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Book 22: True God Chapter 8: Godfiend Witherspike

“Sword Immortal Darknorth, Ji Ning? Sounds familiar.” The alien Outsider leaned back against his throne, resting his head against his palm and muttering to himself. Moments later, his eyes lit up. “I remember now. I believe he’s one of the fastest-rising stars of the Three Realms, supposedly as talented as Houyi was. If memory serves, the Seamless Gate’s intelligence report stated that his true body was destroyed by them. Only his Primaltwin survives.”

“Primaltwins...I can’t help but feel jealous just thinking about them. Those mortal creatures who slowly rise to power have the chance to form a Primaltwin. We Fiendgods who are born from the primordial chaos don’t even have the chance to do that.” The alien Outsider shook his head and sighed.

“How can those mortal creatures be compared to you, Master?” One of the six golden-armored figures, a red-bearded elder, immediately spoke out in protest.

“Ahaha...” The seated alien Outsider laughed loudly, his laughter echoing within the room.

After he stopped laughing, he looked downwards at the still-kneeling Thearch Darkstill. “Darkstill, you said that he has the power of a True God and Daofather? Isn’t he just a third-tier True Immortal? Low-class True Immortals like him are numerous beyond count in the primordial chaos.”

“Three of my minions were slain by this Ji Ning. One of them, prior to dying, sent the scenes of his death back to our race,” Thearch Darkstill said respectfully.

“The scenes of his death?” The seated alien Outsider was intrigued. “Let me take a look.”

“Yes!” Thearch Darkstill assented respectfully, then pointed towards an empty space nearby. Instantly, moving images began to appear there. The scene displayed the three gray-robed aliens moving forward. Suddenly, a black streak of lightning flashed past them, instantly piercing through their bodies. The black lightning serpent was simply far too fast; although the three of them could sense how dangerous it was and had wanted to flee, they simply weren’t able to escape.

With a single flash, the black lightning serpent slew two of the three gray-robed figures and heavily injured the third. The scene then switched to that of a white-robed youth reaching his out with his hand, intending to soulscour the survivor. However, the gray-robed survivor instantly committed suicide.

“Quite fast.” The seated alien Outsider’s eyes lit up. He laughed merrily, “Those fools of the Seamless Gate...they claimed that Ji Ning’s true body was killed. Just now, he used the [Ninehorn Lightning Serpent] evasion technique, something which only a Fiendgod can use. Clearly, his true body isn’t dead after all. The exalted Seamless Gate...it couldn’t even handle something as simple as this.”

“Right. He’s not dead.” One of the gold-armored figures who had just one arm frowned as he spoke. “And for him to be able to use it while slaying three Empyrean Gods in an instant...and he wasn’t even using a sword. Just now, he used his fingers to execute sword-arts. This set of sword-arts...incredible, simply incredible.”

Thearch Darkstill agreed. "Venerable Saber speaks the truth. In the Three Realms, Ji Ning has been acknowledged as possessing the most profound sword-arts. It is said that he wields fourth-stage swordforce, with the speed of his sword exceeding the limits of the Heavenly Daos."

The seated alien Outsider had six retainers, but the only one which Thearch Darkstill truly admired was the single-armed man.

"No." The single-armed man shook his head. "He was able to display his sword-arts so easily while using the [Ninehorn Lightning Serpent]...this level of perfection in the sword isn't something which someone merely at the fourth stage of swordforce can accomplish. If my guess is correct...he has quite possibly reached the fifth stage of swordforce."

"What?"

"The fifth stage of swordforce?"

"How is that possible?"

The golden-armored figures next to him all called out in surprise. Even Thearch Darkstill was stunned.

The seated alien Outsider frowned as he looked at the one-armed man. "Saber, are you sure?"

"This is just my conjecture. His sword-arts were too fast, after all, and he used them while executing the [Ninehorn Lightning Serpent]. I wasn't able to see it too clearly, so I'm just making an educated guess." After speaking, the one-armed man no longer said a word.

The seated alien Outsider pondered for a moment.

He had collected these six retainers while roaming through the endless primordial chaos. Of the six, 'Saber' had voluntarily decided to join him in order to repay a debt of gratitude and voluntarily decided to call him 'Master'. Saber was also the only retainer who this figure truly respected. As for the other five? He hit them and berated them as he pleased.

Ever since he had arrived at the Primordial Ruinworld, he had easily subjugated and taken control over all of the alien Outsiders here, including the most powerful ones such as Thearch Darkstill.

"Since Saber is willing to make the claim...it probably really is true," he murmured to himself.

There were some similarities between the usage of a sword and the usage of a saber. Both were weapons meant for attacking.

"If he has fifth-stage swordforce...?" The seated alien Outsider stared into the looping scenes, peering at those three gray-robed figures as they died again and again. "He's reached such a level despite having trained for less than a thousand years. He really is terrifying. But of course, it's also possible that Saber's conjecture is wrong. Still, no matter what, for him to be able to kill those three in such a short period of time means that he definitely has the power of a Daofather."

"Intriguing." The seated alien Outsider chuckled.

"Blackheaven." He sent a mental call directly out to Blackheaven. "Come here."

Celestial Immortal Blackheaven was relaxing and drinking wine in another part of the castle. This time, he was the one responsible for delivering messages on behalf of the Seamless Gate! This was a golem-body he was using, and so even if it was destroyed he wouldn't care in the slightest. He naturally was quite relaxed and content.

"Coming." Blackheaven picked up the jug of wine and headed off. No one barred his path, and a short while later he arrived at the place where the alien Outsiders were located.

"My respectful greetings to you, great Godfiend Witherspike." Celestial Immortal Blackheaven chortled merrily as he bowed.

"Each time I see you, I feel happy." The seated alien Outsider smiled merrily back at him. "That idiot, 'All Things'...whenever I saw him, he used to put on such stupid airs. I would've wiped that idiot out long ago, if he didn't have so many subordinates or that pack of utterly unbreakable Envoys. I didn't have the chance to personally see him die, but whenever I see you, his former treasure-spirit, I feel happy all the same."

Celestial Immortal Blackheaven continued to chortle merrily, seemingly not bothered in the slightest.

He had been enslaved by the Seamless Gate, becoming the personal retainer of the Lord of All Fiends. Why would he be bothered by a bit of jesting from the great Godfiend?

"You used to be the treasure-spirit for the Blackheaven Cauldron. That idiot had to have used the Blackheaven Cauldron to create the cores of those golems, yes? And you ended up learning those techniques...but now, you've been enslaved by the Seamless Gate. What's the point? I think it'd be better for you if you joined me instead," the alien Outsider said with a laugh.

"You?" Celestial Immortal Blackheaven said in a very uncaring manner, "It doesn't really matter to me. If you can defeat my master, the Lord of All Fiends, I'd be more than willing to join you."

