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Book 17: Celestial Immortal Chapter 21: Master?

Within the towering palace in the Fifth World.

The three leaders of the Seamless Gate, Myriad Demons Cave, and Bloodcloud Hall were all gathered here, along with True Immortal Gaudy, Empyrean God Beastleave, Empyrean God Threesuns, Fairy Deadgrass, Celestial Immortal Blackheaven, and Immortal Venomfreak. They had only sent their clones or incarnations to deal with Ji Ning, but they were still watching nervously.

This was because they had brought powerful treasures, such as Empyrean God constructs and Protocosmic spirit-treasures.

“We reached Swallow Mountain.”

“We’re fairly lucky; we actually encountered Ji Ning after a single Greater Teleport.”

“Hurry up and kill Ji Ning.”

They all stared intently at the mirror in the air. The mirror was displaying images from what was happening within Brightheart Island. Fairy Deadgrass was standing close to it, and every so often she would say a few things. Then, suddenly...

“What the hell?!”

Whoosh!

The azure-robed woman and the others all jumped to their feet. They stared intently at the old gardener holding the gardening shears who had just woken up and stood up.

“Who is that?!”

“Our clones and incarnations can’t even move. We can’t even use our elemental energy.”

“He’s terrifying...he must be a Daofather. Otherwise, there’s no way he could be this powerful.” True Immortal Gaudy, Empyrean God Beastleave, and the others all had ugly looks on their faces.

“How can there be a Daofather at Brightheart Island?!?” The azure-robed woman roared furiously.

A short while later, after the old gardener chatted with Ji Ning for a while, his identity was revealed.

“Old Man Yuan, of the Four Ancestors of the River Source?” The azure-robed woman’s face turned ashen. Everyone present was stunned.

“Ugh. I just lost my horsetail whisk.” True Immortal Gaudy had an ugly look on his face; that was a top-grade Pure Yang treasure. Although this wasn’t one of the treasures he liked the most and used the most, the loss of a top-grade Pure Yang treasure still caused him some heartache.

“Don’t say a thing. Blackheaven suffered the worst loss this time.”

They all looked towards Celestial Immortal Blackheaven.

Blackheaven had lost a Protocosmic spirit-treasure!

“Damn.” Blackheaven ground his teeth. “Ji Ning managed to escape again.” In truth, Blackheaven was angrier over having not killed Ji Ning than over his loss of a Protocosmic spirit-treasure.

“He’s acting now.” Immortal Venomfreak and the others watched as the mirror showed images of the giant gardening shears snicking through them. He said hatefully, “This Old Man Yuan really shows no mercy at all.”

“If Old Man Yuan wants to kill you, what can you do?” The fire-robed man shook his head and snickered, “Forget about clones and incarnations...even if he wanted to kill your true body, he’d do so without pause.”

Rumble...

After the mirror finished sending images of everyone being ‘snicked’ and killed by the giant gardening shears, the shears turned towards the sky and made one final ‘snick’. Instantly, no further images appeared in the mirror; they were no longer able to watch what was going on.

“Old Man Yuan won’t let us watch any more,” the azure-robed woman said. “Given his abilities...he must know that we were watching what was happening there. The reason why he let us watch him act was because he wanted to let our superiors, the major powers of the Seamless Gate, realize that he is going to protect Ji Ning.”

“Old Man Yuan isn’t even on our side. Does he really think he can just protect whoever he wants?” Blackheaven growled, “Right now, we’re trying to court him, but once the great storm truly erupts, no one will be able to escape it. He’ll have to make a choice. Ji Ning already has a Daofather as his master, and an enemy one at that; if Old Man Yuan chooses to join us, then in the future he’ll become an enemy to Ji Ning’s master. I refuse to believe he’ll still protect Ji Ning then! And if he doesn’t join our side...then we can completely ignore him when we move to kill Ji Ning.”

Everyone present nodded.

“However...the storm has yet to truly erupt.” The azure-robed woman shook her head. “Old Man Yuan is still standing to one side and watching. He hasn’t truly made a choice yet; it’s not appropriate for us to offend Old Man Yuan.”

“You are over-thinking things.” Blackheaven let out a snicker. “Do you think that is something for you to concern yourself with?”

The azure-robed woman’s face sank. Blackheaven was acting far too impudently. Even with so many others present, he still dared to speak in such a manner.

Alas, Blackheaven wasn’t under her command, and she still wasn’t sure of his true power. In addition, the number of treasures he had was completely bizarre. When he had sent his clone to the Grand Xia, he had carried two mighty treasures with him; a top-grade Pure Yang treasure known as the ‘Yin-Yang Arcane Ki Bottle’, and a Protocosmic spirit-treasure known as the ‘Nineleaf Snowlotus’.

“That’s for the Godking and the other major powers to worry about,” Blackheaven said coldly. “I trust that the Godking will quickly send an order as to whether or not we are to kill Ji Ning, so stop worrying your little head over it.”

“Hmph.” The azure-robed woman’s face sank. She no longer said anything.

Blackheaven gave the azure-robed woman a glance, a hint of mockery in his eyes, then turned and left. He felt tremendous distaste for this Gatekeeper of the Seamless Gate, Azurefox...because Violetgrass had died on her orders. As for any anger that the Gatekeeper might feel towards him? He didn’t care about it at all.

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The world of the Grand Xia.

Ning couldn’t be bothered to worry about the Seamless Gate right now; it was Old Man Yuan that he was faced with, and he felt a headache coming.

Take him as his master?

He could tell that since Old Man Yuan had come to personally inspect him, the old man had definitely decided that Ning was moldable talent! Today, he had first asked Ning whether or not he should kill the forces of the Seamless Gate, and then immediately killed them upon Ning giving the nod. This caused Ning to feel quite delighted; clearly, Old Man Yuan wanted Ning to feel positively towards him.

And now, the old man had gifted him with the many treasures the Seamless Gate’s forces had left behind; this, too, was to make Ji Ning feel grateful towards him.

Next, the old man had suggested that he work on applying heartforce to his legs or to his entire body; these words had indeed caused Ning to feel a desire to learn such a method.

Finally...he had asked Ning to accept him as his master.

“He’s really put effort into this.” Ning understood this. “It seems this Old Man Yuan really does want to take me as his disciple.”

“This is how the world is. Some people desperately want to become a Daofather’s disciple, yet never will. When I wanted to become Daofather Crimsonbright’s disciple, he didn’t find me worthy. Even Master Subhuti only accepted me as his disciple because he saw that I was the sole successor to the [Starseizing Hand] of his good friend, Daoist Threelives and a decent cultivator. Back then, although I was a genius, I clearly wasn’t that attractive in the eyes of the Daofathers. Now that my power has increased dramatically, and have reached the Empyrean God level of power as a Void-level cultivator...one of the supreme Daofathers of the Three Realms has come to seek me out on his own accord.

If your potential was truly astonishing, the Daofathers would seek you out on their own accord.

Ning now was qualified for a Daofather to do so.

He truly was an astonishing piece of unpolished jade!

But...

“What should I do? What exactly should I do?” Ning hesitated.

“Is he a friend or a foe of my master, Subhuti? Or do they have no relationship at all?” This was what Ning was worrying about. “This Old Man Yuan killed the forces of the Seamless Gate, but the Seamless Gate didn’t even make a single peep about it; the major powers behind the Seamless Gate haven’t responded or reacted at all. The Three Realms are facing a great storm, and there is no way that the major powers behind the Seamless Gate can possibly be frightened by Old Man Yuan. Clearly, then, Old Man Yuan is on passable terms with the Seamless Gate, while my teacher, Subhuti, is an enemy to them.”

“What if Master Subhuti and Old Man Yuan are enemies?”

“If I were to apprentice myself to Old Man Yuan without getting Master Subhuti’s permission...then in the future, how could I possibly face Master?” This was Ning’s concern.

As the saying goes, the Dao is not to be lightly transmitted.

There was a saying regarding one who taught the Dao: One day as a teacher, a lifetime as a father. This meant that one was to revere and honor one’s master as one would one’s father. Subhuti had transmitted complete Fiendgod Body Refining techniques, Ki Refining Techniques, sword-arts manuals, and even supreme divine abilities like the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], [Houyi’s Archery], and the [Torch Dragon’s Eye] to Ning.

For Ning’s sake, he had even toiled painstakingly to create the [Obscuring Wind of the Nine Heavens] divine ability and the supreme sword-formation, the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation].

After Ning had been exiled into the Nihilum Zone, his master had come to search for him.

His master had shown him benevolence in transmitting the Dao to him and in saving his life...no matter what, if he was going to take on a new master, he first had to get the nod from Master Subhuti.

When Ning had expressed the desire to take part in the Conclave of Immortal Destiny in the hopes of being able to have a True Immortal or a Daofather as his master, Immortal Diancai was in full agreement; naturally, he hoped that Ning would have even higher accomplishments. Before becoming Subhuti’s apprentice, Ning had first spoken with the giant yellow bear, who had verified that Subhuti and Daoist Threelives had been good friends. If they had been enemies, things would’ve been tricky.

“Why are you hesitating and hemming and hawing?” The nearby Old Man Yuan frowned.

“Senior...” Ning said, “I need to get my master’s permission, first.”

“Your master?”

Old Man Yuan suddenly seemed to have thought of something. Laughing, he waved his hand.

Whoosh.

Someone suddenly appeared out of nowhere. It was Immortal Diancai, a winecup in his hands and a befuddled look on his face. Immortal Diancai had been seated atop his mountain, watching the dawn

sun rise while drinking some Immortal wine. Who would've thought that he'd suddenly be teleported here?

"Disciple?" Immortal Diancai looked at Ning, then he looked at Old Man Yuan by Ning's side. Old Man Yuan's face changed, and his figure changed as well, becoming a bit thinner.

"MASTER!" Immortal Diancai instantly grew excited upon seeing him. Falling to his knees, he said excitedly, "Master, I've finally met you again!"

"Hey hey hey! Don't overstate our relationship," Old Man Yuan said hurriedly. "All those years ago, I saw that you were borderline suicidal, and also saw that you were decently talented, and so I took pity on you and casually transmitted a set of sword-arts to you. I have plenty of sword-arts in my possession, and so teaching you one of them didn't really mean anything. What's more, your talent is too mediocre and your comprehension abilities are too weak; how could you possibly be qualified to call me 'Master'? You'd cause this old man to lose all face!"

He had first praised Immortal Diancai as 'decently talented', then immediately described him as 'mediocre' and 'weak'.

Still, everyone knew what he meant.

Clearly, Immortal Diancai would be considered decently talented when compared to the countless cultivators of the Three Realms, but he was far from being qualified to become Old Man Yuan's disciple.

Although these words were rather unpleasant, Immortal Diancai didn't feel the slightest bit of anger. Kneeling there, he said excitedly, "How could Diancai possibly forget the grace you have shown me by transmitting the Dao to me? I know that my talent is poor, and that I am not qualified to become your apprentice, but I've always viewed you as my master in my heart."

"You can think whatever you want, I guess. This, uh...this Ji Ning has a very close relationship with you. This old man wants to take him on as a disciple; help me persuade him," Old Man Yuan said.

"Disciple?" Immortal Diancai instantly revealed a look of great joy. He immediately looked towards Ning. "This senior possesses world-shaking power; even though I am now a Celestial Immortal, the sword-arts he transmitted to me were so unfathomably profound that I can tell I have still only scratched the surface of it. He must be a Daofather. Go ahead and take him on as your master; there are many people in the Three Realms who have multiple masters."

"Right, right, right! I'm a DAOFATHER!" Old Man Yuan looked at Ning, then stared at him. "I'm taking you on as my disciple! Why haven't you knelt down already?!"

"Senior, this junior feels unspeakably proud that you wish to take me on as your disciple," Ning said hurriedly. "But...this junior has already taken on a Daofather as a master, and many people already know this. Without his approval, it isn't appropriate for this junior to accept you as master as well, senior."

"Oh, you are quite respectful towards this Daofather master of yours." Old Man Yuan laughed. "I guessed long ago that your master had to be a Daofather, and he's probably not too shabby either. Who is your master? Tell me, and I'll go talk to him about this. This merely the accepting of a new disciple,

and I'm not asking you to betray him either. It's a minor matter. What is the name of your Daofather master?"

The Godking behind the Seamless Gate knew the answer, but Old Man Yuan did not. Indeed...the Seamless Gate's intelligence mechanisms were truly terrifying.

"Master's name is taboo; this junior does not dare speak it," Ning said honestly. Subhuti had ordered long ago that Ning was not permitted to tell others who his master was.

"You dumb cucumber! You can't even tell me your master's name? Is your master really that badass? Who the hell is your master, Nuwa?" Old Man Yuan stared at him with bulging eyes.

"I'm his master."

A calm voice rang out.

The nearby natural energy began to condense, and a skinny, white-bearded old man dressed in Daoist robes appeared out of nowhere.

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Book 17: Celestial Immortal Chapter 22: A Graceful Departure

Yu Wei and Immortal Diancai suddenly felt spacetime around them began to change and blur. By the time their surroundings turned solid once more, they were now within a hallway next to Autumn Leaf. Upon seeing Immortal Diancai and Yu Wei suddenly appear, Autumn Leaf was quite startled. She immediately addressed the two: "Madame, Immortal Diancai."

"It seems they don't want us to watch," Immortal Diancai said with a helpless laugh.

"I wonder who junior apprentice-brother's master is." Yu Wei was curious as well.

Just now, they had only heard the words, 'I'm his master', before they were forcibly teleported away. They hadn't seen the man at all, much less learn who Ji Ning's master was.

"What happened?" Autumn Leaf was intrigued. "You said something about the young master's teacher?"

"Nothing." Yu Wei shook her head and smiled. "It's something good, but it's not something for us to know about."

"Oh." Autumn Leaf nodded, asking no further.

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"Master." Ning immediately called out with respect and excitement. The skinny, white-bearded elder in the Daoist robes smiled and nodded towards Ning, then looked towards Old Man Yuan.

"YOU!" Old Man Yuan's eyes bulged. "You cucumber! You friggin' cucumber! You ended up snatching away such a wonderful disciple!"

"This is the third time, you know." Patriarch Subhuti sighed. "Why do you always come after the disciples that I take in and teach?"

Ning blinked.

The third time?

It seemed as though Old Man Yuan had gone after two of his fellow disciples as well?

“Ahaha, all I can say is that you are formidable in teaching students, Subhuti.” Old Man Yuan laughed, “Since it’s you, Subhuti...that makes everything easy. We came to an agreement last time, right? Go ahead and tell me whatever it is that you want. This old man has plenty of treasures, and I’m willing to spend them. I’m not afraid of any demands that you might make.”

“Ji Ning, are you willing?” Subhuti looked towards Ning.

“I’ll follow your orders in all things, Master,” Ning said respectfully. If it didn’t make things tough for his master, there would be no issues. More importantly, Master Subhuti had to know more about Old Man Yuan than Ning did; Ning trusted that Master Subhuti wouldn’t steer him wrong in this decision.

Subhuti nodded slightly.

“He can be both considered one of your disciples as well as one of mine,” Subhuti said calmly. “I’m only going to ask one thing of you...that you stand with us, on our side.”

“You...” Old Man Yuan’s face became unsightly to behold.

Subhuti frowned. “Are you still unwilling to make your choice?”

“It’s merely a matter of taking on a new a disciple, and I’m not even asking him to switch sides! He’ll be our jointly shared disciple. If you want divine abilities or Protocosmic spirit-treasures, that’s fine...but why are you trying to force me?” Old Man Yuan scratched his head. “Didn’t things work out splendidly when little Peacock became my apprenticed? She addresses both of us as ‘master’!”

