother clones jointly assaulted the Empyrean God of the Seven Planets, which used its longspear in unfathomably profound ways to defend. In fact, within the surrounding voice, countless white snowflakes actually began to appear, and even time itself began to grow disordered. Within this region of fractured time, the spear-arts of the Empyrean God of the Seven Planets grew even more terrifyingly powerful as they completely blocked the assaults of the three Queen Mother clones.

“Where did this fellow come from?”

“He’s merely an Empyrean God! Although there are seven of them fighting together...the three of us, joined forces, are unable to kill him?”

“It seems we need to summon even more warriors.”

“Have the Second Army of the border armies come as well.”

The three Queen Mothers were growing frantic as well.

Although their three clones held the upper hand, their advantage wasn’t that huge. In addition, the defensive power of that spear was simply too great; although they were able to suppress their foe, they weren’t able to actually injure him. In fact, it was the first Queen Mother who had initially sustained some injuries!

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“We can’t kill them.”

“This probably isn’t even the full power of the Snaophorn world. We can’t fight for too long; we have to break out of this grand sealing formation and leave this place immediately.”

After battling for a few moments, the seven Empyrean Gods immediately came to this conclusion.

The rainbow-armored Empyrean God of the Seven Planets suddenly lashed forward with his spear, slamming it against the chest of one of the Queen Mother clones, causing the Queen Mother to be knocked backwards by several hundred meters.

Swoosh!

The Empyrean God of the Seven Planets sought to fly away!

“Fleeing?” One of the other Queen Mother clones stretched out her four arms, transforming them into countless streaks of formless green light that instantly wrapped around the Empyrean God of the Seven Planets, preventing them from taking even a single step further.

“Hahaha, you seven Empyrean Gods, you’ve already arrived at our Snaphorn world’s territory...if we were to let you flee, just like that, how would I, Woelasy, have any face left in the Primordial Ruinworld?” The first Queen Mother clone, which had just trapped the Empyrean God of the Seven Planets, let out a loud laugh.

The two other Queen Mother clones came over to attack as well.

“Hmph.”

The Empyrean God of the Seven Planets spun its spear about to defend. Although it was surrounded by green light, the green light would at most make it slower; it was still more than capable of continuing to defend itself.

“Redhair, these three old bastards of the Snaphorn world are clearly trying to buy time. I trust that they are summoning even more forces from their Snaphorn world so as to deal with us.”

“We can’t waste any more time.”

“We have to leave.”

.....

Not just the seven Empyrean Gods; even Ning could tell that these three Queen Mother clones of the Snaphorn world were intentionally trying to delay and buy time. They all knew what was going on...but they were helpless to stop it! The Empyrean God of the Seven Planets was capable of protecting itself, but not of escaping. Ning, in turn, was completely unqualified to participate in a battle of this level.

“Senior bear, where did these seven seniors come from? They are in a dangerous situation right now; do you have any method for saving them?” Ning was frantic; his Primaltwin was currently querying the giant yellow bear, but all the bear did was sigh. What could he possibly do?

But just as Ning was panicking and as the Empyrean God of the Seven Planets was battling against the three Queen Mother clones...

Whoooooosh.

In the distant Void, a grayish-white vortex suddenly appeared, causing Ning to turn his head to look at it. The battling Empyrean Gods and the three Queen Mother clones also couldn’t help but notice the grayish-white vortex which had suddenly appeared.

A figure suddenly emerged from the grayish-white vortex of the Void.

It was an old man with a pristine white beard who was dressed in loose Daoist robes.

“MASTER!” Ning stared, wide-eyed.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 16: The Nihilum Zone Chapter 22: Subhuti

“Who are you?” The three Queen Mother clones all called out in unison. Looks of vigilance were in their eyes. The way in which the old man dressed in Daoist robes had appeared was simply too frightening! It must be understood that most people would use special methods to tear through space to teleport, but this old man had formed a spatial vortex instead, creating a corridor for himself to easily pass through.

There had been nothing flashy at all about it...this was something which the three Queen Mothers wouldn't be able to do, no matter how hard they tried.

The Empyrean God of the Seven Planets looked towards the old man, but in its eyes was a look of wild joy.

“Subhuti came.”

“I knew it. With a disciple as monstrously talented as this, Subhuti HAD to come rescue him.”

“Haha, we're saved!”

Even the calmest of the seven Empyrean Gods, Empyrean God Redsnow, let out a sigh of relief. None of them felt any doubt whatsoever as to whether or not Subhuti was capable of rescuing them. After all...Subhuti stood at the very, very top of the Three Realms, and was the most mysterious of Daofathers. Even Daoist Threelives was quite lacking compared to him!

“This is the territory of our Sraphorn world. We three sisters don't wish to become enemies with you.” The three Queen Mother clones stared fixedly at the old man in the Daoist robes, paying no attention to the Empyrean Gods next to them.

The old man gave them a glance, then said calmly, “Vile creatures!”

Rumble...

When the two words, ‘vile creatures’ came out, an invisible ripple instantly pierced through the surrounding space, almost instantly arriving at the three Queen Mother clones. In the area where the three Queen Mothers were present, space and time began to twist, curve, and break apart. The three Queen Mother clones let out enraged roars within that field of shattered spacetime, and all the green light from their bodies surged forth, attempting to break out. However...they were completely unable to resist the field of shattered spacetime. Their three mighty clones were completely shattered and destroyed along with the local spacetime itself.

Everything turned silent.

The only ones left in the Void were Patriarch Subhuti, Ji Ning, and the Empyrean God of the Seven Planets.

“But...” Ning couldn't believe what he had just seen.

“So this is the power of Patriarch Subhuti?” The seven Empyrean Gods were terrified as well. It must be understood that Empyrean God Redsnow stood at the very pinnacle of power amongst Empyrean Gods; in fact, he was extremely close in power to an ordinary Daofather. When the seven of them joined together into their Seven Planets Empyrean God Formation, they could be considered to have just barely reached the Daofather level of power.

Those three Queen Mother clones had been comparable to them in strength...but all that Patriarch Subhuti had done was say the words ‘vile creatures’, and an invisible ripple of power had instantly slaughtered those three clones without damaging the seven Empyrean Gods in the slightest.