"The Lord of All Fiends?" The alien Outsider frowned.

A monster.

The Three Realms really was a place that could give birth to monsters. One of these primitives, Nuwa, had actually been able to force her way into becoming a World God. This was quite a monstrous accomplishment. And the Lord of All Fiends...he had actually been able to flee with a group of experts while being pursued and attacked by a World God. The World God, Nuwa, hadn't even been able to catch up to him. This was an even more monstrous accomplishment!

It must be understood that World Gods all completely surpassed the limitations of the Heavenly Daos in every way, be it speed or power or other areas. But Nuwa had still been unable to catch up to the Lord of All Fiends! Most likely, the experts of the Three Realms didn't truly understand what a terrifying accomplishment this was. Mighty Godfiend Witherspike, however, had wandered the endless primordial chaos for many years. He understood quite well.

Advancing to become a World God represented a fundamental change in every single aspect. The difference between an Elder God and a World God was simply unfathomably vast. To make it so that even a World God couldn't catch up...it meant that the Lord of All Fiend's insights into the Dao must have reached an even more unfathomable level.

The Three Realms was now divided up into two major alliances.

The Nuwa Alliance...when Mother Nuwa left, she must have left some treasures and techniques behind for them. These things made this alien Outsider quite nervous.

The Seamless Gate...the person who worried him the most was the Lord of All Fiends.

He was wary of both sides, which was why he had never tried to attack the Three Realms. In fact, he had chosen to ally with the Seamless Gate instead.

“Well, enough of that.” The alien Outsider pointed towards the constantly looping images in midair. “See for yourself.”

Only now did Blackheaven turn his head to take a look, and when he did his face completely changed. That flashing black serpent of lightning, that white-robed youth who attempted to perform a soulscour...wasn't that Ji Ning?

“Ji Ning.” Blackheaven no longer had any trace of a smile on his face. Instead, it was ashen. “The [Ninehorn Lightning Serpent]? His true body isn't dead?”

“Oh, you noticed?” The alien Outsider chuckled. “Didn't the Seamless Gate claim that Ji Ning's true body was destroyed? And if I recall correctly, I think the Lord of All Fiends, Daomother Devilhand, and quite a few others joined forces to ensure it...but now, he's reappeared in the Darkstill world, seemingly with his true body.”

Celestial Immortal Blackheaven stared at the continuously looping images in the air. He forced down the rage and hatred he felt, then growled out, “Great Godfiend Witherspike, this was indeed our Seamless Gate's mistake. I've already reported this to my superiors...and I trust that Master will soon deliver an order to me.”

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Book 22: True God Chapter 9: All Slain in Battle

Celestial Blackheaven had many golem bodies that he could use. He was able to immediately send a message to the Lord of All Fiends, and the news was then quickly spread to Daomother Devilhand, the Godking, and the other high-level members of the Seamless Gate.

“What? He's not dead?” The black-robed Godking was the most stunned of them all. He simply couldn't accept this.

“Some sort of clone technique?” Keeper Everwood had been using a knife to whittle away at a piece of wood. When he heard the news, he frowned and began to mumble to himself.

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Deep within the Primordial Ruinworld, inside that vast castle.

Celestial Immortal Blackheaven said respectfully, "My Master said that this Ji Ning is a scourge. He hopes that when you deal with Tathagata and Fuxi, great Godfiend Witherspike, you will also deal with this Ji Ning as well.

"Oh?" The alien Outsider chuckled. "But now, it seems, this Ji Ning has a special cloning technique."

Blackheaven said hurriedly, "Even if he does, each time he restores his body he most assuredly has to pay an enormous price. Last time, when we destroyed his true body, Houyi ended up taking away his black lightning serpent as well as his other treasures. This time, if you can kill him, he'll lose all of those things. Without them, he will be dramatically weakened even if he does manage to rebuild his body once more."

"Why is it that I have the feeling that you particularly want Ji Ning to be killed?" The alien Outsider looked at Blackheaven, then let out a merry chuckle. "Blackheaven, how about this? If I kill him for you, why don't you teach me the technique for creating Envoys?"

"My old master made me swear a lifeblood oath long ago to teach it to no others," Blackheaven said.

He was a treasure-spirit, much like the giant yellow bear of the Starseizing Manor. He had long ago trained to the level of being able to live independently from the treasure which had housed him, and could be considered a true living creature now. Strictly speaking, he had actually learned the art of golems before the Lord of All Things did. The Lord of All Things had been lucky enough to acquire the Blackheaven Cauldron, which was why he also gained access to the ancient golem crafting arts contained within it. This caused his power to instantly skyrocket, resulting in him being an extremely famous figure even amongst Elder Gods. But alas, he had fallen during his campaign against the Pangu Chaosworld and the Seamless Chaosworld.

"Damn that man." The alien Outsider said coldly, "Tell your current master that Ji Ning has quite possibly reached the fifth stage of swordforce."

"The fifth stage of swordforce? How is that even possible? He's only trained for a few centuries!" Blackheaven was visibly shocked.

Ning's mastery of the [Five Treasures] could be ascribed to his peerless talent, but to reach the fifth stage of swordforce one had to have significant insights into the essence of the sword itself. This was something that required time, as well as many life-and-death battles against powerful experts. Only after seeing enough sword-arts and gaining enough experience would one even have a chance of reaching the fifth stage of swordforce.

"He's attacked my Primordial Ruinworld, so I really should kill him. However, I'm also doing the Seamless Gate's dirty work for them. We have borne all the casualties in the battles to date. We agreed on a price for me to deal with Tathagata and Fuxi, but if you want me to deal with Ji Ning...I'll need twelve chaos jewels."

"Twelve?" Celestial Immortal Blackheaven hesitated momentarily. The energy source for each Envoy consisted of five chaos jewels, which allowed them to be able to fight for a very long period of time. The other nine Envoys probably would consume less than a hundred chaos jewels during the entire Endwar.

“Master has responded. If Ji Ning truly has reached the fifth stage of swordforce, he will deliver twelve chaos jewels after you slay his true body,” Blackheaven said.

“Good. It’s always a pleasure doing business with Allfiend.”

The alien Outsider looked downwards at Thearch Darkstill. “Darkstill, send your subordinates to try and kill Ji Ning. If they cannot, make sure they at least verify whether or not he has reached the fifth stage of swordforce. Then move to guide him into a danger zone.”

“Yes, almighty Master,” Thearch Darkstill said respectfully, then departed.

“Damn.” In private, Thearch Darkstill now had an ugly look on his face. He had once been an important general of the Lord of All Things. Later, he had become one of the four mighty Thearchs that dominated the Primordial Ruinworld. He had the power of an elite Daofather! He wasn’t one whit weaker than those six retainers of Godfiend Witherspike. The only one he felt respect and admiration for was the one-armed man. As for the other five? Thearch Darkstill didn’t fear them in the slightest.