Ning was intrigued. Were they referring to senior apprentice-sister Peacock?

“Little Peacock?” Subhuti shook his head. “That was before the storm came, and before I knew it was coming. Now that the storm is already here...of course you have to make your choice. Otherwise, there’s no way I’ll permit my disciple to become apprenticed to you as well.”

“How can you...you are absolutely...you old blockhead!” Old Man Yuan was infuriated.

“Hmph.” Subhuti snorted coldly. “Then let me ask you this; if Ji Ning becomes your apprentice, and you end up joining the Seamless Gate...what is Ji Ning supposed to do? Is he supposed to choose to stand with me, or is he supposed to choose to stand with you? If he stands with the Seamless Gate, then I’ll definitely strike and annihilate such a vile disciple! But if he stands with us, then you’ll move to kill him as well. After all, by then it will be a life-and-death battle; no one will be able to escape it.”

Old Man Yuan’s face grew even uglier to behold now.

Ning, standing to one side, now understood everything.

Right. If he took on two masters who ended up in opposing, enemy camps...then no matter which side Ning was on, he would end up becoming enemies with one of his masters!

“If you want him to become your disciple, then I imagine you don’t want to make things difficult for him; you don’t want him to eventually be killed by one of his masters, right? That’s why you have to stand with us; only by doing so will Ji Ning not suffer such a sad fate,” Subhuti said. “So long as you agree...Ji Ning can take you on as master.”

“You...” Old Man Yuan had a complicated look on his face.

Ning just stood there, watching quietly.

The Four Ancestors of the River Source; they were a formidable power within the Three Realms. Most likely, whichever side Old Man Yuan chose would be the side the Daofathers who followed him would choose.

“Why are you forcing me on this? This isn’t just a personal matter; I have all my friends and disciples and grand-disciples to worry about.” Old Man Yuan was truly upset now.

“There’s nothing to negotiate!” Subhuti shook his head. “Don’t make things difficult for Ji Ning.”

“But didn’t things work out perfectly when I took on little Peacock?” Old Man Yuan snapped back irritably.

“That’s because you haven’t made your choice yet. Once you do make your choice in the future...if you choose to join the Seamless Gate, little Peacock will have to make her choice as well. Will she follow you, or will she follow me?” Subhuti sighed. “I’ve already done wrong by little Peacock; I don’t wish for Ji Ning to face the same tough situation in the future.”

Old Man Yuan suddenly grew angry. “I don’t get it. Why are all of you so damned stubborn?”

“I don’t understand either! All of us were born from the same primordial chaos. We were like brothers! All of us are standing together now...why is it that you are roving about on your own? All four of you Four Ancestors of the River Source act in the exact same manner; you don’t give a damn about your old friends and friendships.” Subhuti was no longer calm either; in fact, he was so angry that his eyebrows were twitching, and as he spoke he pointed angrily at Old Man Yuan.

“The rest of you are in Nuwa’s debt, but we aren’t,” Old Man Yuan replied angrily. “And Pangu’s Primordial World shattered long ago. This is now the era of the Three Realms. That old, undying bastard just wants to take over the Three Realms; let him! Do you Daofathers really care who is in control of the Three Realms? Do you have to risk everyone’s lives over this question? You say that I don’t care about old friends and friendships? If I didn’t, I would’ve joined the Seamless Gate long ago!”

Subhuti was now truly enraged. “How can you be so...”

Their voices suddenly turned silent.

The distant figures of Patriarch Subhuti and Old Man Yuan’s turned blurry as they angrily but silently yelled at, argued with, and cursed at each other.

Ning wasn’t able to hear a single word of it.

“It seems...they don’t want me to hear this.” Ning mumbled to himself, “They said something about an ‘old undying bastard’ who ‘wants to take over the Three Realms’...who? He must be a truly terrifying major power of the Three Realms.”

Ning had no choice but to just stand there silently and watch. As for the two distant Daofathers...both of them were awe-inspiringly famous figures of the Three Realms who stood at the very pinnacle of power amongst Daofathers. Both had multiple Daofathers amongst their disciples, and both also had many Daofathers who were their resolute allies. Both possessed tremendous power in every sense of the word.

In addition, both were born from the primordial chaos of the universe.

And right now, they stood there arguing, each trying to convince the other.

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A long time passed...

The two Daofathers actually argued for two full hours. Towards the end, Ning noticed that Patriarch Subhuti was growing increasingly imposing as he argued, while Old Man Yuan seemed to become increasingly less self-assured.

Boom! The area around him suddenly trembled. Now, Ning could once more hear the voices of the two Daofathers.

“Ji Ning.”

Old Man Yuan charged over, an ugly look on his face. He snapped angrily, “That master of yours is like a big hunk of wood. You just can’t talk to him! Those who walk different paths can’t make plans together. I really can’t be bothered to talk to him any longer. You are quite talented, kid; although that rotten blockhead is very skilled in some respects, he’s complete crap in heartforce. Since we aren’t destined to become master and disciple...then forget it! This is a technique for applying heartforce which I developed. Although it’s not a complete system, it might be of help to you in some way. I’ll give it to you as a gift!”

As he spoke, he pointed a finger towards Ning.

Instantly, a streak of light shot out from his finger into Ning’s forehead.

An ocean of information instantly filled Ning’s mind.

“Subhuti!” Old Man Yuan turned to point at Subhuti, then cursed, “In terms of fleeing abilities, you are number one in all the Three Realms! You’ll be able to flee and survive, but how many of our other old friends will be able to survive? All those years ago, Threelives and the others all perished. How many more do you want dead?”

“If we retreat, even more will die. In fact, all of us might die!” Subhuti said angrily.

“Fine. Fine. Fine! We’ll wait and see!”

The enraged Old Man Yuan turned and walked away.

After taking two steps away, the now-ordinary old gardener suddenly slumped supinely to the ground as a streak of light shot into the skies, disappearing.

Subhuti waved his hand, and the old gardener was instantly teleported away. He was nothing more than an ordinary old man, after all; prior to this, Old Man Yuan had simply been possessing him.

Subhuti walked towards Ning, who was completely filled and preoccupied with the enormous amount of information regarding the application of heartforce.

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It was awe-inspiring.

It was unfathomably profound.

When Ning viewed the awe-inspiring collection of information, he couldn't help but feel veneration towards Old Man Yuan. Incredible! Old Man Yuan's true power, however, most likely didn't lie in heartforce; after all, in terms of heartforce, Ning could tell that Old Man Yuan shouldn't be as powerful as Houyi had been.

Old Man Yuan, however, was different from Houyi.

Houyi was extremely focused on his archery, and he had systemized a way to apply heartforce to archery in a terrifyingly profound and powerful manner.

Old Man Yuan, however, was a jack of all trades. Most likely, he liked analyzing heartforce, and so had come up with multiple different heartforce techniques, some meant for the legs, some meant for the entire body, some meant for the fingers, some meant for the hair, some meant for the sword, some meant for other treasures...there were all sorts of techniques here! However, none of them were truly systemized; from the looks of it, Old Man Yuan had jotted down a few notes whenever inspiration struck him.

His most profound techniques regarding heartforce actually were in applying heartforce to the soul! This allowed the soul to control even more magic treasures. For example, if normally Ning was only able to control the third level of the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation], if he applied heartforce to his soul, he would be able to control the sixth level or even the seventh level. This was a technique which Ning was truly eager to learn.

Heartforce was like a marshal, with the soul being the soldiers; if one used them together properly, the number of magic treasures one could control would instantly explode. In addition, the amount of heartforce that was used up was negligible; after all, it merely served as a commander, without much of it being actually burned away. The increase in power, however, was still astonishing! This was definitely a killer technique for any Ki Refiner.

However...none of it was systemized, which meant that no one could simply 'learn' the technique after reading about it.

Still...

Ning wasn't an uninformed outsider to this art.

He was someone who, after learning how to apply heartforce through [Houyi's Archery], had first come up with a way to apply heartforce to his sword-fingers, then come up with a way to apply heartforce to his swords! Ning was capable of creating these techniques himself; now, after having seen the more profound techniques of Old Man Yuan, he was of course stimulated by them and had new insights. These insights would absolutely be enough to allow Ning to come up with a suitable method for applying heartforce to his legs or to his entire body, or even to his soul.

Aside from Old Man Yuan's own techniques, there were also techniques which other major powers had devised for the application of heartforce.

All these non-systemized heartforce techniques...this collection was known as the [Heart Sutra].

"The [Heart Sutra]? With this [Heart Sutra], I'll be able to grow dramatically more powerful in every aspect, whether it be dodging in close combat, fleeing, or anything else. My Primaltwin will become more powerful as well." Ning was unspeakably excited right now. Before this, he was only formidable in his attacks; he was quite lacking in other respects. Thus, almost any Emyrean God or True Immortal would probably be able to capture him.

Now, however, Ning would be able to improve himself in every area. He would no longer have any obvious weaknesses, and so capturing him would become far more difficult in the future.

"Wow." Ning opened his eyes, a look of delight on his face.

As he did so...he saw his master, Patriarch Subhuti, standing not too far away from him. Ning's face quickly stiffened.

"Master," Ning immediately called out.

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Book 17: Celestial Immortal Chapter 23: Before The Tribulation

Ji Ning's heart clenched. He could tell that there were some disagreements between his master, Subhuti, and Old Man Yuan. Was his master going to forbid him from training in the [Heart Sutra]?

"What did Old Man Yuan transmit to you?" Subhuti asked.

"The [Heart Sutra]." Ning didn't dare to hide this. "It contains his many experiences with various heartforce application techniques, as well as a mix of heartforce application techniques from a few other Daofathers. However, they are all un-systemized...but they will still be of great benefit to me, especially the one that applies to using heartforce on the soul. It will be of tremendous help to me in controlling the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation] as well as in overcoming the demonheart tribulation."

Subhuti gave Ning a glance, then revealed a calm smile. "Your master isn't the pedantic, inflexible sort; since Daofather Yuan has gifted you with this sutra, and since he hasn't forced you to become his disciple...go ahead and learn from it! If in the future, Daofather Yuan decides to stand with us, you shall naturally repay his kindness. If, however, he stands with the Seamless Gate...then when a war to the death erupts between our two alliances, you'd have to fight against him with all your might. This would be true even if he really was your master, to say nothing of him merely having transmitted a technique!"

Ning's heart shivered. He immediately said, "Your disciple understands."

This was a storm!

A storm which no one would be able to avoid.

"I hope senior Old Man Yuan decides to stand with us," Ning mused secretly to himself. Everyone who he owed a debt of gratitude to, such as the former Lord of Cui Palace who had been the First Judge of the Dead and who had transmitted the [Nuwa Painting] to him, belonged to the side of the Nuwa Alliance. Even the master he had never met, Daoist Threelives, had also been on the side of Nuwa. The same was true for the seven Emyrean Gods of the Starseizing world, to say nothing of Patriarch Subhuti, Daofather Crimsonbright, and the Xia Emperor.

There was also already a feud between himself and the Seamless Gate...and Ning had a true disliking for the way in which the Seamless Gate had acted in seeking to conquer the universe. Once they took over the Three Realms, not only would they pay no attention to maintaining any order, they would instigate countless battles and massacres.

"This Old Man Yuan truly is an extremely formidable figure," Subhuti said to Ning. "His power is most likely no lower than mine, and he loves to analyze and research many different types of techniques. He's a master in many areas, and in heartforce he is second only to Houyi. In terms of how many heartforce skills he knows, he's even superior to Houyi. Spend some effort on this [Heart Sutra], especially in the part that shows you how to apply heartforce to your soul. You must gain insight into it; once you do, your chances of overcoming the Emyrean Tribulation and shall increase by quite a bit."

"Your disciple understands." Ning nodded.

Heartforce as the general, the soul as the soldiers.

Once the general commanded the soldiers to unleash their power in an organized fashion, he would be able to control even more magic treasures while also making it harder for the demonheart tribulation to invade his mind. Against a weak soul, it was easy to create a terrifying demonheart illusion, but against one with a powerful soul, it would be far more difficult. In fact, there were some truly terrifying souls that were so powerful that the demonheart illusions were completely unable to take hold against them.

Once Ning learned the art of applying heartforce to his soul, his soul would instantly become more than ten times steadier. This, in turn, would dramatically lessen the power of the demonheart illusions generated by the 'demonheart tribulation' of his Emyrean Tribulation.

"Your disciple has a subconscious feeling...if I am able to master this soul heartforce technique, my Primaltwin will be in virtually no danger during the Celestial Tribulation," Ning said. "Should your disciple delay the tribulation?"

"No need." Subhuti shook his head.

Ning looked at his master, puzzled.

"If you wait until you've mastered the soul heartforce technique, your Primaltwin's tribulation will indeed be very easy." Subhuti nodded. "But...first of all, it's hard to say how long it would take you to come up with such a technique; after all, there's a tremendous difference between applying heartforce

to the soul and applying heartforce to sword-fingers. Second, although your Primaltwin's tribulation is indeed a tribulation, it's also an excellent and rare opportunity to temper yourself."

"Temper myself?" Ning was intrigued.

"After having withstood the karmic sinflames, your heartforce improved dramatically," Subhuti said. "By the same principle...your Primaltwin's demonheart tribulation will be a tempering experience as well that will allow your heartforce to improve in strength and your Dao-heart to grow even more resolute. If you wait until you come up with a soul heartforce technique before you attempt the tribulation, ending up in an excessively easy tribulation, it won't have any tempering effect on you."

"Remember this."

"Your Primaltwin's tribulation is a minor matter. What really matters for you should be your true body's tribulation." Subhuti looked at Ning. "Your true body has trained in many divine abilities, and its potential is far greater than your Primaltwin's. After all...compared to Fiendgods, Ki Refiners are always at a significant disadvantage. If you look at the Three Realms, all of the most supreme of powers of the Three Realms have powerful divine bodies."

"Threelives, for example; he clearly didn't master a Heavenly Dao, but was still able to kill many Daofathers." Subhuti looked at Ning. "Or for example, you; even if your Primaltwin becomes a Pure Yang True Immortal, it will still most likely be merely an average Pure Yang True Immortal. But once your true body becomes an Empyrean God, you'll instantly become one of the most supreme Empyrean Gods or True Immortals. If you spend a bit of time training, you'll probably come extremely close to Lu Dongbin's level. That's the advantage which Fiendgods have! Look at the most famous figures of the Three Realms; Houyi, Nuwa, Pangu, Old Man Yuan, and yes, myself; which of them trained solely as Ki Refiners?"

Ning nodded.

"The more monstrously talented you are, the more terrifying your tribulation will be. Even I can't be certain as to how powerful your Empyrean Tribulation shall be. All I know is that it will definitely be shocking." Subhuti looked towards Ning. "Thus...the most important thing for you right now is to focus all of your efforts towards preparing for your Empyrean Tribulation."

"Your disciple understands," Ning said solemnly. "Three days from now, your disciple's Primaltwin will undergo the tribulation."

"Good." Subhuti nodded with satisfaction. "If you succeed in this tribulation and your Primaltwin becomes a Celestial Immortal, your Dao-heart shall be further strengthened. This would naturally be an ideal outcome. However, even if you fail and lose your Primaltwin...you'll have at least experienced the demonheart tribulation. If you end up failing it, it'll have been of even greater help to you in terms of tempering yourself."

Ning nodded.

Everything was for the sake of his true body!

"Shall I still go to Daofather Crimsonbright's place for the tribulation?" Ning asked.

