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Book 20: Jindan Upgrade Chapter 32: Lifeblood Oath

Ji Ning secretly sighed to himself. So the items of those he killed belonged to him? Clearly, Undermoon Lake didn't forbid internecine warfare. Perhaps this sort of internal struggle was an even more grueling and cruel form of tempering for the survivors. In truth, the sea yaksha alone had slain thousands of Empyrean Gods. From this, one could tell that Undermoon Lake's process of selection was innately brutal to begin with.

Ning followed the silver-haired man forward through the fifth island, Moonfall Island.

Moonfall Island emanated an aura of shockingly great age.

The other four islands were all quite ordinary, but Ning had the sense that this island was different. It seemed as though this island contained an inconceivable type of power within it that was easily capable of obliterating him.

"The major power who created Undermoon Lake...he went through tremendous effort to select and train Empyrean Gods. Why?" Ning mused to himself, "Does he merely want to temper us, then release us? Not very likely. There has to be an important reason behind it all. Mmm...let me go to the final area first. I'll be able to leave afterwards, which means that this final area will make everything clear."

Moments later, Ning and the silver-haired man wended their way through a mountain path, arriving at the mountain peak. At the very top of this peak was a palace that was built from seemingly ordinary-looking rocks.

"This is Moonfall Shrine." The silver-haired man pointed towards the shrine before them. It looked ordinary; in fact, it looked rather old, ragged, and in bad shape. However, despite its seemingly poor condition, it was actually the heart of the entire Moonfall Island.

In front of the shrine, there was a stone tablet that shone with golden light.

"Move all of the Empyrean Gods you brought with you to this place," the silver-haired man instructed.

"Alright." Ning nodded, then willed it. Instantly, a large group of figures appeared around him. It was the two hundred-plus Empyrean Gods. Sin, Sealthroat, the Seven Dragon Gods, and the rest all stared curiously around them. Quite a few of them revealed looks of surprise and joy.

"This isn't Kilostar Island."

"This is a new island."

"This has to be the fifth island. We are going to leave! We'll be able to leave!"

The Empyrean Gods instantly grew excited. They also noticed Darknorth and the silver-haired man.

"Darknorth, this is the fifth island, right?" One of the Empyrean Gods called out to him, and the others all looked towards him as well.

Ning smiled and nodded. "This is the fifth island, Moonfall Island."

“Hahaha!”

“Darknorth, in the future, if there’s anything you need, just say the word. Even if it costs me my life, I won’t shy back!”

“Darknorth, some thanks cannot be expressed with words.”

The Empyrean Gods were all quite excited. Some of them were actually crying. To them, it was as though Ning had given them a second life. All of them were Empyrean Gods...they would naturally remember the debts they owed others. If Ning asked them to help in the future and they refused, it would negatively impact their Dao-hearts. Only a small number of truly demonic, fiendish figures were capable of ignoring the debts they owed others without having their Dao-hearts being affected at all.

“Enough,” the silver-haired man said calmly.

Rumble...

A surge of invisible power swept out from the shrine. It was like an invisible palm that slapped down upon the bodies of the Empyrean Gods. All of them were flattened into the ground, with only Ning being unaffected.

Ning stared at this scene, stupefied. The Empyrean Gods were completely scared senseless as well. This was two terrifying! There were more than two hundred of them, but they had been smacked into the ground without being able to resist at all...and this was not simply a forceful strike of raw power.

If it was a forceful strike of raw power, the Empyrean Gods would have been drilled into the ground like nails, leaving behind deep holes. But instead, all of them were knocked prone, face-down into the ground. Clearly, in that moment, they were as weak as mortals against this sort of power.

“The major power who created Undermoon Lake truly was formidable. His abilities are beyond what I can imagine,” Ning mused to himself.

“The only reason you are able to leave is because you followed Darknorth,” the silver-haired man said calmly. “Now...each of you shall go one-by-one and place your palms atop the golden stone tablet.”

“Yes.” “Yes.” “Yes...”

Moments ago, the Empyrean Gods had all been extremely excited. But now, they were all incredibly nervous and cautious, not daring to act rashly for fear of losing their lives.

Empyrean God Sin was at the very front, and so he was the first to step forward and press his hand against the golden stone tablet. In the instant that he did so, his body completely froze and became unmoving. This sight caused all the Empyrean Gods to grow nervous. Ning, upon seeing this, became nervous as well...but worrying was of no use. The aura emitting from the shrine alone was enough to effortlessly murder him.

The silver-haired man gave Ning a glance. He could sense Ning’s worry, and so he said calmly, “Don’t worry. He’s fine.”

After roughly ten breaths worth of time, Sin finally regained consciousness. He retracted his palm, a look of disbelief flashing over his face as he stared at the golden stone tablet.

“Beat it!” The silver-haired man snapped.

Sin finally came back to his senses and hurriedly stepped back.

“Next!” The silver-haired man instructed.

Although the other Emyrean Gods were quite uneasy, they had no choice but to go forward. Sin said to them, “It’s fine. There’s no danger.” Only then did the Emyrean Gods feel slightly less nervous.

Every single Emyrean God went forward in turn, pressing their hands on the stone tablet. Each of them froze for ten seconds before regaining consciousness.

After a long period of time passed, all of the Emyrean Gods finished touching the golden stone tablet.

“Put them all away.” The silver-haired man looked towards Ning. Upon hearing his words, Sin and the others let out sighs of relief. Ning waved his hand, once more drawing the Emyrean Gods into his Immortal estate.

“Darknorth, you go as well. Place your hand atop the tablet,” the silver-haired man said.

Ning walked forward, gently resting his hand against the golden stone tablet.

BOOM!

A surge of invisible power filled his mind and his soul.

“I swear on my very life itself...” No longer under his control, Ning’s soul began to swear an oath on its own. However, Ning remained fully aware of what was happening.

This...this was a lifeblood oath!

Life oaths were very complicated. Not just anyone could simply speak a life oath. For example, in the Three Realms, there were no major powers who could force themselves to swear lifeblood oaths! Generally speaking, only Chaos Immortals and World Gods would perhaps be capable of voluntarily making themselves swear lifeblood oaths. Aside from them, all others would need to rely on special objects.

In the chaos-kingdom of Pangaea, the largest clans and sects would generally have a treasure similar to this golden stone tablet, which would be used to force the sect disciples to involuntarily swear lifeblood oaths.

Once a lifeblood oath was sworn, there would be no way for the oath-swearer to divulge any secrets that he was sworn to secrecy about.

For example, when Ning tried to soulscour some of them, he discovered that some of their thought-bubbles with divine abilities and techniques within them were covered by countless complicated runes. There was simply no way to see inside those memories.

There was no way to violate a lifeblood oath whatsoever!

Ning came back to his senses, then stared at the golden stone tablet. He said softly, "No wonder Buddha Jueming only gave a bit of information regarding some of the treasures, but was completely silent regarding Undermoon Lake. So it was due to this lifeblood oath."

Lifeblood oaths could be used to strictly restrict any and all information from being spread about something.

As for items like Iceheart Leafs, they weren't unique to Undermoon Lake. They existed in the outside world as well, which was why it was permitted to discuss them.

"After you leave, you won't be able to discuss most things pertaining to Undermoon Lake, but you will be permitted to recommend that more Empyrean Gods enter," the silver-haired man said.

"More enter?" Ning secretly shook his head. Impossible. The chances of surviving Undermoon Lake were far too low. This sort of 'training' and 'tempering' was utterly terrifying, despite its effectiveness. Ning had indeed made it out alive, but he didn't feel confident that others would be able to similarly survive it. In addition, the Three Realms were facing a major calamity; hundreds of Empyrean Gods and True Immortals, when joined together into a formation, were as strong as a Daofather! At a time like this, there was no way he would possibly work to convince more Empyrean Gods to enter this place.

"Alright. Enter the shrine," the silver-haired man said with a smile. "After you leave it, I'll deliver you away from Undermoon Lake."

"Alright." Ning immediately walked towards it.

The shrine was ancient and tattered, but the aura of power it had emanated earlier had made Ning understand that it wasn't as simple as it looked.

He stepped through the doorway.

"Eh?" Upon entering, Ning swept the place with his gaze. This shrine truly was too simple and plain. It was completely empty, with almost nothing inside it. There were stone pillars and stone walls, but no decorations or furnishings of any kind. The shrine was just a few hundred meters long, and he was able to see every corner of it clearly.

Rumble...

Suddenly, a blurry, deep azure light emerged from every part of the shrine. Every single rock emanated this aura of deep azure light, and the countless rays of light swirled around Ning's body. Soon, a 'cocoon' of deep azure light had appeared within the shrine.

The silver-haired man watched quietly from outside. A hint of a smile appeared on his face as he murmured softly to himself, "I hope you won't disappoint Master."

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Book 20: Jindan Upgrade Chapter 33: Transmission

Wrapped within that cocoon of deep azure light, Ji Ning shut his eyes. It was as though he was asleep. A surge of enormous power was currently being transmitted straight into his soul.

“I swear on my very life itself that within a thousand years of becoming an Elder God, I must leave the Three Realms. I must reach ‘Vastheaven Palace’ within a chaos cycle and inform a Welcomer of Vastheaven Palace that World God Northrest was slain by the three Wujiao Godbeasts.” Ning’s soul was no longer his control as he was forced to swear yet another lifeblood oath.

This caused Ning to feel quite irritated. This sort of sensation, of being forced to swear a lifeblood oath, was extremely unpleasant.

However, Ning instantly realized the real purpose behind the creation of Undermoon Lake.

“World God?” Ning mused to himself, “The creator of Undermoon Lake was actually a World God. However...he seems to have died.”

“This lifeblood oath isn’t that bad. I have to leave within a thousand years of becoming an Elder God, but I’m a long way off from that level. And I have a full chaos cycle to reach Vastheaven Palace. However...where exactly is it? What type of a place is it?” Ning was quite puzzled.

Although he had soulscoured the memories of the prisoners inside Prisonworld 17, he had never before heard of this ‘Vastheaven Palace’.

However, judging from the lifeblood oath he had just been forced to swear, World God Northrest had to be a member of Vastheaven Palace! He was killed but wanted to find someone to send a message, which meant that Vastheaven Palace should be powerful enough to take revenge for him! But of course, this was just logical reasoning; it was also possible that other stories were hidden within this seemingly-simple message.

Boom!

Just as Ning was pondering this question, an enormous amount of information began to flood into Ning’s soul. Ning was instantly sent into a half-dazed state, as the enormous flood of information made it almost impossible for him to think.

After six full hours, Ning finally regained his consciousness.

Whoosh.

Ning, still within that tattered-looking shrine, finally regained his freedom and mobility. The cocoon of azure light that had wrapped around him had completely vanished. Ning just stood there blankly, not moving at all.

“First the stick, then the carrot?” Ning muttered to himself.

He had first been forced to swear a lifeblood oath, but then he was given the real reward. Two major techniques now existed within Ning’s memories.

The first was a Fiendgod Body Refining technique, [Forlorn World God]. The second was a divine ability, [Nine Elements Annihilation]. Both were for Fiendgod Body Refiners to train in.

In truth, the creator of Undermoon Lake, World God Northrest, was himself a Fiendgod Body Refiner. This naturally meant that he was more skilled in this respect, which was why he only permitted

Empyrean Gods to enter this place. Empyrean Gods were more moldable; those who had relied on other techniques to become True Gods would be much less moldable.

[Forlorn World God] was a technique that was unfathomably superior to the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]. It was an extremely detailed and exquisite technique that could guide someone all the way to becoming a World God!

But of course, just having the technique wasn't enough; actually training in it was the key part. For example, even though Ning had the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], he had yet to break through to become a True God. But no matter what...this unfathomably profound Fiendgod Body Refining technique pointed out with tremendous clarity a path for Ning to walk. There was simply an enormous difference between a profound technique and a simple technique.

For example, a person who perhaps only had a 1% chance of becoming a True God when training in the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] might have a 10% chance of reaching that level when training in [Forlorn World God].

"Empyrean God. True God. Elder God. World God." Ning was filled with eagerness.

As for the other technique, it was a divine ability. [Nine Elements Annihilation].