An ability like this, finesse like this...they felt utterly amazed.

“Subhuti truly is Subhuti, the most mysterious Daofather of the Three Realms.”

“He really is powerful.”

“Utterly terrifying.”

The seven mighty Empyrean Gods were completely stunned.

Patriarch Subhuti was too mysterious a figure; he rarely showed his power within the Three Realms, and these seven Empyrean Gods had never seen him strike! They had only heard from their former Godking, ‘Daoist Threelives’, that Patriarch Subhuti was very strong, even stronger than Daoist Threelives himself. As for how much stronger...very few in the Three Realms knew the answer to that question. The number one impression which the countless experts of the Three Realms had of Patriarch Subhuti could be summarized in one word; ‘mysterious’!

Just look at the Crescent major world he had created! Without Patriarch Subhuti’s permission, nobody could even find it! This ability alone was utterly inconceivable.

.....

In truth, the person who had undergone the greatest emotional turmoil just now was actually Subhuti’s disciple, Ji Ning.

He had felt despair upon being trapped, had quietly waited and fought for eighteen years, felt utter despair again upon being captured alive, felt shocked and overjoyed at the appearance of the seven Empyrean Gods, once more felt despair upon seeing how powerful the three Queen Mother clones were...and now, his master had appeared, said the words ‘vile creatures’, and completely killed all three Queen Mother clones.

In fact...in his heart, Ning felt as though the entire universe had suddenly changed.

The Void remained the Void...but Ning now felt that the Void was a beautiful, beautiful place.

“Respectful greetings to you, Old Patriarch.” The Empyrean God of the Seven Planets broke apart into seven Empyrean Gods, all of whom spoke out respectfully.

“Not bad.” Patriarch Subhuti lightly nodded.

The seven Empyrean Gods felt a joyful feeling in their hearts.

They understood the true meaning behind Patriarch Subhuti saying the words, 'not bad'. Per Daoist Threelives' orders, if his heir had not reached the Emyrean God level, the seven of them didn't have to care about whether or not his heir lived or died. However, as Patriarch Subhuti saw it, Ji Ning was his own disciple as well as Threelives'; thus, Subhuti felt quite pleased that the seven of them had chosen to come out and protect Ning.

"Disciple." Patriarch Subhuti looked towards Ning. He took a single step forward, displacing himself through space and appearing before Ning.

"Master." Ning hurriedly called out to him with respect, tears having appeared in his eyes. "Thank you, Master..."

"Hahaha..." Subhuti laughed. "Come. It's time to go back."

"Right." Ning nodded heavily.

"Why haven't the seven of you returned yet?" Subhuti glanced backwards.

The seven Emyrean Gods hurriedly flew over. They first saluted towards Subhuti respectfully, and then they disappeared into nowhere. Clearly, they had returned to the Starseizing Manor...but the 'master' of the manor, Ji Ning, didn't feel a thing. Clearly...he had yet to fully master this Starseizing Manor.

Ning raised his head, giving the infinite Void a final glance.

This Nihilum Zone...

It had proven to be a testing ground for him. In this place, he had first overcome the karmic sinflames, had reached the 'ruler' level in heartforce, had come up with a way to apply heartforce to his sword-fingers, and had mastered a tiny amount of swordforce...

Fortune and disaster often came hand-in-hand.

Whoosh. That spatial vortex once more appeared next to Patriarch Subhuti, looking just like an oceanic whirlpool. Patriarch Subhuti guided Ning into the spatial vortex...and then it all completely disappeared from the Nihilum Zone.

The Primordial Ruinworld. The Snaphorn world.

Within a field of endless darkness.

Three minds were conversing with each other...and their thoughts were full of terror.

"Who was that old man?"

"We've never seen him before. We didn't even see him in that great war, all those years ago."

"If we had encountered him in that war, we probably would've died long ago."

"By the looks of him, he appears to be one of the humans of the Three Realms. From the fact that he attacked us, we can tell that he should belong to the side of the Three Realms."

“Logically speaking, it should be impossible to teleport through the space of the Nihilum Zone...but he was able to do it! And in addition, he was able to annihilate our three clones simply through his mastery over spacetime. Abilities like these are utterly inconceivable.”

The three Queen Mothers were all restless and uneasy.

He had been too powerful.

His power had completely eclipsed theirs. In that great war, the three of them had been small-time players; they had only survived due to luck. Any one of the truly powerful figures of that great war could've crushed them to death with ease. Clearly, this old man was comparable to one of those truly powerful figures! A supreme power who was capable of impacting the entire course of that war!

“I wonder if that old man of the Three Realms has left or not.”

“I hope he leaves right away.”

“I hope he never comes to our Snaphorn world again.”

The three Queen Mothers conversed hopefully to each other, their courage having been completely shattered by the two words ‘vile creatures’. All they wanted right now was to never encounter that old man again.

“What the...”

“Oh no!”

“He’s here!”

The three Queen Mothers had covered the entire Snaphorn world with their minds long ago. They kept an extremely tight level of control over the world, and so if any powerful figure intruded within it, they would immediately notice.

.....

The Snaphorn world was located at the margins of the infinitely vast Primordial Ruinworld. It was a world in its own right and was extremely vast. There were countless horned warriors who lived in this place....but at this moment, all of them could sense their entire world shaking. The ground itself was trembling, and the mountains were beginning to collapse.

“What is going on?”

“What is this?”

The countless horned warriors raised their heads to stare towards the skies. Some of these Snaphorn citizens were merely youths, not yet qualified to join the army; they had to reach at least the most basic level, the Earth-level, before they could become warriors. At this moment, every single person in the entire world, including the Elders of the Palace of Elders as well as every single army squad were staring at the skies with raised heads.

Rumble...

From beyond the Snaphorn world...a single, utterly gigantic palm had appeared.

This palm was nearly half as large as the entire Snaphorn world itself. When it slapped downwards through the Void of space towards the Snaphorn world...

Crackle, crackle, crackle...

The protective formations covering the Snaphorn world began to crack apart, and even spacetime itself was compressed so tightly that it began to shatter. And the strangest thing was...spacetime within the Snaphorn world began to compress into multiple layers of density, and the layers of spacetime came crashing downwards.