“No need.” Subhuti shook his head. “Undergoing the Celestial Tribulation is a major matter; naturally, as your master, I will ensure that you won’t suffer any disturbances during your tribulation. I was always planning to guard you while you underwent your tribulation. I didn’t expect that you’d go seek out that kid Xiamang.”

Not even Subhuti could keep the [Dream of the Three Realms] up at all times. Subhuti only found out about Ning speaking to Xiamang after the fact.

“You can undergo it here at Swallow Mountain,” Subhuti said. “Don’t worry about anything. I won’t show myself, but I definitely won’t let anyone disturb you.”

“Thank you, Master,” Ning immediately said.

“This Celestial Tribulation is nothing more than a tempering experience for you; don’t waste it. Your Emyrean Tribulation is what truly matters,” Subhuti said solemnly.

Upon becoming an Emyrean God, Ning would have become one of the truly formidable figures of the Three Realms.

“Calm yourself and prepare for your Celestial Tribulation. Although this Celestial Tribulation isn’t as important as your true body’s Emyrean Tribulation, it will still be extraordinary.” Subhuti smiled, then vanished into thin air, no longer anywhere to be seen.

.....

Ning continued his preparations here at Swallow Mountain. He spent a little bit of time to pay a visit to the Xia Emperor, informing him that his own Daofather master was going to protect him, and so there was no need to trouble Daofather Crimsonbright. The Xia Emperor had nodded; if there was no need to bother his master, all the better.

During these three days prior to his tribulation, Ning paid a visit to West Prefecture City, where he had spent his early childhood days. He visited the Eastmount Marshes he had once adventured through, went to the mountains where he had once killed Bei Zishan...and as he retraced his steps, Ning felt his heart grow calmer and calmer.

This was a day on the cusp between spring and summer. The early dawn was very cool and refreshing.

Within a solitary mountain peak in the Swallow Mountain region, Ning’s true body and his black-robed Primaltwin were seated together in the lotus position, a hint of dew on their bodies. They had sat here all night, their minds and hearts as calm as still water. Far away, on a distant mountain peak, stood Uncle White, Little Qing, Mu Northson, Immortal Diancai, Autumn Leaf, and the pregnant Yu Wei. They all watched nervously...because Ji Ning was about to undergo his Celestial Tribulation.

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Book 17: Celestial Immortal Chapter 24: The Tribulation

Uncle White, Autumn Leaf, Mu Northson, and the others watching from far away were all extremely nervous. Immortal Diancai immediately said consolingly to them, “I was able to successfully overcome my tribulation. This disciple of mine is more powerful than me, even as I am right now, and his

Primaltwin is merely a Ki Refiner; I trust his Celestial Tribulation won't be too powerful. He'll definitely succeed in overcoming it."

"Right." They all nodded, including Yu Wei. However, Yu Wei still felt restlessness in her heart. This was because she had been an apprentice to Patriarch Lu; she knew very well that Patriarch Lu's tribulation had been one with nine nine-sets of thunder tribulation; clearly, Ki Refiners could also encounter incredibly terrifying Celestial Tribulations.

Whooooosh.

Atop the distant, solitary mountain peak, Ning's true body which had been seated in the lotus position suddenly vanished. He had entered the underwater estate, leaving behind only the black-robed Primaltwin Ning, who still continued to sit there.

The golden-lotus Primal within the black-robed Ning's body began to undergo its final breakthrough. It surged to the peak of the Void-level and began to actively call out for the Celestial Tribulation to descend...

Whoooooosh. Whooooosh. Whoooooosh.

A wind arose.

"It's begun."

"The wind tribulation."

"The Celestial Tribulation has started." Immortal Diancai and the others all stared nervously.

Everything had been completely calm before this, but suddenly a gale erupted out of nowhere, forming into wind-blades that grew increasingly small in size. The wind-blades changed in color, growing increasingly powerful as they became tiny black knives, each of which was comparable to an Immortal-ranked magic treasure.

"The start to the wind tribulation is already this powerful..." The looks on the faces of Immortal Diancai and Yu Wei changed. They had both undergone tribulations and had past experience to rely on; it was obvious to them that the Primaltwin Ning's Celestial Tribulation was starting off at an excessive level of power. It vastly surpassed theirs, at least!

The seated, black-robed Ning just watched calmly. In a soft voice, he called out, "Nineleaf, come out."

Instantly, an enormous, snowy-white lotus treasure appeared beneath the seated Ning. If one looked at it carefully, one would see that it had a total of nine snowy-white lotus petals. This was the most powerful magic treasure which Celestial Immortal Blackheaven had prepared for the Seamless Gate's assault against Brightheart Island...the Protocosmic spirit-treasure, 'Nineleaf Snowlotus'.

The Nineleaf Snowlotus was incredibly powerful, and it was best-suited for trapping and binding foes! Even if it was ownerless, the Nineleaf Snowlotus could activate the cold elemental energy of the natural world to form tiny snowlotus petals to wildly assault and constrict its foes. And if it did have a master who filled it with elemental ki...its power would be even more astonishing.

Blackheaven had been planning to rely on this Protocosmic spirit-treasure to bind Ning! From this, one could tell how powerful it was.

When Old Man Yuan had wiped out all the forces of the Seamless Gate, he had given Ning all of the treasures the Seamless Gate had left behind. The Pure Yang treasures weren't as important for now, and Ning was in no rush to parcel them out to Yu Wei or the others; after all, his tribulation was coming soon, and he had his master to protect him, meaning that this period of time would be very safe. The parceling out of the treasures could wait for after the tribulation.

As for the Nineleaf Snowlotus, Ning had bound it to himself.

This sort of treasure was tremendously helpful towards Ning, and binding it could also be quite difficult; it depended on whether or not the Protocosmic spirit-treasure was willing to accept the new master or not. The Nineleaf Snowlotus naturally had a spirit of its own, one which took the form of a white-robed girl. The white-robed girl was persuaded by the Rahu Bow and the giant bear of the underwater estate...and given that Ji Ning was indeed a monstrous talent, and that she had seen a Daofather strike out on behalf of Ning, she quickly accepted and acknowledged Ning as her master. As a result, Ning was able to easily bind this Protocosmic spirit-treasure.

If the Nineleaf Snowlotus had been unwilling, binding her would've been a true pain; most likely, only a Pure Yang True Immortal would've been able to bind her forcibly, after spending an enormous amount of time.

However, once she became willing, Ning was able to effortlessly bind her.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Ning was now enthroned on his Nineleaf Snowlotus. Countless snowflakes appeared around him, each of which had the form of a tiny little snowlotus leaf. In the thousands and tens of thousands, they completely surrounded Ning and protected the area around him. Although they were best-suited for wrapping around and binding a foe en masse, they could also be used to defend. If they had to protect a large space, their defensive power would drop a bit, but since the treasure was as a Protocosmic spirit-treasure, its power was still quite extraordinary.

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

Countless Immortal swords appeared around Ning, hovering in the air around him and ensconcing him within. Although Ning had already activated a Protocosmic spirit-treasure...to be completely safe, he released all of his Immortal swords, preparing to defend if necessary.

Rumble...

First came the roaring gale.

Next came all sorts of terrifying skywinds with astonishing power.

Still...no matter how powerful the assaults were, the Nineleaf Snowlotus Protocosmic spirit-treasure was able to endure them all. Ning wasn't even needed to use his sword-formations at all.

"The final assault of the wind tribulation has come, the Celestial Immortal Wind." Immortal Diancai and the other distant spectators all felt their hearts clench.

The Celestial Immortal Wind was formless and invisible; no magic treasures or spells could block it.

Whoosh!

The Celestial Immortal Wind descended, effortlessly bypassing the defending Nineleaf Snowlotus. It passed through Ning's skin, going straight into the Sole-Ki Pearl of Primalwater within Ning's Primaltwin. Ordinary people usually had this wind entering through their head, but since Ning's Primaltwin was created from this Sole-Ki Pearl of Primalwater. Still...in the face of the Celestial Immortal Wind, it seemed incredibly fragile.

Celestial Immortal Wind would only ever appear during the Celestial Tribulation. It was a manifestation of the Dao that flowed through the Three Realms, and no power or magic treasure could oppose it. If one's Dao-heart was not strong enough, the Celestial Immortal Wind would incinerate one's body and reduce it to ash.

Thus...one's Dao-heart had to be firm.

Ning had managed to overcome the karmic sinflames tribulation; how could his Dao-heart be weak? He could sense the Zifu region within his Sole-Ki Pearl of Primalwater begin to tremble, then transform. The pearl itself was being transformed. Once he truly became a Celestial Immortal...the pearl would completely vanish, and the true core of his Primaltwin would become a golden pellet, his Jindan.

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The wind tribulation ended. The fire tribulation came.

The weather changed dramatically as an utterly enormous cloud of fire appeared in the skies, causing the temperature to skyrocket. However, Ning continued to simply sit there above the Nineleaf Snowlotus. Just by using a little bit of his elemental energy, he was able to activate a large amount of energy of the natural world to cause the temperature to cool once more. For a time, the world was divided between a blazing sky high above and a world of snow down below. Truly, this was a case where fire and snow could not coexist.

"The fire tribulation has come. However...since that protective treasure Ning has was able to easily defend against the wind tribulation, I trust it won't be too hard for it to resist the fire tribulation." Immortal Diancai smiled.

"The power of the wind tribulation is comparable to the power of the fire tribulation. Given how formidable junior apprentice-brother's protective treasure is, he should be able to easily overcome it without using up too much energy." Yu Wei said with concern, "What I'm worried about is the thunder tribulation."

Indeed.

The power of the Protocosmic spirit-treasure, the Nineleaf Snowlotus, was truly astonishing. It didn't require too much energy to be used up, but alas, Ning didn't have a way to apply his heartforce through the Nineleaf Snowlotus. If he did, not even his swords might be as powerful as the Nineleaf Snowlotus. This was a Protocosmic spirit-treasure, after all; although Ning had many hundreds of Immortal swords, and although the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation] was incredibly powerful, they were still 'merely' top-grade Immortal swords. But of course...Ning had come up with a way to apply heartforce through

his swords of the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation], and so at present the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation] far surpassed the Nineleaf Snowlotus in power.

He had passed the wind tribulation!

He now passed the fire tribulation as well! The Celestial Immortal Fire that came in the end resulted in the Sole-Ki Pearl of Primalwater evolving yet again.

Finally...the time came for the thunder tribulation.

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There was a fairly long period of time that would pass between the end of the fire tribulation and the start of the thunder tribulation. The Celestial Tribulation gave the tribulant some time to restore their energy...but in truth, in this case Ning had primarily relied on the Nineleaf Snowlotus to defend against the elemental attacks, and had used his Dao-heart to endure the Celestial Immortal Wind and Celestial Immortal Fire. Thus, he had used up very little of his energy.

“I wonder how many sets of thunder tribulation Master will face,” Little Qing said worriedly.

“I underwent six nine-sets,” Immortal Diancai said with concern. “This disciple of mine had far more karmic luck than I did, and he also has karmic sinflames around him; his thunder tribulation shall undoubtedly be astonishing.”

All of them were worried. What none of them realized...

Was that in truth, Ji Ning had received supreme transmissions of the Dao from three Daofather-level figures; Patriarch Subhuti, Daoist Threelives, and Old Man Yuan. Of the three, Old Man Yuan and Patriarch Subhuti both stood at the very pinnacle of power amongst the Daofathers of the Three Realms. While Daoist Threelives had never been able to actually become a Daofather, remaining a True God of Primordial Chaos, the [Starseizing Hand] divine ability was awe-inspiringly powerful and one of the top ten divine abilities of the Three Realms.

Ning had acquired so many legacies that even his Ki Refiner tribulation wouldn't be weak...and he also had mastered heartforce and was covered in karmic sinflames.

An hour passed.

Rumble...

The calm skies suddenly manifested a pair of enormous black clouds. These enormous black clouds covered nearly the entire sky, causing the world to turn pitch-black as they blocked out almost all light.

“What just happened?”

“The sky turned dark?”

The Ji clansmen within Swallow Mountain, as well as the other clansmen and monsters present, all stared towards the sky in confusion.

The entire sky had turned pitch-black. As for the dark clouds...they had now completely covered the entire Swallow Mountain area of nearly a hundred thousand kilometers!

“How could this...” Yu Wei, Immortal Diancai, Mu Northson, Uncle White, Little Qing, and Autumn Leaf all raised their heads. They had changed looks on their faces, while Yu Wei’s face was completely bloodless.

The two enormous dark clouds that had blotted out the skies above all of Swallow Mountain slowly began to move towards each other. Because of how enormous they were, these two massive clouds seemed to fly at a very slow pace. But as they flew...crack! Crack! A series of cracking sounds could be heard from the skies as one enormous bolt of lightning after another began to snake out from within the two massive dark clouds.

Ning, however, just watched calmly.

He wasn’t surprised at all.

Soon, an enormous vortex of lightning and clouds had formed within the skies. The size of this vortex still covered the entire Swallow Mountain region; from its size alone, one could tell how utterly astonishing its power was.

BOOM!

A streak of lightning lashed out from the lightning-cloud vortex, striking directly down like the sword of the heavens.

Clang!

Ning had already risen to his feet. Hundreds of Immortal swords hovered around him, while the Nineleaf Snowlotus was underneath him. Many hundreds of meters above Ning, an utterly enormous lotus had formed, generated from countless tiny snowlotus petals. The enormous lotus was a barrier to defend against the thunder tribulation. Ning still wanted to use this Protocosmic spirit-treasure; it consumed very little of his elemental ki, after all.

BOOM! The first bolt of lightning wasn’t even able to cause the Protocosmic spirit-treasure to shake in the slightest.

Bolts of lightning continued to crash down.

Soon, they were at the fourth nine-set of thunderbolts.

Thunderbolts continued to crash down.

Five nine-sets. Six nine-sets...

“This is the seventh nine-set.” Autumn Leaf couldn’t help but whisper these words. BRIGHTHEART ISLAND now had quite an extensive library of books, many of which Ning had acquired after killing other Immortals. Autumn Leaf had naturally perused them.

“Master is almost at his limit.” Little Qing was worried as well.

This was the sixty-first bolt of thunder.

The enormous lotus flower formed from the Nineleaf Snowlotus was already beginning to collapse.

“[Greater Thousand Swords Formation], go forth!” The black-robed Ning, standing atop the Nineleaf Snowlotus, pointed towards the skies. Instantly, a golden sword that had manifested in front of his chest streaked out into the heavens.

BOOM!

The enormous lotus above him had already vanished into thin air. However, a series of layers of lotus flowers appeared around the black-robed Ning.

This strike of the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation] contained a hint of his heartforce, allowing him to effortlessly block the celestial thunder.

“The eighth nine-set has arrived.”

Soon, it was time for the eighth nine-set. Immortal Diancai and the other spectators all felt nervous; how was it that a Ki Refiner actually caused an eighth nine-set to appear? Even though Ning had taken on a Daofather as his master, his tribulation shouldn't be this terrifying, right?

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Book 17: Celestial Immortal Chapter 25: A New Life

The seventieth bolt of thunder.

A violet streak of lightning crashed down with ice-cold callousness. The black-robed Ji Ning beneath it pointed with his finger, causing the golden sword of the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation] to once more soar into the skies.

Rumble...

It once more blocked the assault.

“I hope it is merely eight nine-sets. If it grows much stronger...it may put too much stress on my heartforce.” Ning was a bit worried as well. Third-level heartforce was very powerful, and it would be easy to use it against eight nine-sets, but if it became the full nine nine-sets...the power of the thunder would skyrocket to a new level. By then, each blow would most likely require Ning to use up quite a bit of his heartforce. Once it was used up, he would definitely perish.