This was an extremely old divine ability that was spread throughout the primordial chaos. Meant for Fiendgods to train in, one could say that its power was quite ordinary...but one could also say that its power was almost limitless!

The reason for this was because the [Nine Elements Annihilation] involved a total of nine fundamental, basic elemental runes.

These elemental runes were very simple, like the basic strokes in Chinese characters; a dot, a slash, a vertical line, etc. But those simple strokes could come together to form the words for a word, the words could come together to form a language, and the language could give birth to profound idioms, poems, songs, and novels.

The same was true for this divine ability, the [Nine Elements Annihilation].

These nine elemental runes could join together in countless ways, forming increasingly complicated and increasingly perfect divine tattoos!

For example, the foundation of the [Starseizing Hand] was its Starseizing Tattoos. As for these nine elemental runes, their potential for growth was nearly limitless, as they could be joined together in increasingly complicated, profound, and powerful divine tattoos, which would be used to unleash divine power to execute divine abilities. Theoretically, the power of these runes could allow this divine ability to surpass the [Starseizing Hand] and countless other divine abilities.

However...

This 'unlimited power' was only in theory. For example, there were countless people throughout human history who had learned Chinese characters, but almost none had been able to master it to the level of writing poems and stories that would be passed down for generations. The same principle was true for the [Nine Elements Annihilation]; it was extremely widespread amongst the powerful experts of the

primordial chaos, but very, very few were actually able to develop truly outstanding divine tattoos based on it.

“Although it will be hard, based on the description that I saw, quite a few World Gods within the primordial chaos use and train in this technique,” Ning mused to himself. “This is a key. A key that will allow me to potentially unlock and develop a truly dazzling divine ability.”

“World God Northrest truly went to great lengths.”

“The refining technique is one that can allow my power to rise nonstop, while the divine ability theoretically has no limit to its maximum combat power. The more talented one is, the more powerful this divine ability will become.” Ning was extremely moved.

The silver-haired man was still standing outside the shrine. When Ning walked outside, the silver-haired man said with a smile, “Now that you have these two techniques, you are different from all other living creatures within the Three Realms.”

“You knew?” Ning frowned.

“Master died, leaving all the matters within Moonfall Island to me to control. Of course I know,” the silver-haired man said with a smile.

“Then I ask you...where is Vastheaven Palace?” Ning asked.

“I don’t know.” The silver-haired man shook his head.

“You don’t know?” Ning was puzzled. “Was your master World God Northrest? Was he the creator of Undermoon Lake? Was he from Vastheaven Palace?”

The silver-haired man nodded. “My master was indeed World God Northrest, and he was one of the top-tier World Gods within the primordial chaos. If it hadn’t been due to the three Wujiao Godbeasts joining together and trapping him, how could he have died? He was caught in a trap and surrounded, nearly dying in body and soul. Just a tiny bit of his soul managed to escape, and he plunged through one dangerous region after another, eventually ending up here. Because of all the dangerous regions he went through as he fled, not even he himself knew the path back to his original sect. This the reason why Master gave you a full chaos cycle in the lifeblood oath for you to find Vastheaven Palace. That’s a tremendous amount of time! If you aren’t able to find it in a full chaos cycle and end up being devoured by your oath, you have no one to blame but yourself.”

Ning was quite calm.”

A full chaos cycle!

That was the amount of time needed for an ordinary chaosworld to be born and then perish. It was countless trillions of years! He had only lived for a bit more than three hundred years. He felt no pressure at all.

“After Master reached this place, he used the remainder of his strength to build Undermoon Lake,” the silver-haired man said with a cold laugh. “You should be able to tell how powerful my master had been. Even the small amount of power he had left was equal to the amount of power an ordinary World God would have.”

“Yes.” Ning nodded.

He understood now. World God Northrest came from Vastheaven Palace and was a figure of incredible power...but disaster struck and he fled with heavy injuries. Unwilling to just die like that, he had created Undermoon Lake as a place to choose a suitable Empyrean God to send a message to his comrades for him.

“Fortunately, World God Northrest didn’t force me to swear an oath to take revenge for him,” Ning chuckled.

“You?” The silver-haired man shook his head and sneered, “The three Wujiao Godbeasts are three Godbeasts that were born from the primordial chaos with the power of Elder Gods. Later on, thanks to many fortuitous experiences over their countless years of roaming through the primordial chaos, they all reached the World God level. When they join together, they are a match for even my master; how could someone like you possibly kill them? All you need to do is deliver the message. When you do that, my master’s many friends will take revenge for him.”

Ning nodded. Fine, then. Northrest, the three Wujiao Godbeasts...all of that was very distant from him.

“Is Vastheaven Palace very powerful?” Ning asked curiously.

“It...should be.” The silver-haired man was slightly hesitant. “Master created me here, so I don’t know much of Vastheaven Palace. I trust that after you leave the Three Realms and begin to roam the endless primordial chaos, you should be able to find information regarding Vastheaven Palace.”

“Why is it that the written language of Undermoon Lake seems to be a bit different from the written language of the Three Realms?” Ning asked. He had noticed long ago that the language here was absolutely identical to the written language used by the chaos-kingdom of Pangaea.

“This is a common language that is used throughout the primordial chaos,” the silver-haired man explained.

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Ji Ning instantly understood. The chaos-kingdom of Pangaea was far more powerful than the Three Realms, and it also had much closer connections to the rest of the primordial chaos. It made sense that the language it used was the same language as was used throughout the rest of the primordial chaos. The Three Realms, by contrast, was rather segregated from the rest of the primordial chaos. It was only when the odd alien Outsider invaded that the Three Realms would gain some more information about the greater primordial chaos.

“Eh, forget it. Vastheaven Palace, Pangaea, World God Northrest, three Wujiao Godbeasts...all of that is way beyond my level for now. Even the lifeblood oath I swore only takes effect once I become an Elder God; only then would I have to leave the Three Realms.” Ning was quite calm.

In the end, he had gained great benefits from Undermoon Lake. The Three Realms was in the midst of a war, and Ning’s home, along with those he cared about, were all in the Three Realms. Nothing else mattered.

Becoming an Elder God was no easy feat either. Even becoming a True God would be very difficult, to say nothing of becoming an Elder God; all of that would definitely take an extremely long period of time.

"It has been countless years. Only two people have acquired these two techniques from Undermoon Lake; one was Jueming, and the other is you." The silver-haired man looked at Ning. "Don't disappoint Master."

"For my own sake as well, I wouldn't dare," Ning said with a laugh.

"Let's go. I send you away from Undermoon Lake."

The silver-haired man immediately led the way forward. Ning let out a sigh of relief; he was afraid that the already-deceased World God Northrest had other schemes for him as well. In truth, Northrest was far too powerful, and his abilities were simply unfathomable. Most likely, even Mother Nuwa, back when she had first broken through to become a World God, wouldn't necessarily have been a match for him. Ning naturally was like an ant compared to the man, to be used or abused as needed. Fortunately, everything was going to be fine.

And of course, Mother Nuwa had entered the endless primordial chaos long ago to go adventuring; it was entirely possible that she had reached a shocking level of power.

Moonfall Island was truly beautiful. The silver-haired man led Ning through it until they arrived at the center of a grassy region. The center of the grassy region had a calm, curvy lake within it. The surface of the lake was so smooth that it looked like a giant piece of jade. When Ning and the silver-haired landed next to it, their landing caused a bit of wind which stirred up tiny, rippling waves on the surface of the lake, making it look even more mesmerizingly beautiful.

"Once you enter that little lake, you'll leave Undermoon Lake," the silver-haired man instructed.

"I'll go in, then appear outside?" Ning pointed at the lake. When he had first arrived, he had smashed headfirst into the waters of Undermoon Lake, then appeared within the world of Undermoon Lake.

"Right. When you emerge, you'll appear above the lake of water that is below the enormous moon." The silver-haired man nodded, his gaze locked onto Ning. "Don't forget your lifeblood oath."

"Of course." Ning chuckled and nodded.

Ning stared at the curved lake, his heart filled with joy. Finally...he was finally going to leave!

Senior apprentice-sister!

Wait for me!

Plop. Ning dove into beautiful pond, causing a series of ripples and waves to appear. Spacetime began to twist, teleporting Ning to a different place.

Ning could sense spacetime fluctuating around him as his surroundings became blurry to behold. Clearly, he was being transferred somewhere at high speed. Suddenly, the area around him began to tremble slightly, causing Ning to feel rather puzzled. When he had been transferred to Undermoon Lake, the process had been very smooth and had lasted only a moment.

When his surroundings began to stabilize, Ning took a look around and was able to clearly see the environment.

“Eh?” He was completely surrounded the Void. Within the Void, there were a series of steps that seemed to be endless, leading him deeper up.

“W-where is this?” Ning was completely dazed. According to what the silver-haired man had said, he should’ve been brought back in the air above the waters of Undermoon Lake...but there wasn’t even a drop of the waters of Undermoon Lake here. All it had was the infinite Void and those seemingly endless stairs.

“Where exactly am I? Where have I been transferred to?” Ning was extremely cautious. It was easy to die of carelessness in a strange and unfamiliar place. “That silver-haired man didn’t lie to me, and I wasn’t able to fight back against him in Undermoon Lake; if he wanted me dead, it would’ve been easy for him to kill me.”

“If this was his doing, he could’ve simply said that he was going to send me to a special place. I wouldn’t have been able to fight back at all; there’s no need to lie to me.”

“In other words...that silver-haired man probably didn’t expect this either.”

Ning felt his heart lurch. “Is it...that World God Northrest died so long ago that holes appeared in his transmission tunnel, causing an error in my teleportation?”

Nothing in the world was truly eternal. Even chaosworlds would eventually wither and day, and even World Gods like Northrest would one day be killed. It wasn’t impossible for his teleportation matrix to develop problems.

“Wasn’t I supposed to go back? Where have I been sent to?” Ning calmed himself down, then first used heartforce followed by coresense to investigate this place. But it was all useless!!

“Those stairs...? If there’s a set of stairs here, this should be a specific, constructed location.” Ning carefully advanced up the stairs, following them upwards.

Ning moved incredibly quickly. Just a short while later, he saw an enormous stone tablet levitating atop the stairs ahead of him. The stone tablet was covered with countless carvings of sword-stances, and the sword-intent surging forth from each and every carving caused Ning’s heart to turn cold. The power of this sword-intent surpassed even the [Five Treasures].

“What terrifying sword-intent...there’s no way a True God or Daofather could’ve devised this. Could it be a World God? Was it World God Northrest?” Ning mused to himself.

Ning was in no rush to advance. He slowed down to take a careful look at the nameless sword-art before him.

If he was to leave now, who knew if he would ever be allowed back? He had to seize the opportunity to carefully inspect this sword-art. He had mastered the [Five Treasures] and stood at the very peak of skill in the Three Realms, but the Dao contained within this sword-art was simply too unfathomably powerful. Most likely, it was something that only a Chaos Immortal or World God could develop.

Ning ended up spending more than three months pondering that stone tablet.

“Urgh.” Ning’s face turned ashen, blood beginning to leak down his nostrils. The blood inside his body was bubbling and roiling about.

“I can’t keep studying it. It’s beyond my limits.” Ning was secretly shocked. “I wonder who left behind this sword-art? Was it World God Northrest? No matter who it was, this sword-art...it definitely surpasses any other sword-art of the Three Realms.”

In truth, the only World God the Three Realms had ever seen was Mother Nuwa. She didn’t use the sword, and so there was naturally no way that the Three Realms would have any techniques that could compare to this one.

“Time to go.” Since he could no longer study it, Ning had no choice but to continue to advance upwards through the staircase through the Void. Just a short while later, he encountered yet another stone tablet. This one was also covered with sword-stances, and it also did not have a name to it. However, this sword-art was diametrically different from the previous one...and yet, its power wasn’t one whit weaker.

Ning spent another three months carefully analyzing this technique, resulting his understanding of the sword rising even more.

“As the saying goes, beyond the heavens there is always an even greater Heaven.”