As the palm came slamming down, the layers of spacetime began to split apart.

"No!"

"Flee!"

"FLEE!"

Three utterly enormous creatures had suddenly charged out from deep within the Snaphorn world.

They, too, had incomparably massive bodies with pitch-black scales, but compared to the ordinary horned warriors, they were much, much fatter. At first glance...one would see that their bellies took up nearly half the size of their entire bodies. Their ugly little eyes emitted rays of dark light that attempted to tear a hole through space.

Whoooooosh...

That enormous palm continued to descend, causing spacetime to continue to compress and shatter apart, layer by layer. The spacetime at the very bottom had become incredibly dense, making it so that the three mighty Queen Mothers were completely unable to tear a rift through space and flee, no matter how they tried.

"Spare us."

"Spare us."

"Spare us!"

All three Queen Mothers called out loudly, their voices reverberating through the entire Snaphorn world.

But that massive palm continued to coldly, emotionlessly continue its downward smash.

"No..." The countless horned warriors were all completely stunned. They felt terror, a terror that came from their very souls. This was all completely beyond their expectations. That giant palm which they could see with the naked eye...it was a palm of infinite size, a palm that was more than half as large as their entire world itself. Even if Ning were to use his [Torch-Dragon's Eye], he still would find it hard to see the complete palm.

They could see the massive, canyon-like fingerprints and palm-print of that mighty palm.

BANG! BANG! BANG! An incredible amount of pressure had already been brought down to bear. The countless horned warriors of the Snaophorn world began to explode into green-colored bits of blood and gore. Only a very small number of violet-caped warriors and golden-caped warriors were able to just barely stay alive...but their bodies were also slowly beginning to crack.

“Old bastard...are you trying to start another war?!”

“Damn you, you old bastard!”

“Damn you!”

Asking for mercy was useless. The three Queen Mothers went mad, beginning to curse in utter despair, using every imprecation in the book. They weren't even able to flee...all they could do was face this terrifying palm as it came down.

BANG! BANG! BANG! The palm had yet to make contact, but the pressured, fractured spacetime that came before it had caused the bodies of even the golden-caped warriors to completely blow apart. The only ones left within the Snaophorn world were those three mighty Queen Mothers. Their hideous bodies began to crack as well. Slowly, the cracks grew larger and larger, and the three Queen Mothers began to curse and scream in an even louder manner.

Finally...it all came to an end.

The three Queen Mothers had been completely blown apart, having transformed into dust.

BOOM!

The giant palm finally came to a halt.

An ancient voice rang out. “Start another war? Nothing more than three little worms!” And then...the enormous palm completely vanished.

Everything turned silent.

The entire Snaophorn world...had become transformed into a massive planetary basin with a giant, palm-shaped impression caved into it.¹

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 16: The Nihilum Zone Chapter 23: The Return

There were white clouds in the skies. A spatial vortex suddenly appeared within them, followed by an old man in Daoist robes emerging alongside a youth.

Ji Ning looked downwards.

He immediately saw Mount Innerheart...and he was even able to see the many disciples of the Mount Innerheart League, living their peaceful lives there.

“Let's go.” Subhuti led Ning in flying downwards. They quickly arrived at the most central area of Mount Innerheart – the Tristar Crescent Abode, that seemingly ordinary-looking Daoist monastery. This was the place where Patriarch Subhuti normally trained in; disciples like Ning and the others wouldn't dare to go disturb him without cause.

Within the Daoist monastery.

Subhuti landed, then took a high seat in the lotus position.

Ning respectfully bowed. "If it hadn't been for your aid, Master, your disciple would have most likely never been able to return to the Three Realms. Your disciple feels ashamed for having forced you to exert yourself, Master."

Subhuti laughed. "Sit."

Ning selected a prayer mat and sat down beneath him.

"How did the karmic sinflames taste?" Subhuti asked.

"I don't wish to experience them again," Ning said. "The karmic sinflames are now ever-present around me. Although the burning sensation is agonizing...I can endure it. The descent of the karmic sinflames...although it was a tribulation for me, I gained quite a bit from it."

"Fortune and calamity ride together," Subhuti said with a laugh. "What level has your heartforce reached?"

"The third level," Ning said.

Subhuti nodded and smiled. "I noticed that when you were fighting those aliens, your application of heartforce through your sword-fingers had reached a level where none of it leaked out whatsoever. It seems you've also developed an actual technique for applying heartforce through your fingers."

"I did indeed learn a few things from my eighteen years of battle," Ning said.

"Do you know why those aliens did not kill you, and instead chose to battle with you for eighteen years?" Subhuti asked.

Ning was startled. He shook his head. "Those aliens said that they were going to use me for target practice to train their warriors, but...I keep on having the feeling that this was perhaps not the actual reason."

Subhuti nodded gently. "Your feelings were correct. You are in control of heartforce, and also know a way to apply it. Heartforce...it is an extremely mysterious type of power, one which even True Gods and Daofathers ponder on. There are five levels of heartforce. Although it is very weak in the early stages, as you go farther along this path and rise in levels, it will undergo an utterly earth-shaking transformation! The third level of heartforce is already quite astonishing. By using your third level heartforce, you have already reached the minimum threshold of an Emyrean God in power."

Ning understood this to be true.

The first level was fairly weak; the amount of benefit it brought was almost negligible. The second level represented a clear, explosive increase in power...and the third level allowed one's previous level of power to skyrocketed. The fourth level was the level of the most powerful divine archers of the Three Realms, and as for the fifth level...it was the level of the long-vanished Houyi.

“Heartforce is very powerful. If you can reach the fifth level, then even as a mere Empyrean God, you would have the combat power of a Daofather or a True God.” Subhuti looked at Ning. “The peak power of heartforce is far greater than your [Starseizing Hand]. You must not be lazy in making use of your talent for heartforce.”

“Your disciple understands.” Ning nodded.

But how could the fifth level of heartforce be so easily accomplished?

The only one who was publicly known within the Three Realms to have reached this level was Houyi. Perhaps some supreme Daofathers or True Gods might have secretly reached this level without telling anyone or using it...but still, one could clearly tell that reaching the fifth level was unbelievably hard.

