

## Desolate 641

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### Book 20: Jindan Upgrade Chapter 13: Volcano Island

“The Dao of the Sword...” Ji Ning shut his eyes.

Slowly, an invisible surge of power began to manifest in the area around Ning. It formed into the blurry image of a black sword which covered Ning and swirled around him.

Normally, those who mastered the Dao of the Sword would be referred to as Sword Immortals...but this was actually just the beginning of the Sword Immortal path! Only by comprehending swordforce would one be able to pursue the true essence of the sword itself.

“It is alive.” Ning opened his eyes, staring at the blurry, illusory black sword around him. This manifestation of fourth-stage swordforce allowed Ning to clearly sense the childish playfulness of the illusory sword. It was like a little child that absolutely loved to stick closely to Ning, causing Ning’s own heart to be filled with joy.

Sentience. Life.

The first three stages of swordforce only involved the rigid application of power, but the fourth stage of swordforce actually gained both life and sentience. Although the level of intelligence was very low, it was still enough to truly stun Ning.

Prior to this, before his heartforce had actually reached the fourth stage, Ning had never sensed this from his swordforce. As for heartforce, it came from himself; it was the power of his own heart. Swordforce, however, came from an arcane, inexplicable, unfathomable essence of the sword itself. The path that Ning was pursuing was the path of finding the original essence of the sword.

Whoosh.

Ning rose to his feet. He waved his hand, and the black swordforce responded accordingly.

“Such tremendous power. Prior to this, I was a bit weaker than senior apprentice-brother Silvermoon and Redsnow, due to me not having trained for long enough. Although my heartforce is formidable, it’s consumed far too quickly in battle. When I want to beat down on those weaker than me, it’ll allow me to gain victory in just one or two blows, but when fighting against experts of the same level, it simply won’t last. Swordforce, however, doesn’t use up any divine power, and it comes in a steady, unbroken stream.” Ning was absolutely delighted.

Upon truly comprehending swordforce, even a mortal commoner would be able to infuse his punches and kicks with fourth-stage swordforce.

“I can vaguely sense that the power of this swordforce is roughly equal to 80% of the power unleashed when I use my heartforce to maximum effect.” Ning sighed in amazement. Although it was ‘only’ 80%, it could be used in every single strike and blow; in a protracted battle, it would be far more useful to Ning than heartforce would be.

“From this day forth, in a one-on-one battle, I am now the equal of senior apprentice-brother Silvermoon and Redsnow.”

After calming himself, Ning took a look at the volcanic island. This island had a towering volcano in the center that was occasionally belching forth plumes of lava. However, because the sea around the volcanic island was completely frozen with countless snowflakes falling all around it, the borders of the volcanic island were at a perfect temperature, with only the volcano itself being blazingly hot.

Whoosh. Ning willed it, and a second person appeared next to him. It was Empyrean God Roughpeak.

“Junior apprentice-brother Darknorth.” Roughpeak immediately smiled and called out to Ning upon stepping out...but upon seeing his surroundings, he was instantly stunned.

The volcano belching fire...

It was a sight completely different from that of the snowy island.

“Th-this place is...” Roughpeak stuttered.

“This is the second island. I call it ‘Volcano Island’,” Ning said.

“You actually su-succeeded. Ahahaha...wonderful! Wonderful!” Roughpeak turned his head to look at Ning with eyes full of excitement. “Junior apprentice-brother Darknorth, to tell you the truth, I didn’t really think you’d be able to succeed. In fact, after spending a few days in your Immortal estate, I was truly afraid that you had already failed. But you actually succeeded! Wonderful, simply wonderful.”

Roughpeak truly didn’t have that much faith in Ning. He had watched as Ning killed the Snowfiend clone on the snowy island, and had seen that Ning’s sword-arts were only at the level of third-stage swordforce. However, Ning’s sword was quite shockingly fast, which was why he thought that there might be a chance that he would be acknowledged by Snowfiend! It wasn’t necessary to actually defeat Snowfiend in order to go past him; if one fought him for long enough and was acknowledged by him, one would be allowed past.

Ning had spent a long period of time analyzing the stone stele. Although Ning had felt that only a brief moment had passed, in truth he had spent more than two days on it.

After waiting for so long within the Immortal estate, Roughpeak felt that the reason why Snowfiend had let Ning pass was because the two had fought for so long that Snowfiend had acknowledged Ning’s power.

Ning chuckled. “Luck was part of it.”

“Being able to pass Snowfiend proves your power.” Roughpeak sighed. “No matter what...we’ve finally left the island of snow. I’ve had more than enough of that place.”

“The island was actually quite pretty,” Ning said.

“When you’ve spent countless terrified years by yourself in one place, it’ll turn into hell for you, no matter how ‘pretty’ it is.” Roughpeak said hurriedly, “Let’s go! Let’s not chat here; let’s take a look at what’s up ahead! Let’s see if there are any other Empyrean Gods on this island. The further along we go, the stronger any surviving Empyrean Gods must be. Even if they aren’t able to make it to the next island, they should be able to stay alive for quite some time.”

“Yes, let’s take a look.” Ning nodded.

Ning and Roughpeak walked through the volcanic island, taking in the sights. A short while later, they found a winding series of spiky palaces.

“Over there. If there are any surviving Emyrean Gods, they should be living there.” Roughpeak hurriedly pointed towards the palaces.

As soon as his words came out...whoosh! A fur-clad, muscular, bronze-eyed man appeared at the entrance to one of the palaces, glancing outside. He instantly saw both Ning and Roughpeak.

“Eldest brother! Second brother! Third brother! Fourth brother! Fifth brother! Seventh sister!” The muscular man instantly called out in a loud voice.

Swish! Swish! Swish! One figure after another began to charge out from the other palaces. They all congregated together, staring towards the two newcomers.

Six were men, one was a woman. All of them were dressed in furs.

“Is that my young friend Roughpeak?” Suddenly, a wrinkle-faced man called out to the two.

“Seven Dragon Gods...all of you are still alive?” Roughpeak began to roar in laughter.

“The Seven Dragon Gods of the Primordial Era?” Ning was truly shocked as well.

Before coming to this place, he had naturally read up on the Emyrean Gods who had entered Undermoon Lake. The Seven Dragon Gods had entered Undermoon Lake during the Primordial Era! Countless years had passed since then, and during his conversation with Roughpeak, Ning had learned that the island of snow had suffered attacks every thousand years. The same was most likely true for the other islands as well.

To be able to live for even a hundred million years in Undermoon Lake was a marvel. To be able to survive from the Primordial Era to the modern day?!

“Young friend Roughpeak, why have you come to this damned hellhole? We should never have come to this damned place.” The oldest-looking man spoke out as Ning and Roughpeak walked towards the seven.

“Too late for regrets. I’m already here.” Roughpeak let out a sigh. “I was trapped on the snowy island for more than a hundred million years, but the seven of you entered during the Primordial Era. I’m in complete awe of you; you were actually able to survive for so long!”

“Ahahaha...and who is this new friend?” A fiery-haired man looked towards Ning, a friendly look in his eyes. “Although I don’t recognize him, I can sense that he’s one of my brothers, a human.”

“Let me make the introductions.”

Roughpeak smiled as he looked towards Ning. “Junior apprentice-brother Darknorth, I trust that you must have guessed by now, but these seven are the Seven Dragon Gods who once followed Human Emperor Suiren in his campaigns across the world. In the past, as our human race just began its rise to prominence, we were still testing out many different cultivation paths. Human Emperor Suiren once harvested draconic blood from a True God and used it to qualitatively change a human’s body and allow them to train in superior Fiendgod techniques. However, he discovered later that this sort of forced

transformation had an impact on both the body and the soul, resulting in most being unable to progress past the Empyrean God level.”

“Why do you have to talk about these things?”

“At least we became Empyrean Gods!”

The Seven Dragon Gods all laughed.

“These are the Seven Dragon Gods. The eldest is Empyrean God Witherdragon. This is the second, Empyrean God Fiercedragon. This is the third, Empyrean God Blackdragon. This is the fourth, Empyrean God Dragoncaller. This is the fifth, Empyrean God Owldragon. This is the sixth, Empyrean God Tyranodragon. And this one, the most beautiful of the seven, would naturally be Empyrean God Voidragon.” Smiling, Roughpeak made the introductions.

As for Ning, he felt true admiration for these seven.

Ning had always felt true admiration for the earliest human experts. They had established a foundation for all their human descendants, and they had even used their own bodies to test out new cultivation methods. It wasn’t just these seven who had attempted to use draconic blood to transform their bodies; many others had died on the spot, their bodies instantly blasting apart.

Not just anyone could withstand the blood of a draconic True God, after all. The seven of them were seven of Suiren’s early test subjects, and they became known as the Seven Dragon Gods. Although they weren’t true siblings, they were even closer to each other than true siblings!

“Hurry up and introduce this young friend of yours.” The only woman present was dressed in fur clothes that couldn’t disguise her beauty. Her voice was clear and crisp, but as heroic and valiant as any of the others.

“He is junior apprentice-brother Darknorth, one of the disciples under the tutelage of Daofather Subhuti,” Roughpeak said with a sigh.

“Darknorth?”

“My young friend Darknorth, it’s been a long time since we’ve encountered other humans. The seven of us have nearly died of loneliness here. Ahahaha...come, come, come! Taste some of this wine which our seventh sister created through harvesting elemental energy.” The tall, muscular, bronze-eyed man who had been the first to see Ning and Roughpeak immediately stepped forward, slapping his arm around Ning’s shoulders and pulling him towards his palace.

The Seven Dragon Gods of the Primordial Era, Empyrean God Roughpeak, and Ji Ning. These nine humans all seated themselves in a casual manner, beginning to drink wine in large gulps while chatting.

“I trust that the seven of you know by now that the outside world is now in the era of the Three Realms,” Roughpeak suddenly said.

“Yes, we’ve heard of this.”

“Some Empyrean Gods who passed by mentioned this to us.” They all nodded.

Roughpeak nodded as well. "But I imagine that those Emyrean Gods didn't know that the Three Realms have fallen into a state of crisis. A tribulation has descended."

"Tribulation?" The faces of the Seven Dragon Gods all changed.

"One which is as deadly as the tribulation which destroyed the Primordial Era," Roughpeak said somberly.

"What?!"

The Seven Dragon Gods had entered Undermoon Lake during the Primordial Era, and so they didn't experience the war that destroyed it. However, the Emyrean Gods that had come past them since then had described the war to them. They knew exactly how calamitous that war had been. Even major powers had died, as well as Elder Gods! The Pangu Chaosworld itself had been shattered!

"It was junior apprentice-brother Darknorth who told me this." Roughpeak looked towards Ning.

"Let me explain." Ning began to narrate the details of this tribulation to the seven. Upon hearing the story, their faces all changed.

"If I knew this...I would've slaughtered all of the Emyrean Gods of the Seamless Gate that came here in the past!" Emyrean God Tyranodragon bellowed.

"Damn. Damn! They really are like a pack of wild mongrels that just can't be tamed. They should die. Every last one of them should die!"

The Seven Dragon Gods were all utterly furious. They could imagine how disastrous and calamitous this new storm would be. The more they imagined it, the angrier they grew.

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#### **Book 20: Jindan Upgrade Chapter 14: The Predicament**

After chatting for a long period of time and finishing all the wine, everyone prepared to retire to their own residences. Ji Ning hurriedly advised Emyrean God Roughpeak, "Senior apprentice-brother Roughpeak, there's a stone stele located right at the entrance to Volcano Island. The stone stele contains the representation of Snowfiend displaying the intricacies of his staff-technique in detail. You can go take a look."

"Oh?" Roughpeak's eyes lit up.

"Roughpeak, you haven't taken a look yet?"

"Hurry up and take a look. That stone stele really is quite interesting."

"Yes, hurry up and take a look!"

The Dragon Gods all laughed and urged him to go take a look.

"Fine. I'll go take a look right now." Roughpeak immediately headed out towards the stone stele by himself.

“My friend Darknorth, there are plenty of palaces here. Just pick one as you see fit. Since you’ve just arrived, it’s guaranteed that you won’t suffer any attacks for the next thousand years,” Empyrean God Witherdragon said.

“Alright.” Ning nodded, then casually chose a palace to temporarily reside in.

Two days later.

Roughpeak returned from his trip to the stone stele, once more reuniting with the Seven Dragon Gods.

“How did it go? That stone stele is quite nice, right?” Empyrean God Owldragon laughed.

“It really is quite something, but my path isn’t the Dao of Taiji. Alas...I was trapped on the snowy island for more than a hundred million years because my attacks are too weak.” Roughpeak let out a sigh. “My agility techniques ensured that not even Snowfiend could kill me, but what of it? My attacks are too weak; Snowfiend completely refused to acknowledge me. He wouldn’t let me pass him no matter what! It was all thanks to junior apprentice-brother Darknorth.”

“And where is our friend Darknorth?” Witherdragon asked.

“He’s still training,” Voiddragon replied. “I saw him meditating so I didn’t disturb him.”

“Darknorth truly is hard-working.” Blackdragon asked, “Roughpeak, how strong is our friend Darknorth? The seven of us have been trapped here for far, far too long. We’ve been here since the Primordial Era and really can’t take it any longer. If Darknorth is strong enough, we’d be willing to ask him to help lead us out of here. We no longer harbor any false illusions regarding the treasures of Undermoon Lake.”

“How strong is he?” Roughpeak shook his head. “I’ve seen him fight. He’s skilled in swordplay and quite formidable, but he’s only reached the third stage of swordforce. His divine abilities should be quite powerful, though. He spent several days travelling from the snowy island to Volcano Island. I imagine that he must’ve fought against Snowfiend for a long period of time, resulting in Snowfiend acknowledging his power and letting him pass.”

“Third-stage swordforce?” Witherdragon shook his head. “A pity. Although he can be considered an expert of the Dao of the Sword, it won’t be enough against the Purgatory God.”

“A pity.”

“Well, let’s keep waiting.”

All of them were rather disappointed.