“Anyone who believes the major powers of the Three Realms to be the most powerful figures in the universe is as narrow-sighted as a frog within a well. The endless primordial chaos has far, far too many powerful experts within it.” Ning’s skill in the sword was continuing to grow, but he was beginning to grow increasingly humble. He understood that there were many who were far more powerful than him. The creator of the sword-art on this tablet would be able to slay him with a single blow of the sword.

The staircase through the Void seemed endless.

Ning continued his path through the staircase. He actually encountered a total of ninety-eight stone tablets, each of which possessed a sword-art that was so unfathomable and profound that Ning’s horizons were continually broadened. His skill in the sword had skyrocketed, and Ning had even gained some insights and ideas about reaching the fifth stage of swordforce.

The fifth stage of swordforce, Sword God. Ning had previously believed that it represented an unfathomably dense essence of emotions, and so when one reached this level, one’s sword-art would gain a soul of its own. This was what Ning believed, and it was also what most of the major powers of the Three Realms believed.

But now, after viewing the ninety-eight profound sword-arts left behind by this alien major power, Ning understood the truth.

Having emotions in one’s sword-art was of secondary importance! For example, Ning’s [Brightmoon] sword-art had originally possessed no emotional aura, but Ning had still been able to reach the fourth stage of swordforce, right?

The emotions simply aided the swordsman in becoming further intoxicated by the sword, allowing him to unleash even more of its potential.

In the end, what really mattered the most was understanding the sword and the essence of the sword! Of course strong emotions would be needed to upgrade one's swordforce from being 'sentient' to having an actual 'soul', giving it extraordinary power, but that was just a side effect. What really mattered was truly understanding the sword; upgrading one's understanding was the true foundation that needed to be laid.

"If I completely focused on infusing deep emotions into my sword-arts, I would've embarked on a wrong path." Cold sweat covered Ning's forehead. Only now, after seeing so many profound sword-arts, did he understand what his own path would be.

It was clear and obvious that the ninety-eight sword-arts atop the stone tablet had surpassed the fifth level of swordforce and reached an even higher and more unfathomable level.

"I've finally reached the end."

After viewing the ninety-eighth stone tablet, Ning saw an end to the stairway through the Void. At the end of the stairway lay an ancient shrine that looked like it had been completely formed from green jade. The shrine emanated an invisible aura of power and majesty.

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Book 20: Jindan Upgrade Chapter 35: The End of the Road for World God Northrest

Ji Ning understood that the person who left behind this sort of sword-arts was powerful enough to, even in death, have complete control over whether or not Ning would live or die here. Thus, Ning didn't hesitate. He walked straight towards the jade shrine at the end of the stairways through the Void.

The jade shrine was as beautiful as beautiful could be.

The shrine's walls were made out of jade, possessing a semi-translucent quality about them. Just drawing near the walls of the jade shrine made Ning feel peaceful at heart.

"This shrine..." Ning swept it with his gaze as he entered. The shrine had almost nothing inside it, much like the last one.

At the very center of the shrine, there hovered a prayer mat that glowed with golden light. Far in front of the prayer mat lay an ancient, unadorned stone dais that had a slender sword atop it. The sword was three feet long but just one inch wide. This sword was completely blood-red in color, and its surface was covered with many cracks and scars. The cracks and scars covered every inch of the surface of the sword, making it look as though the sword might completely shatter at any moment. In fact, there were three particularly noticeable chunks missing from the edge of the sword.

This was a sword that was so badly damaged, it looked as though it was going to fall apart at any moment. But the sword...the sword was the source of the aura that filled the entire shrine! When Ning looked at the sword, he felt even more pressure than he did when he gazed upon Human Emperor Fuxi. Without any question, this was a sword that vastly surpassed any Protocosmic spirit-treasure.

"A Chaos treasure?" Ning momentarily became quite excited, but moments later he frowned. "Even if it is a Chaos treasure, this sword...it's been damaged to an incredible extent."

After inspecting the place for a long time, Ning noticed that the prayer mat of golden light was woven from a Chaos ingredient known as winterheart grass. Similar types of prayer mats existed in the Three Realms, and those who sat upon it would feel their hearts becalmed. But in terms of price, it was merely comparable to a Protocosmic spirit-treasure. To someone like Ning, who had all the treasures of Prisonworld 17 in his hands, it really wasn't that important.

"This is a mysterious place. It has a long staircase leading through the Void with a shrine at the end of it, and the shrine seems built to house and venerate a sword that's almost been destroyed." Ning was secretly puzzled.

The only items in the entire shrine were the prayer mat, the stone dais, and the divine sword. Neither the prayer mat nor the stone dais were particularly special. Although the sword had an utterly shocking aura, it was unspeakably damaged.

As Ning was still pondering how to further investigate this shrine with care, a ripple of power suddenly flew out from the sword, landed on the ground, and transformed into a golden-armored female general. The golden armor was covered with many blood-colored patterns.

"Empyrean God Darknorth...Ji Ning?" The golden-armored warlady looked at Ning and spoke out.

"You are...?" Ning instantly understood. Since this person knew his name, she was probably the one who arranged for him to come here.

"I am the sword-spirit of 'Violetjewel', the divine sword that was wielded by World God Northrest." The golden-armored warlady pointed at the tattered-looking sword. "That's Violetjewel right there. You may address me as 'sword-spirit'."

This golden-armored woman was just the spirit of the treasure.

"You should have been sent out of Undermoon Lake, but I arranged for you to be led here instead," the warlady said.

"What is this place?" Ning asked.

"This is still Undermoon Lake," the golden-armored warlady said. "However, it is an independent, stand-alone dimension within Undermoon Lake. Before you entered, no one aside from myself knew that it existed."

Ning was puzzled. "Are you saying that Reverend Jueming wasn't allowed in here either?"

"Right. You are the only living person who has entered since Master died," the warlady said.

"Then why did you bring me in here?" Ning was growing increasingly puzzled.

"Because of the [Five Treasures] sword-art," the warlady said.

"The [Five Treasures]?" Ning was startled. "Are you keeping a constant watch on the actions of the Empyrean Gods within Undermoon Lake? Is that how you learned of the [Five Treasures]?"

The golden-armored warlady revealed a hint of a smile. This caused Ning to feel surprised and even a bit dazzled. Previously, she had maintained an emotionless look on her face. Her smile, however, was like the blooming of a flower.

“It was my master who created the [Five Treasures]. How could I not know of it?” The smile on the warlady’s face had a hint of pride to it.

“Your master created it?” Ning was stunned. Right. Although Daofather Fujū had claimed to others in the Three Realms that he was the one to create it, after soulscouring the memories of the prisoners of Prisonworld 17, Ning had come to understand how truly impressive it was for a sword-art to exceed the limits of the Heavenly Daos. It definitely wasn’t something that the likes of a Daofather such as Fujū would’ve been able to create. So...it had actually been created by World God Northrest.

However, Ning was puzzled as well. “Even prior to ‘developing’ the [Five Treasures], Daofather Fujū had been a top-tier Daofather. Given his power and ability, why would he need to lie? Did he lie to keep some sort of secret hidden?”

“Do you know Daofather Fujū?” Ning asked.

Daofather Fujū’s death was a mystery. Countless major powers in the Three Realms had wished to investigate it and understand it, but none had been able to discover anything.

“Daofather Fujū?” The golden-armored warlady blinked. She then looked at Ning with a smile on her face that wasn’t really a smile. “Of course. After you listen to what I say, you’ll understand.”

“Speak.” Ning nodded.

“Many years ago, the shattered remnants of my master’s soul borrowed from the power of Violetjewel in order to frantically flee, eventually arriving within your Three Realms. Upon reaching this place, he was no longer able to flee any further. Oh; back then, your ‘Three Realms’ didn’t exist. It was still the Primordial Era, so the world was the Pangu Chaosworld back then,” the warlady said.

“Fortunately, Master had fled so frantically that those three Wujiao Godbeasts were unable to catch up to him. Upon arriving, Master could sense that there was an Elder God in the Three Realms who could potentially pose a threat to him...the person you all refer to as Mother Nuwa! Although back then she was still just an Elder God, she had already reached the very peak of power possible for an Elder God. She was far more powerful than the other Elder Gods back during the Primordial Era, so powerful that even Master felt a faint sense of danger emanating from her. If they really were to go all-out in a fight...it’s hard to say if he would’ve been able to slay Nuwa, but he himself definitely would’ve died.”

Ning continued to listen with curiosity.

“If Master was at full power, he wouldn’t have worried about Nuwa at all, of course. But back then, he had only a tiny shred of his soul left! Although he would still be able to unleash the power of a World God, he wouldn’t be able to sustain it for long; naturally, he didn’t wish to take the risk of battling Nuwa. Thus, Master created this world, Undermoon Lake, within the vast primordial chaos.”

The golden-armored warlady continued, “Master’s injuries were simply too heavy. His divine body had completely crumbled apart, and he had only a shred of his soul left. Even his truesoul was beginning to

break apart. The only thing Master could do was to slow the rate at which his truesoul was disintegrating, because once it completely broke apart he would've died."

"Master established Undermoon Lake for the purpose of enticing Empyrean Gods to come to this place. He didn't want to let those three Godbeasts continue to live carefree lives, to let them get away with what they had done. Thus, he wanted to arrange for someone to go deliver a message to Vastheaven Palace."

"Master wasn't going to be able to live long enough to deliver the message himself. He had to train someone else, an Empyrean God, to do it for him."

"Eventually, one day...Daofather Fuju wandered into the primordial chaos and was discovered by my master. And so...my master took possession of his body," the golden-armored warlady said.

Ning's eyes widened as he stared at her.

"P-possessed?" He was completely stunned.

"Right." The golden-armored warlady nodded. "After establishing Undermoon Lake, Master's top priority was slowing the speed at which his truesoul decayed, or perhaps even stop and reverse the process! Master still wanted to live, after all, and so he came up with a method to use the physical body to nourish the truesoul. Upon wandering the primordial chaos, he just so happened to run into Daofather Fuju."

"Master wouldn't have been confident in his chances of possessing Nuwa, but Daofather Fuju...he was nothing more than an ordinary Daofather. Master was naturally able to possess him with ease."

"After possessing him, Master entered the Pangu Chaosworld. He revealed just a bit of his power, showing off fifth-stage swordforce, resulting in his status within the Pangu Chaosworld skyrocketing," the golden-armored warlady explained.

Ning felt a twinge of fear. So even back during the Primordial Era, Daofather Fuju had been possessed.

"Master had no desire to teach any students; all he cared about was coming up with a way that would halt the collapse of his truesoul, and perhaps even heal it. But...no matter what he tried, no matter how much effort he expended, he was unable to stop his truesoul from crumbling. He was only able to rely on the energy of his fleshly body to slow the rate of decay. Thus, during the war that destroyed the Primordial Era, Master didn't really try all that hard, precisely because he didn't want to get into a serious fight with tough experts like the Lord of All Things, the Lord of the Demonheart, or the Lord of All Fiends. If he did, he would've died even faster."

Finally, Ning understood.

No wonder. No wonder Daofather Fuju was the undisputed number one Sword Immortal of the Three Realms, but was quite ineffective in teaching disciples, producing not even a single powerful student. By contrast, the likes of Old Man Yuan and Daofather Subhuti had multiple students who became Daofathers. So it was all because World God Northrest had no real interest in teaching disciples at all.

“The Primordial Era ended. The Three Realms were born.” The golden-armored warlady continued. “Master finally gave up. He understood that there was no way he could prevent his truesoul from disintegrating. And so, prior to his death, he made the final arrangements.”

“He left behind five mountain peaks within Sword Immortal world, then left behind the complete [Five Treasures] within those mountain peaks, all for the sake of training a successor, someone who could go and send a message to Vastheaven Palace for him, or perhaps even take revenge on his behalf,” the golden-armored warlady said. “Master was a Fiendgod refiner, and so he required that his successor be a Fiendgod refiner as well. Back then, Master didn’t really care if his successor was an Emyrean God or a True God. Any Fiendgod refiner who mastered the [Five Treasures] would be allowed into the fifth mountain...and in truth, the so-called ‘legacy’ within the fifth mountain was actually a spatial corridor that led to this place.”

Ning was stunned. So the fifth mountain led to this place?