Ning had never imagined that he would have failed during the thunder tribulation of the Celestial Tribulation, but he was now beginning to worry. The power of the eighth nine-set was already a bit beyond what he had expected.

Boom!

Boom!

The divine thunder grew increasingly powerful. After these two consecutive blows of divine thunder...everyone, be it Ning or the distant group of spectators including Immortal Diancai and Yu Wei, stared upwards nervously.

“This is merely junior apprentice-brother's Primaltwin. Eight nine-sets should be enough; there shouldn't be nine nine-sets, right?”

“The legendary nine nine-sets...generally speaking, only Void-level Fiendgods will encounter them.”

They all watched nervously.

Thousands of kilometers away, an old man in Daoist robes was watching from atop a distant mountain peak. When he saw that the tribulation clouds in the sky did not disperse, and instead began to gather an even more terrifying amount of power, his face changed. He murmured softly to himself, “My disciple’s Primaltwin has actually encountered the ninth nine-set?”

“It’s just a Primaltwin. In terms of fortuitous encounters, it probably isn’t even up to Lu Dongbin’s standard...can this be due to the karmic sinflames?” Subhuti began to worry.

Ning was a monster, but that was with regards to his true body.

His Primaltwin, by comparison...although it had control over heartforce, it was far inferior in all other aspects to the Void-level Lu Dongbin of countless years ago. Although heartforce was powerful, it had a glaring weakness: It could only be used to fight for a short period of time. Once one’s heartforce was used up, one’s power would drop dramatically.

For Ning’s Primaltwin to encounter nine nine-sets of thunder tribulation...Subhuti felt that this was too excessive, even though Ning did have karmic sinflames covering him.

“If this is the case...then my disciple’s true body...?” Subhuti began to worry.

If even the Primaltwin had to undergo nine nine-sets, then the Emyrean Tribulation of the true body would be...

“Once he becomes an Emyrean God, he will quickly reach the pinnacle of power amongst Emyrean Gods. In fact, after he undergoes a bit more tempering, he’ll be like Houyi was, capable of rivaling the Daofathers despite merely being at the Emyrean God level.” Subhuti let out a soft sigh. “It seems not even the heavens are willing to casually permit such a monstrous genius like this to exist. The heavens will insist on unleashing a terrifying tribulation...”

From the era of Pangu’s World to the modern day, countless monsters had their souls shattered by their tribulations!

“Forget about the Emyrean Tribulation; even this Celestial Tribulation...” Subhuti stared off into the distance, a frown on his face.

“Nine nine-sets!”

“There’s more?!”

“How can this be?!”

Immortal Diancai, Mu Northson, Autumn Leaf, Uncle White, Little Qing, and Yu Wei all revealed frantic looks on their faces. There was no way they could help Ning; during the Celestial Tribulation, a person could only rely on himself.

“Junior apprentice-brother, you have to succeed.” Yu Wei gently stroked her belly, her eyes filled with hope.

“Ji Ning.”

“Young master.”

They were all filled with hope. Although the fame of the ninth nine-set was terrifying, Ning had overcome the previous eight nine-sets with utter ease, not seeming to be taxed by them at all. Thus...they were still filled with hope.

Boom!

The ninth nine-set of the thunder tribulation. The seventy-third bolt of thunder was a streak of violet lightning that was tinged with a white color. This hint of white caused the thunderbolt to become beautiful, a terrible beauty to behold. It was as though the lord of all creation had just taken a look at his universe with a gaze that of ineffable power. Weaker Void-level Earth Immortals probably wouldn't even try to fight back against this thunderbolt...but of course, there was no way a weak Void-level Earth Immortal would even be able to make it this far, to the ninth nine-set of the thunder tribulation.

In all the Three Realms, in all of history, every single person who had encountered nine nine-sets was an extraordinary figure. They wouldn't easily admit defeat; even if they had to die, they would die standing.

“Go.” Ning pointed into the distance, and the golden sword in front of his chest once more flew out. While flying out, Ning manifested yet another golden sword in front of himself.

Clang!

As the first golden sword flew out, it was struck head-on by the violet-white thunderbolt and broken apart.

“It seems I have to use one-fiftieth of my total heartforce in order to completely block these attacks. The power of the divine thunder truly has risen significantly.” Ning hurriedly commanded his second golden sword to fly out, blocking the remaining power of the violet-white thunderbolt. “The power of these thunderbolts are greater than the full-strength blows of the likes of Celestial Immortal Infatuation. How could an ordinary Void-level Earth Immortal possibly withstand them?”

Only by accurately predicting the power of each thunderbolt could Ning ensure that he wasn't wasting too much of his heartforce with each blow.

“He blocked the seventy-third thunderbolt.”

“He blocked the first bolt of the ninth nine-set!” Immortal Diancai and the others revealed looks of excitement and nervousness in their eyes. There was a huge increasing in power between the last bolt of the eighth nine-set and the first bolt of the ninth nine-set; for him to be able to block this first bolt meant that there was hope for him to block the others.

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

One bolt of lightning after another came crashing down.

All the thunderbolts were violet-white in color, but towards the end, the white grew more and more dominant, and the power grew increasingly greater. In turn, Ning was forced to use up more and more of his heartforce.

The seventy-ninth bolt!

The eightieth!

“There’s one more left.”

“The last one.”

Yu Wei, Uncle White, and the others felt as though their hearts were hanging in the air. The legendary nine nine-sets of thunder tribulation...finally, the last blow of it was going to reveal its force. Not everyone was lucky enough to witness such a thing. However, their hearts were only filled with a dim, vague fear...because the very sight of the cloud-lightning vortex swirling above them was filling them with inexplicable terror.

“Even if it was me...the current me, who has become a Celestial Immortal long ago...I would probably die beneath this below,” Immortal Diancai mused to himself.

.....

Ning stood there at the very peak of the mountain, like a sharp sword unfurled towards the heavens. Beneath his feet was the Nineleaf Snowlotus, and lotus flowers swirled and bloomed all around him. Hundreds of swords levitated around him, all pointed towards the heavens as Ning raised his head, staring at the tribulation clouds.

The final thunderbolt.

The final bolt of the ninth nine-set of the thunder tribulation.

BOOM!!!!

It was a thunderbolt of pure white, filled with holiness and sanctity. It didn’t have even the slightest hint of wildness or savagery; all it held was an exalted, noble aura within it as it came crushing down from the heavens. This was the true face of the very final thunderbolt of the ninth nine-set.

“Go.” Ning pointed a finger.

Swoosh!

The golden sword-light flashed with incomparable brilliance, expanding to become an enormous sword that instantly shot into the heavens, striking towards that pure-white thunderbolt.

“Go.” As fast as Ning could, Ning manifested and unleashed a second golden sword. By now, the first golden sword he had sent towards the white thunderbolt had already been completely blasted apart. The second golden sword quickly soared upwards. BOOM! The remnants of the pure-white thunderbolt trembled, and then completely dispersed.

The enormous golden sword continued on its upwards trajectory, stabbing straight into the heart of the cloud-lightning vortex in the skies, completely dispersing the entire vortex.

One last streak of lightning suddenly appeared out of nowhere, crashing into Ning’s body.

Ning’s body began to emit an Immortal aura.

“Celestial Immortal Body.” The distant spectators, including Immortal Diancai, Yu Wei, and Autumn Leaf, began to call out in excitement.

“Success.”

“Nine nine-sets of thunder tribulation...the legendary nine nine-sets! Master actually withstood it!”

“So the final bolt from the ninth nine-set is actually a bolt of completely white lightning. Why did that white bolt of thunder seem so holy and noble? I felt the urge to bow towards it.”

.....

Ning looked at Uncle White, Yu Wei, Immortal Diancai, and rest of his distant, celebrating friends. He revealed a smile...but still felt a hint of lingering fear in his heart. “The nine nine-sets were simply too terrifying. I’ve been very stingy with my heartforce, but I still have less than thirty percent of it left. That final thunderbolt in particular...even my full-strength sword-strike was unable to withstand it!”

“If the thunder tribulation is already so frightening...then what of the demonheart tribulation?”

Ning had a bad feeling.

Although this was merely his Primaltwin’s tribulation, the power of the Celestial Tribulation had still exceeded his expectations. The demonheart tribulation coming up would probably also be as powerful as the most terrifying ones in the legends.

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“It’s a boy! It’s a boy!” A distorted voice suddenly rang out in Ning’s mind, summoning his memories.

Ning opened his eyes.

A giant dressed in white furs was holding him. The white-furred giant ordered, “The rest of you can leave!”

“Father!” The face of the giant caused Ning’s heart to tremble. Ning immediately turned to look towards one side. He immediately saw a body covered with sweat that lay on an enormous, fur-draped bed.

“Mother! I...did I just go back to the moment of my birth?”

Time passed, one day after the another.

Ning once more lived life in West Prefecture City. Under his father’s protection, he began to train. Although Ning had all his memories, he still had to undergo normal training. Still, although the demonheart world had given him a weak body, it was unable to change Ning’s memories or his Dao-heart. Thus...Ning knew very well that this was the demonheart world!

However, even though he knew it, he wasn’t able to do anything about it, because there was no way for him to leave this world at all. He had to wait for the demonheart tribulation to come to an end; only then would this demonheart world come to an end as well.

.....

Ning slowly grew up.

Because he did possess all of his memories, Ning was able to train very quickly within this demonheart world. In addition, he had control over his heartforce; third level heartforce was simply too powerful! Thus, although he was a child of less than ten years of age, his power was no weaker than that of a supreme Celestial Immortal's. Thus...everything was changed. In the demonheart world, he had to train normally as a Fiendgod Body Refiner, but his training speed as a Ki Refiner was incredibly fast. With the assistance of his powerful heartforce, he was naturally able to acquire Immortal spirit-pills. He became a Void-level Earth Immortal by age nine, procuring spirit-pills for his mother, Yuchi Snow, that would allow her to continue to live.

A nine year old Void-level Earth Immortal.

What an utter monster.

Within the demonheart world, Ning continued to hide his control over heartforce. The fact that he was a Void-level Earth Immortal, however, could not be hidden. And so, just like that, a nine year old Void-level Earth Immortal emerged into the world of the Grand Xia. His status was so special that even the Northmont clan of Stillwater sent someone over to recruit him. The Xia Emperor, however, ignored him. This was because the Xia Emperor believed that this Ji Ning had to be the disciple of a major power, which was why he possessed all of his memories immediately after being reincarnated and born again. As someone who had all of his former memories, to become a Void-level Earth Immortal at age nine wasn't that unheard of.

Still...the entire situation within Stillwater Commandery had changed.

Ning's status became more and more transcendent. And yet...out of habit, Ning kept the form of a youth.

"Ning, son, a disciple of the Black-White College named Ninelotus has come to pay you a visit." Yuchi Snow, already a Zifu Disciple herself, smiled as she spoke to her son. Now that Ning's status within Stillwater Commandery was so transcendent, many people came to pay their respects to him. As for their enemies such as Snowdragon Mountain, Ning had wiped them out long ago.

"Ninelotus?" Ning's heart trembled. In the demonheart world, he hadn't even visited the Black-White College yet; why had Ninelotus come?

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Book 17: Celestial Immortal Chapter 26: Another Life, Thirty Millenia

Within the demonheart world. Out of curiosity, Ninelotus had come to meet Ji Ning. By now, Ninelotus had already grown up to be a slender, elegant beauty. As soon as she saw Ning, for some inexplicable reason, she felt close to him. Ning, however, felt guarded; no matter what, he absolutely could not allow himself to sink down into this demonheart world. 'Sinking down into it' meant liking this world and accepting it in his heart.

To like the demonheart world so much that he might abandon the real world...

To allow himself to drown within it, to allow his real self in the real world to perish!

Within this demonheart world, his parents were both alive and well. This was a world without tragedy for him. In truth, in his heart, Ning did like this world...but thankfully, he had reached the third level of

heartforce, 'ruler'. No matter what thoughts, likes, and emotions flashed through his mind, Ning remained the master of himself. He constantly reminded himself that these were all nothing more than the illusions of the demonheart world; these weren't real.

"The feelings I bear for my parents are already having a tremendous impact on me within the demonheart world. I absolutely cannot allow my feelings for Ninelotus and Yu Wei to be added to the mix as well." Ning knew in his heart that once he allowed love to enter the fray, this demonheart tribulation would become truly dangerous.

.....

However...Ning wasn't able to control the demonheart world.

As a result of this visit, Ning's had been firmly engraved into Ninelotus' mind. Thus, she came back repeatedly to visit him.

"This is my senior apprentice-sister, Yu Wei. She's a true genius of our Black-White College," Ninelotus said.

"But of course, I cannot compare to Immortal Darknorth." Yu Wei smiled as well. As soon as Yu Wei had seen Ning, she too had felt an inexplicable attraction towards him.

Within the demonheart world, both Yu Wei and Ninelotus found themselves uncontrollably drawn to Ning.

However...Ning's heart was filled with misgivings, and so he always moved to prevent a relationship from blossoming between them.

Time flowed on.

Decades passed in the blink of an eye.

Very early on, Ning had acquired the Starseizing Estate. By now, he had already reached the seventeenth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens].

Yu Wei and Ninelotus were as close as real sisters, so close that they didn't differentiate between 'mine' and 'yours'. The two of them settled into a residence within Swallow Mountain, not too far from where Ning lived. The two of them felt certain that one day, their sincerity would move Ji Ning. Unlike in the real world, in this demonheart world, Ninelotus and Yu Wei were both completely devoted to Ji Ning. In fact, both of them threw away everything for his sake, and Ninelotus gave up her clan as well.

Now, in the demonheart world...the storm finally swept through the Three Realms!

Within the demonheart world, Ning allowed his Primaltwin to undergo its tribulation. The tribulation of the demonheart world was completely illusory, and so the demonheart tribulation lasted for but an instant before it ended, resulting in his Primaltwin becoming a Celestial Immortal.

With the entire Three Realms being shaken by this storm, Ning naturally allied with the Northmont clan of Stillwater. Although he didn't truly enter into a relationship with Yu Wei and Ninelotus, the two of them continued to wholeheartedly pursue him. The Dongyan clan was on very close terms with Ning,

and the Dongyan Forefather, Ji Ning, Patriarch Unity, and others all joined together into an alliance to weather this storm.

The war began!

One battle after another began to erupt within the world of the Grand Xia. To protect his tribe, Ning was forced to go into battle as well. As the war progressed, however, he found it harder and harder to gain victory in his battles...and finally, he decided to undergo his Empyrean Tribulation!

There was one major problem with the demonheart world; there was no way to gain insights into the Dao here!

This was an illusory world; every single tribulant knew that in their hearts. As a result, they couldn't advance in the Dao in the slightest. Although Ning had already spent over a hundred years in the demonheart world, he hadn't improved in the Dao in the slightest. The only improvement he had was in terms of his Dao-heart; he was tempering his Dao-heart.

He was also able to improve his heartforce within this illusory demonheart world, but alas, Ning remained at the third level, the 'ruler' level. Although he did improve slightly, to reach the fourth level of 'mortal dust' was far too difficult. Anyone who could reach that level would be considered one of the truly most powerful experts of the Three Realms. The terrifying divine archers of the Three Realms and Old Man Yuan were all at the fourth level.

Within the illusory world, Ning could sense that he was gradually becoming unable to defend his clan from the storm, and so he decided to undergo his Empyrean Tribulation.

The Empyrean Tribulation was simply far too powerful.

The wind tribulation, the fire tribulation...they nearly caused Ning's death.