“I’m already satisfied at having been able to make it out of the first island to Volcano Island. In truth, my decision to follow junior apprentice-brother Darknorth was a gamble. When I saw him fight, I didn’t have much faith in him...but in the end, my gamble paid off. Honestly, there’s no need to be depressed; perhaps after million years or so, junior apprentice-brother Darknorth will suddenly advance in strength and we’ll be able to make yet another gamble,” Roughpeak said.

“Hopefully.” The Seven Dragon Gods all sighed.

They had been hoping that someone would be able to come here and help them out, but Roughpeak had actually been carried here by Ning; there was no hope to be found from him at all. As for Ning himself...he had been just barely able to make it into Volcano Island. The chance that he would be able to progress further was quite remote.

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Within a quiet, secluded palace. Ning was seated in the lotus position here, completely silent. His other clone was within his Immortal estate, and both of them were meditating on the [Five Treasures].

Ning knew very well that Undermoon Lake would not be an easy place to conquer. He had only been able to reach Volcano Island; how incredibly difficult would the next few islands be? Thus, he had to do everything he could to grow stronger.

Time slowly flowed on.

After one year and three months had passed since Ning's arrival at Volcano Island...Ning finally opened his eyes.

"My [Brightmoon] sword-art has reached the apex of perfection possible for me at present." Ning rose to his feet, a smile on his face. "If I was to meet Snowfiend again, I'd probably be able to easily defeat him with just a single body."

Swordforce was highly well-suited for combat to begin with.

Ning's [Brightmoon] sword-art had been based off of the essence of the [Five Treasures] sword-art, a technique which surpassed the limits set by the Heavenly Daos. Its power was naturally staggering, and in attack power it was now completely capable of suppressing Snowfiend. Once Ning used [Three Heads, Six Arms] and fought against Snowfiend's two arms with six arms...he would absolutely be able to dominate and defeat Snowfiend.

"It's been quite some time since I've spoken to Roughpeak and the Seven Dragon Gods." Ning felt rather embarrassed. During this year, he had spent all of his time in meditating. He immediately left his palace to go meet with the Seven Dragon Gods.

A short while later, the Seven Dragon Gods, Roughpeak, and Ning all gathered together once more.

"It's very unlikely that the eight of us will be able to advance any further, and so we often gather together. But you, junior apprentice-brother Darknorth...you end up going into seclusion for a full year in one training session! You remind of me myself when I first entered Undermoon Lake," Roughpeak said with a laugh.

"I'm embarrassed," Ning said.

"Oh, right." Ning looked at the other eight. "I'm preparing to go test the next guardian and see if I can reach the next island?"

"You?"

The Seven Dragon Gods and Roughpeak all glanced at each other.

Witherdragon said, "Brother Darknorth, do you know that there are treasures on the third island? If you can make it there, you can acquire treasures."

"Treasures?" Ning's eyes lit up.

"The sea yaksha, Snowfiend, and Purgatory God – these are three of the guardians which the creator of Undermoon Lake left behind. If you can make it past the three of them, you'll be able to acquire treasures. And of course, the fourth and fifth islands all have treasures as well." Witherdragon looked at Ning. "But...do you think those treasures are so easily acquired? You can probably guess at how powerful the Purgatory God is."

Ning immediately began to listen carefully. Only by understanding both one's self and one's enemies would one be able to win all battles.

"On the other side of Volcano Island, you'll be able to see yet another floating wooden bridge. This floating wooden bridge will pass through an endless sea of fire...and within the sea of fire lives a Fiendgod known as the Purgatory God." Witherdragon continued, "The Purgatory God is formed by countless flames that gather together. He wields a pair of halberds, and he is incredibly powerful, close to a True God in might. Although he flies quite slowly, his twin halberds attack at an utterly incredible speed. His infiniforce has even reached the fourth stage! Compared to Snowfiend, he's stronger, has faster attacks, and is even more skilled. When those twin halberds of his start to chop about...he's an utter nightmare."

Ning was secretly shocked by what he heard. Even stronger and even faster than Snowfiend? This meant that this Purgatory God's underlying foundation was superior to Snowfiend's!

"The seven of us know exactly how powerful he is. Honestly, we hope for your success, as that way we'd be able to follow you through, but..." Witherdragon shook his head. "He's far too powerful. If you aren't strong enough, you will likely die."

"The seven of you entered long ago during the Primordial Era." Puzzled, Ning said, "If you wanted to follow a powerful Empyrean God to the next island, you probably could've done so long ago. You should've run into quite a few by now."

"Right." Voidragon, the only female of the seven, nodded. She said in a clear voice, "Your words are correct. From the Primordial Era to the present day, we've encountered more than ten who we were absolutely certain had the power to pass through. However, all of them came a long, long time ago. When the seven of us work together, even when the Purgatory God attacks the island he is unable to do anything to us. We were patient enough to keep waiting and training, hoping that we'd be able to break through by relying on our own power."

"However...roughly thirty million years ago, the Purgatory God told us that we have almost spent an entire chaos cycle in Undermoon Lake. After a hundred million years, he would use his full power to wipe us all out." Voidragon's gaze turned dim. "Only then did we realize that there was a limit to the amount of time which Undermoon Lake gave us."

"If the Purgatory God really was to attack at full-power and press us nonstop...our divine power would rapidly deplete, and when we use it all up, we'll die. We've never heard of the term 'chaos cycle' before,



but we understand that it has to be a period of time which the major power that created this world uses.”

“A chaos cycle?” Ning was startled. A chaos cycle had already passed since the Primordial Era?

Ning had felt all along that Undermoon Lake was a place that was meant to cultivate Empyrean Gods through particularly ruthless methods. However, a chaos cycle was enough; if one wasn’t able to make any real breakthroughs in an entire chaos cycle, they generally wouldn’t be able to make any more breakthroughs at all.

“We only have seventy million years left.” Tyranodragon’s deep, sonorous voice boomed out. “We absolutely aren’t willing to just admit defeat. We want to keep living, so our only hope right now is to find a powerful Empyrean God who can bring us along with him. But alas, no such figure has appeared recently.”

Ning nodded. During the past ten million years, he had been the only person to even enter.

“Although we truly wish to leave this place and aren’t willing to just die here...Ji Ning, you really are not yet strong enough.” Tyranodragon continued, “Please don’t blame me for saying something unpleasant, but the Purgatory God truly is incredibly powerful. Your third-stage swordforce...it’s far from being enough. You don’t have much of a chance to make it past him. To make it past him, you generally have to reach the fourth stage of thunderforce, taiji-force, infiniforce, heartforce, etc.; you have to reach the fourth stage to have any hope of succeeding.”

“And of course, if you are particularly skilled in a battle-type force, such as swordforce or saberforce, you’ll be completely capable of succeeding.”

Tyranodragon looked at Ning. “Brother Darknorth, you should wait until you have at least a decent chance before making the attempt. Otherwise...you’ll be gambling with your life. If you are lucky, you might escape, but if you aren’t, you’ll die there.”

“Junior apprentice-brother Darknorth, it’s best if you wait patiently for some time. You aren’t like us; a long path still lies ahead of you,” Roughpeak said. “Honestly, I’m already quite content with being able to see Volcano Island.”

Ning was speechless.

Third-stage swordforce?

Why did they believe him to be at the third stage of swordforce?

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#### **Book 20: Jindan Upgrade Chapter 15: Iceheart Pith**

“Stop!” Ji Ning hurriedly called out.

The Seven Dragon Gods and Empyrean God Roughpeak paused their protestations, looking at Ning. Truthfully speaking, they didn’t really want to say these words either, but they also didn’t wish to see Ning die in the hands of the Purgatory God.

“You, uh...who told you that my swordforce is at the third stage?” Ning laughed.

“Eh?” The other eight were all startled. Judging from Ji Ning’s words...it seemed as though he wasn’t at that stage?

“I did.” Roughpeak looked at Ning, puzzled. “Was my guess wrong?”

“Oh!” Ning now understood. Laughing, he explained, “When I first encountered you, senior apprentice-brother Roughpeak, I was indeed just at the third stage of swordforce.”

These words instantly caused the eight to reveal looks of surprised delight.

“You broke through?”

“You made a breakthrough when fighting Snowfiend?”

“Have you reached the fourth stage of heartforce?” All of them looked eagerly and excitedly towards Ning.

Ning smiled, then nodded. At the same time, he waved a finger, causing a loop of extremely sharp black sword-light to circle around it.

Upon seeing the black, sword-shaped swordforce, the Seven Dragon Gods and Roughpeak felt extremely excited, but they also didn’t know whether to laugh or to cry.

Roughpeak finally said, “Junior apprentice-brother Darknorth, I...uh...”

“I understand,” Ning said hurriedly. “Senior apprentice-brother Roughpeak, you believed that I had fought against Snowfiend for an extremely long period of time, and so you naturally came to certain conclusions based on that. It’s my fault for not having explained it to you.”

“How can it be your fault? Who would be so foolish as to blurt out exactly how strong they are?” The nearby Empyrean God TyranoDragon boomed with laughter. “Excellent. It seems as though the seven of us aren’t destined to die just yet. Given how powerful you are, brother Darknorth, it should be easy for you to overcome the Purgatory God. Come, come, come! Let’s make haste towards the next island. Our chances of leaving will be greater as well.”

“We’ve been in Undermoon Lake for countless years. Oh – according to what the Purgatory God said, we’ve been here for nearly a ‘chaos cycle’. I wonder what the next island is like?”

“I’m rather curious.”

“I hear that after defeating the Purgatory God, you’ll be able to acquire treasures.”

“Fourth brother, why are YOU getting excited? You won’t be the one to get the treasures!”

“My excitement is no business of yours!”

They all celebrated and joked about. Clearly, the chance to leave this Volcano Island had put them all in quite a good mood.

An hour later, Ning and the others arrived at the other end of Volcano Island.

“Here we are. All you need to do is advance past the floating wooden bridge.” Witherdragon pointed towards the wooden bridge up ahead. In front of them was an endless sea of flames that stretched off into the horizon, with the wooden bridge being the only thing within it.

“It’s really hot.” Ning turned his head and grinned. “Everyone, come into my Immortal estate for a few days.”

“After you.”

“Sorry for the trouble.”

“C’mere, lemme see what your Immortal estate is like!” They all laughed and jested. Their relaxation was primarily due to the fact that they knew how strong Ning was and that he was certain of victory. Roughpeak, when he had first joined Ning, had done so in a much more nervous, restless manner.

Ning waved his hand. None of the eight Empyrean Gods resisted, allowing him to draw them into his Immortal estate.

“Let’s go.” Ning seated himself within his Ruyi Soulsnake Shuttle, then began to rapidly advance via the wooden bridge into the sea of flames. Although the flames were incredibly hot, Empyrean Gods would generally find it easy to endure them, to say nothing of someone like Ning who was protected by the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art].

After flyinig for just a single hour...

“Eh?” Ning came to a sudden halt, staring in front of himself. Up ahead, a massive red figure that was more than ten meters tall had appeared on the bridge. The figure was bald, had red eyebrows, a red beard, and was extremely muscular. He wielded a pair of short halberds in his hands, and his dark-red eyes were fixed upon Ning.

“The invisible pressure he gives off truly is stronger than Snowfiend’s,” Ning murmured to himself. The only reason Ning was able to sense this was because his foe had prepared his full power, not disguising his aura at all.

Ning put away the Ruyi Soulsnake Shuttle, then landed on the bridge. A pair of swords appeared in his hands.

He wasn’t even willing to use [Three Heads, Six Arms]. Now that his swordforce had reached a new level, and his [Brightmoon] sword-art had been further perfected...he wanted to give himself a good challenge.

“I can sense...that the volcanic island no longer has any Empyrean Gods on it.” The Purgatory God’s dark-red eyes held a hint of madness within them. “It seems you are quite confident.”

“Please come,” Ning said politely.

“Alright.”

The Purgatory God didn’t hesitate. He immediately bound forward, his body moving at incredible speed. He instantly arrived before Ning, who charged forward as well, sending two streaks of black sword-light towards the Purgatory God.

Boom! Boom!

Ning couldn't help but take several steps back, while the Purgatory God was knocked back by one step as well.

"What tremendous power." Ning was secretly surprised. "In strength alone, he's nearly at the True God level. Fortunately, my swordforce reached the fourth level." After swordforce reached the fourth level, Ning was able to unleash power equivalent to 80% of a full-force heartforce blow with each ordinary strike. This level of power was absolutely enough for him to do battle head-on against his foe. All Ning had to do was reserve enough divine power to allow him to move about at high speed. There wasn't even a need for him to use the [Starseizing Hand] or [Three Heads, Six Arms]. In fact, he didn't even really need to fight with full power.

Ning was completely capable of replenishing the amount of divine power which he was using up through absorbing natural elemental energy from Heaven and Earth.

"Stage-four swordforce?" The Purgatory God instantly grew even frenzied.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! The twin halberds hacked downwards, screaming through the air like devils.

The two short halberds were like the Taiji itself; one was Yin while the other was Yang, and both joined together into a perfect whole that completely embodied the essence of of what Wuji, Infinity, was all about. Although Ning also wielded a pair of twin swords, in terms of making his swords work together in harmony he was vastly inferior to the Purgatory God. Anyone who had embarked on the path of Wuji would be extremely skilled in making multiple weapons work together.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Ning's sword-light remained as fast and bizarre as ever.

In Undermoon Lake, Ning had spent most of his time and effort on the Shadowless stance, and this stance was the most unpredictable stance of them all.

The two exchanged blows for a long while. For a period of time, Ning was at a slight disadvantage; although his attacks were more powerful, his two weapons didn't work together as seamlessly as his enemy's did, resulting in him being at an overall disadvantage. In truth, if Ning used the [Three Heads, Six Arms] technique, he would be able to quickly suppress his opponent, but Ning was in no hurry to do so. Finding such a perfect opponent wasn't an easy task!

The power of his sword-arts primarily came from his black swordforce. Very little of Ning's divine power was being used up, and it was actually being replenished faster than it was being consumed. He'd easily be able to battle like this for a thousand years without any problems.