“The reason why the aliens of the Snaphorn world did not kill you was precisely because the mind and thought-strands of the masters of the Snaphorn world had descended upon the bodies of those warriors. Through battling with you repeatedly, they would be able to sense the ripples of your application of heartforce in detail, and thus be able to develop a heartforce technique,” Subhuti said. “I imagine that the past eighteen years have brought insights to the owner of the Snaphorn world! Heartforce...it is a technique which is unique to our Three Realms. It absolutely cannot be taught to outsiders.”

“They have insights into it? It can’t be taught to outsiders?” Ning was shocked. “I...”

“I’ve already annihilated the entire Snaphorn world, and the masters of the Snaphorn world are dead. Even if they did come up with a bit of information on heartforce, it is of no use now,” Subhuti said.

Ning let out a sigh of relief...and then stared in amazement.

The Snaphorn world had been annihilated?

This entire time, from rescuing him to bringing him back to Mount Innerheart, his master had been by his side. Somehow, without Ning even having the faintest clue about it, he had annihilated the entire Snaphorn world, including even its masters? Ning had been able to tell from the battle between the seven Empyrean Gods and the three Queen Mother clones that the masters of the Snaphorn world had to be very strong.

“My master truly is unfathomable,” Ning secretly mused to himself.

“Right. That Dao-companion of yours, that Yu Wei,” Subhuti said, “She’s already overcome her tribulation and become a Celestial Immortal. Did you know about this?”

“Senior apprentice-sister became a Celestial Immortal?” Ning was both delighted and surprised.

He was surprised because his senior apprentice-sister had actually become a Celestial Immortal before him. Before she had left to go accompany Patriarch Lu, her power as displayed within the Conclave of Immortal Destiny hadn’t been particularly eye-catching. Who would’ve thought that in just a few short decades, she would’ve become a Celestial Immortal, even before Ning himself had?

“When is your Primaltwin going to undergo the Celestial Tribulation?” Subhuti asked. The questions which any master cared the most about were naturally the ones related to the disciple’s tribulation. This was the most difficult calamity for any Immortal cultivator to face.

“Very soon,” Ning said.

“You need to ponder on the application of heartforce to your Immortal swords,” Subhuti said. “Your experiences and background are all quite extraordinary. Even though your Primaltwin is a Ki Refiner...the power of this tribulation will definitely be significant. If you can completely apply your heartforce to your Immortal swords, your power shall be greatly improved. I trust that your chances of overcoming your tribulation shall thus be much greater. The technique you’ve developed during the past eighteen years is for applying heartforce to your sword-fingers. There isn’t a huge difference between your sword-fingers and your swords...I trust you can make it work.”

“Yes.” Ning understood that his master was expressing concern and care for him.

And indeed...his Primaltwin could also use heartforce when executing the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation], at which point his power would rise by a shocking amount. This would indeed give him a much better chance at overcoming his tribulation.

“Your disciple shall definitely first develop a way to apply heartforce through physical swords before attempting the tribulation,” Ning said.

“As for your true body...ideally, you should only attempt the tribulation to become an Emphyrean God after you have completely mastered the Grand Dao of the Sword,” Subhuti added.

“Complete mastery?” Ning was stunned.

Although he was at a very high level in the Dao of the Sword, he was still quite a ways off from completely mastering it. In addition...generally speaking, the closer one was to mastery, the harder it would be to break through the next bottleneck.

“You are capable of wielding swordforce; it can be said that you have already touched upon what the essence of the sword is. You should be completely capable of mastering the Dao of the Sword at the void-level, which will give you a decent chance.” Subhuti looked solemnly at Ning. “I’m not too worried about your Primaltwin’s tribulation. But your true body’s tribulation...you have to be careful, careful, careful!”

Ning felt pressure as well. He nodded lightly. Right...

Upon returning to the Three Realms, Ning’s subconscious premonitions had grown strong once again. Just discussing his true body’s tribulation instantly caused Ning to feel nervousness in his heart. He knew that this was Fate’s way of warning him in secret. The Three Realms occasionally gave birth to truly peerless, monstrous geniuses who were blessed by the distilled virtues of the universe, but the more of a genius one was, the more terrifying one’s Celestial Tribulation would be. If he could overcome it, he would soar to the heavens in a single leap, becoming a mover and shaker of the Three Realms. But...the vast majority would end up perishing to the Celestial Tribulation!

“Little bear!” Subhuti suddenly called out.

Whoosh.

The giant yellow bear suddenly appeared next to Ning. The giant yellow bear respectfully fell to his knees and said, “This little bear greets you, Daofather.”

“Let the other seven come out,” Subhuti instructed.

“Yes.” The giant yellow bear didn’t dare to disobey.

Ning’s heart clenched. Ning was extremely curious about those seven Empyrean Gods; after all, back in the Wargod Hall of the underwater estate, it had been a clone of Empyrean God Redsnow, formed from a drop of Redsnow’s blood, who had served to test Ning. In addition, when he encountered danger just now, it had been the seven of them who had intervened to rescue him.

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

Seven figures appeared out of nowhere, all in human form. In truth...they had all changed their appearances; after all, as Fiendgods, their true forms were quite enormous. They all looked quite odd, but Pangu, Nuwa, and many other supreme powers all looked quite humanoid, which was why Fiendgods like to take on the appearance of humans. In fact...in secret, many Fiendgods speculated that the reason why humans had such astonishing potential was because Nuwa had used ‘Pangu’ as the blueprint for creating humanity.

“Greetings to you, Old Patriarch.” All seven Empyrean Gods saluted reverently.

“Thank you, Old Patriarch, for saving our lives.” Empyrean God Redsnow was the first to respectfully offer his thanks.

“Even if I hadn’t gone, you would’ve been able to stay alive,” Subhuti said with a laugh. “You could’ve simply returned to the Starseizing Manor and your own world within it, bringing Ji Ning inside and hiding him within it. In a true battle, you wouldn’t be able to defeat the Snaphorn world, but if you were to rely on the formations protecting your own world, you would’ve been able to withstand them.”