The thunder tribulation destroyed Ning's true body by merely the sixty-second thunderbolt.

He had failed.

His true body had failed its tribulation, and so the Starseizing Estate left him, having gone to search for another successor.

.....

Ning only had his Primaltwin left to him. Thus, like many other Celestial Immortals, he became embroiled into and pushed about by the waves of the storm. Yu Wei and Ninelotus both became Celestial Immortals over the course of the storm, but the two continued to follow by Ning's side. Ning, however, continued to act guarded, not allowing the relationship between him and the two of them to deepen.

The deeper their relationship grew, the easier it would be for Ning to sink into this world.

One battle after another!

Yu Wei and Ninelotus followed Ning at all times, experiencing life-and-death experiences with him. Finally, after eighteen thousand years, the storm came to an end. Ninety percent of the Celestial

Immortals of the world of the Grand Xia perished, and even the Xia Emperor had died. As for major powers, no one knew how many had perished. Ji Ning, Yu Wei, and Ninelotus, however, had not died. In fact, even the Ji clan of Swallow Mountain had survived.

With the tribulation having ended, Ning returned once more to Swallow Mountain.

Ninelotus and Yu Wei continued to follow him. They, too, took up residence at Swallow Mountain. As for Yuchi Snow and Ji Yichuan, they successfully overcome their tribulations and become Celestial Immortals towards the end of the storm. They, too, urged Ning to accept and wed Ninelotus and Yu Wei.

Eighteen thousand years!

They had experienced life and death together.

It must be understood that in the real world, Ning had only lived for a mere century. In this demonheart world, however, he had already lived for eighteen thousand years. If his Dao-heart had been slightly weaker, he would've long ago confused what was real and what was not. He would've willingly accepted that this demonheart world was the true world; after all, he had spent far more time in this world, which was a far more blissful one.

However...Ning, who had ruler-class heartforce, only felt an ever-greater amount of terror.

His father and his mother had actually both become Celestial Immortals? Yu Wei and Ninelotus had both survived the storm? Clearly, the demonheart world was doing everything it could to give him an incredibly blissful life. It had even ensured that Ning failed his Empyrean Tribulation, so as to clip his wings and lessen his ambitions.

Lessened ambitions...a blissful life...emotions...countless shared life-and-death experiences...eighteen thousand years...all of these things were having an impact on Ning.

"Ji Ning...how can you be so heartless? It's been eighteen thousand years, but you still remain this cold-hearted. Alright...alright...alright. I will never bother you again. I'll never irritate you again!" Ninelotus looked at Ning, her tears dripping downwards.

"Little sister Ninelotus and I will be leaving now. We'll never bother you again, you callous, cold-hearted man." Yu Wei's eyes were filled with pain as well.

Immortal swords suddenly appeared in both their hands.

"No!"

Ning couldn't help it; he instinctively knocked those two Immortal swords away.

"You won't even let us die? Even if you prevent us from dying, we can go to a place where you can't find us, then end our lives there." Ninelotus said with agony, "My sister and I no longer have anything worth living for, anyways."

"Let's go, little sister." Yu Wei took Ninelotus by the hand.

Ning just shut his eyes.

Was he supposed to just keep fleeing within this demonheart world? Keep hiding from everything? Was this right, or was this wrong? Why was it that by fleeing...these emotions were only causing him even greater agony?

"Don't go," Ning suddenly said.

Yu Wei and Ninelotus had already turned away, but now their bodies both shook. These two peerless beauties, one dressed in white and the other dressed in black, both turned to look at Ning. They had an eager look in their eyes, a look that bespoke of how they had waited for eighteen thousand years...a look that was about to melt Ning's heart.

"Ji Ning, are you truly..." Ninelotus and Yu Wei both looked at Ning.

"Don't go." Ning walked to them. "I don't want you two to go." He reached out with his arms, taking Yu Wei and Ninelotus into his embrace.

Yu Wei and Ninelotus each clung to one of Ning's elbows, gently leaning against him.

Ning, however...could sense that his Dao-heart was wavering and growing blurry.

He understood...

That he had taken yet another step towards sinking into this world.

When he took the finally step and completely sank into it...his soul would be extinguished, and he would die.

.....

Ning began to live together with Ninelotus and Yu Wei. They truly were a trio of Immortal lovers. The Three Realms were in a state of peace, and the Ji clan had nine Celestial Immortals within it; Ji Ning, Ninelotus, Yu Wei, Yuchi Snow, Ji Yichuan, Uncle White, Autumn Leaf, Spring Grass, and Little Qing. Everyone Ning cared about was alive...and in fact, all of them had become Celestial Immortals.

His life was peaceful and beautiful. In fact, this was what Ning truly desired in his heart.

To be carefree...to do what he wanted to do...

To be together with his loved ones...to live a simple, happy life...

Both Ninelotus and Yu Wei bore him children. To teach and rear children could be quite frustrating, but it was also quite blissful and happy.

.....

Bliss.

Ning had never been so blissful. Not in his previous life, and not in this one. This demonheart world, however, truly was very blissful and very perfect.

"No wonder it is rare for a single new Celestial Immortal to appear within the world of the Grand Xia, even after the passage of a million years. No wonder countless Void-level Earth Immortals have attempted their tribulations but failed." Ning felt agony in his heart. He knew very well that all of this

was a lie...but he had spent more than thirty thousand years here. A hundred years in the real world...thirty thousand years here...even Ning's Dao-heart was finding it hard to extricate itself from this demonheart world.

In fact...he was beginning to feel slightly unwilling to extricate himself. He didn't want to let this all be destroyed.

.....

The demonheart world.

It was night.

A little boat was drifting about in the waters of Serpentwing Lake. Ning was seated in the lotus position within that boat. He was by himself.

"Am I really...going to sink?" Ning could already sense that his Dao-heart was growing blurrier and blurrier. Clearly, it was becoming increasingly corroded.

Ning stared at the distant Brightheart Island. That island had all the people he loved the most; his father, his mother, Ninelotus, Yu Wei, Uncle White, Little Qing, Autumn Grass, Spring Leaf, and his children. All of those relationships, all of those emotions...they were like chains that had dug their way deep inside him. As more time passed, the chains only dug deeper and deeper. Thirty thousand years of life here...it was incredibly hard for him to shake them off.

"But..."

"But...!"

Ning gritted his teeth, blood becoming to come out from his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth as he forced the words out. "It's all fake. FAKE!!!"

When Ning said these words, he felt as though a knife was scraping against his heart.

"It's all fake..."

"Because..."

"I want all of these things to become real. I want all of them to come back to life in the real world!" Ning's Dao-heart was like a tiny blade of grass that had become completely trapped by countless metal chains...but that blade of grass continued to struggle and grow. Although the chains tried to suffocate it, tried to drag it away, the blade of grass continued to survive and grow.

"I am myself!"

"I AM THE RULER OF MYSELF! Nobody and nothing can shake me; not thirty thousand years, not a hundred thousand years, NOTHING!!!" Ning sat there on his wooden boat, letting out an enraged roar. This was a roar directed against the entire demonheart world.

Just as Ning called these words out...

Rumble...

The colors of the world began to change.

Whoooooosh.

Space itself broke apart.

A towering figure appeared within the distant, infinite void that was left. Its aura was incomparably powerful, and it was looking at Ning.

“So you are Ji Ning? You were the previous successor to the Starseizing Estate, yes? The [Starseizing Hand] divine ability is not to be learned by outsiders. I alone can possess it, and so...you can die!” An enormous hand appeared, instantly covering the entire sky. Carrying awe-inspiring power, it came crashing down.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 17: Celestial Immortal Chapter 27: Becoming Immortal

Ji Ning just closed his eyes.

Kill him?

Go ahead.

This was the demonheart world; killing him here wouldn't actually have an impact on his Dao-heart. In addition...Ning had a certain feeling. He had spent more than thirty thousand years within this demonheart world. He had allowed himself to sink deeply into this world multiple times before rousing himself once more. This had only resulted in his Dao-heart becoming even stronger. This sudden appearance of a 'new successor to the Starseizing Estate' was most likely the last trick the demonheart tribulation had to play.

BOOM! The giant palm suddenly came to a halt directly above Ji Ning. It was mere inches away from Ning. If Ning lifted his head up, he would be able to see the enormous fingerprints of that massive palm.

“Why have you halted...” Ning asked calmly, “...New master of the Starseizing Estate.”

“You aren't afraid of death?” The towering figure said, slowing pulling back his enormous, sky-covering hand.

“If you want to kill me, kill me,” Ning said coldly.

“I had thought that killing a previous owner of the Starseizing Estate would be quite an interesting affair...but you actually aren't going to fight back at all? How dull,” the towering figure said. Ning did his best to try and make out what this new master of the Starseizing Estate looked like, but he wasn't able to see anything.

The towering figure waved his hand.

Whoosh!

One figure after another appeared in the air. There was a pair of white-robed Immortal lovers; Ji Yichuan and Yuchi Snow. There was also a white-robed, white-haired man who had an aura of calmness and

tranquility about him...an azure-robed maiden...the mature Autumn Leaf...the young Spring Grass...Ning's Dao-companions Yu Wei and Ninelotus...and their three children.

"Ning, son, have you just grown more powerful?"

"Why have you brought us here?" Yuchi Snow and the others all raised their heads to look towards the massive figure in confusion. They didn't even give Ning a glance.

Ning's face instantly changed.

"Ji Ning...you understand now, right? Yes...as you have guessed...I just used the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] to transform into your appearance," the towering figure said. "They believe me to be you! And, thanks to my power...they are completely unable to see you or hear your voice."

"What are you going to do?" Ning roared.

BOOM!

The towering figure suddenly stretched out with a single finger. He gave a single flick! The flick landed on the body of the white-robed, white-haired man. The man's eyes were filled with disbelief...and with a boom, he exploded, transforming into dust.

"Uncle White!" Ning called out in shock, feeling pain in his heart.

He bore tremendous love for Uncle White in the real world, and he had also spent thirty thousand years loving Uncle White in the demonheart world. Upon seeing Uncle White be slaughtered...Ning instantly felt utter agony in his heart, agony so great as to affect even his Dao-heart.

"There's plenty left. Don't worry," the towering figure said.

"What are you going to do?!" Ning knew that this was just nothing more than another illusion of the demonheart world...but the emotions he had built up over thirty thousand years wouldn't be so easily wiped away.

"I'm going to kill them, one by one," the towering figure said. "But of course...if you accept me as your master and owner, I can spare them."

"In your dreams," Ning said through gritted teeth.

Ning was no fool. He knew that the demonheart tribulation was part of the Dao of the Heavens; if he was to swear an oath to the Dao of the Heavens in the demonheart world to be a servant, he would truly and forevermore be lost.

"Then I'll continue to kill." The towering figure flicked his finger out again.

"Ning, son, what are you doing?"

"Ning, son, stop!"

"Master...you are going to kill me?"

"FATHER!!!"

The voices of his loved ones caused Ning to feel as though his heart was being torn apart. However...he gritted his teeth, just watching as they died, one by one.

“Ning, son...I know that you must be acting under some sort of duress.” Yuchi Snow closed her eyes, dying peacefully.

“Ji Ning! What the hell are you doing!” Ji Yichuan’s eyes were so wide, his eyelids were threatening to tear apart.

“Father. FATHER!” The three children who venerated Ji Ning were all sobbing.

The slaughter continued.

Ninelotus died! Yu Wei died! Little Qing died! One by one...all of his loved ones died.

Those emotional chains, forged and tempered over the course of thirty thousand years, had long ago wrapped themselves firmly around Ning. When he saw them all be killed, one after the other...those chains began to tug at him with greater power than ever before. They were going to pull Ning down, to drag him under.

“Ji Ning...what a callous heart you have.” The towering figure roared with anger. These words pierced deeply into Ning’s inner heart; it was as though his family members were all pointing at him and saying these words. “What a callous heart you have.”

Ning shut his eyes.

Even if all the people of the universe were to point at him in such a manner...he didn’t want for his family to point at him.

Thirty thousand years...

But in the end...it was all fabricated.

All fabricated!

BOOM!!!

The world completely blew apart. Everything blew apart; even that towering figure blew apart.

.....

The real world.

“Ji Ning has already spent three full months within the demonheart tribulation. This...this is simply...I’ve never even heard of something like this!” Immortal Diancai looked nervously at the seated black-robed Ning. “A three month long demonheart tribulation...I really worry as to if Ji Ning can withstand it.” His own demonheart tribulation had been far briefer.

“My master’s demonheart tribulation also lasted for three months.” Yu Wei caressed her belly, a look of worry in her eyes. She still remembered what Lu Dongbin had said to her: “Long ago...I was just a hair away from truly sinking into the dreams. Even now, I would be unwilling to undergo the demonheart tribulation a second time.”

“Hurry and wake up!” Northson was truly worried as well.

They all knew that the longer the demonheart tribulation was, the more terrifying it would be.

Ning’s demonheart tribulation had actually persisted for three months; this was utterly astonishing!

“Why has the Primaltwin’s demonheart tribulation lasted for so long? Is it due to the karmic sinflames?” The distant elder in the Daoist robes was watching quietly as well. All he could do was watch and wait; Ji Ning would have no one to rely on but himself, if he wanted to wake up from the demonheart tribulation.

Suddenly...

Everyone’s gaze turned towards Ji Ning...because the black-robed Ning had just opened his eyes.

“He woke up,” Uncle White said with surprise and joy.

“Master succeeded! Wahahaha, he overcame his tribulation and became a Celestial Immortal!” Little Qing seemed to have gone a bit delirious with joy.

“Junior apprentice-brother!” Yu Wei was extremely excited.

All of them were.

As for the black-robed Ning, he just thought there. His thoughts, his mind...everything was slowly coming back to him from the demonheart world. Only a long moment later did he realize...that his face was covered with tears.

He loved and longed for everything he had within the demonheart world. Everyone he cared about was still alive. It had all been a dream...but that dream had lasted for thirty thousand years, far longer than the mere century he had spent in the real world. He wanted to forget it all, but...how?

“I’m sorry,” Ning said softly.

He knew that those ‘family members’ were all just an illusion...but Ning still said those words.

“No wonder Master also shed tears after he successfully overcame his tribulation,” Ning said softly to himself. “This demonheart tribulation really is...”

Only now, after having escaped the demonheart world, did Ji Ning truly understand how terrifying that illusory world had been. In truth, he had danced at the very edge of truly falling into the abyss and never returning. Things had grown especially dangerous for him after he accepted and reciprocated the love of Yu Wei and Ninelotus! After having accepted their love, he now had even more ties to that world.

However...fortune and disaster rode together! Accepting their love did indeed make him sink even deeper into the dream, but precisely because of that, when he successfully struggled to shake off his chains and take control over himself once more, his Dao-heart had reaped even more rewards.

If he hadn’t sunk into the dream, he wouldn’t have been strengthened by the awakening.

But if he had sunk too deeply into it...he would have died.

Fortunately, his heartforce had reached the peak of the 'ruler' stage; otherwise, he wouldn't have been able to withstand the demonheart tribulation.

.....

An Immortal melody rang out as auspicious clouds descended from the heavens and golden lotuses began to bloom throughout the area.

A terrifying presence descended, pouring the energy of the natural world into Ning's body. The universe itself began to transform Ning's Primaltwin.

"This is...?"

The black-robed Ning could clearly sense that the energy of the natural world, with the invisible help of the Dao of the Heavens, had begun to compress all of the energy within his body. His soul completely fused with his golden-lotus Primal; in fact, even his Zifu Region began to merge into the golden-lotus Primal, as well as the Sole-Ki Pearl of Primalwater itself.