This battle went on for more than half a month. Ning had just broken through to the fourth stage of swordforce a short while ago; now that he was able to fight against such a perfectly matched foe for so long, his sword-arts grew increasingly refined and perfected. Although he had spent more than a year meditating on his sword-arts on Volcano Island, he hadn't had an actual opponent to test himself against. Only upon encountering a formidable opponent would he realize that his 'perfected' sword-arts were still lacking in many areas. As a result of his continued improvement, his sword-arts grew increasingly powerful.

"You win." The Purgatory God suddenly retreated.

Ning laughed. During the past half-month, he had went from being at a slight disadvantage to holding a slight advantage! The Dao of the Sword was simply too well-suited for launching offensive attacks.

The Purgatory God looked at Ning, his lips cracking apart into an ugly grin. "I'll be waiting for you at Myriad Mountains Island." His body then vanished, leaving behind countless flames that quickly dissipated.

"Myriad Mountains Island?" Ning murmured softly to himself, "Can it be that the third island is Myriad Mountains Island?"

Swish. Ning boarded his Ruyi Soulsnake Shuttle, then continued to advance.

After flying for around an hour, an enormous, gourd-shaped island appeared before him. This gourd-shaped island looked as though it was a small island and a large island joined together.

As for the wooden bridge, it led to the small island. At the end of the wooden bridge stood the bald, red-browed Purgatory God.

"So this is Myriad Mountains Island?" Ning landed with a laugh.

"To be precise, the small island is a treasure island." The Purgatory God pointed towards the distant, larger island. "That large island over there is the actual Myriad Mountains Island. As for this small island...it has quite a few treasures. You can choose three of them. After doing so, you have to enter the large island. You won't be allowed to come here again."

Undermoon Lake was a place where you could only advance, not retreat. Ning understood this.

Upon reaching Volcano Island, for example, there would be no way back to the snowy island.

After entering Myriad Mountains Island, there would be no way back to Volcano Island. The only options were to die or to successfully pass through the remaining islands and return to the Three Realms.

"Three?" Ning said with surprise, "I hear that the fourth and fifth islands all have treasures as well."

"Yes." The Purgatory God nodded. "The third, fourth, and fifth islands all have treasures within them. In each place, you can choose three items. Thus, there's a total of nine items you can acquire. Once you reach the fifth island, you'll be allowed to leave Undermoon Lake. But of course, in this chaos cycle, the only one who survived was the man called 'Jueming'."

Ning instantly became filled with questions. The legends of the Three Realms stated that Buddha Jueming left Undermoon Lake with three treasures...but the Purgatory God now said that he left with nine?

"It seems there are six treasures which Buddha Jueming did not make public," Ning mused to himself.

"Follow me."

They walked through the smaller island, nearly a million kilometers in circumference. It took them only a short while to travel hundreds of thousands of kilometers and arrive at a lake. Compared to the endless amount of distance the Ruyi Soulsnake Shuttle had traversed over the oceans here, this island really was just a small island.

The island lake was covered by a hazy mist that prevented others from seeing it clearly.

“Disperse.” The Purgatory God waved his hand, causing all the mist to dissipate and the lake to appear. The lake was actually separated into nine distinct regions! One region was filled with incredibly hot Ninefire Lava, with a dark-red snow lotus growing atop it. Another region was filled with slowly flowing rivers of icy Iceheart Pith, and atop the pith grew a clump of jewel-like Iceheart Leaf. There was also a region filled with many types of precious medicinal herbs, all filled with life energy. These precious herbs had given birth to a jade-green fruit that appeared to levitate above them...

Nine regions of fire, of ice, of darkness, of life, of death...

A single invisible formation joined these nine regions together in a perfect manner.

“Eh? Iceheart Pith? Ninefire Lava? This place actually has both of them?” Ning’s heartrate instantly sped up. He grew excited now; he didn’t expect that he would discover Iceheart Pith, which he badly desired, right here within the third island.

“The treasures which Buddha Jueming made public are actually all here.” Ning instantly guessed at the reason behind this. “It seems that Buddha Jueming didn’t make public any of the treasures he acquired on the fourth and fifth islands.” Anyone could tell that the treasures on the later islands would be even more valuable and useful.

“Choose.” The Purgatory God, upon seeing Ning go into a daze, urged Ning to hurry up. “There are nine types of treasures here. You can choose three of them.”

“Nine types of treasure?” Ning was startled. There were nine regions in total. The Iceheart Pith region had a single Iceheart Leaf growing atop it. Although Iceheart Leaf was valuable, the large amount of flowing Iceheart Pith was something which Ning desperately desired as well.

“Can I choose the Iceheart Pith?” Ning suddenly asked.

“Iceheart Pith?” The Purgatory God frowned as he looked at Ning. “Iceheart Leafs crystallize above the Iceheart Pith. You should choose the leaf; the leaf is the crystallized essence of the pith. All nine regions have crystallized essences of certain things; you should choose them.”

“But I want the Iceheart Pith. Can I have it?” Ning asked. He definitely had to choose the Iceheart Leaf, but what of the Iceheart Pith?

The Purgatory God frowned. “The Iceheart Pith is the foundation; because it exists, Iceheart Leaf can grow. After an Iceheart Leaf is harvested, more will grow after a long period of time. You can choose Iceheart Leaf, but the underlying Iceheart Pith...how could I possibly give it to you?”

## [The Desolate Era](#)

### **Book 20: Jindan Upgrade Chapter 16: Icefire Formation**

Ji Ning instantly felt his heart clench. Iceheart Pith was the foundation of the leaf?

“With the pith gone, there will be no more leaves in the future.” The Purgatory God looked at Ning. “Many other Empyrean Gods will enter the Myriad Mountains Island. I can’t just let one of the treasures disappear due to you.”

“But I heard that the person who left, Jueming, was given more than just a single Iceheart Leaf,” Ning suddenly said.

“Uh...”

The Purgatory God’s face changed slightly. He cursed softly, “Damn that Jueming. Why did he have to blabber about the treasures?”

“Yes, your words are correct.” The Purgatory God looked towards Ning. “Jueming entered Undermoon Lake long, long ago. He was able to make it all the way to Myriad Mountains Island in one try, and was only the second person to make it here. Back then, there were many Iceheart Leafs, and so giving him twelve didn’t make much of a difference. But as time flowed on, the Empyrean Gods who entered this place were all tempered and strengthened. More of them entered Myriad Mountains Island...and as a result, the amount of treasures stored here began to run low. That’s why the reward was changed to be a single leaf.”

“Since you also made it all the way here on your first try...if you want twelve leaves, I’ll give them to you.”

The Purgatory God waved his hand. Whoosh. Instantly, the Iceheart Pith region began to ripple, as though some sort of restrictive spell had just been dissipated. One platter after another began to appear, each holding an Iceheart Leaf. There had to be at least ten thousand of the leaves within the great Iceheart Pith region.

“That many?” Ning was shocked.

“Is it? If every single Empyrean God takes away twelve leaves, then a thousand of them would take over more than ten thousand, yes?” The Purgatory God snorted. “I have to be sparing with these treasures. The only reason why I’m willing to offer you twelve is because you made it here on your first trip without failure. Twelve of the leaves wouldn’t be a problem, but the Iceheart Pith...that’s the foundation. Forget about it.”

Ning understood. These Iceheart Leaves all came from the Iceheart Pith before him; to acquire the pith was highly unlikely.

“Actually...” Ning suddenly said, “I only need a small amount of Iceheart Pith. Let’s say...a few dozen square meters of it?”

“A few dozen square meters?” The Purgatory God stared. “You call that a ‘small amount’?”

Ning felt a surge of delight in his heart. Judging from the Purgatory God’s attitude, there was clearly some bargaining room here.

“There are several square kilometers of Iceheart Pith here. A few dozen square meters is nothing,” Ning said hurriedly. Seeing the look on the Purgatory God’s face, Ning knew that he was rather unlikely to agree. Ning immediately said, “Just thirty square meters!”

“Do you know how deep the Iceheart Pith goes?” The Purgatory God explained, “They are nearly ninety meters deep. You want nearly 2700 cubic meters of it? Completely impossible.”

“Just nine meters deep and nine meters long,” Ning said hurriedly. “That’s all I want...”

The Purgatory God frowned.

“Just a tiny bit of Iceheart Pith and a single Iceheart Leaf.” Ning looked at the Purgatory God. “I won’t take any of the other treasures. Earlier, you said that I can take three of my choosing. All I want is a bit of Iceheart Pith and a single Iceheart Leaf.”

“Nine meters...” The Purgatory God looked at Ning, hesitating.

Ning looked back at him.

“Fine.” The Purgatory God nodded. “Since you made it all the way here on your first try...and since nine meters won’t have an impact on the foundation as a whole. Earlier, I told you that you can choose three treasures; now, you’ll only be allowed to pick a single Iceheart Leaf and some of the Iceheart Pith.”

Ning was overjoyed.

“Do you have any treasures to hold it?” The Purgatory God looked at Ning. Ning quickly took out a green-jade bottle. The Purgatory God nodded, then waved his hand. An invisible hand seemed to scrape out a small ‘crater’ in the Iceheart Pith, carving out a spherical portion that was nine meters long and nine meters deep. The Iceheart Pith floated straight towards Ning.

“Come here.” Ning willed it, and the Iceheart Pith instantly flew into the green-jade bottle. He plugged it with a stopper, then waved his hand and collected the Iceheart Pith flying towards him as well. Only then did Ning let out a sigh of relief.

He had finally succeeded. In truth, the other treasures here were of little interest to Ning. He was neither an artifact forger, nor was he a pill refiner, and he had no other skills that could make use of these things.

What he needed were treasures and techniques that would increase his own strength.

The Purgatory God muttered to himself, “I really got ripped off this time. I’m usually able to shoo away Emyrean Gods just by giving them three Iceheart Leafs or equivalent treasures, but I ran into yet another person who knew that Jueming acquired twelve. Jueming...what a troublemaker.”

“Shoo, shoo! Off with you!” The Purgatory God stared at Ning. “Are you waiting for me to show you off?”

Ning laughed, then immediately left.

Within the Immortal estate he was carrying. The second Ji Ning was within a meditative room inside the estate.

“I’ve acquired the Iceheart Pith.” Ning held the green-jade bottle in his hands, a look of delight on his face. “Fortunately, the Purgatory God was rather easygoing and easy to negotiate with. He wasn’t too stubborn. Otherwise, things would be quite troublesome.”

In truth, as soon as Ning saw that the Purgatory God had only been willing to give him a single Iceheart Leaf when Buddha Jueming had acquired twelve, Ning had immediately sensed that the Purgatory God was tampering with things a bit. This was because there was definitely no way that all of the other



Empyrean Gods had merely received just a single leaf when they entered Myriad Mountains Island. The Purgatory God definitely had a certain amount of discretionary power.

Perhaps he wouldn't be allowed to give an Empyrean God too much, but he could definitely choose to give them a bit less if he chose. And so, Ning decided to give negotiation a try...and he succeeded.

"Nine meters long, nine meters deep. Iceheart Pith is a bit lighter than I expected," Ning mused to himself. "This amount of Iceheart Pith weighs roughly 300,000 kilograms or so."

Iceheart Pith could float atop water. However, this amount sufficed for his needs.

"My thirty-six clones need a total of 180,000 kilograms. This is enough."

After acquiring the necessary treasures, Ning no longer hesitated. He immediately took out a different, red-jade bottle. The red-jade bottle contained Ninefire Lava within it. Ning had prepared 50,000 kilograms of it for his journey to Undermoon Lake.

"Time to begin."

Ning pulled open the stopper to the green-jade bottle and the red-jade bottle. He placed them atop the floor, then sat down in the lotus position.

Whoosh. Ning floated up into the air by roughly thirty meters, then the True Immortal energy within his body began to activate. Slowly, a formation-diagram created from an enormous amount of energy began to form below Ning. As the energy surged, the diagram began to shine with golden light. The formation of golden light formed a sphere of nearly three hundred meters that was like an enormous screen.

A large amount of runes flowed atop it as Ning's energy flowed through it in an incomparably marvelous manner.

After a full hour, Ning finally finished manifesting the formation.

"The fire formation has finally manifested." Ning let out a sigh of relief. He took out a Great Firmament pill to replenish his energy, then once more began to manifest a second formation. In the air above Ning's head, a second formation of similar size began to slowly manifest. As Ning continued to materialize it, the formation slowly began to glow with black light. The formation continued to improve in power, until it became like black jade in appearance.

Three hundred meters of golden light below him.

Three hundred meters of black light above him.

"Now that the Icefire Formation has formed...it is time to refine the Jindan." Ning opened his eyes and stared towards the two distant bottles. The red-jade bottle and the green-jade bottle began to release the Ninefire Lava and the Iceheart Pith within them.

A total of 7,500 kilograms flew out from each. Ning was worried that he would run out, and so he brought out a bit more than he needed.

The streams of Ninefire Lava and the Iceheart Pith transformed into two spheres that hovered before Ning. One was a sphere of Ninefire Lava, while the other was a sphere of Iceheart Pith. Within the two spheres, Ninefire Lava and Iceheart Pith slowly bubbled and frothed.

Whoosh. The essence within the Ninefire Lava sphere began to automatically and slowly be drawn downwards, being absorbed into the golden light diagram. As for the sphere of Iceheart Pith, its essence was similarly being drawn up into the black light diagram above Ning.

After absorbing the essence of these two treasures, both diagrams dramatically increased in power. They now contained an unfathomable, mysterious power that began to flow into Ning's body, mingling within the Pure Yang Jindan inside of Ning.

The two diametrically opposed types of energy, fire from Ninefire Lava and ice from Iceheart Pith, both came from treasures that were created by the primordial chaos. They held tremendous, marvelous power within them.

"What a comfortable feeling."

Ning could sense that the Pure Yang Jindan within his body was being baptized and transformed by the unspeakably marvelous power of ice and fire. This was an extremely comfortable feeling, and the Jindan was slowly beginning to transform. Despite how slow the process was, Ning could clearly sense every single part of the change.