“But the three of them were Daofathers...” Empyrean God Redsnow was amazed. The other six Empyrean Gods were amazed as well.

Returning to the world of Threelives and relying on its formations to resist the foes; this was their final option. However...Daofathers had utterly astonishing levels of power. In addition, there were three of them this time! They didn’t believe they had the power to fight back against such a force.

However...given who Patriarch Subhuti was, if he said they could do it, he definitely had a reason for saying so.

“Three Daofathers? You give too much credit to those three little worms.” Subhuti shook his head.

“Those creatures are not of the Three Realms, and you know nothing at all about them; they simply cannot be judged so easily, just by using the power levels of the Three Realms.”

All seven Empyrean Gods were now curious, as was Ji Ning.

“In the Snaphorn world, there were a total of eighteen golden-caped warriors; in your eyes, you viewed them as being eighteen Empyrean Gods, yes?” Patriarch Subhuti explained, “But in reality, all of the horned warriors of that race have a weakness; once the cores in their body are destroyed, they will die.”

“Consider the Immortals of our Three Realms. Although their physical bodies are fairly weak, they can control magic treasures at a long distance. There’s no need for them to fight in close combat as well. As for the Empyrean Gods and True Gods who do fight in close combat...they have no weaknesses at all,”

Subhuti said. "These aliens, however, are only capable of close combat, and they all have a weakness; the core."

"As for those three little worms...their true combat power wasn't that formidable. They were merely at the peak of the Empyrean God level. Their strength lies in giving birth; their childbearing abilities are quite astonishing." Subhuti sighed. "During that great, calamitous war...there were more than ten thousand of those little worms. They gave birth to countless warriors, all of whom were able to fuse together into one body...you'd kill one batch and another would come. Under the control of their master, those myriad little worms caused the Three Realms to suffer heavy casualties."

Ning said, stunned, "More than ten thousand? Master...did you just say they have a 'master'?"

What in the world had happened during that great war?

"These little worms shared a common master," Subhuti sighed. "A person who was far more powerful than even myself. Only Maiden Nuwa was able to suppress him. Fortunately...that demon has long since perished."

"Redsnow...you are just one step away from becoming a True God and having a Daofather's power. Train hard and reach that level as soon as you can." Subhuti looked towards Empyrean God Redsnow.

"Redsnow understands," the Empyrean God said respectfully.

"I imagine you and Ning have some things to say to each other." Subhuti chuckled. "Alright...you can all go back to the world of the Grand Xia now. If you want to chat, go ahead."

Subhuti waved his hand, and yet another spatial vortex appeared in front of him.

Ning bowed respectfully, as did the seven Empyrean Gods, and then they all entered the spatial vortex. They departed from Mount Innerheart, heading back to the world of the Grand Xia.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 16: The Nihilum Zone Chapter 24: Meeting the Seven Empyrean Gods

Stillwater Commandery. Swallow Mountain. The air above Serpentwing Lake.

The Golden Crow hung high in the sky, illuminating the world. However, the trees below were covered by a layer of thick snow. If one took a deep breath, one would feel the cold, crispness of the air.

Whoosh!

A youth appeared in the sky, staring at the nearby Brightheart Island.

Swish! Swish! Swish!!!

A depressed-looking gray-robed youth, an azure-robed maiden, and a giant, snowy-white dog all suddenly appeared out of nowhere.

"Senior apprentice-brother?" The gray-robed youth, Mu northson, stared at the distant Ji Ning in disbelief.

"I told you that Master was back, but you didn't believe it. I'm Master's spirit-beast; how could my senses be off?" Little Qing charged towards Ning excitedly, transforming into an azure serpent mid-flight, then wrapping herself around Ning's arm. The little azure serpentine head nuzzled Ning's arm in a very friendly manner. "Master, I nearly died of worry for you over these recent years. You finally came back."

Ning's right hand gently patted the little azure serpent's head.

"It's good that you are back." Uncle White didn't say much, but his eyes were filled with joy.

"Senior apprentice-brother, it was all my..." Northson stared at Ning.

In truth, over the past eighteen years, Ning had been deeply worried about Northson's situation. This was because, prior to Ning's battle with the Youngflame clan, Northson had been tormented for decades, followed by the loss of his Dao-companion. With Ning himself being exiled to a danger zone while covered by karmic sinflames...he was afraid that his junior apprentice-brother Northson would be filled with self-recrimination. Given his junior apprentice-brother's current state...Ning was worried about what so many years of self-blame would result in.

Fortunately...

Although his junior apprentice-brother had more white hair than he had in the past, he was still alive.

"It isn't your fault. If I have to blame someone, I'd blame myself for being too arrogant and underestimating the Youngflame clan." Ning walked over through the air, gently patting his junior apprentice-brother on the shoulder. "In addition...the feud between myself and the Youngflame clan is a huge one. There's no need for you to shoulder all the blame in such a narcissistic way."

Northson couldn't help but chuckle.

"Master, where have you been? We were worried to death!" Little Qing raised her head, looking towards Ning. Northson and Uncle White looked at him as well.

"That year...I was exiled by the Youngflame clan into a dangerous area in the infinite Void outside of the Three Realms," Ning said. "I was trapped there for the past eighteen years, and was only able to return today."

"So you were were just trapped in a danger zone this entire time. I was worried that you must've been undergoing countless dangers and trials," Little Qing said with a sigh.

"Who else have you spoken to about me?" Ning asked.

Uncle White responded, "We've only informed Immortal Diancai. However, because all of us live here on Brightheart Island, and because Little Qing and Mu Northson found it hard to hide their grief and the worry they felt for you...Autumn Leaf eventually found out as well. Also...your Dao-companion, Yu Wei; when she came back to the world of the Grand Xia, she was already aware of what had happened to you. It should've been her master, Patriarch Lu, who told her."

Ning frowned. In truth, he hadn't wanted Autumn Leaf or Yu Wei to know about this affair; after all, if they had found out, they would've been extremely worried for him.

“Let me go see Autumn Leaf,” Ning said.

“Go,” Uncle White said. “In recent years, Autumn Leaf will go to your bedroom, your study, and your training room every single day and spend some time there. I can tell that this little girl’s mind is completely preoccupied with you.”