But...

Those retainers had followed Godfiend Witherspike for a very long period of time, and he held more faith in them. He was much more ruthless and brutal in the way he treated the four Thearchs, who had only submitted to him relatively recently.

“Sword Immortal Darknorth. Ji Ning. He clearly has the power of a True God and Daofather, but I’m still supposed to go ‘verify’ if he has reached the fifth stage of swordforce or not.” Thearch Darkstill frowned. “If I want to force Ji Ning to reveal his swordforce, I’ll need to send some of my more powerful subordinates. Ugh. Whenever there is a dangerous mission, he always has the four of us send our subordinates.”

Still, Thearch Darkstill understood the reason why. When mighty Godfiend Witherspike had fled to this place, he had only arrived with those six retainers in tow. He had no other subordinates at all, and so whenever there was a need for cannon fodder to be sent out he would naturally choose to send out the original inhabitants of the Primordial Ruinworld.

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The Darkstill world.

A large force of alien experts were flying through the air, each of whom had the power of an Emphyrean God. There had to be nearly three hundred of the creatures flying forward.

“Elder brother, when your group goes to fight against Sword Immortal Darknorth, you have to be careful. The Thearch said that Ji Ning may very well have reached the fifth stage of swordforce.” The two leaders of this force looked fairly similar. Both were dressed in silver robes, and they were mentally chatting to each other.

“Although my team has been assigned to kill Ji Ning, if he really has reached the fifth stage of swordforce all we have to do is flee. We don’t have to force a fight against him. If he really has reached that stage of power...it’ll be up to your team to guide him into the Forest of Dreams,” the taller silver-robed man sent back.

The Forest of Dreams was an extremely bizarre part of the Darkstill world.

Once you entered it, you would be trapped in multiple layers of illusions. You would feel as though you were dreaming! The illusions would come endlessly, and even True Gods or Daofathers would find it hard to extricate themselves. They would often be eternally trapped within the Forest of Dreams until finally the illusions killed them.

The most terrifying thing was...not even the denizens of the Darkstill world could be certain as to exactly where the Forest of Dreams was located. This was because the Forest's location was constantly changing. It was entirely possible that the seemingly ordinary-looking forest in front of you was actually the terrifying Forest of Dreams. However, since Thearch Darkstill was in command of this entire terrifying world, he naturally had his own ways of determining the exact location of the Forest.

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"Fuxi. Tathagata. Where are they?"

Ning stood there in midair. Spacetime was so chaotic that even his sense of directions had become scrambled.

He could no longer find any traces of Tathagata's passing, and in a place of such chaotic spacetime there was no way he could even use a temporal inversion spell.

"Master is telling me that Lord Buddha and the others should still be in the region of the Darkstill world. Screw it. I'll just choose a random direction and just keep flying forward." Ning immediately began to fly forwards, although he didn't dare fly too fast for fear of running into an enemy trap.

Shortly after he had entered the Primordial Ruinworld, Ning came to understand that the hardest part of conquering this region wasn't defeating the alien Outsiders here; rather, it lay in dealing with the terribly environment! No wonder all the aliens who lived here desired to invade the Three Realms. None of the aliens wanted to live in such terrifying, inhospitable environments.

"Eh?" Ning's pulse picked up slightly. He could sense an aura approaching.

After becoming a half-step Elder God, his soul had become far more powerful! His soul heartforce technique had only made his senses even more acute. Even when Daofathers moved towards Ning he would be able to sense their approach, much less the approach of Empyrean Gods and True Immortals.

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"Sword Immortal Darknorth should be somewhere in that region up ahead." A towering, eight-armed Fiendgod was carefully flying forwards. This eight-armed Fiendgod was the culmination of 199 alien Empyrean Gods joining together in the 'Eight-Armed Warfiend Formation'. It was one of the formations that had been left behind by the Lord of All Fiends. Truth be told, when Thearch Darkstill was forced to send out this many Empyrean God subordinates, he felt quite distressed.

This sort of formation was quite similar in nature to the Seven Planets God. However, the Seven Planets God only needed seven Empyrean Gods to execute, while this one was used by a total of 199 Empyrean Gods. It could unleash a degree of power close to that of an elite True God's. This could be considered a 'secret technique', and the wielders who learned the core parts of the formation were all forced to

swear lifeblood oaths not to teach it to any others. The person who was currently the 'core' of this particular formation was one of the warriors who had followed the Lord of All Things.

"I see him." The eight-armed Fiendgod had been searching for Ning. Suddenly, he saw in the distance a white-robed youth who was calmly standing in the air.

"You've arrived." The white-robed youth produced a sword in his hand. "Since you've come, there's no need for you to leave."

"Attack!" The eight-armed Fiendgod's aura surged explosively.

Ning, however, just sauntered forward lazily as though he was taking a stroll through a courtyard.

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"Thearch, all 199 of our warriors have died in battle." A look of grief was on the face of a golden-robed elder.

"None of them escaped?" Thearch Darkstill was incredulous. He barked out, "Show me the scenes of the battle!"

"They weren't able to send back any scenes in time," the golden-robed elder said.

"What?!" The Thearch was truly stunned now. How fast had Ji Ning killed them all, for not a single one of them to be able to send back a scene of their death?

"However, one of them trained in a special clone technique. His other clone is currently on assignment in a different region. I suggest ordering him to return immediately so that he can tell us what happened when they fought against Ji Ning," the yellow-robed elder said hurriedly. "We have to move quickly. If he somehow loses his clone as well, then we'll have no way of finding any information about that battle."

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Book 22: True God Chapter 10: Bugbeasts

Thearch Darkstill immediately gave the order for that soldier's clone to return.

A short while later.

"Thearch, Fuyou was stomped to death by Kuafu as he was trying to lure Kuafu away." A report quickly came from his subordinates.

"What?" Thearch Darkstill's face turned ugly.

For a number of Empyrean Gods to die during a time of war was nothing, but this particularly one was the only one who knew what had happened during the fight against Ji Ning. And now...he was dead. This meant that the 199 Empyrean Gods who had died in the battle against Ji Ning had died for nothing at all. No intelligence had been gained whatsoever.

"Kuafu!" Thearch Darkstill's face was black with rage.

"Where are those four squads currently located?" Thearch Darkstill asked.

The nearby golden-robed elder immediately waved his hand, causing an image to appear in midair. This was an enormous map of the Darkstill world. There were four specks of light on the map, and the golden-robed elder pointed towards one of the specks of light that was close to the edge. "This is the squad which Kuafu is leading. Kuafu, an ancient divinity of the Three Realms, possesses truly enormous power. I heard that when those ten Golden Crows wreaked havoc upon the ancient Pangu Chaosworld, Kuafu chased after them so furiously that all ten of them were terrified by him. None of them dared to turn back and fight against him. From our fights against Kuafu's squad, I can say for certain that Kuafu is indeed astonishingly powerful and is quite close to an Elder God in strength." 1

"Agreed." Thearch Darkstill nodded.