Crack!

The lotus seed-head at the top of the golden lotus gave birth to a tiny little golden lotus seed. This was the most important thing for Celestial Immortals, True Immortals, and even Golden Immortals of the Great Firmament...the golden pellet, the Jindan!

As the Jindan flew out, the Zifu Region, the Sole-Ki Pearl, and everything else vanished. In fact, the body of the Primaltwin Ning was changing as well, transforming into a Celestial Immortal's body, a body that was designed and created through Celestial Immortal energy.

"Jindan?" The black-robed Ning murmured to himself.

This was the very core of his entire life essence...this tiny little golden pellet.

This Jindan possessed utterly inconceivable power. It merged all power into it, melting everything into a dazzling, beautiful golden luster. A perfect Jindan would contain even the soul and the truesoul within it; there would never again be any distinction between them! In fact, the Jindan also contained a dimension within it that held an enormous amount of Celestial Immortal energy. The energy of the natural world was drawn into the Jindan, and even magic treasures could be stored within it.

Breathe in. Breathe out. Ning sensed his body transcending, one breath at a time, as Immortal energy flowed throughout his entire body.

"Ji Ning."

"Junior apprentice-brother."

Only now did Immortal Diancai and the others fly over. The black-robed Ning smiled towards them in welcome.

"Ji Ning, congratulations on your Primaltwin overcoming the tribulation. Nine nine-sets of thunder tribulation, and a three month demonheart tribulation...I've never even imagined something like this

happening.” Immortal Diancai looked at Ning. “I, Diancai, actually have a disciple like you...ahahaha, I regret nothing in life, nothing!”

“Master, you are absolutely incredible. I admire you to death!” Little Qing, in the form of a little azure serpent, immediately coiled herself Ning’s arm with incomparable friendliness.

“I’m actually panicking right now,” Ning said with a laugh. “My Primaltwin’s tribulation was already as frightening as this...I can’t even imagine what my true body’s tribulation is going to be like.”

“It’s just another tribulation. Nothing is impossible for you, junior apprentice-brother,” Northson said. “When you went to take part in the Conclave of Immortal Destiny, how many people tried to convince you not to go? They all said that you didn’t spend enough time training, that you’d be at a disadvantage. But not only did you go, you even became the champion of the Conclave. Afterwards, you only became more and more incredible. And now, you’ve actually overcome nine nine-sets of thunder tribulation and a three month demonheart tribulation. I’m completely convinced that nothing can possibly stop you.”

“Me too.” Yu Wei took Ning by the hand and smiled at him.

Everyone present had watched as Ning had grown up. In their eyes, Ning was an utterly monstrous talent; he had stunned them time and time again. Thus, they were convinced that Ning could do anything! After all, just now, they had personally watched as Ning had overcome nine nine-sets of thunder tribulation and a ridiculously long demonheart tribulation.

“Disciple.” A voice rang out, and the flow of time around them suddenly changed.

Yu Wei, Immortal Diancai, and the others simply stood there, maintaining their earlier postures and poses. Ning, however, didn’t feel as though anything had happened at all. He watched as an old man in Daoist robes came walking over towards him.

“Master,” Ning said respectfully.

“I have some things to say to you,” the old man said. “Your Primaltwin was successful, but I trust you noticed that your Celestial Tribulation was incredibly powerful.”

“Yes.” Ning nodded.

His Primaltwin, logically speaking, should have it much easier than his true body...and yet, it had still been forced to the brink.

“Your true body’s tribulation will undoubtedly be utterly astonishing. There might be some unexpected variables that will cause it to be many times more deadly than this Celestial Tribulation,” Subhuti said. “Thus...I order you to master the Grand Dao of the Sword, master the art of applying heartforce to your soul, and reach the Sixth Cycle of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] before you can attempt it.”

“Your disciple understands,” Ning said respectfully. “Your disciple shall definitely work hard and make plentiful preparations.”

“It is good that you understand.” Subhuti nodded.

“Right...once you master the Grand Dao of the Sword,” Subhuti said, “Because you have already condensed the five types of ki within your chest, you’ll be able to join them together and instantly become a Pure Yang True Immortal.”

Ning nodded.

“Now...the war between your Grand Xia and the Seamless Gate is about to begin. You won’t be able to avoid it. The Seamless Gate will definitely try to come up with another way to kill you,” Subhuti said. “As the saying goes, know thyself and know thy enemy; only then shall you be the victor in every battle. You need to conceal your true power. You absolutely must not let anyone know all of your secrets; once you are exposed, you’ll be in danger.”

“Your disciple understands,” Ning said hurriedly.

“No, you don’t.” Subhuti shook his head. “I am forbidding you from telling anyone in the future about your full power. That includes both myself and your Dao-companion.”

Ning was puzzled. “I can’t even tell you or Yu Wei, Master?”

“You cannot.” Subhuti shook his head. “The intelligence methods the Seamless Gate have available to them are beyond your imagination. If you hide everything in your heart, no one but you will know and the Seamless Gate will not find out either. But if you tell anyone at all...it might be revealed to them. Thus, for the sake of hiding your power, you are not to tell anyone at all about it.”

Ning felt some amazement in his heart.

No wonder...

No wonder the intelligence capabilities of the Seamless Gate were so powerful. So long as he told anyone, there was a chance that it might be leaked to them? This was utterly inconceivable.

“For example...on the day that you become a Pure Yang True Immortal, you are not to tell anyone at all,” Subhuti instructed. “The process of becoming a Pure Yang True Immortal doesn’t cause much of a disturbance; if you don’t tell anyone, no one will know.”

Ning nodded.

It was different from when a Void-level Earth Immortal became a Celestial Immortal; a Celestial Tribulation was involved. There truly wasn’t much of a disturbance caused when a Celestial Immortal became a Pure Yang True Immortal.

“Once I become a Pure Yang True Immortal, I won’t be able to hide my Pure Yang energy,” Ning said.

“I have a magic incantation that you can use to hide your energy signature. So long as you don’t attack someone, they won’t be able to realize your true power.” Subhuti handed over a bamboo scroll.

Ning immediately accepted it.

“The storm has come to the Three Realms.” Subhuti let out a soft sigh. “The more the enemy knows about your capabilities, the faster you will end up dying. Your Grand Xia, for example...it holds multiple individuals who have broken through to become Pure Yang True Immortals, but they’ve been hiding it all

along. Some have been hiding it for trillions of years. The abilities of the Seamless Gate...there is far, far too much that you do not know about them.”

Ning felt astonishment in his heart.

So the Grand Xia actually had multiple Pure Yang True Immortals hidden within it? Still, that made sense; on the surface, the Xia Emperor claimed that he was the sole Pure Yang True Immortal present. If that was true, that really was quite pathetically weak.

“I’ve already given you your instructions. Do not forget them. I won’t be able to protect you at all times, during this storm; in fact, not even the seven Empyrean Gods by your side might necessarily be able to emerge from their Starseizer world to rescue you in time.” Subhuti looked at Ning. “If you want to stay alive...you will primarily have to rely on yourself.”

“If my guess is correct...”

Subhuti lifted his head. “Both sides, the Grand Xia and the Seamless Gate, are already secretly preparing to launch the war. I expect that it will explode onto the stage within a month. You have to be careful.”

After finishing his words, Subhuti turned and walked away, departing gracefully.

“Your disciple shall remember your words,” Ning said respectfully.

“What’s wrong, Ji Ning?”

“Junior apprentice-brother?”

Immortal Diancai and the others next to Ning all returned to normal. Just now, the flow of time had been changed for them, and so although Ning and Subhuti had spent some time chatting, Immortal Diancai and the others only felt as though an instant had passed. They didn’t see Patriarch Subhuti at all; naturally, they had no idea as to what had just happened.

“Nothing. My master was helping to protect me; he just left.” Ning laughed. “Let’s go. Let’s go back to Brightheart Island.”

“Right.” They all followed Ning in flying back towards Brightheart Island.

As they flew through the air, they saw the Golden Crow beginning to rise.

“The wind and the rain are coming...” Ning mused silently to himself, “Within one month, eh?”

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 18: Pure Yang Chapter 1: Evacuation

Brightheart Island.

Ji Ning and the others landed onto the ground. Upon seeing him appear, the servants and maids of Brightheart Island all called out in respectful unison, “Young master.”

“Ji Ning, you’ve returned.” A frantic-looking, black-robed Ji Truekeep came walking over.

“Uncle Truekeep.” Ning smiled. “What has you looking so worried?”

“How can I not be worried? If it weren’t for the fact that I knew you were undergoing your tribulation, I would’ve gone looking for you long ago. Thank goodness...thank goodness you are back!” As Truekeep spoke, an armored soldier began to walk towards them from not too far away. Ning immediately recognized this man as a captain of the Imperial Guard of the imperial capital, a Loose Immortal soldier.

Truekeep immediately said, “This general came all the way here from the imperial capital on the Xia Emperor’s orders. He’s been waiting here for you for two months.”

“Two months?” Ning was startled.

“If you didn’t come back in three days...I would’ve gone looking for you, even though I know you were undergoing your tribulation,” Truekeep said.

The fact that Ning’s Primaltwin was undergoing the Celestial Tribulation wasn’t a secret; both the Xia Emperor and the Seamless Gate knew, and so Ning couldn’t be bothered to hide it from anyone else.

“Does the Xia Emperor need something?” Ning looked towards the Imperial Guard captain.

The captain said respectfully, “Immortal Darknorth, I have come on the orders of the Xia Emperor to deliver this to you in person.” He held up a leather scroll, offering it to Ning.

Ning reached out to accept it.

“I’ll be leaving now.” The captain immediately turned to leave.

“Let me send you off.” Clan leader Ji Truekeep moved to escort the captain.

Ji Ning opened the leather scroll. The nearby Immortal Diancai and Yu Wei were both puzzled; what urgent matter was this?

Upon seeing the contents of the leather scroll, Ning’s face changed slightly.

“Ji Ning, what is it?” Immortal Diancai asked. “Of course, if it’s something that cannot be told to others, you don’t have to tell me.”

“There’s no point to keeping this a secret,” Ning said. By now, Truekeep had returned as well. Truekeep said nervously, “All I know is that the messenger captain said that this is critically urgent news that had to be delivered to you, Ji Ning, before the sixth day of the eighth month. Thankfully, you finally came back with seven days to spare. Right...what is this about?”

Ning swept everyone present with his gaze. Mu Northson, Little Qing, Autumn Leaf, Immortal Diancai, and Yu Wei all looked back at him.

“The Seamless Gate is about to truly launch their war against the Grand Xia,” Ning said.

“War?”

“So it’s finally starting...”

“But...”

They all felt their hearts sink. All of them, however, had mentally prepared themselves for this long ago. Some major worlds of the Three Realms had already descended into war, and some of the weaker ones

had already been subjugated. But of course, things happened more slowly with the more powerful major worlds. The Grand Xia was one example; things were just beginning here. The Seamless Gate's attempted conquest of it wasn't something that could be resolved in a day or two.

"By now...everyone will have to choose a side," Ning said. "I trust that soon, the entire Grand Xia will be divided into two sides. One will be the Xia Emperor's side, which is to say Daofather Crimsonbright's side. The other will of course be the Seamless Gate's side. Naturally...I will of course stand with the Xia Emperor."

"Right." Everyone present nodded.

They all knew of the feud between Ning and the Seamless Gate. Ning was their leader; they naturally would follow him wherever he led.

In turn, Ning was definitely going to follow Patriarch Subhuti. Subhuti, Daoist Threelives...both of them were on the side of the Nuwa Alliance. Be it for personal reasons or organizational reasons, Ning was definitely going to stand with the Nuwa Alliance as well.

"The evening of the sixth, I am to head to the Skylight Palace of the imperial capital. I imagine many Celestial Immortals will be present, and even True Immortals and Empyrean Gods will appear," Ning said. "Of the Ji clan, I am the only person required to take part in battle; no one else needs to participate."

"Then what of the Black-White College?" Immortal Diancai asked.

"I imagine this same information has been sent to the Black-White College already," Ning said. "I don't know the details with regards to the College; Master, if you return to the College, you should be able to find out right away."

"Right. I'll go back right away to take a look." Immortal Diancai nodded, then immediately flew away on a cloud, quickly disappearing into the horizons.

Ning continued, "On the sixth day of the eighth month, I am to go to the Skylight Palace. Before the sixth...the Ji clan needs to evacuate."

"Evacuate?" Autumn Leaf, Ji Truekeep, Uncle White, and the others were all stunned.

"Ji Ning, where are we evacuating to?" Truekeep asked.

"Here is a Pure Yang treasure, a 'Violetdawn Pearl'." Ning waved his hand, and a mottled, violet-colored pearl appeared out of nowhere. This pearl was one of the Pure Yang treasures which Ning had acquired when he attacked those eighteen Celestial Immortals of the Seamless Gate. Alas, although those eighteen had a few Pure Yang treasures, none of them had any top-grade treasures!

The Violetdawn Pearl was used to capture and bewilder foes. It contained a minor world within it that was comparable to the Earth of his previous life in size. It would be very simple to have the Ji clansmen move there and live there.

"A Pure Yang treasure?" Truekeep was rather stunned. To many Immortal cultivators, Pure Yang treasures were mere myths. Only Celestial Immortals could even use Pure Yang treasures!

Yu Wei and the others, however, were quite calm; they had far more experience.

“While the war is going on in the Grand Xia, I won’t be able to guarantee the safety of Swallow Mountain. Evacuation is the only option,” Ning said. “Uncle Truekeep, don’t worry; I will definitely protect the Ji clan.”

“Alright. I’ll go give the order right now to have the clansmen make their preparations,” Truekeep said.

“Good. Three days from now, we will begin the evacuation,” Ning said.

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Night.

Ning, Immortal Diancai, Yu Wei, and Celestial Immortal Unity were meeting at the Black-White College.

“Per the Xia Emperor’s orders...the two Celestial Immortals of the Black-White College, along with all of the Loose Immortals, must arrive at the imperial palace of the Grand Xia by the evening of the sixth,” Immortal Diancai said.

“The Northmont clan of Stillwater received the same order; all the Loose Immortals and Celestial Immortals must go.” Unity sighed. “The Xia Emperor is being fairly benevolent; he isn’t forcing us to send our Primal Daoists or Earth Immortals into battle.”

Unity then chuckled. “Right; the Seamless Gate has sent yet another a messenger to me. They are inviting me to go to Whitepole City on the sixth. They said that if I went, I would no longer be an enemy; I would be a friend.”

“They actually dare to send yet another invitation?” Immortal Diancai was shocked.

“Perhaps the Seamless Gate thinks that senior Unity might lose his mind and join them,” Ning laughed.

“From the looks of it, neither the Xia Emperor nor the Seamless Gate is going to hide their conflict any longer. Both of them chose the sixth of the eighth month...” Unity sighed. “However, one meeting is at the imperial palace of the Grand Xia, while the other is at Whitepole City. It seems as though Whitepole City has already joined the Seamless Gate!”

Ji Ning, Immortal Diancai, and the others all had solemn looks on their faces.

Whitepole City...

This was a very low-key city, an incredibly low-key city. It was incredibly rare for people in the imperial capital of the Grand Xia to hear of any news from Whitepole City. However, the Whitepole clan was one of the top ten ancient clans of the entire Grand Xia Dynasty. They were content to just hold onto a small piece of land, and they had no interest in going to the imperial capital to take up official positions. Instead, they had built up their fief of Whitepole Commandery to the point where it was almost completely invulnerable to attack. The power of this clan was actually greater than that of the brash Youngflame clan’s! Who would’ve thought that they would have silently, wordlessly joined the Seamless Gate? Their city had even ended up as the headquarters for the Seamless Gate’s conference! From this, one could see how much the Seamless Gate trusted the Whitepole clan.