Despite being slow, after two or three days, the transformation would be quite shocking.

"According to the records I read of the Icefire Jindan Smelting method, it will take roughly a month to upgrade my Jindan to the second tier. This is a slow process of nourishing and transforming the Jindan that cannot be rushed." Ning tamped down the eagerness and excitement he felt, allowing the two giant formations to slowly extract energy from the two types of items to smelt his Jindan.

He believed that a month from now, his Pure Yang Jindan would reach the second tier. He would be a half-step into the Daofather level of power. This was a qualitative transformation, a fundamental transformation. Once his Jindan transformed, the soul within the Jindan would also be empowered at a rapid pace.

"I'll wait for a month."

One clone trained in the Icefire Jindan Smelting method, while the other left the smaller island and reached the larger island; Myriad Mountains Island.

The entrance to Myriad Mountains Island also had a black stone stele before it. This one was covered with a diagram of flames.

"The stone stele in front of Volcano Island contained the staff-arts of Snowfiend. I imagine that this stone stele contains the the halberd-arts of the Purgatory God." Ning was still quite intrigued; although he had battled against the Purgatory God for a long period of time, that was a wild fight that made it difficult for him to truly understand the true essence and nature of his opponent's techniques.

Ning stood before the black stone stele, staring at the flame diagram. Soon, his mind was drawn into it.

Within a blurry region, a human-shaped creature was brandishing two halberds. The creature started with elementary stances, but slowly began to advance through the many deeper variations on the twin halberds technique. It started simple and became complicated; started slow and became fast. In the end, it formed into the most terrifying stance which the Purgatory God had.

A long time later, Ning's mind escaped the stone stele. He revealed a look of approval on his face. "I gained quite a bit from viewing the entire technique, from start to finish. My twin swords are still a bit inferior by comparison." Ning had gained certain insights that would allow him to perfect the [Brightmoon] sword-art further.

"First, Myriad Mountains Island." Ning swept it with his gaze.

This vast island was filled with mountains. Some pierced high into the clouds, some were as slender and sharp as knives, some were short, some were strange-looking. There were at least ten thousand mountains here, and none of the mountains were linked together. To see more than ten thousand solitary mountains...this truly was a strange sight.

"I wonder which Empyrean Gods are on this island." Ning immediately walked towards the depths of the island.

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### **Book 20: Jindan Upgrade Chapter 17: Relentless Until Dead**

"According to what the Purgatory God said, this island is named 'Myriad Mountains Island'." Ji Ning smiled, the Seven Dragon Gods and Empyrean God Roughpeak by his side.

"Myriad Mountains Island? Not bad, not bad." Empyrean God TyranoDragon stared with his large bronze eyes towards the surrounding area. "These mountains are like spears that are jabbing towards the heavens. Interesting, interesting. Myriad Mountains Island...a fine name!"

Roughpeak had returned to his normal, relaxed, graceful demeanor. Looking at his surroundings, he said with delight, "I didn't expect that I'd be able to see the third island so soon. I had thought that I would be satisfied with just seeing the second island. Haha...perhaps, junior apprentice-brother Darknorth, you'll be able to make it all the way out in one try."

"He just might."

"Brother Darknorth, we believe in you."

They all chortled with laughter.

Ning, however, didn't dare to make any boasts. The nine of them walked forward together. Although the island was quite large, they were able to advance through it at tremendous speed, thanks to spatial compression techniques they used. After walking for just a short while, they had already travelled millions of kilometers. They could vaguely make out the sound of laughter and jesting in the distance.

This caused Ning and the rest of the nine to exchange curious looks.

"It seems as though there are quite a few people here."

"Let's go take a look."

They immediately headed towards the direction of the voices, and as they drew nearer the voices became clearer.

“Excellent, excellent! Big brother Feiyou, your song was excellent. Let me sing as well!”

“Undermoon Lake, how truly carefree,

Drinking fine wine, how truly sublime,

No worries at all, no worries at all,

A nap I’ll take, and I’ll sleep till I wake!”

The coarse, rough voice boomed out like thunder, carrying a certain cadence and tempo to it. Upon hearing this, Ning couldn’t help but blink. This was ‘singing’? What a perfectly awful song!

Soon, Ning and the rest of the nine reached the region where the voices were coming from. They saw a bonfire blazing in the midst of a desolate, wild area, and skinned haunches of animal meat were currently being roasted above the bonfire. A large amount of glistening oil dripped down from the meat, falling into the flames and emitting crackling sounds. The fragrance of the meat had long ago wafted out to the nine.

Dozens of animals were being roasted in unison, and around the bonfire there were men and women who were either sitting or standing and singing. Most of them were dressed in furs, and they all looked quite relaxed and content. There were also some dressed in robes, but they looked similarly casual and relaxed. They were all either holding wine gourds or wine bottles in their arms as they gulped down wine and chomped away at their meat, laughing and shouting with abandon.

“Ahaha, you guys truly do have it sublime. You even have meat to eat!” Empyrean God Witherdragon laughed loudly and charged towards them.

“I knew that it had to be big brother Feiyou over there. All of you who followed big brother Feiyou have had meat to eat and wine to drink. I, on the other hand, have been starving!” Empyrean God Tyranodragon charged over as well.

All of the Seven Dragon Gods ran over, with Ning and Roughpeak following behind them.

“Why are there so many Empyrean Gods here?” Ning was secretly shocked. He saw nearly a hundred Empyrean Gods present!

“The Seven Dragon Gods? You’ve all finally arrived!”

“The seven of you insisted on waiting at Volcano Island for so long, saying that you were going to rely on yourselves to make it here. What, have you finally succeeded?”

“Ahahaha, brother Witherdragon! Come, eat!”

The lively Empyrean Gods joyfully welcomed the seven. The Seven Dragon Gods had been on Volcano Island for a very long period of time, nearly an entire chaos cycle. Thus, all of the Empyrean Gods present knew the seven of them! More than half recognized Empyrean God Roughpeak as well. As for Ji Ning...none here knew him!

“Let me make the introductions,” Witherdragon said in a loud voice. “This is my good friend, Darknorth! I’m quite ashamed to say this, but we relied on brother Darknorth to make it here from Volcano Island. As soon as he entered Undermoon Lake, he charged straight through all impediments to make it to this location, battling through all three guardians.”

“Oh?”

“Come, brother Darknorth! Let me toast you!”

“You were able to battle your way to Myriad Mountains Island in one try? Admirable!” Instantly, the many Empyrean Gods all turned to look towards Ning. They all had a different look in their eyes, and each of them voluntarily offered Ning a toast.

Ning began to drink and chat with these Empyrean Gods. Slowly, he began to understand what was going on here. Aside from the nine of them who had just entered, there had been a total of ninety-eight Empyrean God present. However, the vast majority of them had followed other Empyrean Gods to this location. They had all given up their hopes of making it through Undermoon Lake on their own, which was why they had chosen to follow others.

Only nine of the ninety-eight had truly relied on their own power to make it to this place.

These nine were ‘Skyriver’, ‘Oddwitch’, ‘Cloudscar’, ‘Feiyou’, ‘Eastvoid’, ‘Seasonstep’, ‘Coppersong’, ‘Zhenbu’, and ‘Autumnwing’. These nine Empyrean Gods had all mastered the likes of taiji-force, infiniforce, thunderforce, sharpforce, and other forces to the fourth level. They were powerful enough to make it past the Purgatory God, which was why quite a few Empyrean Gods were willing to follow them.

“This is my old friend Feiyou.” Witherdragon led Ning over to meet with Feiyou.

“Brother Darknorth, you truly are formidable. You actually made it here on your very first try. This is incredibly rare! Even I had to spend tens of thousands of years on Volcano Island before I made a breakthrough that allowed me to reach this place,” Feiyou said with a laugh.

“Brother Darknorth,” Witherdragon said with a laugh, “This old friend of mine, Feiyou, can’t live without meat or wine. Thus, he always carries an estate-world treasure with him that he fills up with many wild beasts to feast upon. Wine can be distilled from the natural energy of Heaven and Earth, but meat can only come from rearing livestock. Thus, the Empyrean Gods around my old friend Feiyou will always have quite the comfortable life. Just look at them. All of them are drinking wine and eating meat. I can’t even describe how content they look! By contrast, I don’t even remember when was the last time the seven of us tasted meat on Volcano Island.”

Ning laughed as well. This Feiyou truly was a remarkable figure. The Empyrean Gods had all come to Undermoon Lake to adventure, and all of them were filled with heroic aspirations. Thus, even if they were to bring some wine and meat, they would only bring a little bit, as it would all eventually spoil and rot away. There was no way to keep meat from spoiling over the course of ten million years. Thus, after spending enough time in Undermoon Lake, the only way to find meat to eat was to do what Feiyou did; prepare an entire minor world full of livestock and wild beasts to eat. Only then would there be a steady source of meat.

“Brother Darknorth, don’t laugh at me, I beg,” Feiyou said with a laugh. “My willpower is weak, and I delight in wine and meat. I can endure being unable to make any progress in my cultivation, but I simply can’t be without wine and meat. Nothing to eat, nothing to drink...what’s the point of Immortality if that’s the case?!”

“Even in the Three Realms, I’ve heard of your famous name, big brother Feiyou. In fact...you have a nickname these days: ‘Relentless Until Dead’,” Ning said with a laugh.

“Relentless Until Dead?” Feiyou stared, then began to roar with laughter.

“Right, Relentless Until Dead.” The nearby Witherdragon nodded. “This kid did indeed say that he would only stop drinking wine and eating meat when he died. This is why he was nicknamed ‘Relentless Until Dead’.”

After drinking and eating for quite some time, the Emyrean Gods ended up splitting off into two groups. One group was formed from the ten who had made it here on their own power, Ji Ning included, and the second group was formed of all the rest.

Ning looked at the nine before him. Of the nine, seven belonged to the Nuwa Alliance, while the other two most likely were of the Seamless Gate.

Everyone who entered during the Primordial Era belonged to the Nuwa Alliance. It wasn’t until later on during the era of the Three Realms, when the Lord of All Fiends came back after Mother Nuwa departed, that the Seamless Gate’s Immortals and Fiends began to enter this place as well. Thus, there were naturally far fewer Seamless Gate members in Undermoon Lake.

“They all seem to be extremely good friends with each other.” Ning mused to himself, “If they knew of the storm going on outside...there would probably be no way for them to remain as friendly as they are now. They treat each other as brothers, holding nothing back at all.”

Because of how friendly the Nuwa Alliance members and Seamless Gate members on the third island were to each other, Ning, Roughpeak, and the Seven Dragon Gods decided to temporarily withhold information regarding the war outside. None of the others knew of the war, and here in Undermoon Lake, there was no need for them to be made aware of it right away.

“Brother Darknorth.” The winged Emyrean God Autumnwing said, “The nine of us sought you out because we need to tell you something.”

“Eh?” Ning was puzzled. He immediately began to listen carefully.

“The path to the next island is incredibly dangerous, and it is filled with terrors. Myriad Mountains Island, however, is much safer, and there’s no ‘millennial invasions’ like on the first two islands.” Autumnwing looked at Ning. “But Undermoon Lake won’t let us just live here forever in peace and relaxation. Undermoon Lake isn’t meant to serve as a place for rearing useless people, after all.”

Ning nodded.

“Normally, Myriad Mountains Island is completely safe; it’s rare for a single dangerous event to happen in even a hundred million years. But...whenever a new Emyrean God enters the island...” Autumnwing looked at Ning. “Then a terrifying calamity will descend upon Undermoon Lake.”

“A calamity?” Ning was puzzled.

The nearby Empyrean God Oddwitch narrowed his eyes. He said in a gravelly voice, “Right. A calamity! Whenever a new Empyrean God arrives, the calamity will soon come as well. A short period of time from now, an army of demons will descend upon Undermoon Lake. When that happens, the only choice will be for the ten of us to meet them in battle. As for the other Empyrean Gods, they aren’t qualified to take part because we brought them here. If they take part in battle, they will enrage Undermoon Lake...and they will all die.”

Ning nodded, then asked curiously, “An army of demons?”

“Prior this this, you encountered a yaksha and Snowfiend; they are all considered ‘demons’. What we will encounter, however, is an entire army composed of such demons.” Oddwitch continued, “An army will attack, and only the ten of us are permitted to defend. It will be a truly life-threatening battle, and in the past, there have generally been deaths amongst our ranks. In fact, on one occasion four Empyrean Gods ended up dying! There’s only been a single time where none of us died.”

“Thus...if things unfold as they normally do, one or two of the ten of us will die.” Feiyou looked towards Ning. “We’re telling you this now so that you will mentally prepare yourself.”

“Alright.” Ning nodded.

“In truth, the invading army is Undermoon Lake’s way of forcing us to remain vigilant and not be too lazy and relaxed here on Myriad Mountains Island. We must often go visit the wooden bridge and temper ourselves.” Empyrean God Cloudscar sighed. “Only by constantly tempering ourselves and constantly growing stronger will we have a chance to survive once new Empyrean Gods arrive and bring calamity with them.”

Cloudscar looked at Ning. “Brother Darknorth, because all ten of us have to work together to fight against our many foes, teamwork is absolutely critical. Before we can work together, we need to understand how strong you are and what you are skilled in. Only then can we come up with a good strategy.”

“Understood.” Ning nodded.

“The most powerful of us nine is big brother Feiyou. We’ll let him spar with you first. You don’t need to hold back at all. Only by understanding what areas you are strong in and what areas you are weak in will we be able to work together,” Cloudscar said.

“Hahaha...I’m not really the strongest. Cloudscar is the most agile, while Zhenbu is the most ferocious. I simply have the most stable frontal attacks.” Feiyou let out a laugh. “Brother Darknorth, are you ready? Once you are ready, I’m going to attack.”