Houyi and Kuafu were once equally famous during the Primordial Era. By now, Houyi was publicly acknowledged to be unfathomably strong and being at least at the overlord level of power. As for Kuafu, he was a bit weaker but was still quite close to the overlord level of power as well, and he was an extremely valiant warrior who was extremely skilled in combat.

"This squad here is the squad led by Human Sovereign Fuxi. This is the toughest squad to deal with. Fuxi has been able to easily see through our traps and formations, and even when he enters them he can easily break them apart from within." The golden-robed elder continued, "That's why we are temporarily focusing on the other three squads right now."

"Here." The golden-robed elder pointed at yet another speck of light. "This is the squad led by the leader of the Buddhist Sangha, Tathagata. It is just as dangerous as Fuxi's squad is."

"And here. This final squad is led by Daoist Jade Cauldron of the Daoist Path. Daoist Jade Cauldron possessed formidable divine abilities and has reached the fifth stage of swordforce. He definitely isn't an easy person to deal with either." The golden-robed figure pointed at the final speck of light as he spoke.

Thearch Darkstill frowned as he heard this. Two of the squads sent out by the Three Realms were led by overlords Tathagata and Fuxi. The other two were led by Kuafu and Daoist Jade Cauldron, who were close to the overlord level of power as well. There were multiple elite Daofathers in their teams, as well as a few ordinary Daofathers who knew certain special techniques.

Daoist Jade Cauldron was a fairly low-key figure, but he was still viewed as one of the top two figures under the command of Daoist Three Purities. He also had an extremely famous disciple of his own, the number one general of the Celestial Court during the Primordial Era...Erlang Shen, also known as Yang Jian. 2

"And where is Ji Ning?" Thearch Darkstill asked.

"Sword Immortal Darknorth is here." The golden-robed elder pointed to a corner of the map where another speck of light had appeared. "He is closest to Kuafu's squad."

"Oh?" Thearch Darkstill nodded.

"Thearch!" A gray-robed subordinate charged into the room, then said frantically, "Our clansman Floatstone's squad attempted to lure Ji Ning into the Forest of Dreams, but his senses were simply too keen. As soon as the squad drew close to him, he immediately discovered them and then killed them. There's no way to lure him away from far away, but whenever our people get close he kills them!"

Thearch Darkstill frowned. "The terrain is to our advantage, but we still aren't able to lure him into the places we want him to go? Are his senses really that keen?"

But of course, he had no idea that Ning was now a half-step Elder God. His soul was incredibly powerful and acute!

"Have them stay away from Ji Ning for now," Thearch Darkstill instructed. "Go."

"Yes." The subordinate hurriedly departed.

"Thearch." The golden-robed elder looked towards Thearch Darkstill. "Ji Ning is not an easy person to deal with. Even our 'Eight-Armed Warfiend Formation' was effortlessly annihilated by him. He is at least as powerful as an elite Daofather. We can tell from this alone that he has reached the fifth stage of swordforce."

"No." Sovereign Thearch shook his head. "There's many possible reasons why he was able to destroy their formation. For example, it's possible that he's broken through to become a True God. It's also possible that he's travelling with allies, that he's brought other major powers of the Nuwa Alliance with him; it could've been those allies that destroyed the formation. We can't speculate wildly before even seeing the records of that battle."

"But not even the Eight-Armed Warfiend was able to send back any information..." The golden-robed elder felt sorrowful for their losses. "Godfiend Witherspike is commanding many different forces to deal with Tathagata, Fuxi, Kuafu, and Daoist Jade Cauldron, but we are forced to deal with Ji Ning by ourselves. Far too many members of our race have died."

"I will go test out Ji Ning's skills in person." An icy gray light flashed through the eyes of Thearch Darkstill.

"Thearch, you must not!" The golden-robed elder cried out hurriedly.

"I'll personally test him out, but I'll do it via sending my mind to directly descend upon one of my children," Thearch Darkstill said calmly. "Don't worry. I won't risk myself without a good reason."

The golden-robed elder let out a sigh of relief.

Thearch Darkstill waved his hand. Instantly, nine mountain-sized freaks suddenly appeared in the hall next to him. There was a stone giant, an eight-legged beetle, a two-headed serpent...all of them had powerful auras on the level of a Daofather.

"I've spent countless years in order to rear these bugbeasts and make them become as powerful as a True God. I didn't expect that a Sword Immortal who has trained for less than a thousand years would be capable of forcing me to use them." Thearch Darkstill looked at the bugbeasts, and then let out friendly keening calls in response. It was as though they viewed Thearch Darkstill as their parent.

There were actually quite a few techniques in the primordial chaos that were meant for rearing bugbeasts. Strictly speaking, the [Nine Bug Solutions] which Youngflame Freak had acquired and used was actually even more profound than the technique which Thearch Darkstill used. However, Youngflame Freak was just far too weak. He was only able to make use of a tiny part of the true technique.

“When these nine children of mine fight against Ji Ning, I’ll send my mind and soul with them. Whatever they experience, I’ll experience as well. I’ll be able to get a clear sense of what Ji Ning’s skills are,” Thearch Darkstill said.

“You are going to send out all nine bugbeasts?” The golden-robed elder felt a bit of heartache. “Three should be enough, right?”

“Best to be cautious. We’ve already failed once. We cannot fail again.” Thearch Darkstill sent out his will, causing the nine bugbeasts to once more screech in response. They then soared into the air, quickly disappearing into the emptiness of space towards Ji Ning’s direction.

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The distorted, scrambled spacetime in this area was of no threat to injure Ning. His soul was so powerful that he could sense which places posed a threat to him and which places were safe.

Swoosh. As he flew forward, his eyes suddenly lit up. A dazzling beautiful lake had just appeared before him, and there was a little island in the center of the lake which was filled with wild grass.

“I didn’t expect such a beautiful place to exist within a region of such chaotic spacetime.” Ning’s heartforce had spread out to cover an area of tens of thousands of kilometers, and it was rippling out in waves to scan every single inch of the region. He verified that it wasn’t a trap, then flew straight down to the island and sat down. He pulled out a flagon of wine, then leaned back and took a sip for himself.

He looked rather relaxed, but in truth Ning was trying to decide what his next step should be.

“Ever since I entered the Darkstill world, I’ve been attacked by alien Outsiders every so often. They keep on challenging me, and they are very familiar with the local environment. They seem to know exactly where I am as well.” Ning frowned. This was quite an uncomfortable feeling, to not know where the enemy was but have the enemy know exactly where he was.

There was nothing for it. The reason why the Three Realms had never launched an actual assault against the Primordial Ruinworld was in large part due to how inhospitable the environment here was. This place was very hard to invade.