Ning nodded gently. His eyes began to blaze with torch-light as he glanced towards Brightheart Island...and thus he saw Autumn Leaf.

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Within a study.

Autumn Leaf was carefully wiping the table clean with her hands. Actually, because of a formation present, there was no dust on the table whatsoever. However, whenever she touched the table, she couldn’t help but think back to those scenes from long ago, when she would grind ink for Ning as he wrote calligraphy within this study.

“Young master, when will you come back?” Autumn Leaf’s eyes shimmered with tears. She stared at the chair, the chair which Ning normally sat in.

It had been so long.

She had waited so, so long. Even the young master had disappeared for thirty-plus years last time when he had gone to study the Dao with his master, she hadn’t felt the years as keenly as she did this time. After all, last time she knew in her heart that he had gone to study the Dao. This time, however, she knew that her young master was actually in some sort of danger zone which he could die in at any moment. In this sort of an environment, every day felt as long as a year. It had been very hard to endure this.

As a child, she had been sold off as a slave. In the end, she had entered the Ji clan and became a maidservant that was assigned to wait upon Ji Ning.

Ever since she was young, that tiny little boy had become her everything, her heaven and her earth.

Spring Grass had her father to worry about, but Autumn Leaf had lost her kinsmen long ago. She had only one loved one left...her young master.

She had watched as her young master, that tiny little baby, had grown up step by step. She had followed him in roaming the Eastmount Marsh, had followed him until he had embarked upon the Immortal path and headed to Stillwater City. By then...she no longer had the power to help take care of her young master. If she accompanied him, she would only slow him down. She didn’t complain at all; she willingly stayed here at Brightheart Island, quietly awaiting her young master’s return.

The days when he returned were her happiest days.

The days when he didn’t return, she would wait quietly.

But this time...

Her young master might never again return.

Creaaaak.

Suddenly, the door to the study swung open. Autumn Leaf's body trembled, and she hurriedly turned her head to look.

There was a youth standing in the doorway. He was still dressed in those furs, and he still had that familiar, warm smile on his face. "Elder sister Autumn Leaf!"

"Young master!" Autumn Leaf charged forward excitedly, but when she reached Ning, she hesitated.

Ning, however, reached out to take her into his arms.

Only after hugging for a long, long moment did Autumn Leaf finally calm down.

"Elder sister Autumn Leaf, the snow is beautiful outside. Let's go look at the snow," Ning said. Towards Autumn Leaf...Ning felt very special, unique feelings. She had taken care of him since he was a child, and they had grown up together. In his heart, Autumn Leaf was family, just like his parents or a true sibling.

His parents had perished. The only family he had left was Autumn Leaf and Uncle White.

Autumn Leaf, in his heart, was his older sister, his most beloved older sister.

Uncle White was a senior, a senior who had always quietly watched out for him.

Ning would be reserved with his affections when he was with other women, but with Autumn Leaf...even if they hugged, it was the hug of siblings. It was a warm, wonderful feeling.

"The snow?" Autumn Leaf nodded repeatedly. "Okay. Let's go look at the snow."

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Brightheart Island was Ning's home. Autumn Leaf had naturally taken wonderful care of it. Brightheart Island was a beautifully scenic place to begin with; now, with so much snow on the ground, it was a place of truly incredible beauty, the likes of which were rarely seen.

In fact, it wasn't until the sun was starting to go down that Ning finally said, "Elder sister Autumn Leaf, I need to make a trip to Stillwater City. I haven't told my master that I'm back yet, nor have I told my senior apprentice-sister."

"Go." Autumn Leaf smiled. "Your master and your Dao-companion have probably been worried sick about you as well, all these years."

"Right." Only now did Ning ascend into the clouds, flying off into the sky.

Autumn Leaf raised her head, watching as Ning left, a look of satisfaction in her eyes.

Her young master was safe. Even if he wasn't by her side...she still felt at peace.

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The underwater estate. The main palace.

The black-robed Ning looked at the giant yellow bear and the seven Empyrean Gods before him.

“Senior bear, it’s time to tell me some things, yes?” The black-robed Ning said.

“I imagine you must’ve guessed some of it.” The giant bear nodded. “Let me make some introductions first. These seven...are seven Empyrean Gods that had been under the command of my master, Daoist Threelives.”

Seven Empyrean Gods?

Although Ning had suspected it all along, he still couldn’t help but feel stunned upon hearing it. These weren’t like those many warriors of the Snaphorn world, each of whom had obvious weaknesses; these were true Fiendgods, born of Heaven and Earth, each of whom had utterly astonishing power.

“This is Empyrean God Ninefang.” The giant bear pointed towards the bald elder, who cracked his lips in a smile towards Ning. “Young master.”

“Don’t be deceived by this old bastard; he’s the most sinister of us all,” the white-eyebrowed beauty next to him said.

“Did you just call me an ‘old bastard’? What, are you saying you are younger than me?” The bald elder snapped at her.

The giant bear laughed, then pointed at the woman. “This is Empyrean God Snow Scorpion; she’s the straightforward type.”

“Young master.” Snow Scorpion smiled merrily as she looked at Ning. “Hurry up and train hard. Overcome your tribulation, and become an Empyrean God; by then, we’ll be able to accompany you in roaming the universe.”

Next, the giant bear pointed towards the harmless, amiable-looking youth. “This is Empyrean God Dovesnake.”

“Empyrean God Dovesnake?” Ning was amazed.

Dovesnake was a true Godbeast that had been born in the primordial Pangu’s World. He was a truly venomous Godbeast! For such a venomous Godbeast to actually look so gentle in human form...

“And these two...” The giant bear pointed at the two most muscular men, one savage-looking and red-skinned, the other icy-looking and black-skinned. “Long ago, in Pangu’s World, a pair of Fiendgods were born. These Fiendgods were twins that were born at the same time, one from the blazing truefire of the Sun and one from the dark truewater of the Moon. No matter who they fight against, they always fight together. They are known as Empyrean God Sunblaze and Empyrean God Darkmoon.”

“Young master.” Both looked towards Ning.

Ning secretly sighed to himself.