“The reason why the Xia Emperor was able to force the other clans to join him was because he had the Primordial Imperial Clan behind him; this was why he was able to finally unify the world,” Unity said. “In truth, however, there had been many clans that were struggling quite fiercely against the Xiamang clan. The Whitepole clan was one of the clans that struggled with the Xiamang clan for supremacy. However...they didn’t have enough of a foundation, and so in the end they submitted.”

“If the many clans of the world all joined forces, the Xiamang clan would be completely unable to resist them,” Unity continued. “In fact...there have been marquis-led rebellions in the past. Only after that did the Xia Emperor set up the massive commandery cities to further solidify his rule.”

“I wonder...how many marquises have joined the Seamless Gate?” Unity sighed.

Ning nodded as well.

There were differences amongst the various marquises.

The likes of the Xiamang clan and the Kindwater clan were all branches of major clans of the Primordial Era!

The Whitepole clan, however, originally belonged to Celestial Immortal Whitepole, a lone cultivator. After Pangu’s World was destroyed, Celestial Immortal Whitepole had established his clan within the newly created world that was later known as the Grand Xia. Afterwards, he had broken through to become a Pure Yang True Immortal; this naturally resulted in the Whitepole clan flourishing and becoming powerful. Alas...Whitepole didn’t have any powerful backers, as he had created his clan by himself, unlike the Xiamang clan or the Kindwater clan, which had the major clans of the Primordial Era behind them.

“True Immortal Whitepole has always been very low-key. After the Grand Xia was unified, he has never acted against the Grand Xia Dynasty,” Unity said. “In addition, I know of two others at the True Immortal or Emphyrean God level; one belongs to the Kindwater clan, the other belongs to the Skyfarmer clan. Neither of them acted against the Grand Xia either; clearly, they aren’t willing to make enemies out of the Xia Emperor.

Ning was surprised.

The Skyfarmer clan?

He knew that the Kindwater clan had an Emphyrean God behind it, but this was the first time he had heard that the Skyfarmer clan had such a power behind it as well. Celestial Immortal Unity, who had lived through the Fiendgod Era, truly was a man who knew many mysteries.

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Ning’s group, without question, stood by the side of the Xia Emperor. However, they couldn’t help but feel worried by how powerful the Seamless Gate’s side was.

Two sides were struggling for supremacy...

Would the Xia Emperor suffer a disastrous defeat, or would the Seamless Gate be sent fleeing in disgrace?

All of this was unknown for now. However, one thing was certain...this was going to be a savage, cruel war! After all, many major worlds had already been conquered, while many others were already burning in the fires of war. The power of the Seamless Gate...it caused everyone in the Three Realms to shudder.

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Ning's Primaltwin was able to easily bind the Pure Yang treasure, 'Violetdawn Pearl'. The evacuation of the Ji clan started. Since there weren't many Ji clansmen to begin with, the evacuation was fairly simple; in just the time needed to boil a kettle of tea, the evacuation was completedly.

Ji Ning, Yu Wei, Uncle White, Little Qing, Autumn Leaf, Mu Northson, and Ji Truekeep stood atop the clouds, staring down at the vast world below them.

"Time to leave Swallow Mountain." Truekeep let out a sigh. This was the land which countless generations of the Ji clan had worked to till and make prosperous.

"We'll be back," the black-robed Ning said.

Whoosh.

Ning suddenly waved his hand, releasing his Celestial Immortal energy. Using a worldshaping technique, he manifested an utterly enormous palm out of natural energy, a palm that was many hundreds of kilometers in size. The enormous palm looked misty and blurry, as it was formed by energy and air. Suddenly, the giant palm made a downwards grab!

The entire Serpentwing Lake, along with the centermost Brightheart Island, was caught up by the giant palm. Not even a single drop of water was missed.

"Come in." Ning used a technique, instantly drawing the entire Serpentwing Lake into the Violetdawn Pearl.

Serpentwing Lake held extraordinary meaning for him. He didn't want to leave Serpentwing Lake here. If it ended up being destroyed...he would be filled with endless regrets.

If Ning had the energy of a Pure Yang True Immortal, he would've been able to move away the entire Swallow Mountain region of a hundred thousand kilometers!

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The underwater estate.

Ning's true body emerged from the Wargod Hall. He had just successfully challenged the highest level of the Wargod Hall, the tenth level.

"The war is about to begin. It is time for me to find a suitable Pure Yang treasure for myself." Ning headed straight for the Treasure Hall.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 18: Pure Yang Chapter 2: Ten Thousand Immortals Converge

Although the tenth level was seemingly difficult, in truth Ji Ning had already acquired the power to overcome it by the time he had returned from the Nihilum Zone. However, since his Primaltwin had yet

to overcome the tribulation, he wouldn't have been able to put the Pure Yang treasure to any use, and so he hadn't been in a rush to attempt it. The treasure he had acquired last time, the 'Sole-Ki Nine Element Pearls', he had traded to the Xia Emperor for many other treasures, so as to repair the Rahu Bow and train in both the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] and the [Starseizing Hand].

This time, there was no way Ning would trade the treasure away.

The war was beginning. He needed powerful treasures for it! Although he had acquired quite a few treasures from the Seamless Gate, especially the three top-grade Pure Yang treasures and the Protocosmic spirit-treasure which Old Man Yuan had given him, alas...the only treasure which was of significant use to him was the Nineleaf Snowlotus. The others weren't very useful to him; in fact, they weren't even of great use to Yu Wei. Thus, Ning had given one of the Pure Yang treasures to Immortal Diancai, then put the others into storage.

"I hope there are flying swords." As Ning stepped into the Treasure Hall, he saw the giant yellow bear waiting for him.

"Ji Ning, you can now choose one of the twenty-two Pure Yang treasures we have available." The giant yellow bear waved his hand, and a book instantly flew towards Ning.

"There are only five more choices than last time?" Ning was surprised.

"These are Pure Yang treasures. How many do you think we have?" The giant yellow bear was irritated.

Last time, Ning had chosen the Sole-Ki Nine Element Pearls out of eighteen available choices, leaving behind seventeen. Now, five more choices appeared for a total of twenty-two. In truth, however...Ning didn't fancy any of the previous seventeen, and so he would really be choosing from these five.

"Once you become an Emyrean God and become the master of the Starseizing Manor, you'll be able to acquire better treasures. For now...you'll have to continue to act in accordance with Master's rules," the big bear said.

Ning smiled, then lowered his head to flip through the books.

There had to...

There simply had to be top-grade Pure Yang flying swords here! His Primaltwin's [Greater Thousand Swords Formation] truly needed flying swords!

"How extraordinary." Ning could barely breathe.

The Pure Yang treasures which Daoist Threelives had collected truly were not treasures which most Emyrean Gods or True Immortals could hope to touch.

In terms of preciousness...

Of the five Pure Yang treasures, the most precious treasure was a set known as the 'Nine Invisible Mother-Son Hooks'. This was a treasure set formed by nine top-grade and eighty-one middle grade Pure Yang-level poison hooks. They formed into nine mother-son formation sets that could lock down space itself, preventing foes from using Greater Teleportation! In addition, they were extremely fast and possessed astonishing power.

Alas, Ning needed swords, not poison hooks.

“These two sets of flying swords...” Ning revealed a look of delight. Of the five sets, two were actually sword-sets. It seemed as though the giant yellow bear had really been very thoughtful in bringing these out for him.

The first set of flying swords was known as the Three Pure Ones. These were three top-grade Pure Yang swords that were personally forged by the leader of the Daoist Path, Daoist Three Purities. These three flying swords were extraordinary, even amongst top-grade Pure Yang swords.

In his past life on Earth, Ning had heard of the legends of the Three Pure Ones. However, only after he had embarked upon the path of Immortal cultivation and had become apprenticed to Subhuti had he truly understood that Earth’s myths regarding the Exalted Celestial of Primordial Origins, the Exalted Celestial of the Virtuous Dao, and the Exalted Celestial of the Luminous Treasure were all about the same person. These three, the Three Pure Ones, were merely the three mighty incarnations of Daoist Three Purities!

As the leader of the Daoist Path, Daoist Three Purities was acknowledged without dispute as one of the most powerful figures of the Three Realms. The only person one might dare to proclaim as being more powerful as him would probably be Mother Nuwa, who had left the Three Realms to enter the endless primordial chaos.

The second set of flying swords were known as the Ananda [1. Ananda was the cousin of the Buddha and one of his closest disciple.] World-Swords.

Ananda was the attendant and protector of the leader of the Buddhist Sangha. Although he was merely an ‘attendant’, he was also someone who was at the Buddha (Daofather) level of power. His status within the Buddhist Sangha was extremely high, definitely high enough to rank in the top ten.

The Ananda World-Swords were nine top-grade Pure Yang flying swords that had been personally fashioned by Buddha Ananda. They were incomparably sharp, capable of cutting through the miseries of the mortal world.

“I didn’t expect that one of these two sets would have been forged by the leader of the Daoist Path, while the other was created by Buddha Ananda of the Buddhist Sangha.” Ning laughed. He was a disciple of Subhuti; although Subhuti knew both Daoist and Buddhist divine abilities and spells, he belonged to neither camp. Both the Daoist Way and the Buddhist Sangha belonged to Mother Nuwa’s side; they could be considered allies and friends of Ning.

“Have you made your choice?” The giant yellow bear asked.

“The Ananda World-Swords, I suppose.” Ning smiled. “They are nine top-grade Pure Yang flying swords; they can serve as a formation-base, allowing the power of my [Greater Thousand Swords Formation] to increase dramatically.”

“Alright.”

The giant yellow bear waved his paw.

Whoosh!

Deep from the thronging mass of treasures that hovered in the air above the Treasure Hall, a massively powerful ripple suddenly spread out. Nine flying swords that were completely lacquered came descending downwards, appearing in front of Ji Ning. At the same time, nine little monks that glowed with golden light flew out from the nine swords. The little monks were bald and all dressed yellow robes, and they looked as if they were seven or eight years old.

All nine of these little monks, however, possessed sharp auras that were filled with killing intent.

“So you are our new master?” One of the little monks said.

“Right.” Ning nodded.

“Shall you work to sever misery and its bringers from the world, bringing blessings to the countless living beings of the world?” The little monk asked.

Ning smiled. “A storm has arisen, and I shall naturally be forced to kill. I am, however, on the same side as the one who created you, Buddha Ananda.”

The nine little monks immediately folded their hands together into a prayer. “Amitabha.” [2. Amitabha is the name of a Buddha, the most important Buddha of the popular Pure Lands School. It is believed by many Buddhists, even in this very day, that saying his name will bring blessings.]

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With the nine top-grade Pure Yang swords serving as a formation-base, and the hundreds of top-grade Immortal-ranked swords supporting them...the power of the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation] instantly increased to become far more greater than that of the Nineleaf Snowlotus, which was a high grade Protocosmic spirit-treasure. Top-grade Pure Yang treasures were normally only comparable to middle grade Protocosmic spirit-treasures, but nine of them combined into a large formation naturally resulted in more power.

In addition, the Nineleaf Snowlotus was mainly meant for trapping and binding foes, while Immortal swords were meant for launching attacks.

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The sixth day of the eighth month. Night was descending.

“Let’s go.”

Celestial Immortal Unity, the black-robed Ji Ning, Yu Wei, Immortal Diancai, and more than two hundred Loose Immortals all soared into the skies in awe-inspiring fashion, then left through teleportation.

Two hundred Loose Immortals...this represented all of the Loose Immortals of Stillwater Commandery! The various major schools and sects of Stillwater Commandery, such as the Skysplitter Sword Sect, the Hundred Flowers Fairyland, the Dragonhunter clan, and the Eastriver clan actually had even more Loose Immortals than the Black-White College did...and now, all of them were being mobilized. There was no way any of them would dare to violate the Xia Emperor’s orders.

“The war really is starting. All the Loose Immortals and Celestial Immortals are being dragged into it.” Upon seeing more than two hundred Loose Immortals gather here, Ning couldn’t help but secretly sigh to himself.

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The air above the imperial capital of the Grand Xia.

One spatial ripple after another appeared, followed by the emergence of squads of Celestial Immortals and Loose Immortals. Every squad had at least a few dozen people, while some had several thousand! If the Youngflame clan hadn’t joined the Seamless Gate, their three commanderies would’ve sent the thousands of Loose Immortals they possessed as well.

This day was simply too stunning.

Countless citizens of the imperial capital raised their heads, staring at the skies. Upon seeing a countless number of Loose Immortals pour in at a steady rate, and even many exalted Celestial Immortals appear, everyone was shocked.

“This many?”

“They have to all be at least Loose Immortals.”

“Good heavens...”

The local citizens were completely dazed.

As for the Immortals, they shot out like an endless stream of meteors, shooting through the skies towards the imperial palace.

Whoosh.

Ning’s group of two hundred or so from Stillwater Commandery arrived as well.

“So many.” As Ning stared at the many Celestial Immortals and Loose Immortals who had been gathered here, he couldn’t help but feel stunned as well. At the same time, he felt a hint of dread in his heart. “So many Immortals...even Empyrean Gods or True Immortals would be in grave danger if they tried to fight by themselves.

Ning glanced sideways at Yu Wei. Yu Wei’s belly still wasn’t protruding yet; Ning was a Fiendgod, after all, while Yu Wei was a Celestial Immortal. Their child would spend a fairly long period of time gestating in her womb. Ning mused silently to himself, “She’s pregnant; it wouldn’t be appropriate for her to go out into battle. I need to have a chat with the Xia Emperor about this.”

The delegation from Stillwater Commandery flew towards the imperial palace as well.

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The plaza below the imperial palace. Countless figures had appeared here; it truly was a veritable ocean of people.

The Xia Emperor had given the order long ago that only Celestial Immortals were qualified to go into the Skylight Palace and congregate there. The main reason for this was that there were simply far too many Loose Immortals; there was no way the Skylight Palace could possibly fit that many people aside. Were all the Immortals supposed to be packed in together shoulder-to-shoulder? Even back during the Conclave of Immortal Destiny, only a few thousand people had been permitted to sit within the main hall of the Skylight Palace.

“You wait here.” Celestial Immortal Unity gave the order, and the two hundred-plus Loose Immortals all landed, leaving Ji Ning, Yu Wei, Immortal Diancai, and Unity to continue flying forwards by themselves towards the Skylight Palace.

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Within the Skylight Palace. Many Celestial Immortals were gathered here, having rushed here from throughout the 3600 commanderies and the four seas. Although the Seamless Gate had worked hard to pull others into their orbit, over the course of countless years, these Celestial Immortals had all become tightly drawn into Daofather Crimsonbright’s alliance. Thus, many of them had still chosen to come here.

“So many.” Ning, Yu Wei, Immortal Diancai, and Celestial Immortal Unity all entered the palace, and as they did they felt breathless for a moment.

“There has to be at least six...seven thousand people here!” Ning swept his gaze forward.

“Fellow Daoist Ji Ning.”

“Fellow Daoist Darknorth.”

Ji Ning’s arrival caused quite a few Celestial Immortals to head towards them to chat with him. Of course, they said a few things to Celestial Immortal Unity, Yu Wei, and Immortal Diancai as well, but most of them clearly came over to chat with Ning.