“The Darkstill world isn’t even that big. So long as I visit enough places, sooner or later I’ll sense some energy ripples and be able to locate one of the other four squads.” Ning suddenly frowned and turned to look towards the distance.

“Eh?”

“Here as well?”

“And there as well?”

Ning looked towards all eight directions from his position on the island. He could sense multiple auras approaching at high speed from different directions. He hurriedly rose to his feet, producing a Darknorth sword in his hand.

“Grwaaaaar!” Accompanied by a growl, an azure beetle that had a pair of wings on its back suddenly appeared from a distorted region of spacetime that was more than ten thousand kilometers away. Its golden eyes stared fixedly towards Ning.

“Hissssss.” A giant, two-headed black serpent emerged from another part of the skies.

One bugbeast after another appeared, each of which had the aura of a True God.

Ning murmured softly to himself, “Bugbeasts?” Ning had learned multiple bugbeast-rearing techniques, both from stone steles of the prisonworld as well as from the techniques passed down by World God Northrest. There were many major powers in the primordial chaos who trained in these types of techniques. This was because major powers tended to live for a very long period of time. When they reached a bottleneck and were unable to grow stronger, they would divert a bit of their attention towards rearing powerful bugbeasts. These bugbeasts would be absolutely loyal and devoted towards them, and there was no chance of betrayal at all. They could be used to scout dangerous areas, or even block a critical blow meant for their master. There were many, many uses for such creatures.

1. Kuafu was mentioned long ago in the story via the mention of the divine ability, ‘Kuafu Sunchaser’.
2. As mentioned before, this is a famous figure from Journey to the West, someone who fought Sun Wukong to a standstill when he assaulted the Celestial Court.

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Book 22: True God Chapter 11: Sword Peacock

If you were lucky, you might end up rearing a bugbeast that was even more powerful than you!

Bugbeasts possessed low levels of intelligence, and they were far inferior to cultivators in terms of their insights into the Dao. However, this was precisely why it was fairly easy to upgrade them. Their most powerful weapons were their massive, powerful bodies.

“Grwaaaaar!” The nine bugbeasts were attacking from nine different directions. They were tens of thousands of kilometers away from Ji Ning, and they all shrieked, roared, and screeched as they stared at him.

Ning stood atop the island. He swept them with his gaze, then chuckled loudly. “I wonder which ‘major power’ is so terrified that he doesn’t dare to come in person and instead sends a few bugs over.”

Thearch Darkstill, whose mind and soul was riding with these nine bugbeasts, became rather angry upon hearing this.

“My children are more than enough to kill you.” The bugbeast shaped like a stone giant roared angrily. Deep under the cracked parts of its stony exterior, flesh and blood could be seen.

“Oh? Is that so?” Ning made his move.

Swish! A black lightning serpent flashed through the skies. A distance of just ten or twenty thousand kilometers was no distance at all to Ning; for him, travelling such a distance was as easy as taking a single step was for an ordinary mortal. He immediately appeared before the stone giant, and as he arrived an icy-cold streak of sword-light descended as well.

“Damn you.” The stone giant brandished his enormous club-like hands, smashing at Ning with them and completely ignoring Ning’s attack.

“Attack!” The other eight bugbeasts flew towards him as well. But suddenly...

Snick. Snick. Snick.

The sword-light flashed back to Ning’s side. Ning stood there calmly in front of the stone giant. The stone giant’s fists were just about to land upon Ning, but suddenly it froze. It stood there blankly for a moment, and then...its neck, chest, and flank all split apart. Its body was chopped apart into four evenly sized pieces, and the four pieces all began to fall downwards. Ning’s sword-light had completely snuffed out the stone giant’s life. In fact, Ning didn’t even use the rainbow-colored swordforce; against a foe of this level, there was no need to use it at all.

“What? He’s this powerful, even without using any swordforce at all? This sword-art definitely is something that only an expert who has mastered fifth-stage swordforce can come up with. There’s no mistaking it.” Thearch Darkstill instantly became certain of this. Ji Ning hadn’t used rainbow-colored swordforce, but this was precisely why he was terrifying.

“Flee.” The eight bugbeasts that had been charging towards Ning hurriedly began to scatter every which way.

“You want to run?” Ning’s gaze turned cold. Although he possessed the [Ninehorn Lightning Serpent] technique, these eight bugbeasts were all fleeing in a different direction, and they would soon disappear into a field of chaotic spacetime.

“Arise.” Ning pointed a finger up towards the skies.

Rumble...

The skies suddenly turned dark. Streaks of rainbow-colored sword-light began to manifest in the area, and in just an instant the entire region seemed to have transformed into a world of rainbow-colored swordlight. This was a world of the sword.

The eight bugbeasts stared as the heavens and the earth around them suddenly transformed into a world of rainbow-colored sword-light. All of them were terrified. Thearch Darkstill, whose spirit was riding with them, immediately urged them to flee! Thearch Darkstill had already guessed that Ji Ning had reached the fifth stage of swordforce, which was why he wasn’t surprised at all. “Hmph. So what if he can manifest a world of the sword? This is a large-scale technique, yes, but that means that the technique will be fairly weak. Every single streak of sword-light is quite feeble; there’s no way it will be able to harm my children.”

“Sword Peacock!” Ning murmured these words softly, but his voice was like the voice of Heaven and Earth. When he spoke, his words resonated throughout this region as though an edict had just been proclaimed.

The brilliant rainbow-colored swordlight filling the area instantly began to merge together, forming a sight that looked like flower buds blooming or like a peacock displaying its feathers.

Whooooooosh.

The sword-light radiated an arcane intent as it swept forward, and the countless streaks of rainbow sword-light solidified into a total of 1001 peacock feathers, so dazzling and beautiful that one couldn't help but feel intoxicated by them.

The eight fleeing bugbeasts didn't have any chance to escape at all. The terrifying sword-light passed right through them...and then their bodies completely crumbled apart, all life extinguished.

All nine of the bugbeasts had been slain!

"The seven sword-stances of [Sword-Heaven-Earth] truly are extraordinarily powerful." Ning nodded slightly.

This technique was not a technique he had created himself.

His own original creation was the [Brightmoon] sword-art, a sword-art which was meant for battling against foes in close combat. All of its techniques, including 'Heavenbreaker', 'Blood Drop', and 'Shadowless' were meant for dueling.

The seven sword-stances of [Sword-Heaven-Earth], however, were techniques that were meant for massacring weaker foes on a vast scale. They involved using a large amount of swordforce in order to massacre the enemies! This sort of technique was extremely effective against numerous weaker foes, but it was much less effective against someone who was comparable in strength to you. For that situation, the [Brightmoon] sword-art was still better.