“Master understood that few-to-no Emyrean Gods who were truly, outstandingly talented would elect to enter Undermoon Lake, which was why he left behind the fifth mountain and allowed all of the geniuses of the Three Realms to view it,” the golden-armored warlady said. “Master wished to find a good successor.”

“He left behind the [Five Treasures] and the five mountains, then left. All by himself, he entered the primordial chaos to wait for death to come to him. His truesoul completed its disintegration...and Master died a true death.”

Ning couldn’t help but sigh upon hearing this. An almighty World God had struggled and fled, unwilling to give up...but in the end, there had been nothing he could do. And so, he had left behind the [Five Treasures] and other things, then peacefully went to wait for death to descend.

“No wonder Daofather Fujū’s body was discovered in the primordial chaos, but it was impossible to tell how or why he had died.” Ning sighed. Such a powerful figure had died, just like that...and Fujū himself had been possessed during the Primordial Era.

This was indeed a mystery that was impossible for the Three Realms to solve.

If this golden-armored warlady hadn’t exposed it all, who would’ve found out? Not even Mother Nuwa would’ve been able to find out.

“And so, after countless years...you’ve arrived.” The golden-armored warlady looked at Ning.

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Book 20: Jindan Upgrade Chapter 36: Heartseep Technique

Ji Ning felt a surge of joy in his heart.

World God Northrest had spent a tremendous amount of effort to train a proper successor. The things he had prepared for this successor would no doubt be much better than the items he had left behind on Moonfall Island.

“The most precious item within all of Undermoon Lake is the item which master was able to rely upon in order to escape, despite being surrounded, assaulted, and wounded so badly that only a shred of his

soul remained. It is this sword.” The golden-armored warlady pointed at the slender, terribly damaged blood-colored sword. Ning was stunned; this was it? This broken-looking sword?

Even if it was powerful in the past, it was completely ruined now.

“Don’t underestimate it. Don’t be deceived by its bad condition.” The golden-armored warlady sneered, “Not all the treasures in your Three Realms combined would be as valuable as this ‘badly damaged sword’ in front of you.”

Ning was shocked. Not even all the treasures in the Three Realms combined?

“The most precious thing within your Three Realms is its ‘Worldcore’, which will only manifest after the Three Realms is destroyed. But even the Worldcore is vastly inferior in value to this sword.” The golden-armored warlady let out a sigh. “Even in as bad condition as it currently is, it’s far beyond the limits of your imagination.”

“It’s that powerful?” Ning was shocked.

“Powerful?” The warlady laughed coldly, “World Gods and Chaos Immortals are all extremely powerful. They rove throughout the primordial chaos, and to them, it’s not that hard to use a technique to hasten the destruction of a chaosworld and then extract the Worldcore from it.”

Ning nodded.

World Gods and Chaos Immortals did indeed have the power to destroy a chaosworld. For example, the great war of the Primordial Era had been instigated by the Lord of All Things, but if it had been instigated by a World God, Mother Nuwa probably wouldn’t have even had the chance to make a breakthrough. Everyone would’ve been effortlessly dominated.

“Although Worldcores are valuable treasures to Chaos Immortals and World Gods, they can acquire them with a bit of effort. But this sword...” The golden-armored warlady let out a sigh. “It’s enough to drive any World God mad with lust, to the point of risking their own lives for it. Master had to rely on the help of many friends from Vastheaven Palace, combined with his own personal power, in order to acquire it. For the sake of this sword, Master paid an indescribable price...but it was all worth it, because in the end he acquired this sword, Violetjewel.”

“It’s that precious?” Ning stared at the badly damaged sword, extremely puzzled. “What is the story behind it? You should know, right?”

“I do not.” The golden-armored warlady shook her head, a bit embarrassed. “When Violetjewel carried Master’s soul-sliver with it as it fled, it was so badly damaged that even its original sword-spirit was destroyed. Master ended up placing Violetjewel within Undermoon Lake. Once the sword was given some time to settle down and stabilize, it was able to slowly give birth to a new spirit – me.”

Ning now understood. It made sense. For example, the master of a treasure could wipe out its treasure-spirit and then allow a new treasure-spirit to be born.

“However, before he died, Master told me everything that he could. All the necessary arrangements were made.” The golden-armored warlady looked at Ning.

“Judging from what you are saying...this sword should be even more powerful than a Chaos treasure?” Ning asked.

“Powerful?” The golden-armored warlady said, “The so-called ‘Chaos treasures’ of your Three Realms are generally meant for Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals. World Gods could fight barehanded and have power equivalent to that of a Chaos treasure! They use far more powerful weapons. As for this sword...even amongst the weapons used by World Gods and Chaos Immortals, it is one of the absolute best of weapons.”

Ning frowned. “If that’s the case, would I even be capable of binding it?”

After soulscouring the memories of the prisoners of Pangaea, Ning had learned a few things. In Pangaea, True Gods and True Immortals would generally use Protocosmic spirit-treasures, while Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals used Chaos treasures. As for the King of Pangaea, he supposedly used an even more terrifyingly powerful treasure which could only be bound by someone who was at least at the Elder God or Ancestral Immortal level of power.

As for this tattered-looking sword...if it was one of the absolute best weapons that could be used by World Gods and Chaos Immortals, how could a mere Empyrean God/True Immortal like Ning possibly bind it?

“Generally speaking, one has to have the power of a World God to bind this weapon.” The golden-armored woman warlady at Ning. “However, since Master left this sword for you, he must have done it for a reason. In Vastheaven Palace, there is a certain unique and secret binding technique that is recorded within the [Eight Directions Secret Scroll]. Although the records were casually written down, they described something that is extraordinarily marvelous. This technique is known as the ‘Heartseep’ technique. Through using the ‘Heartseep’ technique, you can bind this sword. Once you do, you’ll be able to retract its aura and change its appearance and coloration. Otherwise, everyone would be able to tell at a glance how extraordinary this weapon is.”

Ning nodded. The aura of this badly damaged sword was even more terrifying than Human Emperor Fuxi’s aura. Its power would indeed be obvious to anyone.

Ordinary Pure Yang treasures and Protocosmic spirit-treasures had auras of their own, but after they were bound the auras could be suppressed, making them seem like normal weapons.

“This is the Heartseep technique.” The golden-armored warlady waved her hand, causing a bamboo scroll to appear in midair before her.

“That’s like how we do it in the Three Realms.” Ning chuckled. The Pangaea chaos-kingdom and the Three Realms recorded down techniques in differing manners. After World God Northrest had possessed Daofather Fujū, he had chosen to do as they did in the Three Realms and recorded techniques down within bamboo scrolls.

Ning accepted it in a very practiced manner, then sent his coresense into it.

A large amount of information began to flood into his mind, but after just two breaths worth of time, it came to an end. This was a fairly simple technique, but despite its simplicity, it would be hard for even

World Gods or Chaos Immortals to intentionally devise an idea like it. This technique...the principles behind it were quite interesting.

When royal figures died on Earth during the early ages, they would have jade treasures buried with them. Because those treasures would be covered in dirt and mud for hundreds or thousands of years, once they were excavated they would still be imprinted with some dirt or mud which would have seeped into the jade itself.

It wouldn't be very practical to come up with an idea to actively 'seep' dirt and mud into jade on Earth unless one used extremely high-tech methods, akin to how World Gods and Chaos Immortals would be able to use their tremendous power to forcibly bind this sword. However, given a long enough period of time, just keeping jade in constant contact with mud would eventually cause the mud to 'seep' into the jade. This was the essence of the 'Heartseep' technique.

"What?" Ning's face changed. "It needs that long? A thousand years?"

"Is a thousand years really that long?" The golden-armored warlady looked towards Ning, puzzled. "For you, an Empyrean God and a True Immortal, to spend a mere thousand years binding a priceless treasure like this and complain about how long it takes...? This technique is already quite formidable, and the amount of time is already quite short."

Ning grew frantic. He didn't have the time needed to slowly bind the treasure. The outside world had already descended into a state of calamity, and he had already spent more than a century in Undermoon Lake. He naturally wanted to leave as soon as possible.

"Can I take this sword back with me? Can I slowly bind it in the outside world?" Ning asked.

The golden-armored warlady shook her head. "You can try. If you can move it, go ahead."

"Oh?" Puzzled, Ning immediately walked forward and reached out to grab the terribly damaged sword. Since the warlady wasn't going to stop him, this shouldn't prove dangerous.

Boom!

As soon as Ning's palm descended upon the sword, an invisible burst of power blasted out, knocking Ning backwards and sending him flying away like a meteor.

A short while later, he flew back.

"B-but..." As Ning once more walked into the jade shrine, he stared in astonishment at the badly damaged sword. It clearly was in terrible shape, but it still possessed incredible power.

"If you take it out without binding it, once the Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals of the Three Realms notice it you'll be doomed." The golden-armored warlady shook her head. "I heard you say in Undermoon Lake that the Three Realms has entered a state of war between two main allied camps? If you go out and end up losing that treasure to the major powers of the Seamless Gate, you'll become a sinner in the eyes of all your allies."

Ning understood what she was saying...but was he really going to be trapped here for a thousand years?

“You only have two clones here.” The golden-armored warlady chuckled. “Two absolutely identical clones. Techniques like these always produce more than just two, right? I imagine you have other clones in the outside world at all. If that’s really the case, then they should be able to deal with any emergent situations in the outside world.”

Indeed. In the outside world, Ning had sixteen ‘true bodies’ and eighteen Primaltwin bodies.

“In addition...this sword has suffered tremendous damage. Just look at it; it’s almost fallen apart. Only its energy source remains undamaged. It shouldn’t be that hard to bind it; five hundred years if you are fast, a thousand years if you are slow.” The golden-armored warlady explained, “Oh, right; aside from this treasure, Master has left behind other techniques for you to receive. He spent tremendous effort recording them all down for you.”

As she spoke, the warlady waved her hand. Instantly, one bamboo scroll after another began to materialize in the air, coming together to form a small mountain of scrolls!

“Some of his techniques could not be transmitted, due to the rules of Vastheaven Palace. The others, the ones that he was permitted to teach, are all here.” The golden-armored warlady pointed towards the small mountain of bamboo scrolls.

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Book 20: Jindan Upgrade Chapter 37: The Sole True Body

“One of your clones can focus on using the Heartseep technique to bind the sword while the other can begin the slow process of memorizing all these techniques,” the golden-armored warlady suggested.

Ji Ning nodded.

Whoosh. Whoosh.

Two white-robed youths appeared within the jade shrine. One stood silently in front of the mountain of bamboo scrolls, with every single scroll emanating ripples of power. The other walked next to the divine sword, moved the prayer mat closer to it, then sat down by himself and quietly began to use the Heartseep technique.

Using the Heartseep technique was quite simple, but there was one prerequisite; one had to have a basic understanding of heartforce!

World God Northrest knew for certain that his chosen successor would have a basic understanding of heartforce. It must be understood that most of the True Gods and Daofathers of the Three Realms had reached the second or third stages of heartforce. Truly powerful experts all generally had at least some mastery of heartforce. Anyone capable of mastering the [Five Treasures] would definitely have some level of understanding of heartforce.

As noted by the instructions included with the Heartseep technique, heartforce was ephemeral and formless, yet extraordinarily marvelous and effective. The Heartseep technique, in and of itself, was a special way of applying heartforce.

Ning's heartforce had reached the fourth level. Based on his calculations, he would need a thousand years to bind the sword. If his heartforce had only been on the first or second level, the amount of time needed would've been even greater.

Ning's invisible heartforce seeped into the body of the Violetjewel sword. It entered the sword effortlessly.

Ning's heartforce could sense that within Violetjewel, there was a blurry region that was filled with countless cracks and scars. Clearly, Violetjewel had been damaged tremendously. Within the blurry region, there was a complex, octahedral crystalline structure. Every single face of the octahedral crystal was covered with extremely complicated runes. The runes were far, far more complicated than anything Ning had ever encountered, even the nine chaos seals.

The surface of the octahedral crystal was covered with a layer of flowing light that prevented Ning's heartforce from penetrating through it in the slightest, but he was still able to sense the unearthly power that lay hidden within it.

This was the power source of the Violetjewel sword! The most central core of it!