Celestial Immortal Unity had been in seclusion for far, far too long. Immortal Diancai was the least-known of the group, with Yu Wei being slightly better off thanks to her being Patriarch Lu’s disciple. As for Ji Ning, he was a monstrous genius who was capable of resisting nine Celestial Immortals of the Youngflame clan while being merely at the Void level. He was also the disciple of a Daofather with unfathomable power. Naturally, the various Celestial Immortals wanted to become better acquainted with Ning; that way, if they encountered any problems in the future and they wanted to ask Ning to help out, Ning would at least have met them before.

“So many Celestial Immortals.” Yu Wei couldn’t help but feel stunned as well.

“In the past, many major clans were hiding some of their oldest experts, who lived in seclusion. The exact number of Celestial Immortals each clan had was always a mystery. However, the storm has now swept the Three Realms. The Xia Emperor has personally ordered them to show up, which is equivalent to Daofather Crimsonbright ordering to them to attend. None of them dare to disobey; after all, Daofather Crimsonbright knows exactly how many Celestial Immortals are under his control,” Unity said. “Thus...now that so many of the hidden ones have appeared, the total number is naturally quite high.”

As time flowed on, more and more Celestial Immortals arrived. Soon, the number reached over nine thousand, continuing to climb.

“Why haven’t any Empyrean Gods or True Immortals arrived?” Immortal Diancai was puzzled.

“I imagine the Xia Emperor has invited all the Empyrean Gods and True Immortals to meet with him privately,” Celestial Immortal Unity said. “They have higher statuses than we do, after all.”

Another two hours passed.

The Celestial Immortals within the Skylight Palace were all provided arranged seating by the attendants here. They each had tables placed in front of them, allowing the entire hall to just barely fit in all of the ten thousand-plus Celestial Immortals who had arrived.

“His Imperial Majesty has arrived.”

All of the Celestial Immortals turned their heads in unison to look.

The black-robed Xia Emperor was walking in through a side door...and behind him, there were five True Immortals or Empyrean Gods who had auras as powerful as his!

The Xia Emperor sat up high in his throne, gazing down at his subjects.

“We bow in respect to you, Imperial Majesty.” Instantly, the five True Immortals and Empyrean Gods all bowed and called out.

“We bow in respect to you, Imperial Majesty.” The more than ten thousand Celestial Immortals present all rose to their feet, bowing and calling out in unison.

The Xia Emperor sat atop his throne, staring down at his bowing subjects while feeling high-spirited. To have more than ten thousand Celestial Immortals bowing towards him...this was a first for even the Xia Emperor himself!

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 18: Pure Yang Chapter 3: Xingtian, Heaven Punisher

When the Grand Xia had been unified, all of the Immortals and Gods had come to pay their respects...but that was after countless years of wars against the Fiendgods, resulting in catastrophic casualties. Very few Celestial Immortals were alive after those wars. Now that the Grand Xia had been at peace for so many eons, the total number of Celestial Immortals within the Grand Xia had reached astonishing heights.

“This is a tribulation like none we have ever faced before. I wonder...how many of them will be alive at its conclusion?” The Xia Emperor stared downwards, sighing privately to himself. “I’m not even sure if I myself will survive...”

“Arise,” the Xia Emperor said aloud. “Take your seats.”

Ji Ning and the others all took their seats. Immortal fruit and nectars were placed in front of them, but none of the Immortals were in the mood for food. They were all waiting to hear the Xia Emperor's words.

"Junior apprentice-brother, look; it seems as though the Dongyan Forefather is amongst those five True Immortals up there," Yu Wei suddenly sent.

"The Dongyan Forefather?!" Ning was shocked, immediately looking over.

Indeed.

Amongst the group of five, there was a man dressed in plain blue robes. He looked quite ordinary, but his aura was that of a True Immortal.

The Dongyan Forefather was the pillar that held up the skies for the Dongyan clan! Ninelotus was now the current clan leader for the Dongyan clan, and during the Conclave of Immortal Destiny, Ning had personally seen the Dongyan Forefather. However, back then he had merely been a Celestial Immortal. Who would've thought that when upon his next appearance, he was a Pure Yang True Immortal?

Ning suddenly thought of what his master, Subhuti, had told him. He couldn't help but sigh to himself. "The world of the Grand Xia truly is a world of crouching tigers and hidden dragons."

"My many fellow Immortal..." The Xia Emperor finally spoke out.

Instantly, everyone looked at him. Ning no longer pondered on the Dongyan clan, also focusing on the Xia Emperor's words.

"I trust all of you, fellow Immortals, know what our current situation is like." The black-robed Xia Emperor's voice was very somber. The Seamless Gate has summoned a storm that is sweeping through the entire Grand Xia. By now, hundreds of the weaker major worlds of the Three Realms have already been fully subjugated by them. In addition to those, more than a thousand major worlds have been embroiled by the flames of war...and our Grand Xia has also become embroiled into a war against the Seamless Gate."

Everyone felt heaviness in their hearts.

Hundreds of major worlds had already been subjugated? They hadn't know this previously, before the Xia Emperor announced it. It must be understood that the Three Realms only had three thousand major worlds to begin with; as for the trillion minor worlds, they were far, far weaker. Any clan or school could easily take over a minor world, which was why in the short run it didn't really matter who the minor worlds belonged to. The major worlds were the places where both sides were fighting!

"The Seamless Gate is indeed powerful." The Xia Emperor nodded. "If we were weak and divided like a pile of loose sand, we would've been broken apart and defeated individually by them long ago."

"However...we are unified!" The Xia Emperor's eyes flashed with divine light. "The Seamless Gate's power is unfathomable, but we have the many Daofathers and Buddhas of the Daoist Path and Buddhist Sangha behind us, as well as the many True Gods who were born from the primordial chaos and many other major powers with unbelievable might. Our power is great as well! If the Seamless Gate was capable of completely suppressing us with force, they would've swept through and taken over the Three

Realms long ago. They wouldn't have settled upon their current plan of launching sneak attacks everywhere in such a cautious manner."

Everyone present nodded.

The reason why so many Celestial Immortals had come was because they were all quite confident in their side.

Their own alliance, after all, was an incredibly powerful one as well. They were also under the command of Daofather Crimsonbright, who was under the command of Mother Nuwa. So many major powers...they made up a force of utterly inconceivably terrifying might.

"In war, there is triage. Some places have to be abandoned, while some places must be protected," the Xia Emperor said. "Our power, although great, doesn't allow us to protect every single world of the three thousand major worlds. Thus, we have to abandon a few of those places, allowing us to concentrate our strength to protect the important worlds."

"And the Grand Xia...is one of the places we have to protect!" The Xia Emperor's voice carried a terrifying, combative will within it.

Everyone listening, however, felt uneasy.

Most likely, the Empyrean God and True Immortal rulers of the other conquered major worlds had said the same things to their subordinates...that their world 'had to be protected'. Otherwise, how could they have convinced their Celestial Immortals to fight for them?

The Xia Emperor swept his subjects with his gaze, understanding their concerns. He immediately said, "The karmic luck of our Grand Xia is one of the highest of all the three thousand major worlds of the Three Realms. In the face of a tribulation like this, the war over karmic luck is a critically important component. Even the loss of ten of those weaker major worlds wouldn't compare to our Grand Xia!"

Everyone below him nodded. This was definitely true!

"Thus...the Grand Xia absolutely not must be lost," the Xia Emperor said solemnly.

"In addition!"

"Our side already has eleven thousand Celestial Immortals and more than a million Loose Immortals!" The Xia Emperor continued, "I have spoken with multiple True Gods and Daofathers regarding how the Grand Xia shall defend against our foes."

The many Immortals all felt their hearts clench. Multiple True Gods and Daofathers? They all listened attentively.

Eleven thousand Celestial Immortals, more than a million Loose Immortals...although this figure was stunning, everyone had already guessed at it after seeing the veritable sea of Loose Immortals present.

"We have decided upon our plan," the Xia Emperor said. "Of the eleven thousand Celestial Immortals, two thousand will be under my direct command! The other nine thousand will be divided up into nine major armies, each of which will consist of a thousand Celestial Immortals and a hundred thousand Loose Immortals. Every single army will train in the 'Heaven Punisher Formation'. During the conference,

True God Xingtian [1. Xingtian means Heaven Punisher, much like how Xuanwu refers to the Turtle-Snake] personally agreed to transmit this grand formation to me!”

“Xingtian the Heaven Punisher?”

Everyone revealed a look of shock and joy.

True God Xingtian was extremely famous in the Three Realms. He was a figure out of the oldest legends. Long ago, during the era of Pangu’s World, Xingtian had been merely an Empyrean God, one of the mighty generals under the command of humanity’s Primordial Imperial Clan. Early on during the Primordial Era, although humans were a very powerful race and the Human Sovereign was acknowledged as a true Emperor, the thousands of other races were all quite powerful as well. The monsters, for example, were only slightly weaker than the humans. Thus, the major powers had all worked together to establish the Celestial Court. As for the Celestial Emperor, his job was to assure peace between the various parties, so as to ensure the safety and stability of the Primordial World.

Back then, the Human Sovereign had been a truly dominating force. The Celestial Emperor, by contrast, was merely a mediator.

During that era, Xingtian had a quarrel with the Celestial Emperor, resulting in him launching a direct assault against the Celestial Court. Xingtian was a general of the imperial clan who was extremely skilled in battle. Although the Celestial Emperor had some Empyrean Gods and True Immortals by his side, they were unable to withstand Xingtian. In the end, the Celestial Emperor had been forced to go all-out and also invite other Empyrean Gods and True Immortals to assist him before he had been able to suppress Xingtian. In the end, they actually managed to chop off Xingtian’s head.

Now, as a Fiendgod, Xingtian naturally wouldn’t die after having his head severed. However, Xingtian was an excessively proud person. Much like how Daoist Threelives had been unwilling to regrow his severed arm, Xingtian had been unwilling to regrow his head after it was cut off. Instead, he transformed his nipples into eyes and his bellybutton into his mouth.

Who would’ve thought that as a result of that wild battle, Xingtian would actually break through from being an Empyrean God to the True God level? He had instantly executed the Celestial Emperor. [1. This entire story is very close to the actual Chinese legend of Xingtian, except in the legends, it was Huang Di, the Yellow Emperor and the forefather of Chinese civilization, who defeated and severed Xingtian’s head. The real story, however, ended at the part with Xingtian regrowing his eyes and mouth.]

The Primordial Imperial Clan of humans had gained yet another True God; they were naturally delighted by this and were completely determined to protect Xingtian. The other major powers didn’t quibble too much; after all, Xingtian had already become a True God, and that was that. They ended up just choosing a new Celestial Emperor.

True God Xingtian, a member of the Primordial Imperial Clan, had bestowed upon the Xia Emperor the ‘Heaven Punisher Formation’; clearly, he was standing alongside the Xia Emperor as well.

The fact that the Xia Emperor had the Primordial Imperial Clan behind him was yet another reason why all of these Celestial Immortals were willing to risk their lives for him. The Primordial Imperial Clan was simply too strong! It had multiple major powers within its ranks, and the most ancient members, the Human Sovereigns, definitely were some of the most supreme figures of the Three Realms. The Human

Sovereigns included many ancient figures, such as Suiren of the Flame and Shennong the Divine Farmer. [2. These two figures are extremely ancient Chinese deities/demigods; Suiren is credited for having invented/discovered fire, while Shennong is credited for having taught medicine and farming to humans.] Even the leaders of the Daoist Path and the Buddhist Way worked to befriend the human race; from this, one could tell how powerful the Primordial Imperial Clan of humans was.

“The Heaven Punisher Formation requires a commander, a thousand Celestial Immortals, and a hundred thousand Loose Immortals working in unison,” the Xia Emperor said. “This enormous formation has the power to link into the energy of the natural world. The hundred thousand Loose Immortals serve as a powerful foundation that will pull in natural energy from an area of a million kilometers. The Celestial Immortals will guide them to use that energy to form a Xingtian Divinity which is so powerful that even Empyrean Gods and True Immortals will find hard to damage.”

Ning and the others sighed in amazement upon hearing this.

What an incredible effort the Xia Emperor had made.

If the Loose Immortals all struck out without coordination without guidance, they would be completely and effortlessly slaughtered. However, once a hundred thousand Loose Immortals activated the power of the natural world...they would be able to make a much larger difference. It wasn't hard for a single Loose Immortal to fully activate the natural energy for an area of ten thousand kilometers. A hundred thousand Loose Immortals could definitely activate all of the energy for an area of a million kilometers. So much natural energy...how terrifying that had to be! Not even Empyrean Gods or True Immortals were at such a ridiculous level of power!

But of course, although the Loose Immortals could activate the energy, they wouldn't be able to control it. Thus, a thousand Celestial Immortals were needed to provide guidance and to mobilize that energy, serving as the skeleton and spine...and of course, a commander was needed to serve as the head, in charge of everything. Only then could the power of this mighty Heaven Punisher Formation be unleashed.

“I will transmit to all the Loose Immortals the basic fundamentals of the Heaven Punisher Formation,” the Xia Emperor said. “But of course, I'll leave out the most important parts of it.”

“I'll choose the commanders of the nine armies from the eleven thousand of you.” The Xia Emperor looked downwards, and instantly everyone below him began to murmur. To command a thousand Celestial Immortals and a hundred thousand Loose Immortals...who wouldn't be willing to accept such an honor? All of them wanted to be commanders, not soldiers. They had thought that the Empyrean Gods and True Immortals would take up those positions; who would've thought that the Xia Emperor would choose from the Celestial Immortals?

“The most important part of the Heaven Punisher Formation is the activation of natural energy by the Loose Immortals; an Empyrean God or True God leading it wouldn't actually add that much power to it,” the Xia Emperor said. “Thus, I'm choosing from the Celestial Immortals. As for the True Gods and Empyrean Gods...at critical moments, they'll help you out and deal heavy blows to the Seamless Gate.”

“I’ll give you all half a month,” the Xia Emperor said. “During this period of time, you are to fully learn and understand the Heaven Punisher Formation, and you’ll have a chance to fight for the opportunity to become a commander.”

“When the time comes, I’ll send out a thousand Celestial Immortals and a hundred thousand Loose Immortals and give every contestant a chance to try to command them in a formation,” the Xia Emperor said. “The nine Celestial Immortals who control the formation with the greatest amount of skill and allow it to unleash the most power will become the nine commanders.”

Upon hearing his words, Ning and the others all felt persuaded.

To let those who were able to unleash the most power from the formation become the commanders was quite fair.

“The nine final commanders shall be taught the most important aspects of the Heaven Punisher Formation,” the Xia Emperor said. “Without those parts, the formation can still be used, but the power will only be comparable to some other ancient formations. With those important parts...the power will be increased tens of times over.”

This formation was a secret of the Primordial Imperial Clan; the important parts to it naturally could not be taught to just anyone and everyone.

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One bamboo slip after another was delivered to the tables of the Celestial Immortals. The many Celestial Immortals all pored their coresense into the bamboo slips, easily acquiring the Heaven Punisher Formation. But of course, actually learning it would require some time.

“Everyone, you will only have half a month. When the time ends, only those who have already fully learned the Heaven Punisher Formation will have a chance to fight over the commander positions,” the Xia Emperor said. “Alright, everyone...hurry up and learn the Heaven Punisher Formation!”

That night.

A million Loose Immortals were at the plaza below the Skylight Palace, all seated in the lotus position as they focused on learning the basics of the Heaven Punisher Formation.

As for the many Celestial Immortals, they remained at the main hall of the Skylight Palace. They, too, sat in the lotus position as they meditated on the Heaven Punisher Formation. Ji Ning, Yu Wei, Celestial Immortal Unity, Immortal Diancai...all of them quietly sat there, meditating.