Sometimes, sufficiently large quantities of cannon fodder could have an impact on the overall flow of a battle. Using a sword-art like [Sword-Heaven-Earth] against them could be quite effective. Ning had no desire to come up with such a butcher's technique on his own, but he had discovered [Sword-Heaven-Earth] amongst the ninety-eight sword techniques inscribed on those stone steles left behind by World God Northrest.

Just now, Ning used the second stance of [Sword-Heaven-Earth], 'Sword Peacock'.

"Daofather-level bugbeasts like them..." Ning shook his head, then took a single step forward and flew into the skies. He once more disappeared into space, advancing forward in the hopes of joining together with the other squads.

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The ancestral grounds of the Darkstill world.

"What a terrifying sword-art." Thearch Darkstill was still engrossed in pondering the dazzling sword-art he had just seen, the one which had looked like a peacock spreading its feathers. He was an elite Daofather, after all, and so he was able to see exactly how terrifying that beautiful sword-art was.

It must be understood that even when Daofathers used magic treasures, they had to send those magic treasures flying off into the distance to assault their foes. This sword-art, however, used rainbow-colored swordforce as its underlying power source. With a thought, the wielder was able to fill an extremely wide swathe of land with the swordforce while maintaining a terrifying level of power.

"Dazzling."

“Arcane.

“Shockingly sharp.”

Thearch Darkstill was completely stunned. “When I followed the Lord of All Things, I went to quite a few places within the primordial chaos...but this is the first time I’ve ever seen such a dazzling, beautiful sword-art. This sword-art alone is profound enough to be proclaimed the number one sword-art of the Three Realms. Terrifying. This sword-art is utterly terrifying.”

Of course, he had no idea that this was something which World God Northrest, someone who stood at the very peak of power amongst World Gods, had come up with after meditating on the nameless sword-art he had acquired. Even other World Gods would be amazed by this technique, to say nothing of a mere True God such as Thearch Darkstill.

“It won’t be easy to deceive an expert like this. To lure him into the Forest of Dreams will be far too difficult. In addition...the Forest might not be able to hold him.” Thearch Darkstill had personally witnessed that last sword-art, after all. He now had a much higher opinion of Ji Ning than before. In his heart, Ji Ning was now considered an even more terrifying figure than Daoist Jade Cauldron.

“How could he have come up with a sword-art like this?” Thearch Darkstill couldn’t help but ask himself this question. “Well...I need to go see Godfiend Witherspike right away.”

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Deep within the Primordial Ruinworld. Within the dark golden castle.

Witherspike remained seated atop his throne, relaxing as he stared at four different scenes that were playing out in the air before him. These scenes were of Kuafu, Daoist Jade Cauldron, Tathagata, and Fuxi as they fought in combat.

“The Nuwa Alliance really is powerful...and this should just be part of their total strength.” He couldn’t help but let out a sigh.

“The bulk of their forces remain in the Three Realm, unwilling to leave their headquarters. If they did, our Seamless Gate would absolutely wreck their worlds and their headquarters.” Celestial Immortal Blackheaven let out a chuckle.

“Anyone who is skilled in formations is a monster as far as I am concerned. This Fuxi fellow, and that Keeper Everwood of your Seamless Gate...ugh. I really don’t understand. How did they end up developing such troublesome and complicated formations?” The alien Outsider couldn’t help but let out another sigh. “I don’t have any interest in developing formations myself. Personal power is what matters the most, as far as I am concerned.”

“Almighty Master.” A voice rang out from outside.

The alien Outsider was startled, but Celestial Immortal Blackheaven let out a laugh. “Thearch Darkstill has arrived. It seems we are going to hear some good news.”

“Darkstill is quite reliable when taking on missions.” The alien Outsider glanced calmly towards the outside. Soon, Thearch Darkstill arrived before him, hurriedly falling to his knees with respect. “Master,

as you ordered I did my best to either slay Ji Ning or lure him into the Forest of Dreams. However...Ji Ning is simply far too powerful. Your subordinate is truly incapable of this."

"Too powerful?" The nearby Celestial Immortal Blackheaven frowned. "He's a young fellow who has trained for less than a thousand years. How powerful could he possibly be?"

"Your subordinate sent the 'Eight-Armed Warfiend Formation' to deal with Ji Ning, but all 199 Emyrean Gods of the formation perished in battle without even being able to send any information back," Thearch Darkstill said. "Ji Ning is extremely cautious. There's no way for any of my minions to get close to him or to lure him anywhere."

The seated alien Outsider frowned. "Has he reached the fifth stage of swordforce?"

"Master, your subordinate sent nine bugbeasts to deal with Ji Ning. Would you like to see the results of that battle?" Thearch Darkstill asked.

"Yes." The alien Outsider nodded.

Thearch Darkstill immediately pointed towards the empty air next to him. Scenes of the battle instantly appeared and began to play in empty air. This was what Thearch Darkstill had personally witnessed just now.

The entire hall was completely silent. Everyone was focused on the battle.

The nine bugbeasts appeared. Ji Ning rose to his feet and drew his sword.

His sword struck out, and a bugbeast was split apart into four pieces. The alien Outsider nodded and pronounced his judgment. "This sword-art is indeed proof that he has reached the fifth stage of swordforce."

The eight bugbeasts began to flee in different directions. Ji Ning pointed towards the heavens, causing a boundless amount of swordforce to descend and forming an entire world of swordforce. Then, he used a horrifying sword-art to massacre the bugbeasts...'Sword Peacock'!

It was like a peacock spreading its feathers. It was a dazzlingly beautiful scene, and one which caused all the powerful figures in the hall to turn completely silent.

Only a long moment later did the seated alien Outsider let out a soft sigh. "How beautiful. What a beautiful sword. It has been a long time since I've seen such a beautiful sword-art. The last time I did see such a sword-art was when I was at the city of Hillfall, where I saw distant Chaos Immortals battling in the sky. That was the only time I've ever seen such beautiful sword-arts. He truly is the number one Sword Immortal of your Three Realms. This reputation...it is completely deserved!"

All the figures present nodded. This sword-art was a technique for committing butchery, but it was also an intoxicatingly beautiful technique.

"How could it be this powerful? How did he become even more powerful than he was back when he was in the Deerchaser world?" Celestial Immortal Blackheaven found this all quite hard to accept. "Back then, he still had to rely on the Envoy. Now, all by himself and when using just a single sword, he is able to unleash such tremendous power."

“Master, I have something to report.” Thearch Darkstill’s face suddenly changed.

“What is it?” The alien Outsider frowned. He had been entranced by the beauty of that sword-art; naturally, he was quite unhappy to be roused from his reverie.

Thearch Darkstill said hurriedly, “After Ji Ning slew my nine bugbeasts, he continued to advance. He’s now sensed ripples emanating from a battle which Kuafu’s squad is engaged in. He’s moving towards Kuafu’s squad at high speed and is going to join with them soon.”