## [The Desolate Era](#)

### **Book 20: Jindan Upgrade Chapter 18: Wuji Births Taiji**

Atop the vast wilderness, the white-robed Ji Ning stood facing the fur-clad Empyrean God Feiyou. Off in the distance, more than a hundred Empyrean Gods were watching them.

“Although Myriad Mountains Island doesn’t suffer from the ‘millennial invasion’, it suffers from an even more terrifying calamity whenever a new Empyrean God arrives. The Empyrean Gods who can make it to this place are all tremendously powerful...and yet, almost every single time, some will die when the calamity arrives.” Empyrean God Roughpeak shook his head and sighed.

“Only a deadly threat like this can stir us into becoming more powerful. The stronger you become, the greater your chances will be of making it to the next island,” Empyrean God Witherdragon said solemnly.

This was the third island. The fourth island was next. As for the fifth island, there were no dangers there; upon reaching it, one would be permitted to leave. Thus, all of the Empyrean Gods who had made it to the third island were extremely powerful. As for the ones on the fourth island, they were just one step away from leaving this place.

The tribulations on the third island weren’t meant for the Empyrean Gods who had given up to face; they were meant for the stronger Empyrean Gods who had made it here under their own power.

“Be careful, brother Darknorth.” A pair of short black halberds appeared in Feiyou’s hands.

“Short halberds?” Ning was startled.

According to the reports he had read, during the Primordial Era, Empyrean God Feiyou didn’t use short halberds as his weapons.

“Here in Undermoon Lake, when watching the Purgatory God, I ended up discovering weapons that suited me even better than my old ones.” Feiyou looked at Ning. “Although the Purgatory God and I both use twin halberds...I’m much more formidable than him.”

“After you.” A pair of blood-red swords appeared in Ning’s hands.

The hundred-plus spectating Empyrean Gods all held their breaths. Through this fight, they would be able to find out exactly how powerful this newly-arrived Empyrean God Darknorth was! If he was truly powerful, they would all stand a better chance of surviving once the calamity came.

Of course, the calamity posed no danger to the Empyrean Gods who had given up, but it was deadly to the other Empyrean Gods who had brought them here. They had watched many of their benefactors die over the years, and they hoped that less would die this time.

Swoosh. Feiyou transformed into a streak of light, flying towards Ning. Ning also transformed into a streak of light, going forward to engage.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The twin swords collided against the twin halberds in midair. Upon exchanging blows, Ning was shocked: “Eh? Empyrean God Feiyou’s short halberd technique is identical to the Purgatory God’s?” Thanks to his earlier experience battling against the Purgatory God, it was fairly easy for Ning to deal with Feiyou’s attacks. In turn, Ning put his sword-arts on full display. This spar was mainly meant so that the other nine Empyrean Gods would have a good understanding of Ning’s abilities, allowing them to cooperate better once the calamity came.

Swish.



A queer, unpredictable sword-light lashed out, flashing towards Feiyou's neck. Fortunately, the short halberd managed to block in time.

Swish.

Yet another bizarre streak of sword-light, this one black. It scraped upwards towards Feiyou's body, but Feiyou managed to once more block it with a clever twist of his halberd.

"This Darknorth fellow...what a strange, fast sword-art he has."

"His sword-art is both fast and unpredictable. The Dao of the Sword really is well-suited to launching attacks."

"Formidable."

"Yes, quite formidable. This sword-art alone is enough to allow him to overcome the Purgatory God."

Cloudscar, Eastvoid, Seasonstep, and the others all sighed in amazement. Although they had all made it past the Purgatory God as well, none of them walked upon the Dao of the Sword! From Ning's sword-arts, they were able to get a sense of how deadly and dangerous an expert of the Dao of the Sword could be.

As for Roughpeak and the Seven Dragon Gods, their eyes shone as they watched. Although Ning had brought them to this place, they had never truly seen Ning fight with full power as he was right now.

Boom!

The two clashed together then separated, landing on the ground.

Feiyou said excitedly, "Brother Darknorth, although I was at a disadvantage, that was just the warmup. We were just getting a bit familiar with each other. Now...I'm going to fight for real." After speaking, Feiyou's aura changed in a subtle manner. Transforming into a streak of light, he once more charged towards Ning, and as soon as they exchanged attacks, Ning could sense that Feiyou's short halberd techniques had changed...

It was no longer the technique the Purgatory God had used. It was an even more exquisite technique.

Although Ning was skilled in attacking, for a time Ning was unable to seize the upper hand again. Clearly, the amount of time Feiyou had spent on this island had resulted in him perfecting his short halberd technique to a level that was far superior to Ning's sword-arts.

"Formidable, formidable." After battling for a short while, Ning laughed. "Big brother Feiyou, I'm wondering how strong your protective divine abilities are?"

After speaking, Ning no longer moved to dodge. He allowed his opponent's halberds to land on him as he sent his own swords howling towards Feiyou. Feiyou was so terrified that even the look on his face changed. He hurriedly pulled back his halberds to block Ning's attacks instead.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Feiyou was repeatedly knocked backwards. He called out in a loud voice, "Is this the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]?!"

"The Ninth Cycle of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]," Ning chortled.

“That’s CHEATING!” Feiyou was furious. If Ning was a bit weaker than him, then he would’ve still been able to suppress Ning, even though Ning had the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] guarding his body. But since the two were equal in power...for Ning to be able to focus solely on offense meant that he had an enormous advantage.

“Who is your master?” Feiyou roared. “He actually let you train in the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], and you even reached the Ninth Cycle!”

“My master? Daofather Subhuti.” Ning chortled happily. “Jealous? Envious?”

“Daofather Subhuti? You have such bullshit luck!” The more Feiyou fought, the angrier he became as he was being beaten into an increasingly sorry state. “Enough, enough! I already know that you have a powerful protective divine ability. Stop abusing it, alright?”

Seeing that the point had been made, Ning stopped ‘cheating’. He began to fight normally, no longer relying on the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] to protect him and instead using his swords to block the enemy’s attacking halberds.

This sort of fight was much more interesting, anyways.

“I didn’t know that brother Darknorth had actually reached the Ninth Cycle of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]. This is going to be wonderful.” Oddwitch chortled merrily, “When the demon army comes, brother Coppersong, we won’t need you soak up all the damage all by yourself like a target dummy, like we normally would. This time, brother Darknorth can work together with you to take them on.”

In the face of an army of demons, they would indeed need Fiendgods with incredibly tough bodies to withstand the front-line blows for them.

The muscular Coppersong, his entire body shimmering with an ancient copper aura, said in a low voice, “The [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] which brother Darknorth has trained in is the number one divine ability below the True God level. Although I’ve had some fortuitous encounters, my divine body isn’t a match for brother Darknorth’s. This time, brother Darknorth will have to serve as the vanguard for taking on the enemy’s attacks.”

“My word! Coppersong, you big dumb lunk...you’ve learned how to take advantage of others?”

“He actually understands the principle of letting someone else charge in front of him!”

The others all laughed.

Coppersong stared at them. “I had to do that because none of you have tough enough divine bodies. In the past, I served as the vanguard because I had no other choice, and was just barely up to the task. However, Ji Ning’s divine body is even tougher than mine. That’s the Ninth Cycle of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] we are talking about! His body is akin to a supreme Pure Yang Treasure. Even a True God or Daofather would find it difficult to destroy such a body.”

“In both the Primordial Era and the era of the Three Realms, very few have been able to reach the Ninth Cycle of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]. Every single person who succeeded was not only tremendously talented but also doted upon heavily by a True God or Daofather. There’s no need for someone like that to enter Undermoon Lake, right?”

“That’s true.”

“There really is no need for someone who a Daofather holds in such favor to enter Undermoon Lake.”

All of them were quite puzzled.

Generally speaking, the people who entered Undermoon Lake during the Primordial Era and the era of the Three Realms were people who felt that they had no chance of becoming a True God or Daofather. This was why they were willing to risk everything here in Undermoon Lake. In addition, not even emerging from Undermoon Lake was a guarantee that one would succeed. Buddha Jueming, for example; a long time passed after his departure from Undermoon Lake before he became a Buddha.

Thus, Undermoon Lake really didn’t make much of a difference! Everyone who came in was just gambling with their lives. As for the truly supreme geniuses like Lu Dongbin, Redsnow, and Sun Wukong, none of them would actually enter such a place.

But of course, although the likes of Feiyou, Oddwitch, and the others had been fairly ordinary in strength when they had entered, thanks to Undermoon Lake, they had been trained to the point where they all verily gleamed with talent and power. The nine of them had all reached the fourth level of forces such as taiji-force. In the Three Realms, they would be viewed with great importance by the True Gods and Daofathers. From this, one could see how effective Undermoon Lake’s training regime was.

BOOM!

Suddenly, a colossal explosion could be heard. The shockwave caused the earth to crack like the shell of a turtle, and the nearest mountain began to tremble as well, causing many boulders to fall down.

The power of this collision caused all the distant spectators to be badly shocked.

“How fierce!” Feiyou retreated a long distance, staring towards Ning in shock.

“You blocked it?!” Ning was shocked as well.

“What happened just now? Y-you...how did you suddenly make your sword-arts increase in power by that much?” Feiyou was shocked.

“Just now, I filled my sword with fourth-stage heartforce,” Ning explained. “With heartforce supporting my attack, the strength naturally increased dramatically.”

Buyou was stunned. “Fourth-stage heartforce? You’ve not only reached the fourth stage of swordforce, but also the fourth stage of heartforce? And...but...even if you have reached the fourth stage of heartforce, how could you pour it into your sword? Did you come up with a heartforce sword-technique?”

Heartforce was an invisible, ephemeral thing. Even major powers were often bedeviled by the question of how to apply it.

“And you?” Ning was puzzled as well. “Just now, your halberd techniques...” He clearly had released a maximum-strength blow; he had unleashed swordforce, heartforce, and even the [Starseizing Hand]. Although he had knocked Feiyou backwards, Feiyou had still successfully blocked the attack. Ning had

seen the blurry image of a taiji diagram appear before Feiyou, and it felt as though his attack had been trapped into an endless vortex.

“That’s a new technique that I just came up with,” Feiyou said with a laugh. “My infiniforce has reached the fourth stage, while my taiji-force has only reached the second stage. However...the infinite Wuji gives birth to the supreme Taiji. Infiniforce and taiji-force can be joined together, and so I came up with this technique that does just that, which is why it is so defensively powerful.” 1

Ning couldn’t help but sigh in awe. Impressive.

He naturally knew that some of the supreme types of force could be merged together. For example, timeforce and spaceforce could join together. Redsnow had managed to join them together into spacetime-force, which was why Subhuti was so delighted with him and had taken him on as his disciple.

However, only certain matching, suitable forces could be joined together.

For example, there would be no way to join swordforce together with saberforce. They simply didn’t have anything to do with each other; there was no way to forcibly join them together.

Wuji gave birth to Taiji, and so the two could join together perfectly. Even though Feiyou had only reached the second stage of taiji-force, upon joining these two types of force together the results were quite shocking.

“That’s why I said that I was the stablest and most unshakable of the nine. I can withstand even the attacks of Empyrean God Zhenbu, who has the most ferocious attacks of us all.” Feiyou looked at Ning, then let out an amazed sigh. “But in terms of ferociousness, you are a bit superior to even Zhenbu. Impressive, quite impressive.”

Ning said hurriedly, “Heartforce is different from other types of energy. There’s no way to sustainably attack using heartforce; if I attacked repeatedly with it, I would only be able to launch a bit over ten attacks.”

“Oh...” Feiyou now understood. He shook his head. “A pity...”

“Still, your power surpasses my expectations. We need to make some careful arrangements...and then, the only thing for us to do is wait. Roughly ten days or so from now, the demon army of Undermoon Lake will attack.” Feiyou let out a laugh. “When the time comes, then ten of us shall work together to engage our foes!”

1. This phrase, ‘Wuji births Taiji’, is one of the most famous phrases in Daoism, and you can find out more in the ‘basic primer to Daoism’ on . Wuji means ‘infinity’ or ‘limitless’, while Taiji means ‘the supreme’. The full saying is, Wuji gives birth to Taiji, which gives birth to (the duality of) Liangyi. The duality is known as Yin and Yang, and the transformations of Yin and Yang are known as the (four phenomenon) Sixiang, which are reflected within the world as the (eight trigrams) Bagua. You can think of it as  $0 \Rightarrow 1 \Rightarrow 2 \Rightarrow 4 \Rightarrow 8$

## [The Desolate Era](#)

### **Book 20: Jindan Upgrade Chapter 19: An Army of Demons**

The sparring match Ji Ning engaged in after arriving at Myriad Mountains Island resulted in Oddwitch, Zhenbu, and the others being filled with joy. Although all of them looked quite relaxed and carefree, the truth was that they all knew a calamity was about to arrive...and it was almost guaranteed that at least one of them would die. They all felt an invisible form of pressure in their hearts.

At a time like this, the stronger Ning proved himself to be, the happier they would be!

Time flowed on, one day at a time.

The ten Empyrean Gods all prepared quietly for the battle.

Ning and the nine Empyrean Gods were currently discussing battle strategies within a palace.

“What? We aren’t allowed to use formations?” Ning was shocked.

“Of course not.” Oddwitch said calmly, “If you use formations, the demon army will use formations as well. They vastly outnumber us, which means we’ll be at a major disadvantage! This is hard-earned experience, taught to us by those who came before us. If we don’t use formations, the demon armies won’t use formations either.”

“How strange.” Ning was puzzled. Why was it that if they didn’t use formations, the demons wouldn’t use formations either?

“Why is this?” Ning didn’t understand.

“Put yourself in the position of the creator of Undermoon Lake and you will understand.” Zhenbu laughed. “The creator of Undermoon Lake wished to temper us, making us become more powerful. If we rely on formations, such as the Seven Planets God, then in truth only a single Empyrean God will actually be fighting, with the other six just responsible for pumping enough divine power. This is against the goals of the creator of Undermoon Lake, and so he naturally would not be willing to allow us to rely on formations. He wants us to rely on our own power to battle against our foes, using these struggles to temper ourselves.”