These Fiendgods had been alive since the Primordial Era. Clearly, they were born in the era of Pangu’s World, and they each had extraordinary backgrounds.

“This one,” the giant bear said, pointing at the child wearing a neck-circlet, “Was the first to accompany Master, back in the most early, desolate days of the primordial Pangu’s World. He is Master’s adopted son, and his name is Empyrean God Primelight.”

“Long ago, I wished to learn the [Starseizing Hand] from Father, but alas...I was born as a Void-level Fiendgod; there was no way for me to learn it.” The child laughed as he looked at Ning. “Father’s [Starseizing Hand] finally has an heir. You need to train hard. Become an Empyrean God as soon as you can!”

The giant bear finally pointed at the last man, Redsnow. “You already know Empyrean God Redsnow. He was the most valiant Empyrean God under Master’s command, and the most powerful of them all. Amongst Empyrean Gods and True Immortals...there are few who are stronger than him.”

“I heard Master say earlier that senior Redsnow is just a single step away from becoming a True God,” Ning said.

“Alas, that step isn’t so easily taken.” Empyrean God Redsnow smiled as he looked at Ning. “However, Ji Ning...last time I saw you, I was worried about whether or not you’d be able to convince everyone to follow you. Don’t be fooled by how courteous they are all behaving; in reality, they are all incredibly proud figures. However, in the Nihilum Zone...you survived karmic sinflames and advanced your heartforce to the third level. You even developed a way to apply heartforce and, despite not reaching mastery in the Dao of the Sword, managed to take control over a sliver of swordforce. Even I have to feel admiration for you. The other six are convinced by you; they are simply waiting for you to become an Empyrean God. You heard it yourself; just now, they all addressed you as ‘young master’.”

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 16: The Nihilum Zone Chapter 25: A Promise

“Our young master is a Void-level Fiendgod who is extremely close to the Empyrean God level.” Snow Scorpion let out an emotional sigh. “If the Godking was here and knew that he had a disciple like this...he would probably be very happy.”

“Godking...” Redsnow’s gaze grew distant and dreamy. The others fell silent as well. They were the most loyal followers of Daoist Threelives; if they weren’t, they wouldn’t have waited here silently within the underwater estate despite the passage of countless years.

The black-robed Ning said, puzzled, “Seniors...you said ‘young master’? I don’t really understand. Also...can it be that you’ve been within the underwater estate this entire time, which is why you were able to emerge even when I was in the Nihilum Zone?” Although Ning had been able to guess a bit from their words and knew himself to be Daoist Threelives’ successor, he was still quite mystified about all the rest.

“Let me explain.” A clear voice rang out; it was the child, who looked towards Ning.

“Empyrean God Primelight,” Ning addressed him.

“You can just call me Primelight.” The child laughed, “I know that you have many questions in your heart. Let me explain it all as simply as I can. Father was born a True God of Primordial Chaos, from within the primordial chaos of the universe itself. He was born with tremendous power. After Pangu

established the universe, many Fiendgods were born. Fiendgods innately love to fight, and so their wars stretched throughout the entire Primordial World.”

“Supreme powers like Patriarch Subhuti are transcendent. They secluded themselves, rarely taking part in these wars. Father, however, loved to do battle; he naturally collected a large number of Fiendgods into his fold, within the Starseizing Manor. In the primordial Pangu’s World, the Starseizing Manor was quite famous!” The child continued, “The forces held within the Starseizing Manor included many Fiendgods, all of whom submitted to Father’s command. The seven of us also belonged to the Starseizing Manor.”

Ning nodded lightly.

“The primordial Pangu’s World underwent countless storms and many tribulations, but it passed through all of them safely. But that final war...the war that shattered the primordial world...the war in which Father passed away...was completely different from all the ones that came before.” A sharp look was in the child’s eyes, a killing look. He was a Fiendgod who had been born of Heaven and Earth...but Threelives, he had been a True God who had been born from the primordial chaos.

This pair of father and son...they were closer to each other than many biological pairs.

For so many years, he had no idea that Threelives had perished...it wasn’t until the giant yellow bear had received this information from Patriarch Subhuti that these Emyrean Gods had learned of it. For countless years, he had hoped that he would be able to see his father again, alive and well...but word of his father’s death had caused him to feel despair. It had also filled with fiery rage. He wanted to go do battle. He wanted to take revenge! But he realized that for now...he wasn’t strong enough yet!

“We aren’t sure either what exactly happened during that war; after all, we didn’t take part in it. All we know is that Father was firm in his decision to follow Maiden Nuwa, and that he stood by her side in that war,” the child said.

“He followed Maiden Nuwa?” Ning quietly memorized this fact.

Nuwa was the number one figure of the entire Three Realms. She had reached Pangu’s level!

Could it be that this war was a factional war?

Maiden Nuwa was of one faction...were there other factions? Ning knew very well that sometimes a civil war could be far more savage and deadly than a war against an outside invader.

“Maiden Nuwa was unable to protect us. Father followed her lead, and so prior to that battle, Maiden Nuwa helped us plot a path of retreat,” the child said. “Father expended an enormous amount of effort into this estate-treasure that you’ve acquired. In addition, Maiden Nuwa transferred into and established a wide world within this estate. This world, we refer to as the ‘Starseizer’ major world. This is the place where we live.”

“What? The underwater estate has a major world inside it?!” Ning was stunned.

But although he was stunned...he quickly recovered and understood.

It made sense.

Some of the precious Protocosmic spirit-treasures of the Three Realms innately contained a major world within them! As for treasures that were forged to contain a major world within them...most True Gods or Daofathers weren't capable of creating them, but Maiden Nuwa was. In fact, she had done created more than one! The major worlds that were contained within magic treasures were generally referred to as 'caveworlds'.

"We all knew that Father was going to search for a successor; he was unwilling to allow his divine ability, the [Starseizing Hand], be lost," the child said. "Father was powerful enough to be able to command all the forces of the Starseizing Manor...but would his successor be able to? Nobody could say, and so Father didn't force all of those Fiendgods to stay here to accompany the next master. Those who were willing to stay could stay; those who were unwilling could leave."

"Some of the Fiendgods left, but we continued to stay here at the Starseizer world," the child said.