So long as the core remained intact, even if the entire physical sword was destroyed, it could one day be repaired.

"Time to begin." Ning's heartforce was like an invisible hand within the sword. It began to form countless dots of starlight, all of which joined together to form slender threads. The many starlight threads swirled around the octahedral crystal, beginning to 'seep' into it as instructed by the Heartseep technique.

Two white-robed youths; one seated atop a prayer mat next to the sword on the stone dais, the other standing in front of a mountain of bamboo scrolls.

Time flowed on nonstop. In the blink of an eye, four months passed.

"I've finally finished memorizing them all." Ning was finally able to relax. Although these powerful techniques included the ninety-eight sword arts on the stone tablets, other powerful sword-arts, Fiendgod Body Refining techniques, Ki Refining techniques, special secret arts, and powerful divine abilities...Ning was still somewhat disappointed.

These techniques would all be of some use to him after he became very powerful, upon reaching the Elder God or even World God levels. But as for right now? They were of no use at all in improving his current level of power.

He had been hoping that he would be able to find a way to upgrade his second-tier Jindan into a first-tier Jindan. But alas...he had hoped in vain. There was nothing.

"Disappointed?" The golden-armored warlady smirked at him.

Ning couldn't be bothered to lie to a treasure-spirit. He nodded. "A bit. The Three Realms are in a state of war right now, after all. If it wasn't for the war, I wouldn't be in a rush to increase my level of power, but the war has already arrived. None of these techniques can help me increase my power within a short period of time. I was hoping that I would be able to improve slightly."

"I knew you'd be in a rush." The golden-armored warlady revealed a slightly smug look on her face. "When I saw that look on your face when you heard how long it would take to bind the sword, I understood how frantic you were to leave. Thus...I played a little joke on you."

"Joke?" Ning was stunned.

"The three most important techniques aren't actually in any of those bamboo scrolls." The golden-armored warlady pointed at the mountain of scrolls. Ning's eyes instantly lit up.

"Look." She pointed at the nearby walls of the jade shrine. Instantly, the semi-translucent walls became filled with various diagrams as countless images of sword-stances appeared. With the restrictive spell removed, the aura of the sword-intent within the stances came surging outwards, causing Ning to shudder uncontrollably.

"Master was a World God of the sword. This is the most powerful technique Master acquired while wandering the endless primordial chaos, a nameless sword-art that has utterly Heaven-shaking power. The reason why Master stood amongst the most top-tier of World Gods was primarily due to this sword-art," the golden-armored warlady said. "Master wrote down everything he had memorized about the sword-art here."

Ning nodded.

"The ninety-eight sword-arts on the stone tablets outside were developed by Master after he gained insight into this nameless sword-art. After you master them, you can begin to study the nameless sword-art," the warlady said.

"Now look at this." Another stone tablet suddenly appeared in her hands.

"This is the 'talisman of welcome' which Master personally forged." The golden-armored warlady looked at Ning. "After you bind it, it will become part of you. Once you die, the talisman will shatter."

"Talisman of welcome?" Ning was puzzled.

"Right. In the endless primordial chaos, there are countless Elder Gods, Ancestral Immortals, and even World Gods who would desperately desire to acquire this talisman," the golden-armored warlady said. "According to what Master said, Vastheaven Palace is a very powerful organization within the primordial chaos, and all of the experts within it refer to each other as brothers; there's no such thing as 'masters' or 'disciples' in their ranks. Any and every member of Vastheaven Palace is a brother to the others."

"If you want to join Vastheaven Palace, you have to be welcomed in by a formal member of Vastheaven Palace." The golden-armored warlady explained, "At Vastheaven Palace, there is a 'Welcomer' who is perennially responsible for welcoming new members. If any outsiders wish to join Vastheaven Palace, they have to pass the many tests which the Welcomer gives, at which point they will be welcomed into Vastheaven Palace."

"Aside from this option!"

"Every formal member of Vastheaven Palace is permitted to welcome a single new member into their ranks." The golden-armored warlady continued, "World God Northrest never welcomed any other experts into the palace. Before dying, he fashioned this 'talisman of welcome' for your sake, which

means that so long as you can reach the Elder God or Ancestral Immortal level, you will be qualified to join Vastheaven Palace.”

Upon hearing this, Ning remained quite calm, although he did of course feel anticipation.

Vastheaven Palace?

World God Northrest had fled so frantically that even he himself didn't know the way back. Thus, he had given Ning a full chaos cycle to locate Vastheaven Palace. Who knew where the place even was?

“The nameless sword-art and the talisman of welcome are both extremely important.” The golden-armored warlady looked at Ning. “There was a scroll within that pile over there that would be quite useful for you, but I intentionally took it out and kept it from you.”

“Ah?!” Ning was stunned.

“Take a look.” The golden-armored warlady waved her hand, producing yet another bamboo scroll. “I know that you have a body-duplicating technique, so I felt certain that this bamboo scroll would be very useful to you. Heh heh...I intentionally made sure it was the last one you see.”

Ning quickly accepted the scroll.

The nameless sword-art? He would have to master the other ninety-eight sword-arts before he could study in it. That was not going to happen for a long, long time.

The talisman of welcome from Vastheaven Palace? That wouldn't matter for an even longer period of time.

“This is the last scroll.” Ning accepted it, then immediately sent his coresense into it. Instantly, information began to flood towards him as a technique entered his mind.

“The ‘One True Body’ technique?” Ning murmured to himself.

This was a secret art!

By relying on the [One True Body] technique, bodies that all came from the same source could be merged together into one! The underlying principle of this technique was based off the rationale that, since all bodies and clones stemmed from the same source, they all had hidden connections that could be used to join them together again. Thus, a major power in the primordial chaos ended up creating this technique, the [One True Body].

The third stage of the [Taowu Eighteen Fiendgods] allowed for its eighteen clones to merge into one, but also allowed it to split apart again.

As for the [One True Body] secret art, it could merge together separate clones to form a ‘true body’, but upon doing so it would no longer be able to split the clones apart again!

This, compared to the [Taowu Eighteen Fiendgods], was its weakness; its inability to split up again. However, [One True Body] could be used without any material requirements.

“It is useful to you, yes?” The golden-armored warlady laughed as she spoke. In the future, she would follow Ning, and so she naturally felt intrinsically friendly towards him.

“Yes.” Ning nodded.

After his bodies merged together, they wouldn't be able to split apart again...but why would he even need to split them apart? It was enough for his power to increase by an explosive amount!

When all his clones merged together, the power of his soul, his ki, his divine power, his heartforce, and his divine body would all skyrocket. If him possessing a second-tier Jindan made him a 'half-step Daofather', once he merged all of his clones together he would become equivalent to an actual Daofather.

This wasn't just useful; this was exactly what he needed!

.....

Life in this standalone dimension was quite peaceful. One of Ning's bodies focused on binding the extraordinarily powerful sword, while the other spent every single day meditating on the sword-arts recorded on the ninety-eight stone tablets. The sword-arts recorded into the bamboo scrolls were nothing more than images, after all, whereas the sword-arts left behind on the stone tablets had been personally carved into them by World God Northrest. They were filled with his boundless intent, making it so that meditating on them was many tens of times easier.

One year passed. Ten years. A hundred years...

Ning's sword-arts and cultivation base began to silently rise. For someone like Ning who had already mastered the [Five Treasures], it was entirely possible to meditate on these sword-arts left behind by a powerful World God. Although he wouldn't be able to forcibly master all of them, he was still able to meditate on them one part at a time. And as time went on, he began to understand more and more.

This was one of the things which Ning would rely on in the future to truly roam the Three Realms with his sword-arts.

But as Ning lived this peaceful, fulfilling life of cultivation in this standalone region, the Three Realms...had been thrust into a state of complete and utter turmoil!

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 21: The Bloodlotus Blooms Chapter 1: The Mortal World

Within the Three Realms.

Clatter, clatter, clatter.

The sound of many hooves clattering against the ground could be heard as what looked like a river of black steel flooded through the streets. Atop the large, armor-clad horses were the black-armored knights, all of which had frozen looks in their eyes. They looked as though they had come back from Hell itself as they galloped towards the majestic, towering castle at the end of the path.

The guards at the top of the castle walls were rather drowsy, as things here had been peaceful for far, far too long. Given the influence and power of Tianxun Castle, how many would dare to cause trouble here?

“Eh?”

The vibrations caused by the distant, galloping horses caused one of the guards to take a closer look off towards the distance. Torches were lit all around the castle, and their light was dimly reflected off the armor of the distant knights.

“Not good.” The guard was shocked. Taking a closer look, he was able to tell that there had to be at least a few hundred knights headed their way. His face turned ashen with fear as he hurriedly picked up his warning horn, then lifted it up high and blew it loudly.

WUUUUUUUUU!

The deep, echoing sounds of the horn instantly filled the entire castle. The castle instantly turned into a hubbub of commotion as many armored warriors charged out from within it. Quite a few women and children were awakened as well.

Soon, the walls became filled with many armored warriors, all of whom had solemn looks on their faces. Many of them were filled with savage, murderous auras as well; clearly, these were valiant figures that had seen and spilled blood before.

“Someone blew the warning horn? It’s been a long, long time since our Tianxun Castle has used the warning horn.” A gray-robed, white-bearded old man ascended the castle walls as well, escorted by a group of people.

There were three levels of alerts that could be used to notify Tianxun Castle of danger. Blowing the warning horn represented the highest level of danger!

“Someone would dare to cause trouble for our Tianxun Castle? Hmph.” Next to him was a muscular, scar-faced man. The scar-faced man sneered, “I want to see for myself who could be so audacious.”

“Come, fifth brother. Let’s take a look.”

A group of men escorted a white-bearded old man to the walls, all of them staring far off into the distance. And as they did...their faces all began to change. The mounted knights were now much closer than before, and the lead knights were actually beginning to slow down as they were within three hundred meters of the walls. The appearances of the knights could be seen clearly.

“Mystice Knights?” The white-bearded old man narrowed his eyes. He murmured to himself softly, “Why have Mystice Knights come here?”

“Mystice Knights.”

“There are a total of thirty thousand Mystice Knights, and around three thousand of them have come before us. Only one of their commanders has the authority to lead so many Mystice Knights.”

“Father, what should we do?”

The group of men all looked at the white-bearded old man, who was the lord of this castle. The white-bearded old man frowned, then said in a low voice, “Our Tianxun Castle might be capable of defeating these Mystice Knights if we fought with all our might, but our casualties would be utterly devastating...and we would anger the one who created the Mystice Knights as well...”

“Father, then we...?”

“Our only choice is to come up with a way to have them voluntarily depart.”

Rumble...

The thundering hoofsteps of the three thousand Mystice Knights continued to ring out as they began to gather in front of Castle Tianxun. Soon, all of the knights came to a halt. The leader was a commander dressed in silver armor who had a gray mask on his face. Only his eyes could be seen, and he stared at the white-bearded old man atop the walls as he said calmly, “Li Tianxun, the day of your death has come.”

“Death?” The faces of those atop the walls of Castle Tianxun became quite unsightly. These words showed that clearly, this matter wouldn’t be so easily resolved.

“Commander, might I ask how I offended you?” The white-bearded old man chuckled as he spoke, his voice echoing forth throughout the world. He was a peak Xiantian expert, after all. “My sworn brother’s eldest disciple, ‘Immortal Omniscient’, is currently residing within my castle. I would suggest that you leave this place. If you disturb Immortal Omniscient, you would have committed a grave sin.”

“Immortal Omniscient? I’m supposed to believe he is here, just because you say he is?” The silver-armored knight said coldly.

The white-bearded old man immediately called out, “Immortal Omniscient!”

“Uncle, you can just address me as Omniscient. There’s no need to address me as ‘Immortal’.” A streak of light flew out from the city walls. It was an azure-robed man standing atop a flying sword. A cold wind blew past, rustling his robes. He stood there atop the sword, drifting downwards from the skies, causing all the guards atop Castle Tianxun to grow excited.

“Mystice Knights.” The azure-robed man looked downwards, then said calmly, “There’s no real disputes between my Transheaven Palace and the Mystice Knights. I think it would be best if you leave.”