Ning instantly understood. Laughing, he said, “Come to think of it, I really wonder why the creator of Undermoon Lake spent all this effort in building this place up.”

“We’re quite curious as well.”

“Yes, why did he do this?”

“I imagine that only Jueming, who managed to escape, knows the answer. Darknorth, you’ve just recently entered from the outside world; has Jueming ever spoken of what the creator of Undermoon Lake wants?”

The nine Empyrean Gods were all puzzled.

Ning shook his head. “Buddha Jueming has completely sealed his lips regarding the affairs of Undermoon Lake.”

“He became a Buddha?” Seasonstep called out in surprise.

“The Seven Dragon Gods mentioned it earlier. Didn’t you hear them?”

“I was daydreaming.”

“You? An exalted Empyrean God? Daydreaming?”

“The calamity’s drawing near, you know...I can’t help but think about the demon army attacking. What, I’m not allowed to daydream?”

No formations would be allowed. They would have to risk their lives individually. The main thing they had to be careful about was staying close to each other, so that once one of them fell into a dangerous situation the others could immediately help out. Only by supporting each other would they be able to fight against the demon army invasion.

In the blink of an eye, twenty-one days had passed after Ning’s arrival at Myriad Mountains Island.

Ever since the tenth day, the ten Empyrean Gods had begun to live together, prepared to do battle at all times. On this day, a cold wind blew through the skies, which remained as blurry as always. The bright moon could still be seen hanging up in the heavens. And finally...

“AWOOOOOOO!!!!” A distant, earth-shaking howl could be heard coming from the west side of Myriad Mountains Lake.

“Eh?”

Ten figures simultaneously flew out of the palace like streaks of light, arriving at the peak of the nearest mountain. The ten of them were like the gods of this place as they turned their gazes in unison towards the distance.

“They’ve come,” Feiyou said in a low voice.

“They’ve finally come.” Zhenbu licked his lips.

“Remember, Darknorth.” Oddwitch looked at the nearby Ning. “Don’t charge too far up ahead. Although you have the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] and can charge into their ranks...once you are all by yourself and surrounded by their army, with no one to help you out and the demon king assaulting you...you’ll die shortly afterwards.”

“Understood.” Ning nodded.

The demon army had many demons that were comparable to ordinary Empyrean Gods in power. They also had demon commanders who were equivalent to the ten of them in power...and a demon king who was even mightier than all of them!

The more Empyrean Gods took part in battle, the more demons and demon commanders would take part as well.

Because ten Empyrean Gods would take part in this battle, ten demon commanders would take part as well!

“You have to be beware the demon commanders. Each of the ten are comparable to us in power. Those countless damnable minor demons are particularly irritating. Although they are weak in sole combat, they can tie you down and have a major impact on how much power you can unleash. We have to stay

close to each other and support each other. No matter what, we can't let the demons split us apart." Coppersong couldn't help but remind Ning yet again.

"Right." Ning nodded.

He understood. Everyone had told him this repeatedly, as the nine of them had all experienced this calamity before. It was precisely because they had experienced this before that all of them were so worried that Ning would mess up! During a critical, life-and-death moment like this...a single error would result in certain doom!

Thud! Thud! Thud!!!

The ground was trembling.

The ten Empyrean Gods stared off into the distance. They saw a terrifying, awe-inspiring horde of demons appear off in the distance. These demons had completely dark-green skins, and they wielded sabers, spears, warforks, and other types of weapons. Some of the demons were the particularly muscular commanders who were each many meters tall. The demon commanders had skin that was a dark-red color.

"Those big ones are the demon commanders."

"Look; that one over there with the long horns? That's the demon king." Feiyou and the others provided guidance to Ning. In truth, Ning had more or less come to the same conclusion on his own, as the two horns were nearly three meters long, and the creature had the most powerful aura of all.

"AROOO!!!" The the demon king was carrying a golden gourd around his waist and wielded a black longstaff in his hands. Raising his head, he let out a fierce roar.

"ARROOO ARROOO!!!" The horde of demons roared as well.

The ten Empyrean Gods all watched with solemn expressions.

Far off in the distance, the Seven Dragon Gods, Roughpeak, and the rest of the Empyrean Gods watched nervously.

"The calamity has come yet again."

"I hope all of them will survive this one."

Their hands were tied. If they were to take part in the battle, the only result would be that even more demons would appear. Thus, their only choice was to stay on the sidelines and watch. The only reason they were even able to come to Myriad Mountains Island was because they had followed more powerful Empyrean Gods here...but in almost every single calamity, at least one of them would die! To them, these dead Empyrean Gods were their benefactors!

In a similar manner, the Seven Dragon Gods and Roughpeak didn't wish for Ning to die. None of them wanted for any of the ten to die.

"I hope brother Darknorth and the others will all live," Witherdragon said.

"Let's go."

Upon their leader Feiyou issuing the order, the ten Empyrean Gods who stood at the peak of the mountain all transformed into streaks of light. They flew tens of thousands of kilometers towards another, rather strange-looking mountain. The reason why this place was known as 'Myriad Mountains Island' was because there truly was a myriad of different mountain peaks that stabbed high up into the skies!

The mountain that Ning and the rest of the ten had chosen was one which was a perfect fit for them.

They weren't able to set up formations, but at least they would be able to select the terrain of their choosing! A well-chosen region could help to ensure that the demon armies wouldn't be able to join together and completely surround them, which would make the battle even more difficult.

"My brothers!" Feiyou roared loudly, "Let's survive to drink together again!"

"Survive to drink together again!"

"Survive to drink together again!"

The other nine, Ning included, all howled furiously as they stared at the distant, impending demon army. Their hearts were all filled with a desire to slaughter! They had no choice; they had to kill. If they didn't, they would die.

The demon army drew closer...ever closer!

A million kilometers. Six hundred thousand kilometers. Three hundred thousand kilometers!

Even the weakest demon was comparable to an ordinary Empyrean God. They moved with astonishing speed, quickly charging forward towards the ten.

"AROOOO!!! Slaughter them all, my children!" The demon king bellowed in a loud voice.

Instantly, all the demons grew even more excited.

"Kill!" Feiyou let out an explosive shout of his own.

"KILL!" The nine Empyrean Gods had all drawn their weapons long ago.

BOOOM!!!!

It was like a tidalwave smashing into dry rocks. The ten Empyrean Gods, their backs to the mountain walls, were instantly flooded by wild attacks from the countless demons.

Ning instantly began to use the [Brightmoon] sword-art with his twin swords, deflecting the oncoming spears, warforks, machetes, and other weapons.

Sword-light flew forward in a strange, unpredictable manner.

Slash!

A demon's head went flying.

Clang! The sword-light scraped down the side of a machete, chopping a pudgy demon in half.



Every so often, Ning would also execute the 'Soleheart' stance and the 'Yin-Yang' stance, his two defensive stances. When suffering attacks from so many demons, maintaining a strong defense was clearly quite important. Otherwise, once the demons managed to close in on him, he wouldn't even have enough room to use his sword-arts. He would be finished if that happened.

"According to what big brother Feiyou and the others said, we have to wipe out these ordinary demons as fast as possible. The faster, the better! Although they are weak, it'll be these little demons who end up sending us into hell at critical moments." Ning didn't dare to be overconfident. Although he had the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] protecting him...if he was to be completely surrounded and bound, then the demon king would be able to easily suppress him and draw him into that golden gourd.

## The Desolate Era

### **Book 20: Jindan Upgrade Chapter 20: Half-Step Daofather**

The demon king wielded a long black staff in his hands. Surrounding him were the ten dark-red demon commanders! They simply watched from afar, allowing the many demons under their commands to surround and assault the ten Empyrean Gods.

Ji Ning and the others knew that each time, the leaders of the demon army would allow the ordinary demons to attack first for a time. Only later would the demon commanders and demon king attack. Thus, the initial period of time when only the ordinary demon soldiers were attacking was extremely critical; they had to seize that period of time to wipe out as many of the ordinary demons as they could.

It was a wild, berserk battle.

Boom! Every so often, Ning would ram forwards, relying on his tough divine body to smash into the demons and knock them asunder. At other times, he would use a sword-art that would transform his swords into a black hole, guiding the demons off to one side. In short, he used every method he could think of to ensure that the demons would not be able to completely surround and restrain him.

"Intriguing." The demon king pointed towards the distant Ning with a slender, knife-like claw. "Look at that new Empyrean God. His sword-arts are quite powerful, and he's killing the fastest."

"This divine body is quite tough. Our children's weapons and attacks are negligible to him."

"His sword-arts are quite odd."

The demon king and the dark-red demon commanders chatted amongst themselves.

"According to what Purgatory said, this new Empyrean God is named Darknorth." The demon king chuckled. "Number three, go and play with him a bit."

"Alright." Instantly, a muscular demon commander who was wielding a shield in each of his two hands charged forward towards Ning. The ordinary demons all parted before this demon commander, clearing a path for him. Soon, he closed in on Ji Ning.

"Ji Ning, be careful."

"Brother Darknorth, be careful."

“It’s the twinshield commander!”

The other nine Empyrean Gods hurriedly sent mental messages over to Ning. Ning felt a sense of shock in his heart as well. Because Feiyou and the other Empyrean Gods had experienced multiple battles against the demon king and his commanders, they had naturally memorized the appearances of quite a few of them. Each of the commanders had their own unique traits, and this one, the ‘twinshield commander’, possessed enormous strength and was extremely skilled in defense.

“Of the demon king’s commanders, the twinshield commander is probably the best counter to me.” This thought flashed through Ning’s mind as the dark-red twinshield commander came charging towards him.

“Die!” Twin shields in hand, the demon commander rammed towards Ning. These two shields protected almost every single inch of his body. No matter how formidable Ning’s sword-arts were, there was no way for him to touch this foe.

“Heavenbreaker stance!” Ning charged forward as well, his twin swords becoming as heavy as mountains. He sent them smashing downwards with an aura of power like Pangu cleaving apart Heaven and Earth.

BOOM!

The two swords smote down upon the shields, but the demon commander was still able to maintain his charge towards Ning with shields raised. Clearly, Ning didn’t have any advantages in terms of strength. The many ordinary demons around him also joined in the fight, wildly assaulting Ning and causing his movements to turn chaotic. Now, he truly understood why the demons he had so easily killed were said to be truly deadly.

While Ning was forced to concentrate on the demon commander, the ordinary demons continued to launch stabbing strikes against him, making his life miserable.

“Three heads, six arms!” Ning’s body momentarily blurred as he executed the [Three Heads, Six Arms] divine ability. Instantly, six streaks of sword-light began to fly about, sweeping the area around him clear of lesser demons while completely stalemating the twin bucklers.

“Number four, you go as well,” the distant demon king instructed.

“Yes.”

The dark-red demon commander referred to as ‘number four’ also had six arms. Each of his six arms held a whip, and he let out a howl as he charged towards Ning. His arrival instantly put Ning into an even more dangerous situation.

If Ning was just fighting against this ‘number four’ by himself, he would be able to easily defend against him. In fact, he would even hold the advantage. But right now, the twin shields were the primary threat, while the six whips of ‘number four’ coiled about his swords, making it difficult for Ning to execute his sword-arts. At the same time, the lesser demons continuously charged forward, trying to trap and constrict Ning.

“ARUUUUUUU!” The two demon commanders and many lesser demon furiously assaulted Ning like a wave that was about to drown him.

“Not good.”

“I’ll go!”

The person nearest to Ning was the most muscular of the ten Empyrean Gods, Empyrean God Zhenbu. Letting out a mighty roar, he slaughtered a path through his opponents and charged straight towards the twinshield demon commander. The twinshield commander had been in the middle of launching an attack against Ning, and so was only able to use a single shield to defend against the valiant Zhenbu.

“F\*ck off!” Zhenbu’s longspear pierced out, and a mighty whirlpool appeared at the tip of it. It latched onto the bottom of the shield, tugging it straight into the heart of the whirlpool. Zhenbu then gave the spear a mighty tug.

This attack contained a strange force that was both upwards and downwards. Even the twinshield commander was unable to withstand it, and he was sent flying into the air.

“Perfect.”

Sword-light flashed.

[Starseizing Hand]!

Swordforce

Heartforce!

[Brightmoon] sword-art, Blood Drop stance!

This was Ning’s fastest sword of all. As the twinshield commander flew into the air, an opening was revealed in his defenses. Ning saw it and immediately stabbed his sword into the demon commander’s chest. “Arghh!” The twinshield commander glared furiously at Ning, then vanished into thin air. Even his shield vanished with him.

“Well struck!”

“Excellent!”

“One down.”

The other nine Empyrean Gods instantly celebrated. They had never imagined that Ning, forced into such dire straits, would actually be able to slay the twinshield commander.

In truth, as soon as he been forced into that dire situation, Ning had immediately prepared to unleash his full power. However, in a situation like that, he would at most be able to force the enemy back a bit. Fortunately, Zhenbu had also charged over, forcing the twinshield commander to reveal a flaw in his defenses and giving Ning the chance to launch a full-strength attack to kill him.

“Beautiful.” Zhenbu looked towards Ning, laughing loudly, “Even if I didn’t intervene, a puny demon like that wouldn’t have been able to do anything to you, brother Darknorth.”

Ning, however, felt a complicated feeling in his heart.

In truth, ever since he had arrived at Myriad Mountains Island, Ning had felt lumps in his throat whenever he looked at these nine Empyrean Gods, especially Zhenbu and Autumnwing, who belonged to the Seamless Gate. This was because he knew very well that their two alliances had already entered a deadly war in the outside world! But here in Undermoon Lake, none of the Empyrean Gods knew of the war. These nine Empyrean Gods in particular had undergone many calamities together; they had long ago begun to view each other as brothers for life.

"It doesn't matter. They might be of the Seamless Gate, but they are both my brothers," Ning mused to himself as he stared at the heroic Zhenbu, who had been so concerned about him.

After the twinshield commander was slain, the six-armed demon commander hurriedly retreated.

The distant demon king frowned upon seeing this happen.

"Hm?" The demon king ordered with a frown, "Attack."