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Book 22: True God Chapter 12: Joining Together

“He’s about to join together with Kuafu’s squad?” The alien Outsider drummed on the throne’s armrest with his fingers, then smiled as he looked at Celestial Immortal Blackheaven. “Blackheaven, Ji Ning truly is the undisputed number one Sword Immortal of the Three Realms. This sword-art alone ensures that there’s no way those useless minions of mine can deal with him. Even by himself, he’s very hard to deal with. Once he joins together with Kuafu, it’ll be even harder to deal with him. There’s nothing I can do. If the Seamless Gate wishes to stop him, I suggest you hurry.”

Blackheaven said hurriedly, “The strategy we agreed upon with you, Godfiend, was that we would make use of the inhospitable environment of the Primordial Ruinworld to kill as many of the True Gods and Daofathers of the Three Realms as possible. It isn’t time for the Seamless Gate to attack yet. Once we do, the Endwar shall immediately begin.”

“Hmph. Then we are out of options,” the alien Outsider said calmly.

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The Three Realms. Within a palace in the Allfiend world.

Sixteen True Gods and Daofathers were here, including the Lord of All Fiends, Keeper Everwood, Daomother Devilhand, the black-robed Godking, Daofather Netherjade, and others. Some had sent their true bodies, with others manifesting incarnations. The weakest figure present was still an elite Daofather.

“Master.” A voice rang out from outside.

“Blackheaven. Come in,” the Lord of All Fiends said.

Celestial Immortal Blackheaven entered, then said respectfully, “We just received a new intelligence report from the Primordial Ruinworlds.”

The seated True Gods and Daofathers all looked towards Blackheaven. The Lord of All Fiends said, “Speak.”

“Master, please take a look.” Celestial Immortal Blackheaven pointed towards an empty space nearby. Instantly, scenes of a battle began to be displayed. It was the battle between Ji Ning and those nine bugbeasts. After watching the scene, Blackheaven was naturally able to reproduce it for the benefit of others.

“Ji Ning?”

“Ji Ning’s fighting against nine bugbeasts. From the looks of them, those bugbeasts should be quite powerful, at the level of True Gods.”

The major powers were paying close to attention to this fight. When they saw Ning easily slay a bugbeast with just a single sword-strike, they simply frowned. But when ‘Sword Peacock’ was displayed, all the major powers in the hall were stunned. In fact, looks of absolute rapture could be seen in the eyes of Daomother Devilhand and a few other Daofathers as she saw the beautiful technique.

“What a beautiful sword-art.” Daomother Devilhand let out a soft sigh. “It really is beautiful.”

“What a terrifying sword-art.” Keeper Everwood nodded as well.

“This is just a area-of-effect sword-art Ji Ning uses to attack a host of weaker foes. His close-combat skills are undoubtedly even more terrifying. He was able to easily kill that bugbeast without even using his rainbow swordforce; this means that strike just revealed a tiny portion of his true power.” The Lord of All Fiend became even more solemn. “Sword Immortal Darknorth of the Nuwa Alliance has now become one of our major foes. He’s no weaker than Daofather Fujū was!”

“He’s trained for a shorter period of time than Daofather Fujū had,” Keeper Everwood said. “He’s trained for less than a thousand years, but has reached such a level of power.”

“The efforts of our ‘Godking’ really were quite indispensable in helping Ji Ning to train so quickly,” Daomother Devilhand said mockingly as she glanced sideways at the ashen-faced Godking.

The black-robed Godking was filled with sullen resentment. When he saw that lovely sword-strike, even he felt uncontrollably mesmerized by it. It was simply too beautiful.

The next moment, however, he remember that the person who had displayed that sword-strike was Ji Ning. Ji Ning was once a minor figure who he held in complete contempt, so much so that the Godking didn’t even care that much about using Yu Wei as a chess piece. Who would’ve thought that this minor figure would have become even more powerful than him! Although he didn’t want to admit it, he knew quite well that Ji Ning no longer needed to use any formations to fight with him. That sword-strike alone was proof that Ji Ning had vastly surpassed him. This sword-art alone ensured that Ji Ning was very close to the overlord level of power!

“No one could’ve imagined that Ji Ning would advance so rapidly. The actions the Godking took against him, such as the destruction of Yu Wei’s soul...normally speaking, those actions should’ve cast a shadow over his heart and perhaps even thrown him into an eternal stupor, never to advance any further. The Godking’s actions weren’t wrong. Ji Ning...Ji Ning is simply too much of a monster,” Daofather Augur said with a laugh.

“A shadow over his heart?” Daomother Devilhand shook her head. “I heard that during the Crimsonbright Realmwar, this dear Godking of ours tried to force Ji Ning to choose to join us. Instead, he broke through to the fourth stage of heartforce in the blink of an eye. This time, our Godking went straight to killing Yu Wei’s soul...and in yet another blink of an eye, Ji Ning’s nearly become an overlord-class figure. Last time in the Deerchaser world, Ji Ning had to rely on the Rahu Formation and his Envoy in order to reach this level of power. This time, he no longer has to rely on any external sources of help.”

“Godking.” Daomother Devilhand turned and smiled at him. “Some people are irrepressible. You simply can’t beat them down. The more you pressure you place upon them, the more dazzling their performance shall be. Ji Ning is one such person.”

“Thank you for your lesson, aunt-master.” The black-robed Godking bowed towards her.

“Ji Ning has already turned into a serious problem for us.” The Lord of All Fiends looked at the others, then instructed, “Blackheaven, keep a close eye on him in the Primordial Ruinworld. If you can find a chance to kill him there, do so.”

“Yes,” Celestial Immortal Blackheaven assented respectfully.

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The Primordial Ruinworld. The Darkstill world.

A titanic foot that was tens of thousands of kilometers in size pierced through the skies, slamming downwards towards the land. Mountains and rivers alike were completely crushed and flattened by this foot as an enormous footprint was gouged into the earth.

The giant foot then quickly shrank in size, and a bare-chested, muscular man who was dressed in a fur loincloth appeared. He laughed loudly, “Ahaha, these dogshit formations sure are a pain in the ass. They seem so mysterious and profound, but when I put my foot down even the earth itself is blasted apart. Doesn’t that wreck those formations perfectly?”

“The ones you can destroy are all the weaker ones.” A golden-robed woman with draconic horns on her head laughed as she walked towards him.

“That was a bit anticlimactic. I wanted to spend a bit more time studying the mysteries of this formation.” A handsome, silver-haired, fan-wielding youth shook his head.

“Kuafu took advantage of the fact that he runs faster than me. Otherwise, I would’ve split that formation apart with a blow of my axe.” A massive headless Fiendgod walked next to them as well. This headless Fiendgod was bare-chested as well, but he had eyes where his nipples should have been and a mouth where his belly button should have been. His belly-mouth was speaking rather unhappily.