"We've been waiting. Waiting for Father's successor. Waiting for the new master of our Starseizing Manor." The child looked at Ning.

The other Empyrean Gods also looked at Ning.

In their hearts...

Ning was the perfect candidate! The best candidate!

Although Ning's blood was pumping, he quickly calmed down. "Can you tell me about the Starseizer major world? Can anyone enter it?"

"No." The nearby Snow Scorpion smiled merrily. "The Starseizer major world was established by Maiden Nuwa, and she was the one to set up the formations around it. Even True Gods or Daofathers would have to resort to brute force to enter it! When we left the Starseizing Manor, we used the formations we controlled to allow us out, but once we left it, we would be unable to locate the Starseizer world again right away; after all, the Starseizer world is inside the Starseizing Manor."

"Who is in control of the formations?" Ning asked.

"Myself, Primelight, and Snow Scorpion," Empyrean God Redsnow said. "Primelight was the first to follow the Godking and the Godking's son; the Godking trusted him! Snow Scorpion and myself, in the past, had followed the Godking in his campaigns throughout the world, and we were two of the most powerful Empyrean Gods under his command; the others would submit to us. Thus, the three of us took control over the formations that protect the entire world."

Ning nodded.

"I know that my master, Daoist Threelives, had ordered that before I became an Empyrean God, there was no need for you to worry about my life, right?" Ning asked.

"Right." Empyrean God Redsnow nodded.

"But...you saved me in the Nihilum Zone," Ning said.

"Even if we didn't save you, the Starseizing Manor would've fallen into the hands of the masters of the Snaphorn world. They probably would've been able to forcibly bind it and discover the Starseizer major

world, at which point we would still have to fight them. Since that was the case...the seven of us came out,” Redsnow explained. “It wasn’t all because of you.”

Ning laughed. “But since you’ve come out...seniors, the Three Realms are currently on the precipice of a major storm, one which isn’t any weaker than the storm which destroyed the Primordial World. Even my master said that he might perish in this storm; that goes without saying for a young fellow like me as well! Thus, to tell the truth...I really need your help. But of course, if you aren’t willing to help, that’s fine as well.”

“The Three Realms truly are in a state of chaos right now,” Snow Scorpion sent mentally to the others. “Since we’ve come out, we might as well follow the young master for now.”

“Father’s orders remain standing,” the child sent back.

“The Godking gave us instructions, but he still left it up to us as to how to carry them out. The Three Realms are quite chaotic; to experience these storms ourselves will be of benefit to us in increasing our power as well,” the bald elder sent.

“Big brother Redsnow, I’ll follow your lead.”

“I will as well.”

Sunblaze and Darkmoon both looked towards Redsnow.

All of them turned to look towards Redsnow. Redsnow was their true leader. First of all, he was very strong; secondly, the way in which he handled matters was quite convincing.

Redsnow was silent, pondering as he looked at Ning.

Ning looked back at Redsnow.

“Ji Ning,” Empyrean God Redsnow said, “An enormous storm truly is about to sweep the Three Realms. To strictly follow the Godking’s orders to the letter is rather unsuitable for present condition. But if we were to follow you...this wouldn’t be of the slightest bit of help for you in terms of tempering yourself. I’ll give you a promise! Prior to you becoming an Empyrean God, you have one opportunity to ask us to assist you. The seven of us will use all our might to help you out, but...we’ll do it just once! Once you use it up, we definitely won’t help you again. Even if you die, we’ll just simply stand back and watch. If you die, you have only yourself and your own weakness to blame, as well as your poor luck.”

The other six Empyrean Gods looked towards Ning as well.

Ning laughed. “Alright. This promise of assistance from the seven of you is enough, seniors! It is like a protective talisman that will save my life; if I still end up dying before becoming an Empyrean God, then I really will have no one else to blame.”

“Mm.” Empyrean God Redsnow nodded

The child, however, urged Ning, “Ji Ning, hurry up and become an Empyrean God.”

“Don’t make us wait too long,” the beautiful woman added.

“Our Starseizing Manor needs a manor-master.” The amiable-looking youth looked towards Ning as well. Their eyes were all filled with hope.

Whoosh!

All seven of them disappeared.

Ning let out a sigh of relief. In truth, he hadn't truly expected that these seven Empyrean Gods would agree to follow him around the entire time; this promise of helping out once was already enough. After all, in dangerous times like this...the invisible pressure from the upcoming storm was causing Ning to feel constant pressure and danger. He naturally wanted to use everything he had available to give himself a better chance at surviving it.

He wanted to stay alive within this storm. Even more than that, he wanted his loved ones and his lover to survive.

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It was dark.

Stillwater City. Within the Black-White College. Yu Wei was currently in her own residence, quietly pondering by herself. A single candle was lit by her side, flickering with light. Yu Wei had a very complicated look in her eyes.

“I need to stop obsessing.”

“I'll do what I need to do.” Yu Wei walked out of the room by herself, raising her head to stare at the skies. It was already dark. The crescent moon could vaguely be seen in the darkening sky. She murmured softly, “Junior apprentice-brother, come back...you have to come back...”

Suddenly, Yu Wei felt a strange feeling in her heart.

Whoosh.

She instantly flew into the air like a gust of wind.

There, in the air...

A youth had appeared in the dark skies. He stared at someone far away...the distant Yu Wei. Yu Wei's eyes were filled with surprise and joy. Her eyes couldn't help but to fill with tears. She had a strange premonition just now, which was why she had soared into the skies. It was as though Fate had whispered silently to her soul.

Ning just looked at Yu Wei. The look in her eyes instantly caused Ning to think of his big sister, Autumn Leaf.

Both Yu Wei and Autumn Leaf shared a commonality; they both viewed Ji Ning as the most important person in their lives. For Ji Ning's sake, both of them could even give up their own lives! Ning could sense it from Autumn Leaf...and he could also sense it from Yu Wei. He sensed it all the way back during the Conclave of Immortal Destiny. And now...that feeling was even stronger than before. What Ning

didn't realize was that during Yu Wei's demonheart tribulation, she had lived with him for over three thousand years in the illusory demonheart world...

"Senior apprentice-sister." Ning finally called out to her.