The eight demon commanders instantly grew excited. The demon king gently stroked the golden gourd by his waist, then hoisted his black longstaff with a cold smile and strode towards Ning. "The rest of you can deal with the other nine. Leave this Empyrean God Darknorth to me."

"Understood."

"Empyrean God Darknorth is doomed."

"Doomed."

The demon commanders all charged towards their respective targets. Aside from Ning, whom they weren't familiar with, they knew the Empyrean Gods quite well. They were able to choose whichever target suited them the most, but the Empyrean Gods didn't have that luxury; they were being surrounded and attacked by too many demons! They were also far slower than the demon commanders in movement speed.

"Careful. They are all coming." Feiyou let out a loud roar. This was the critical moment; when the demon commanders all attacked in unison, the Empyrean Gods would easily be at risk of death or injury!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The demon commanders battled furiously against their respective Empyrean God opponents, with crowds of lesser demons assisting them!

As for Ning, however...he was under the attack of the most terrifying demon of them all. The demon king.

"You actually killed number three." The demon king wielded the long black staff in his hands, filled with an overpowering aura that caused even Ning to feel pressure. The demon king strode forward with wide steps, causing the earth to shake. "I want to see exactly how strong you are. All of you, step aside."

Whoosh. The surrounding demons all gave way.

The demon king suddenly leapt into the air, soaring straight towards Ning with both hands around his staff, delivering a mighty, smashing blow towards Ning's head.

Clang. The three-headed, six-armed Ning sent all six of his swords into an upwards block.

BOOOOOOM!!

A deep hole appeared in the ground, with Ning having been smashed straight underground.

As for the demon king, he held the long black staff in a single-handed grip as he charged towards that hole with an aura of astonishing power!

Boom! A streak of sword-light flew out from the ground, with Ning ensconced within it.

"What an incredible aura." Ning's heart was shaking. This demon king was far too powerful, much stronger than Ning himself. Ning had used all six swords in order to block a single strike from the enemy, and one of the swords had been reinforced by heartforce. But it was useless! He had still been smashed underground. Clearly, the difference in power between them was enormous.

The demon king leapt high into the sky, soaring through the air as he chased after the fleeing Ning. In terms of power or speed, the demon king was definitely superior to Ning.

Boom!

Bang!

Ning was knocked everywhere; high, low, left, right...but thanks to the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] protecting him, the demon king remained unable to harm Ning. What Ning had to do was to use every tool available to him to ensure that his foe wouldn't be able to trap or bind him. Ning's sword-arts were still quite formidable, and thanks to his six arms the lesser demons were unable to even move close to him. This made it so that the demon king didn't have a chance to use the golden gourd to absorb Ning.

"Being dominated and trampled like this pisses me off. This demon king is way too strong." Suddenly, Ning's face changed.

"Attack."

"Shit!"

Faced with attacks from nine demon commanders and many lesser demons, Feiyou, Zhenbu, and the rest of the nine were trapped in a quagmire. Even Ning, when facing off against two demon commanders and many lesser demons, had been in a dangerous situation. Although the demon king seemed powerful, he was simply very fast and very strong; as long as one was able to withstand his attacks, one would only be knocked flying; there was no risk of dying to him.

During the last calamity, it had been Feiyou who had withstood the demon king's attacks. In terms of defensive techniques, he was actually far superior to Ning, and so he was able to withstand even the demon king.

During this calamity...the demon king had sought out Ning. Clearly, he didn't want to deal with the troublesome Empyrean God Feiyou, whose defenses were airtight.

As time passed, the positions of the other nine Empyrean Gods grew increasingly dire. Being at a constant disadvantage would, sooner or later, lead to catastrophe. Based on their past experiences, only after one of the Empyrean Gods died would these demons relax a bit with their attacks.

The ten Empyrean Gods each had their own abilities.

Empyrean God Cloudscar had amazing agility techniques that vastly surpassed the techniques of Ning and the rest of the other nine. Surrounded by an army of demons, he was still like an unpredictable cloud that manifested and dissipated at will. He moved about constantly, continuously launching attacks.

Empyrean God Feiyou's forte was defense. Not even the demon king was able to do anything to him, and he was naturally in quite a stable position right now as well. However, his attacks were weak. When surrounded and trapped, it was difficult for him to assist the others.

After battling for a long period of time...Empyrean Gods Eastvoid and Zhenbu fell into danger! Although the other Empyrean Gods had helped them out two or three times, there was no way they could be there every time.

"Shit!" Zhenbu let out a furious roar.

"These damned demons." Eastvoid was growing frantic as well. Both of them specialized in attacking, and so they were in similar, incredibly dire straits right now. Many scars had already appeared on both of their bodies.

"Eastvoid and Zhenbu are almost done for," Feiyou said through a frantic mental roar as he did his best to charge towards them.

"Feiyou? Don't even think about going over there." A demon commander who wielded clanking chains let out a bizarre laugh as he sent his chains lashing outwards, forcibly preventing Feiyou from moving past him.

"Darknorth!" Oddwitch sent out a frantic mental shout as well.

Boom!

The demon king sent out yet another smashing staff blow, knocking Ning aside. Ning grew frantic as well. "There's no way for me to move close to them." He was barely able to keep himself safe from the demon king as it was.

Slash! A blade scraped past Eastvoid's waist. A gaping wound instantly appeared, and fresh blood came spurting out from it. Moments later, a wave of divine power flowed over the wound and quickly healed it.

"My divine power is almost depleted," Eastvoid sent mentally. Each time his body was injured, a large amount of divine power would be used up to heal it.

"Eastvoid."

"Brother Eastvoid."

The other Empyrean Gods were all frantic. Once his divine power was used up...no one would be able to help him.

.....

Within the quiet Still Room.

Down below, there was a golden light formation of three hundred meters.

Up above, there was a black light formation of three hundred meters.

Ning was seated in the meditative position between the two. Spheres of Ninefire Lava and Iceheart Pith were floating in front of him, and a large amount of the essence of the two was flowing into the two diagrams. The two spheres had already shrank significantly.

“I’ll have to halt for now.”

Ning willed it, and both great formations slowly vanished into thin air. As for the two spheres of Ninefire Lava and Iceheart Pith, they flew back into their respective jade bottles.

As for Ning, he landed on the ground.

“Although my Pure Yang Jindan still needs upgrading...I have no choice but to halt for now. After the battle, I’ll continue the upgrade process.” Ning took a look inside his body. The gleaming, spinning golden pellet Jindan within his body had an aura that was already tens of times more powerful than it had been previously. The Jindan region inside his body had also dramatically expanded, and a torrent of powerful and pristine Pure Yang energy was flowing through it.

The Icefire Jindan Smelting technique was a process that was extremely slow and extremely gentle. As the Pure Yang Jindan absorbed more and more of the icefire essence, it would constantly improve and evolve. But of course, it could be halted at any time as this was a very gentle, slow type of transformation.

The difference between a Daofather’s Jindan and a True Immortal’s Jindan was like the difference between Heaven and Earth!

A Daofather’s Jindan was on the same level as one of Pangaea’s first-tier True Immortal’s Jindan. If Ning was able to upgrade to a second-tier Jindan, he would be half a step into the Daofather level of power. After having worked on it for more than twenty days, he was actually quite close to completing the upgrade process; it could already be considered a second-tier Jindan. But of course, only after a few more days of refining would it truly reach its maximum potential.

“Let’s take a look and see how powerful this second-tier Jindan is.” Ning willed it, and he instantly vanished from the Immortal estate, appearing within Myriad Mountains Island in the world outside.

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Myriad Mountains Island.

The battle between the Empyrean Gods and the demons had reached a fevered state. Ning had just been knocked flying away...and suddenly, a second Ning appeared out of nowhere. The sudden

appearance of a second Ning caused all of the Empyrean Gods present, as well as the many Empyrean Gods watching from far away, to gawk in amazement.

“Two Empyrean God Darknorths?!”

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### **Book 20: Jindan Upgrade Chapter 21: That Sword!**

When the two Ji Nings appeared in midair, the only one who wasn't surprised was the demon king. He had learned from Snowfiend long ago that Ning had two clones, and this was actually the reason why he had given Ning the 'special treatment'.

“Your clone has finally appeared.” The demon king laughed loudly. “I've been waiting quite a while.”

Whoosh! He charged straight towards Ning.

One of the Nings flew straight towards him with [Three Heads, Six Arms] activated. Six streaks of sword-light lashed out as this Ning engaged the demon king in close combat. As for the other Ning, the Ning who had just appeared...a total of 729 top-grade Pure Yang swords appeared around him, slowly undulating up and down. His Pure Yang energy, far more pure and powerful than the energy of the True Immortals of the Three Realms, flowed outwards through his body, filling each and every one of those Immortal swords.

Ning's energy was simply too pure. The solidified energy sword that was created by the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation] was thus improved dramatically as well. All of the energy from the many swords levitating around Ning flowed towards his chest, merging into a single jade sword that appeared before him.

“Eh?” The demon king, who had just knocked aside the other Ning, suddenly felt a feeling of shock in his heart. He turned to take a look and saw the jade sword. He immediately sensed an invisible aura of menace coming from that sword, causing him to feel stunned. “That flying sword actually makes me feel as though I'm in danger. How can this be? How can he be so powerful?”

“That flying sword...”

“The power of that sword-formation...”

The lesser demons, the demon generals, Feiyou and the rest of the Empyrean Gods...everyone last one of them was stunned. There was no way to suppress or retract the aura of a sword-formation, and the jade sword was the crystallized essence of sword-ki itself; waves of power emanated outwards from it! This caused all of the demons and Empyrean Gods to feel a nameless fear.

Ji Ning...had already reached a qualitatively higher level of existence than they had.

“Go!” Ning pointed. Whoosh! The jade sword left behind a solitary, arcing scar in the skies. It transformed into a crescent streak, and the jade sword, covered by black sword-light, turned to strike at the demon king. All of the demons and Empyrean Gods present could sense the solitary, desolate beauty of the crescent streak...and could also sense the terror that it brought.

Ning had both fourth-stage swordforce and fourth-stage heartforce, and both gave him power comparable to the most supreme of Empyrean Gods. Ning's [Starseizing Hand] also gave him power that



was close to that of a supreme Empyrean God by itself. And prior to his Jindan evolving, when Ning used 729 top-grade Pure Yang swords in the ninth-level of the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation] formation, he similarly was capable of unleashing power that could only be matched by the most supreme of Empyrean Gods and True Immortals.

Fourth-stage swordforce, fourth-stage heartforce, the [Starseizing Hand], and the ninth level of the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation]; all of them were on the same level. Although the [Starseizing Hand] and the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation] were slightly weaker by comparison, they were still on the same general level as the other two.

But now...!

Now that Ning's Jindan had begun to evolve, his Pure Yang energy had become tens of times purer than before. Without any question, the jade sword formed through the crystallization of this pure energy via the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation] was now tens of times more powerful than before as well! It had already surpassed the apex of power possible Empyrean Gods; it had stepped into the Daofather level! In fact, in power and presence alone, it was a bit more powerful than Redsnow's 'Seven Planets God' or even Sword Immortal Evergreen's Daofather golem! It was comparable to Ning using the perfect Heaven Punisher!

"Fast!" The demon king's face changed dramatically.

The jade sword shot towards him at incredible speed. After Ning's energy had been upgraded and purified, his jade sword's speed had been greatly enhanced as well. The demon king hurriedly brandished his longstaff, seeking to block...but the jade sword covered by black sword-light was quite bizarre. It slashed out in a strange, ghostly manner, arcing past the longstaff and scraping through the demon king's body.

Swish.

The demon king, longstaff in hand, just stood there blankly. And then, his body began to fall apart. He had already been bisected by that sword attack.

"I lost."

The demon king's bisected body quickly reformed, but he still stared blankly at Ning. In fact, the entire battlefield turned completely silent. Those frantically attacking lesser demons and demon commanders had come to a halt as well. They all raised their heads, staring at their demon king in disbelief. They also stared at the white-robed youth who was surrounded by a countless cluster of levitating swords.

The nine Empyrean Gods raised their heads to stare at Ning as well.

"Darknorth..." They all felt stunned.

The Seven Dragon Gods and the many other Empyrean Gods off in the distance were all completely dazed as well. They were only able to watch, not fight...and they all stared at the white-robed youth.

"We lost. I lost." The demon king looked at the two Ji Nings. One of them vanished, leaving behind the other one.

The attack of the demon army could indeed be described as a calamity or as a tribulation. To survive it, there were two options. The first was to endure for long enough and wait for the demon king to order the retreat. The second was to slay the demon king; in this case as well, the demon army would disperse.

However, during all of the previous tribulations, they had relied on the first method to succeed. They had supported each other and had managed to endure the deadly calamity with difficulty. Normally, one or two Empyrean Gods would die. This was because so long as a single one died, the demon army would slowly begin to lower the pace and power of its assaults. The creator of Undermoon Lake's goal was to temper Empyrean Gods, after all, not to wipe all of them out.

In the past, they had relied on the first method...but this time, Ning had slain the demon king!

"Empyrean God Darknorth. Ji Ning." The demon king looked at Ning. "After entering Undermoon Lake, you made it all the way here in one try...and, from what I can tell, even the countless demons under my command who guard the 'Demon Icepass' won't be able to hold you off for long. You should already have the power to make it to the fourth island. After you make it there, the only one you have to worry about is the final guardian. Your talent and your power is far superior to Jueming's; there is a very high chance that you will be able to survive and depart from Undermoon Lake."

"Work hard, young man." The demon king looked at Ning, a deep, long smile on his face. "When you reach the fifth island...you'll find a surprise in store for you."

"Children, let's go!" The demon king turned and left. The demon commanders and lesser demons all whistled through the air after him, but as they left quite a few gave Ning curious glances.

The demon army had come like a tidalwave. Now, they receded like the waves as well.

Eastvoid and Zhenbu let out sighs of relief, but they were still frightened as they thought back to what had nearly happened. The other Empyrean Gods all landed on the ground as well.