“He really is here...” the silver-armored knight growled softly.

“We of Castle Tianxun do not know how we offended the Mystice Knights. Later, I will definitely send people to deliver gifts in recompense.” The white-bearded old man still had that yielding, accommodating smile on his face. Neither the Mystice Knights nor Transheaven Palace were powers he could afford to offend!

“The general’s guess was right on.” The silver-armored commander continued in a low voice, “Elders, sorry to trouble you.”

“Leave that kid Omniscient to us.”

Whoosh. Whoosh.

Two streaks of light flew out from within the ranks of the Mystice Knights. It was two of the armored knights, but their auras suddenly exploded with power that was greater than even Immortal Omniscient’s.

“Elders of the Mystice Knights?” The azure-robed man had been flying forward calmly atop his sword, but his face now instantly changed. It was known that the Mystice Knights had a total of ten

commanders, each of which could control three thousand knights...but the truth was a bit more complicated than that. Strictly speaking, these thirty thousand knights were nothing more than the disciples under the general's tutelage, with the better ones being promoted to become lieutenants, captains, and commanders. Commanders were generally all at the peak Xiantian level.

If however they were able to break through again and reach the Zifu level, they would no longer be required to serve as military commanders. They would become elders.

Every single Elder was, in truth, a former commander. The most terrifying figures of the Mystice Knights were its elders and its general.

"Transheaven Palace and the Mystice Knights..." Immortal Omniscient began frantically. All of the Zifu Disciples of the Mystice Knights had risen to power through countless battles. Each and every one of them was terrifying.

"Transheaven Palace...no longer exists." Both of the elders spoke out as they flew into the air.

"What?!" Immortal Omniscient's face completely changed.

"Go join them in the tomb." Accompanying these words was an attack, as one of the elders sent a streak of curved, bloody moonlight towards Immortal Omniscient. The battle instantly erupted.

"KILL!" The silver-armored knight immediately gave the order.

Castle Tianxun had already begun to panic. Two Immortals had suddenly emerged from within the ranks of the Mystice Knights, causing them to lose all of their courage. With a single boom, the gates to the city were blasted open. Given the power of the Mystice Knights, breaking through the gate of a castle was far too easy.

The slaughter instantly began.

The Mystice Knights had made their preparations long ago. The terrified guards of Castle Tianxun were far from being a match for them.

"Ahhhh!" A terrified, fleeing woman was chopped to death by one blow of a saber.

"Mother! Mother!"

"I'm gonna kill you!"

One by one, the children were wiped out as well.

Castle Tianxun was transformed into a river of blood.

The white-bearded old man had gone completely berserk, but he was unable to prevent it from happening. He roared angrily, "Even if the Mystice Knights have launched a war against Transheaven Palace, why do act you against Castle Tianxun as well? How has Castle Tianxun we offended you?!"

"Why? Tianxun, you old wretch, do you still remember me?" The silver-armored commander, who had fought with the greatest degree of savagery, removed his mask, revealing a hideous, scar-covered face.

"Who are you?" The white-bearded old man didn't recognize him.

“It seems you’ve done so many evil deeds that you’ve forgotten. Do you remember that night, thirty-nine years ago, when you left behind one wound after another on the face of a child?” The silver-armored knight’s voice was filled with boundless hate.

“Y-you...didn’t you die?!” The white-bearded man was a peak Xiantian expert, after all; he naturally was able to quickly remember the events of that night, and he couldn’t help but stare in disbelief.

“Yes...it would’ve been best for you if I died. But I did not. Although I lost a great deal of blood, I didn’t die. I’m not the type to die as easily as that. I crawled out, alive, from that pile of corpses...and when I woke up, I found that I was the only survivor out of our tribe of thirty thousand. I survived...but my life was a life worse than death. That day, I swore an oath that I would one day destroy Castle Tianxun. I changed my name to ‘Bloodfeud’. Step by solitary step, I advanced through life...and now, I’ve become the general’s personal disciple.”

“Y-you...” The white-bearded old man’s heart shook as he stared at this man, whose face covered with savage scars.

Given the power of the Mystice Knights, they could’ve easily fixed this commander’s face long ago. However, he had chosen not to; clearly, it was due to him nursing this hatred.

“You actually managed to tie yourself to Transheaven Palace...but alas for you, after seeing the hatred festering in my heart for so long, one day Master finally asked me about it, and so I told him. Master’s response was... “Then we might as well wipe out Transheaven Palace. The death of the Lord of Transheaven Palace will be a good thing for the world.” The silver-armored knight continued to fight, drawing closer and closer to the white-bearded old man.

“It’s over.”

The white-bearded old man had never imagined that he was actually the reason why the general of the Mystice Knights had attacked Transheaven Palace. All of the knights of the Mystice Knights were madmen, and the general who had founded their order was the number one madman in the world. No one dared to antagonize him. Even Transheaven Palace was doomed to be destroyed, now that they had.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 21: The Bloodlotus Blooms Chapter 2: Understanding the Heart

In truth, the general of the Mystice Knights had taken a dislike towards Transheaven Palace for quite some time now. This was nothing more than a final, motivating spark. The general really did like his disciple, ‘Bloodfeud’; he felt that Bloodfeud was his perfect successor. Bloodfeud was extremely talented, but had been held back by his hatred. Once he gained his vengeance, Bloodfeud would probably undergo a true transformation, rising like a phoenix from a pile of ashes. Thus, he decided to wipe out Transheaven Palace at one blow.

“Flee! Flee!”

“So long as I survive, the Li clan will remain.” Upon seeing what was happening, the white-bearded old man no longer had any more will to fight, and he immediately began to flee.

The silver-armored knight, in turn, slaughtered through all who attempted to oppose him, doing his very best to close the range. Morale began to plummet as the guardians of Castle Tianxun saw their lord begin to flee, and they began to flee as well.

The Mystice Knights began an absolute massacre of the survivors. Bloodfeud's order was for them to kill everyone here, leaving none behind.

"Li Tianxun, stop fighting." An ancient voice rang out.

Two streaks of light flew towards him from far away. It was the two elders...and behind them, the corpse of Immortal Omniscient fell towards the ground.

"No..."

The white-bearded old man stared in despair at the two armored elders who had appeared in the air in front of him.

"Bloodfeud, he's yours," one of the elders said.

"Thank you, Elder." The silver-armored knight walked forward, filled with a murderous aura.

But right at this moment...

The world suddenly turned silent.

All the cries, the shouts, the screams, the begs for mercy, the sobs...they all vanished. It was completely silent now.

The Mystice Knight stabbing a spear through the air...the mother crouched in front of her child, blocking sabers and swords for him...the silver-armored knight whose eyes were filled with hatred...the two calm elders in the air...all of them had looks of utter shock in their eyes.

They realized...that they were completely unable to move.

Not even the two elders in midair could move.

"Alas." A single sigh echoed within the world.

A black-robed youth suddenly appeared in the distance. He had been watching from far away, but with a single step he arrived in the air above Castle Tianxun.

Everyone present was utterly terrified, including the silver-armored knight and the two elders. Not even their general, who was said to be one of the top three experts of the entire world, was even close to being as terrifying as this black-robed youth. The black-robed youth stood there, and it seemed as though he had become the center of this entire world. The world itself seemed to shudder at his presence, as though he could effortlessly destroy it.

"You are the leader of these knights?" The black-robed Ji Ning stood in front of the white-bearded old man and the silver-armored knight, aiming his question at the knight.

The knight suddenly realized that he could now speak. He nodded. "Yes."

"You are the leader of this castle?" Ning looked at the white-bearded old man.

The white-bearded old man also realized that he could now speak. He immediately said, "Senior, the Mystice Knights destroyed my clan and murdered countless innocents. Please give me justice, senior!"

Ning looked towards the silver-armored knight.

"Him? He wants 'justice'? The entirety of Castle Tianxun is a den of devils. All of them deserve to die." The silver-armored knight's eyes were filled with hatred.

Ning did a quick scan of their souls, quickly sorting through the memories of the silver-armored knight and the white-bearded old man. He now completely understood the situation, as well as how much hatred this silver-armored knight held in his heart.

"Our Castle Tianxun has brought blessings to many. Although we are many in number, resulting in the occasional evildoer appearing, you can ask anyone you like about our reputation, senior." The white-bearded old man knew that this youth before him was his only hope for survival, and tears began to flow out of his eyes. "Damn these Mystice Knights. They didn't even spare the children."

"There's no need to discuss your 'reputation'." Ning glanced at the white-bearded old man, his gaze very calm. "Lord of Castle Tianxun...leader of Blackwind Cave."

The white-bearded old man's face turned ashen.

It was true. Blackwind Cave was indeed a secret identity of Castle Tianxun. Every single male child would be trained, and in fact from the age of three they would be taught to kill. However, as the saying goes, a rabbit doesn't eat the grass around his hole. It was true that in the surrounding area, Castle Tianxun's reputation was sterling, and they had indeed done many good deeds. But in other places...they were the utterly vile and rapacious Blackwind Cave! They had robbed and murdered countless people, which was why Castle Tianxun was so wealthy.

But very few knew this secret!

The only reason Bloodfeud knew the secret was because he was one of their victims. After he became a Mystice Knight, he learned the full truth.

"All of them deserve to die. All of them!" The silver-armored knight said demonically.

"But the children? The women who have never killed a single soul? Those infants who are still dressed in swaddling clothes?" Ning looked at him.

"Pull up grass by the roots." The silver-armored knight looked at Ning. "I know you are strong, senior. I've already taken my revenge. If you wish to kill me or punish me, that's entirely up to you. I only ask that the others not be implicated as a result. My brothers in the Mystice Knights only attacked because of my orders. I've been gripped by hatred for countless years. Now that I've taken revenge...I'm satisfied." The silver-armored knight stood there resolutely.

Ning shook his head.

Whoosh. Ning waved his hand, and all of the children and women within Castle Tianxun were drawn into a minor world estate-treasure which Ning kept with him.

And then, Ning himself vanished as well.

“Eh?” Everyone sensed that they were now able to move again.

“He didn’t kill me?” The silver-armored knight was momentarily stunned, but he then fell to his knees and kowtowed solemnly thrice.

As for the white-bearded old man, he was completely and truly stunned.

The two elders had solemn looks on their faces. They hurriedly urged the silver-armored knight, “Bloodfeud, hurry up and deal with Li Tianxun. We need to leave this place right away and report today’s events to the general.”

“Right.” The silver-armored knight nodded, then immediately strode forward. The white-bearded old man closed his eyes.

Ssssshnk. The spear stabbed forward, piercing through the white-bearded old man’s chest, then retracted. As it did, blood spurted out. The white-bearded old man opened his eyes as his body fell powerlessly to the ground...and then he began to laugh wildly. Moments later...all signs of life fled his body.

A short while later, the three thousand Mystice Knights immediately departed from this place under cover of night.

“The amount of hatred and evil within the Three Realms is becoming greater and greater.”

As Ning wandered this world, he could sense that this entire world was filled with hatred and vileness.

His two clones had already spent more than 160 years in Undermoon Lake. He had no way of finding out or sensing what had happened within Undermoon Lake, but he was still certain that they were alive. If one died, the other clones would immediately sense it and be able to recreate it.

“Ji Ning, your priority is rescuing your wife. There’s no need for you to take part in the Realmwars for now.”

“Master, my wife is my wife, while the war is the war. These are two separate things.”

“Don’t worry. When the final war for karmic luck begins, we’ll have you take part. As for now? You won’t have much of an impact on the overall situation, so you should focus on your training. Fuxi, Suiren, and the others all view you with great favor. If you can become a True God or Daofather before the Endwar, you’ll be of true assistance.”

“Alright.”

These were the words which Subhuti had said to Ning. Ever since then, Ning had roamed the Three Realms. He had seen many things in his travels. The Realmwars came one after the other, and the Seamless Gate grew increasingly berserk in his actions. Due to their increasing degree of influence, even the mortals were greatly impacted as all sorts of murders, feuds, and unjust acts grew increasingly common.

Ning had seen too many things. He understood that in truth, all of this was due to the provocations of the Seamless Gate, which sought to transform the previous days of peace into utter chaos.

The Seamless Gate delighted in chaos. But in a time of chaos, the lives of ordinary mortals were like grass to be trampled upon!

In addition, Ning had always felt that children were innocent. When he had been young, he had tortured to death a member of the Riverside clan for the sake of avenging Spring Grass, but he had spared the man's child, 'Riverside Cai'. Want revenge? Grow powerful and come after me! But in the end, that child Cai had only been able to become a Zifu Disciple...and then, Cai had died in the chaos the Seamless Gate had created.

He saw mortals in all their states. He saw through their small kindnesses and their petty feuds, their grudges and their gratefulness.

Ning couldn't explain how it made him feel, but he could sense that his heart was slowly transforming.

Night.

The black-robed Ning was seated in the lotus position atop a stone that was located at the very peak of an ordinary mountain. In front of him hovered a Goldstar Bead of the Heavens, divine runes flickering atop its surface. Ning spent most of his time analyzing the [Five Treasures] and the Nine Chaos Seals. By comparing and contrasting the two, he was able to gain insights faster. In order to study the Nine Chaos Seals, he had to view the goldstar beads.

"Eh?" Suddenly, Ning sensed something.

"Come out."

Instantly, a dazzling horde of stars seemed to appear in the air as all 3600 goldstar beads emerged. As Ning sent out his Immortal energy, they began to glow brightly, the divine runes on their surface changing nonstop. Slowly, arcane auras began to manifest above each of the goldstar beads, causing them to emit auras of incredible profundity.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 21: The Bloodlotus Blooms Chapter 3: The Mirrors of the Heavens

Every single goldstar bead's aura was now far more powerful than before. It was as though they had evolved somehow...and the reason was because Ji Ning had just mastered the second of the Nine Chaos Seals.

"How truly extraordinary. It supports and reinforces the [Five Treasures] sword-art, and is even more profound." After mastering the second chaos seal, Ning could immediately sense how extraordinary these nine seals truly were. "If I had those two clones each bring a goldstar bead into Undermoon Lake and meditate on it, it most likely would've been beneficial to them in their quest."

It was extremely difficult to completely memorize all nine of the Nine Chaos Seals. Daoist Three Purities had spent an enormous amount of effort before succeeding, and had only been able to master seven of the seals. Prior to becoming a World God, Mother Nuwa had only been able to master eight of the seals. There was simply no way that Ning could possibly memorize these incredibly profound and arcane chaos seals; he had to keep the goldstar beads by his side in order to train in them. The reason why he hadn't taken them into Undermoon Lake was because he was afraid that if he died in Undermoon Lake, the beads would be lost as well.

Even if just a single one of the 3600 beads was lost, the set would become incomplete and there would be no way for them to join together into the Thirty-Six Heavens in the future.

“Form.” The black-robed Ning willed it, and the 3600 dazzling goldstar beads in the skies joined together, rapidly merging into 360 stars, then further merging together into the Thirty-Six Heavens.

The Thirty-Six Heavens hovered around Ning, and Ning could vaguely sense that were somehow connecting to the workings of fate. Ning had a sudden thought, and he immediately barked out, “Change!”

Whoosh. The thirty-six dazzling, glowing globes suddenly transformed into a series of ancient, unadorned mirrors. These mirrors all had bronze borders to them. Some of the mirrors had stellar diagrams of the sun and the moon on the bronze, while others had diagrams of fish, bugs, birds, and other beasts on them. Others were covered with flowers, trees, and other vegetation...

Every single mirror seemed quite extraordinary.

“Eh?” Ning stared carefully at these thirty-six levitating bronze mirrors with curiosity.

The Thirty-Six Heavens could transform into anything. The reason why they had changed into mirrors just now was because Ning had mastered the second chaos seal. Upon doing so, Ning felt a vague, hidden connection between them and the hidden workings of fate, and so he allowed them to go with the flow and transform as they pleased...and they became mirrors. Their current appearance was the most suitable appearance for unleashing the power of the Thirty-Six Heavens when using the second chaos seal.

Ning’s Immortal energy quickly filled into them.

“So that’s how it works. They are actually able to scry the workings of fate itself,” Ning murmured to himself. “They can view the past, the present...and the future?”

There weren’t many treasures in the Three Realms that were capable of touching upon the workings of fate, but there were a few. The number one such treasure was the Book of Life and Death!

The Book of Life and Death was one of the most mysterious, arcane treasures that existed. It recorded the details of the past and present lives of countless living creatures. It was capable of recording hundreds or even thousands of lives for each person. The Book of Life and Death was so powerful that just by scribbling a few extra markings onto it, a person who was destined to live just thirty years could instead be given a lifespan of three hundred years! It could be used to effortlessly change the workings of fate. It truly was an utterly heaven-defying treasure.

The Celestial Court, Buddhist Sangha, Daoist Path, and the Three Emperors all had treasures of their own that could also scry on the workings of fate. They had also developed various fate-scrying methods and techniques as well.

Another example was the ‘Stone of Three Lives’ that lay by the side of the River of Forgetfulness. The Stone of Three Lives was similarly capable of illuminating the past, present, and future lives of a person.

“My Thirty-Six Heavens are quite similar to the Stone of Three Lives.” Ning nodded slowly. “If that’s the case...then since it has the appearance of mirrors, let them be known as the Mirrors of the Heavens.”

There were only so many fate-scrying treasures in the Three Realms, and each of them had been created by major powers. This was the first time that an Emyrean God/True Immortal like Ji Ning had acquired a treasure like this. But of course, Ning hadn't created it on his own; he didn't have that ability! He had relied on the power of the Nine Chaos Seals, unconsciously applying them through the goldstar beads and transforming them into the Mirrors of the Heavens.

"They are capable of scanning one's past, present, and future. In addition, these thirty-six mirrors are shaped like rectangles; they are perfect for defense. In fact, it should even be possible to use them to reflect an enemy's attacks." Ning carefully examined his treasures, quickly coming to this conclusion regarding their uniqueness.

In the past, the goldstar beads had mainly been useful because of their extremely high quality, which was why Ning would use them in the form of various weapons. But now, thanks to the chaos seals, they had gained certain special powers as well.

After mastering the second chaos seal, Ning continued to wander the Three Realms as he had before. He watched many mortals, seeing their joys, their sorrows, their farewells, their reunions, their love, their hate, their debts, their grudges.

Love...love was the hardest one to truly fathom.

No expert, no matter how powerful, would be able to claim that he had truly transcended beyond this word, 'love'. Ning couldn't, despite having mastered the fourth stage of heartforce. Not even Houyi, who had mastered the fifth stage of heartforce, could make that claim.

One year passed after the other. Ning continued to wander the vast world...

.....

Rumble...

A towering palace began to collapse as a flood of hatred, malevolence, and death energy soared into the heavens.

Two armies of Immortal cultivators were battling each other, as were many mortals.

"Is this what things have come to on the eve of apocalypse?" The midair Ning stared downwards at the slaughter proceeding. He shook his head. He couldn't, wouldn't get involved. This sight was incredibly common these days in the Three Realms.

"Who can compare to the Seamless Gate when it comes to manipulating the hearts of men?"

"Why must they cause the entire Three Realms to be thrown into such a state of turmoil?" Ning felt quite powerless. Not even the major powers could stop this, to say nothing of him.

Even if he stopped this particular battle, as soon as he left the war would continue. During his journey across the Three Realms, Ning had long ago discovered that all of these disputes were caused by the secret machinations of the Seamless Gate. Aside from the more mundane methods of incitement they used, the Seamless Gate had a particularly powerful tool at their disposal...the Heavenly Dao of Heart!

The Seamless Chaosworld had originally had six Heavenly Daos; the Heavenly Daos of Earth, Fire, Water, Wind, Heart, and Primordial Chaos.

The Pangu Chaosworld had ten Heavenly Daos; the Heavenly Daos of Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, Earth, Yin, Yang, Destruction, Life, and Primordial Chaos.

But then, the Primordial Era had come to an end. Under the guidance of Mother Nuwa, the Three Realms was founded using the Pangu Chaosworld and its Daos as the foundation. The Heaven Realm, for example, had originally been one of the largest surviving pieces of the Pangu chaosworld. The Pangu Chaosworld had served as the core, while the Seamless Chaosworld had been used as a support structure. Thus, the Heavenly Daos remained those of the Pangu Chaosworld!

As a result there was no way to, for example, truly understand and master the Heavenly Dao of Wind. The Three Realms had a flawed Heavenly Dao of Wind that had been divided up into many different Grand Daos.

The Heavenly Dao of Heart similarly no longer existed in the Three Realms.

However, of the major powers of the Seamless Chaosworld who had been alive during the old days, such as the Godking, quite a few had very high levels of attainment in the Heavenly Dao of Heart. They were tremendously skilled in manipulating the hearts of men. With but a single gaze, they could cause some ordinary Immortal cultivators to immediately fall to their knees and willingly become slaves.

The Seamless Gate had many who had gained insight into the Heavenly Dao of Heart early on, including many who were Empyrean Gods and True Immortals. They used their many clones to cause trouble throughout the Three Realms, and there was nothing the Nuwa Alliance could do about it.

Time continued to flow on.

Ten years. A hundred years. Three hundred years...

The situation in the Three Realms had become increasingly dire. The chaos in the mortal worlds was just a minor matter; the real problems lay in the repeated Realmwars between the Seamless Gate and the Nuwa Alliance! In the beginning, Realmwars only occurred every so often, but now they became increasingly frequent and increasingly deadly as both sides grew more and more berserk.

More and more Empyrean Gods and True Immortals began to perish!

Six hundred years had passed since the two clones had entered Undermoon Lake.

“Darknorth.”

“Darknorth.”

A shout could be heard echoing from far away.

Ning was seated atop a wooden boat, allowing it to be carried forward by the waters of the river.

Upon hearing the shout, Ning raised his to look. A long-haired man dressed in loose robes was walking through the air towards him from far away. He had been far away just a moment ago, but in the next instant he appeared before Ning’s wooden boat.

“Fellow Daoist Luoshui.” Ning pulled out a flask of wine.

“Why didn’t you let me know that you came to my place?” The long-haired man laughed as he sat down. This was True Immortal Luoshui, the controller of this world, the Luoshui major world. He was the disciple of Exalted Celestial Carefree, a True Immortal who had found his Dao during the Primordial Era.

“Quite a few old friends have died. I really wasn’t in the mood to pay a call.” Ning shook his head.

Upon hearing this, True Immortal Luoshui couldn’t help but shake his head and sigh as well. “True. Especially during the past three centuries. More and more Empyrean Gods and True Immortals have died. Quite a few old drinking buddies of mine have died.”

Ning nodded.

Based on what he knew, during the past six centuries since his two clones had entered Undermoon Lake, the Nuwa Alliance had lost more than 1300 Empyrean Gods and True Immortals! As for the Seamless Gate, they had lost more than 1000 as well! The number of Celestial Immortals and Loose Immortals who had died...that number was truly incalculable. Although the casualties in each Realmwar weren’t that great, there had been many, many Realmwars by now!

“Damn the Seamless Gate.” True Immortal Luoshui ground his teeth. “They are simply too despicable.”

“Indeed.” Ning’s face sank as well.

The Seamless Gate’s actions were simply contemptible! They actually acted in merciless fashion against the family members and loved ones of the Empyrean Gods and True Immortals of the Three Realms! For example, if they discovered that a True Immortal had a child, the Seamless Gate would send people to assassinate that child! An Empyrean God had just two disciples? The Seamless Gate would assassinate them!

“The Seamless Gate seeks to drive our Empyrean Gods and True Immortals mad. Ideally, they would go completely insane and die in their madness.” True Immortal Luoshui said furiously, “Even if they don’t go insane, they can be driven so berserk that they will seek out vengeance in such a way that leads to their deaths.”

Ning nodded.

For ordinary True Immortals and Empyrean Gods, to act alone in seeking vengeance upon the Seamless Gate was akin to committing suicide. Not everyone had as many powerful tools as Ning did! Only by staying calm and relying on the support of an army of other Empyrean Gods and True Immortals a Realmwar would they have a chance to win. The angrier they became, the easier it would be for them to die.