"Darknorth." Eastvoid walked over, a smile on his face. "Thank you. You saved my life."

"And mine as well." Zhenbu also grinned, then patted Ning on the shoulders.

"Admirable."

"Darknorth, I am in complete awe of you now."

The nine Empyrean Gods had previously viewed Ning as someone on their level, but now they were filled with the utmost of admiration towards Ning. It must be understood that Redsnow's 'Seven Planets God' or Ning's 'Rahu God' and 'Heaven Punisher' all primarily relied on the power of a formation, on the combined energy of many other Immortals and Fiendgods. Only then were they capable of getting close to the Daofather level of power.

Ever since Pangu established Heaven and Earth, there were extremely, extremely few Empyrean Gods and True Immortals who were able to reach that level of power on their own. They could be counted on one hand! Every single one was truly a favored son of the heavens. But of course, the only Empyrean God who had ever actually *slain* a True God or Daofather had been Houyi.

However, aside from the unequalled Houyi, Ning now stood at the absolute pinnacle amongst the countless Empyrean Gods of the Three Realms!

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Within the private room inside the Immortal estate. A white-robed Ning appeared out of nowhere, immediately levitating into midair to continue training in the [Icefire Jindan Smelting] technique. Slowly, the giant formation of golden light appeared below him, as did the formation of black light above him. The red-jade gourd and the green-jade gourd once more released Ninefire Lava and Iceheart Pith, and Ning once more began to slowly refine his Jindan.

His Pure Yang Jindan had yet to be upgraded to the limit.

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After this battle, Myriad Mountains Island once more became calm and tranquil. Both of Ning's bodies focused on upgrading their Pure Yang Jindans to the second tier. By the time both of them had reached their maximum potential, more than a month and a half had passed since the demon army's attack.

"I plan to head to the fourth island," Ning said. "Prior to this, the demon king spoke of the 'countless demons guarding Demon Icepass'. What's this all about?"

Upon hearing his words, the other nine Empyrean Gods all laughed.

"So you are finally heading out?"

"Given your power, Ji Ning, it is indeed true that you have a chance of traversing Demon Icepass."

"We've been waiting for you to say these words for a long time now."

All of them laughed as they spoke. Feiyou hefted his gourd of wine, then said, "On the other side of Myriad Mountains Island is yet another floating wooden bridge. This floating wooden bridge passes through an endless chasm of ice, which has countless demons hidden within it. The number of demons in that place are far more than the number you saw in the demon army that attacked. What you need to do is continuously fight your way through them, to do your best to wipe them all out. You have to fight for a hundred years. After doing so, the demon king will decide whether or not you are qualified to enter the fourth island, based on how many demons you have slain."

"Fight for a hundred years?" Ning was surprised. The last three times, he merely had to defeat the respective guardians. But this challenge, the fourth challenge, actually required him to battle for a hundred years?"

## [The Desolate Era](#)

### **Book 20: Jindan Upgrade Chapter 22: I Don't Regret It**

"Right." Empyrean God Oddwitch said in his hoarse voice, "Because you need to constantly battle, there's no way you can just use up all your divine power as you please; you need to conserve it and use it sparingly. Darknorth, when you challenge the pass, you'll have to rely on your swordforce when you

fight. Swordforce comes from the very essence of the sword itself, and so it is endless and inexhaustible.”

Ji Ning nodded. If he truly did have to fight for a century, then most of his Ki Refining techniques would be useless. This was because the amount of energy consumed by the ninth-level [Greater Thousand Swords Formation] was quite high. Although his second-tier Jindan gave him far more Pure Yang energy than he had before, far more than any ‘ordinary’ True Immortal had, it still wasn’t possible for him to inexhaustibly release jade swords. He would only be able to unleash them for half a day at most, much less a century.

To battle for extended periods of time, he would have to rely on swordforce! As for divine abilities...Ning wouldn’t even dare to use [Three Heads, Six Arms], much less the [Starseizing Hand]; that would use up divine power at far too fast a rate.

The only way Ning would be able to fight for a century would be if he was able to ensure that the amount of divine power he used up was no more than the amount he was able to naturally replenish.

“So challenging Demon Icepass means overcoming an endless swarm of lesser demons?” Ning asked.

“Almost all of them will be lesser demons,” Empyrean God Autumnwing said. “A demon commander will only spawn on occasion, and the demon king will appear once towards the end. However, when the commanders or the king appears, they will appear by themselves! The lesser demons, however, will come in an endless horde; there simply is no way you can possibly massacre them all. No matter how many you kill, more will be reformed and manifested.”

Ning nodded.

“Actually, aside from battling for a century, there’s one more method,” Eastvoid said with a laugh. “The demon king once told us that if you can fight your way all the way to the end of Demon Icepass and step onto the other island, that would of course be considered success as well.”

“Yeah, but how?”

“Right, that’s simply impossible. With so many demons attacking you, you wouldn’t be able to make it there in even a thousand years, to say nothing of a hundred.”

They all chimed in with their opinions.

Ning agreed with their opinions as well. Each of the islands was separated from the others by an enormous amount of distance. Even the Ruyi Soulsnake Shuttle would have to fly for a long period of time when unimpeded. When battling countless demons, one would only be able to advance at a very slow pace. A thousand years? Not even ten thousand years would necessarily be enough.

“Ji Ning,” Feiyou said with a laugh, “Battling for a hundred years is actually quite beneficial to us. I’ve undergone more than a thousand of those hundred-year battles, but each time I didn’t kill enough to proceed...but those wild battles caused me to continuously improve and perfect my short halberd techniques. In fact, I was even able to develop my technique, ‘Wuji Births Taiji’ and merge those two types of force together. I trust when my taiji-force reaches the third stage, I’ll be able to make it past.”

Feiyou’s infiniforce had reached the fourth stage, whereas his taiji-force was only at the second stage.

“Right. It is of tremendous benefit.”

“The first hundred-year battle is particularly helpful. The later ones become less and less helpful.”

“You’ll know when you give it a try.”

After chatting with the nine for a period of time, Ning learned quite a few things about challenging Demon Icepass. After making it past the gorge, only one step would remain before he could leave.

“Darknorth.” Empyrean God Eastvoid suddenly spoke out.

“Eh?” Ning looked towards him. He could sense that Eastvoid seemed to be hesitating. “What is it?”

Eastvoid hesitated for a while, then finally said, “I very nearly died during this demon invasion. I now see the truth of things. My talent and my abilities were fairly ordinary for Empyrean Gods of the Primordial Era. Even though my time in Undermoon Lake has increased my power dramatically, I’m still at risk of dying during every single demon invasion. As for Demon Icepass, I have no hope of making it past it. My current level of power is a limit for me. Just now, the demon king himself said, and I myself believe, that you are the first person after Jueming to have an extremely high chance of making it out of this place. I want you to help me out...and take me out with you.”

“You are going to give up?” Ning was surprised. Everyone who made it to Myriad Mountains Island had been allowed to choose a treasure. But anyone who gave up would have to give up the treasure as well! And since they were indeed quite close to being able to leave, there weren’t many who were willing to give up at this point.

“I’ve seen through to the truth of things, past the allure of treasures. If Undermoon Lake wishes to retake those treasures, let it. I really want to leave. I want to see my master, my fellow disciples, my own apprentices.” A reminiscent look appeared within Eastvoid’s eyes. In the past, when he lived surrounded by all his loved ones, he didn’t realize what a pricelessly wonderful life he had. But now, after spending countless years here in Undermoon Lake, he deeply missed his master and the others.

“Darknorth...help me out.” Eastvoid looked at Ning.

“If you’ve made up your mind, Eastvoid, then I’ll naturally agree to your request. It won’t cost me anything at all,” Ning said.

“I’ll leave as well,” Empyrean God Cloudscar said. “I can understand how Eastvoid is feeling. Like him, I’ve been trapped here for far too long. It’s been a long, long time since I’ve improved in power at all. Although my agility techniques are good, my attacks are indeed fairly weak; I’m far from reaching the level of power necessary to go through Demon Icepass, much less the final guardian. Darknorth, you have a good chance of escaping this place. I’m willing to follow you.”

“My dear, old brothers...all of you want to leave this place?” Feiyou was rather saddened.

“Big brother Feiyou.”

“We...simply see no hope for us at all.”

Of the nine Empyrean Gods present, there were actually five who were willing to follow Ning.

They were Eastvoid, Cloudscar, Oddwitch, Skyriver, and Zhenbu. They no longer saw any hope for success for themselves. Given that even the demon king had said that Ning had an extremely high chance of leaving this place, and with the jade sword attack Ning had revealed filling them with trust in him...they truly wished to follow Ning and escape this place, reuniting once more with the loved ones that they hadn't seen in so long.

But of course, the nine all felt a bit saddened as well. As they began to make their farewells, Ning suddenly fell silent.

The nine didn't notice at first, but eventually they began to realize that something was off with him.

"Darknorth, what's wrong?" Feiyou asked, "Although I am saddened by my five brothers leaving, I can understand their feelings. Why is it that you have suddenly..."

"Zhenbu." Ning suddenly spoke out.

"Eh?" Zhenbu looked towards Ning.

"I cannot take you with me," Ning said.

Zhenbu was stunned, as were the other eight Empyrean Gods present.

"What about the other four?" Zhenbu looked at Ning.

"I can take them. I can't take you." Ning gritted his teeth, forcing the words out.

"But why?" Zhenbu wasn't angry, only puzzled.

"Darknorth, what the hell are you saying?" Coppersong had the worst temper of the nine, and he immediately grew angry. "When you found yourself in a dangerous situation during the demon army invasion, big brother Zhenbu risked his own life to go save you. Although you were powerful enough that it didn't make a difference, for you to help him out costs you nothing at all!"

"Enough!" Feiyou snapped at Coppersong, then looked at Ning in a solemn manner. "Darknorth, I can sense that you have secret troubles of your own. What is it?"

Ning took a deep breath. "Alright, I'll tell. I'm going to talk, and none of you are going to interrupt me."

"Alright." The nine Empyrean Gods all nodded. They could all sense that Ning was about to tell them something important.

"I'll need to start my story from the war that destroyed the Primordial Era." Ning began to speak, starting his tale from the Lord of All Things's plot to have the two chaosworlds ram into each other. He continued his tale all the way to the present, where the Seamless Gate and the Nuwa Alliance had once more become locked into a life-and-death battle.

As the nine Empyrean Gods listened, their eyes bulged out so far that they very nearly popped out. On multiple occasions, they wanted to ask Ning questions, but in the end they didn't interrupt.

"...And now, you understand."

Ning let out a sigh. "Zhenbu battled by my side, and he was even willing to save me at the risk of his own life. I truly view him as a beloved brother of mine. But...although the Empyrean Gods of the two alliances are brothers here in Undermoon Lake, in the outside world the Nuwa Alliance and the Seamless Gate are embroiled into a war of annihilation. All of the Empyrean Gods and True Immortals, and in fact even all of the Celestial Immortals, will be forced to make a choice; they will be forced to choose an alliance."

"This is a war of annihilation, a war for survival."

"Although there are many secrets involved, the workings of fate have already revealed to us that only one side can survive; either the Seamless Gate, or the Nuwa Alliance." Ning continued, "Even the True Gods and Daofathers must pick a side. As for the Four Ancestors of the River Source, who have yet to choose...they are only able to stay on the sidelines for now. When the final Endwar comes, they'll have to make a choice as well. The two alliances absolutely won't allow any powers to remain on the sidelines and potentially wipe out the exhausted victor."

"All of you are Empyrean Gods. If we were to return to the Three Realms...do you think you'll be able to escape this war?" Ning swept the nine with his gaze.

"Zhenbu...if you were to return to the Three Realms, which side would you choose?" Ning looked at him.

Zhenbu opened and closed his mouth several times. Finally, he said in a low voice, "My master, my brothers, my friends...all of them are with the Seamless Gate. Of course I would choose the Seamless Gate."

"Why...why does it have to be like this...why has this storm descended..." The nearby Autumnwing found this hard to believe. "Everything was perfectly peaceful..."

"None of us have ever been able to control the destiny of the Three Realms. When the war that ended the Primordial Era occurred, it wasn't a long period of time had passed that we realized the Lord of All Things, an alien Outsider, had been the one to instigate it. There are definitely secrets behind this catastrophe as well...but they aren't for the likes of us to understand." Oddwitch let out a sigh.

Feiyou suddenly said in a low voice, "Darknorth, I'll leave with you."

"Big brother Feiyou?" Ning was shocked. "All you need to do is make a breakthrough in taiji-force and you'll be able to make it past Demon Icepass. In fact, you even stand a good chance of leaving Undermoon Lake on your own."

"Now that a storm has swept the Three Realms, no one can simply act selfishly for themselves. Yes, if we hide in Undermoon Lake, we'll be able to avoid this storm," Feiyou said, a look of agony on his face, "But many of my fellow disciples already died during the war that ended the Primordial Era. I avoided one storm already. This time...I can't keep hiding. I'm going to face this storm alongside my brothers and my fellow disciples."

"I'll go back as well."

"And I."

"The storm has descended. Every little bit of extra power counts."

Of the nine Empyrean Gods, seven belonged to the Nuwa Alliance. Feiyou, Jibu, and Coppersong had been planning on staying, but now they decided to return as well.

News of the storm quickly spread throughout Myriad Mountains Island...and the Empyrean Gods who viewed each other like brothers had to make their choice.

Three days later, every single Empyrean God of the Nuwa Alliance elected to follow Ning. As for the twelve who belonged to the Seamless Gate, all of them remained on Myriad Mountains Island.

"I don't wish to one day be forced to kill them in the outside world." Ning stood before the floating wooden bridge. He murmured softly, "I'd rather have them stay here at Undermoon Lake and wait for this storm to pass. No matter which side wins, they wouldn't go so far as to act ruthlessly against such a small number of survivors."

"Let's go."

Although Ning felt quite miserable in his heart, he had already made his decision. He had no regrets.

He stepped onto the floating wooden bridge.