For the sake of achieving victory, the Seamless Gate would stoop to anything.

Fortunately, Ning had placed his daughter Brightmoon within the Crescent major world. Otherwise, she probably would’ve suffered an attack as well. These large-scale assassination programs the Seamless Gate had initiated had driven the Nuwa Alliance utterly furious. This was one of the reasons why the Realmwars were occurring nonstop now!

“All those years ago, when the Lord of All Fiends brought back the Seamless Gate survivors, we should’ve refused to let them in.” True Immortal Luoshui ground his teeth. “Better to have fought than to have allowed them back into the Three Realms. Now, they rooted themselves firmly here, growing increasingly powerful...and they have used that power to deliver us a vicious bite.”

“But who could’ve imagined all this?” Ning shook his head.

“True. No one was ready for any of this. We actually addressed many of the Seamless Gate as ‘brother’, and some were lifelong friends of mine. We even traded many of our techniques for theirs, resulting in them learning quite a few of our powerful techniques.” True Immortal Luoshui shook his head. “We didn’t try to prevent them from recruiting apprentices from our ranks either, resulting in them gaining large numbers of Emphyrean Gods and True Immortals.”

“It’s far too late to be saying these things now. All we can do is prepare for the war. Let all of this be decided on the field of battle,” Ning said.

“Right. The wars are becoming increasingly larger in size and scope. In a hundred years, or perhaps a thousand years at most, the final war for karmic luck will most likely begin,” True Immortal Luoshui said.

Ning nodded.

The final war for karmic luck...

That would be one of the last great battles before the end. All the Emphyrean Gods and True Immortals would enter this final battle that would truly decide the war for karmic luck. In fact, if the losing side felt that things were going worse than expected, they might immediately launch the Endwar, resulting in all the major powers attacking! All the surviving major powers would then engage the final, true Endwar.

Indeed, from the looks of things, this final battle would happen anywhere from a hundred to a thousand years from now.

“Right. Yesterday, True Immortal Dongyan of your Grand Xia died in battle.” True Immortal Luoshui looked at Ning. “Did you hear this news?”

“True Immortal Dongyan?” Ning was stunned.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 21: The Bloodlotus Blooms Chapter 4: Yellow Emperor Realm

Ninelotus belonged to the Dongyan clan. During the Crimsonbright Realmwar, True Immortal Dongyan had battled alongside Ji Ning for many years. Ning and True Immortal Dongyan naturally became quite close friends, and in his heart, Ning felt tremendous admiration and respect for True Immortal Dongyan, due to the way Dongyan acted and treated others. Dongyan was a truly honorable, just, and upright man, a true hero. However, Ning could tell that True Immortal Dongyan always seemed to have a hidden sorrow buried within his heart. Most likely, something that happened long ago which True Immortal Dongyan had never been able to fully recover from.

“True Immortal Dongyan of your Grand Xia was quite an admirable person,” True Immortal Luoshui said with a sigh. “The Crimsonbright Realmwar ended long ago, which meant that the Seamless Gate had far fewer clashes against the Crimsonbright Realm. However, battles would still occasionally break out, and

True Immortal Dongyan fought at the very front of almost every single battle. He was extraordinarily powerful, resulting in him killing two Empyrean Gods/True Immortals of the Seamless Gate. However, this time he was unlucky...he was surrounded by three Empyrean Gods/True Immortals of the Seamless Gate, and he wasn't able to escape..."

Ning nodded slowly.

It had been six hundred years. Early on, when Ning had heard of the deaths of his friends, he felt pain in his heart. Later on, however, as more and more of them died, Ning was able to stay calm despite his grief. This was because he knew that this was a war that no one would be able to avoid or escape from...and in war, there would always be casualties.

To prevent people from dying, there was only one solution — Win the war!

"Ji Ning." A voice suddenly rang out in Ning's mind.

"Master." Ning was startled.

"Come to Mount Innerheart right away."

A spatial whirlpool suddenly appeared directly in front of the wooden boat. True Immortal Luoshui, still on the boat, was a bit puzzled upon seeing this. Ning immediately explained, "Master has summoned me. I need to leave immediately. Please pardon the abruptness, fellow Daoist Luoshui."

"Hurry up and go, go! Don't mind me," True Immortal Dongshui said hurriedly. Ning was now powerful enough that his status as a disciple of Subhuti had long ago become widespread. The reason why Subhuti had forbidden Ning from telling others in the past was because he was concerned that when other experts knew of Ning's true status, they would all do their best to curry favor with Ning and befriend him for the sake of giving Subhuti face. That would make it so that it would be very difficult for Ning to be truly tempered and tested while wandering the Three Realms.

This was Subhuti's standard plan for training disciples. In the beginning, Subhuti would not permit them to say that he was their master, unless he gave explicit permission. Only when they became powerful experts of the Three Realms would they be allowed to make it public.

Whoosh. Ning immediately flew into the spatial whirlpool. He didn't spend too much time traversing through it before arriving at the air above Mount Innerheart.

Ning immediately landed before the Daoist monastery.

"Uncle-master." The two guards at the entrance, Clearwater and Whiteriver, both smiled as they welcomed Ning.

Ning nodded, then stepped into the Daoist monastery.

After entering, Ning was quite surprised to see that far off into the distance, not only was the white-haired Subhuti seated in the lotus position, more than ten of his disciples were seated below him as well. All of them were at the Empyrean God/True Immortal level. His third apprentice-brother, Goldcrow, had made a rare appearance. Silvermoon and Lord Jiang, who he was quite familiar with, were here as well. Other members included senior apprentice-sister Empyrean Phoenix and senior apprentice-brother Fiveking, who he had met just a few times.

Ning hurriedly walked over, choosing a place to sit down.

“Ji Ning, have Redsnow come out,” Subhuti instructed.

“Yes, Master.” Ning nodded, immediately notifying Empyrean God Redsnow, who was in the Starseizer world, to come out. A short while later, Redsnow appeared as well.

“Everyone is here now.” Subhuti looked downwards at his disciples, then said calmly, “You should all know that ever since the assassinations the Seamless Gate carried out three centuries ago, battles have continuously raged between us and the Seamless Gate.”

Everyone present nodded.

Everyone, Ning included, was enraged at the mention. Even mortals knew the principle of not getting family members involved, but the Seamless Gate had shown no scruples at all; they had launched a massive, Three Realms-wide assassination program! The Seamless Gate knew very well that this sort of assassination program could only be carried out once; after the first time, the Nuwa Alliance would be on their guard and give them no further chances. Thus, they made the program an enormous one. Although the Nuwa Alliance had many experts, they had been caught off-guard and so many had suffered catastrophic losses.

The family members, friends, and beloved disciples of many experts of the Nuwa Alliance had died miserable deaths.

In fact, twelve Pure Yang True Immortals of the Nuwa Alliance had been so enraged by what had happened that they had gone completely insane, resulting in them losing control of their power and thus losing their lives as well.

Every single member of the Nuwa Alliance had been enraged by this. The Three Emperors of Mankind and the two leaders of Daoism and Buddhism knew that there was no way they could suppress the rage of their followers...and so war had erupted on a massive scale. The number of wars that had occurred during these three centuries was more than ten times as many as the wars that had occurred in the previous three centuries! Almost all of the Realms had experienced Realmwars by now.

“The vast majority of the Realms in the Three Realms have experienced Realmwars now. Only a very small number of truly top-tier Realms have been able to just barely keep the peace,” Subhuti said. “And now, the place where the next Realmwar shall erupt...is the Yellow Emperor Realm!”

“Yellow Emperor Realm?”

“The Yellow Emperor of the Five Emperors?”

All of them were shocked.

The Realms of most True Gods and Daofathers were fairly ordinary in strength, with a realm that possessed a hundred Empyrean Gods/True Immortals to be a fairly powerful one. Ning and the others all understood that the scale of the wars was increasing in size, and they weren't surprised that this Realmwar would be occurring within a Realm belonging to someone on the level of the Five Emperors. They had expected a war like this to occur for quite some time now.

But...they didn't expect that it would be the Realm of the Yellow Emperor!

The Yellow Emperor was someone who held an extremely exalted status in human history. The human race was first unified by the Three Emperors: Suiren, Fuxi, and Shennong. The next to rise to power was the first of the Five Emperors, Xuan Yuan the Yellow Emperor! In fact, long ago Shennong, then known as the Flame Emperor, had battled against the Yellow Emperor Xuan Yuan for an extremely long period of time. Although Shennong was very powerful, he primarily focused his efforts on alchemy rather than leading his armies. Thus...in the end, he was actually defeated! It was the Yellow Emperor who won!

Even in the Primordial Era, the human race would thus refer to themselves as the ‘scions of the flame and the yellow.’ 1

It can be said that in terms of his influence on the human race, the Yellow Emperor was supreme amongst the Five Emperors. Although in the end, it was Yu the Great who established and solidified the imperial clan of humanity which had persisted to this very day, in terms of personal charisma and military prowess, Yu the Great was actually inferior to the Yellow Emperor.

“Yu the Great is the leader of the Primordial Imperial Clan. When the Primordial Imperial Clan gives the order, all the clans of the human race shall join together under their banner. They will definitely be saved for the final war for karmic luck.” Empyrean Phoenix was puzzled. “But of the four remaining monarchs, Emperor Yao, Emperor Shun, Zhuanxu, and the Yellow Emperor...Xuan Yuan the Yellow Emperor is definitely the most powerful of the four. More than a thousand Empyrean Gods and True Immortals are by his side at all times. His Realm is considerably more powerful than the Realms of Emperor Zhuanxu, Emperor Yao, and Emperor Shun. Why has war broken out in his Realm instead? 2

Ning and the others all knew that the likes of Emperor Zhuanxu only had six hundred or so Empyrean Gods and True Immortals under their command. Emperors Yao and Shun had perhaps a bit more, but they didn’t have more than a thousand. Xuan Yuan, however, had roughly 1500 of them under his command.

It must be understood that the Five Emperors ‘merely’ had the power of top-tier True Gods/Daofathers. If one truly wished to become as powerful as possible, one would generally choose to become a follower of the Three Sovereigns instead! Suiren’s Kindlefire world, for example, had more than ten thousand Empyrean Gods and True Immortals within it. There were many secret whispers that Suiren was actually the most powerful individual in the Three Realms, and so he naturally had many followers.

The Primordial Imperial Clan was the master of the entire human race. Many Daofathers were at its command, to say nothing of Empyrean Gods and True Immortals.

For Xuan Yuan, who had long ago given up his title as leader of the human race, to still command more than 1500 Empyrean Gods and True Immortals was actually quite incredible.

Subhuti gazed downwards. He said calmly, “Since we are going to fight, then let us have a good one. This Realmwar is going to be different from the previous ones. In all the previous Realmwars combined, we lost around a thousand Empyrean Gods and True Immortals. But this time...Xuan Yuan has more than 1500 under his command. Factoring in all the reinforcements he will receive, he will have more than 2000 under his command. ‘Ordinary’ casualties would be in the hundreds, but if the fighting becomes especially fierce, it’s entirely possible that more than a thousand will be killed. In other words...this Realmwar will see as many casualties as all the other Realmwars thus far combined!”

Everyone below him could feel the silent pressure.

Their side would have more than two thousand Empyrean Gods and True Immortals? The enemies would most likely have a similar number of experts.

A battle like this...even most Daofathers would run the risk of being surrounded and annihilated.

“Which of you would like to join?” Subhuti looked at Ning and the others. “If you wish to join, you will of course be allowed to command a formation comprised of other Empyrean Gods and True Immortals.

Each and every one of Subhuti’s disciples was extraordinary. Even the latecomers like Ji Ning and Redsnow were quite impressive.

“Me.” A voice rang out.

Ning and the others all turned to look.

The speaker was Empyrean God Silvermoon. Silvermoon no longer looked as relaxed and carefree as he had in the past. His body was covered with a baleful aura that had come from centuries of battle and slaughter. Long ago, Silvermoon had expressed a willingness to accompany Ning in battle, but for the sake of rescuing his wife, Ning had temporarily put aside his plans to enter the war. Silvermoon was unwilling to wait, and so he had gone out by himself to take part in quite a few wars.