“Xingtian, I didn’t ‘run’ per se. I just stretched my leg out and stepped on that dogshit formation.” The muscular man holding a wooden staff in his hands was Kuafu. Kuafu laughed smugly, and he even twiddled his toes a bit.

The six Fiendgods chatted and joked amongst themselves as they continued to cause destruction. Deadly formations? Screw’em. They’d first give them a chop of the axe or a good hard stomping.

When the six of them worked together, their actions were straightforward and brutal.

“Eh?” The handsome, fan-wielding youth’s face changed slightly as he turned to look off into the distance. “Something’s happening?”

The other five Fiendgods, upon hearing his words, all grew careful as they turned over as well. They knew very well that although their good friend ‘Windfate’ was an ordinary Daofather, his senses were incredibly acute. He could use the wind to sense many things which others could not sense. In fact, he

was also very skilled at scrying on the workings of fate itself, which was why he was known as Daofather Windfate. In this squad, he was the best detector of danger; without him, these brutish figures would've easily been drawn into dangerous, trap-filled regions.

Swoosh. A black lightning serpent was flying towards them from afar.

"A Ninehorn Lightning Serpent?" Upon seeing the black serpent, all of them relaxed slightly.

"It's Sword Immortal Darknorth, Ji Ning." Xingtian laughed. "The only person who can use this [Ninehorn Lightning Serpent] technique in the Three Realms should be Ji Ning. But...it's a bit odd. Wasn't his true body destroyed by the Seamless Gate?"

"Patriarch Subhuti told me that Ji Ning would come, but I didn't expect him to come using the [Ninehorn Lightning Serpent]," a soft, gentle-looking maiden said.

Ning's figure appeared in midair above them, then began to descend.

"Ji Ning."

"Darknorth."

The six Fiendgods walked towards him in a very friendly manner.

"Respectful greetings to you," Ning said hurriedly. He had something of a friendship with Xingtian the Heaven Punisher long ago, thanks to the latter permitting him to use the 'Heaven Punisher Formation'. As for the other five, he had met four of them before. It was back when Exalted Celestial Thundergod and some other major powers had sought to learn the [Ninehorn Lightning Serpent] technique from him; back then, a large group of major powers had congregated around him.

True God Xingtian laughed. "Ji Ning, let me make the introductions. This fellow here is Kuafu, a barbarian who has warts for brains."

"You make it sound like you are very refined and gentile," Kuafu said with a laugh.

"Kuafu actually knows the word 'gentile'? How unexpected." The fan-wielding Daofather Windfate chortled.

"Ji Ning, Subhuti told me that you'd be coming. Not bad, not bad...it seems your true body is in perfect shape." Kuafu reached out with his hand and patted Ning on the shoulders.

Xingtian continued with the introductions. "This is Daofather Windfate."

Daofather Windfate folded his fan, then nodded and smiled at Ning.

"This is Empress Xi." Kuafu pointed at the dragon-horned woman dressed in golden robes.

Ning nodded. Empress Xi was also a Fiendgod. She was actually the grand-daughter of the Ancestor Dragon. The Ancestor Dragon had nine sons. One of them, the Bi'an Tiger, had a daughter who he named Xi. No one expected that Xi would actually prove to be even more formidable than her father, and she eventually became an elite Daofather.

"This is Luwu." Xingtian pointed at the honest-looking man.

“True God Luwu.” Ning greeted him.

Luwu smiled. He looked like the honest, straightforward man he was. He had become an Empyrean God long ago, and he had served as a guard for quite a few different major powers. In fact, he had once been a guard and general for the Celestial Emperor which Xingtian had slain. When Xingtian had assaulted the Celestial Court, Luwu had attempted to stop him, only to fail.

After that great battle, Xingtian had finally made his breakthrough to become a True God. A few years later, however, the low-key Luwu had also silently, soundlessly broken through to become a True God.

“This is Graceful Peacock.” Xingtian pointed at the gentle-looking maiden. “She has four clones, and one of them is in each squad. This makes it easier for our squads to communicate with each other.”

“Greetings to you, Daomother Graceful Peacock,” Ning said.

Graceful Peacock had an extremely formidable elder brother, Mahamayuri of the Buddhist Sangha. During the Primordial Era, he had become a figure who was close to the overlord level of power. His savage reputation was known throughout the Primordial Era, but in this day and age he rarely showed himself. 1

Both Graceful Peacock and Mahamayuri were the children of the deceased Elder God known as the ‘Phoenix’.

Although Graceful Peacock was merely an ordinary Daomother, she had been able to cultivate her five peacock feathers into five separate clones, each of which had bodies like top-grade Protocosmic spirit-treasures that were completely unbreakable. She usually sent those clones out to adventure, while her true body was kept safe in the legendary Phoenix Palace.

“We’ve sent a total of four squads to destroy the Primordial Ruinworlds,” Kuafu said with a loud laugh. “Our squad completely consists of Fiendgods – Myself, Empress Xi, Windfate, Graceful Peacock, and Luwu. Lord Tathagata the Buddha is commanding a squad that is completely composed of Buddhas of the Buddhist Sangha; their squad has four total! Fuxi’s squad also has four members, each of whom is a major power of the human race. The final squad is led by Daoist Jade Cauldron, which consists of seven True Gods and Daofathers of the Daoist Path.”

“Now that you’ve joined us...hm. We’ve already decided upon a joint combination formation that we are using. I’m not exactly sure how we should work you into it.” Kuafu pondered on this matter.

These Daofather squads all came equipped with formations, so as to be able to unleash tremendous power in battle.

“How about this?” Xingtian said. “Ji Ning, just follow us. If you encounter anything dangerous, just stay inside our formation for now. We don’t have enough time to alter the formation for you right now.”

“Understood.” Ning nodded.

In truth, Xingtian and Kuafu were speaking in quite a delicate, tactful manner. Because all six of them were True Gods, when they unleashed their formation they were able to do in a very perfect manner. But now, Ji Ning had suddenly appeared. As they saw it, he was just an Empyrean God. He might have

some special techniques, but if everyone else in the formation had True God divine power while Ning only had Empyrean God divine power, an imbalance would occur.

Ning had his own concerns as well. Xingtian and the others all had True God power, while he himself was a half-step Elder God. His divine power was even purer than theirs. If he joined their formation, it truly would cause an imbalance. It probably was indeed better for him to act independently for now.

“Be careful and stay close to us. The Primordial Ruinworld isn’t easy to deal with,” Kuafu advised. He actually cared quite deeply about Ji Ning, as Ji Ning had rendered tremendous merits to the Nuwa Alliance. However, Kuafu was quite puzzled as well...why had Ji Ning even come? Didn’t he know that he would just be slowing them down? Still, this question really wasn’t very appropriate to actually voice.

“I won’t cause any trouble.” Ning nodded.

“Alright. Let’s head out.” Kuafu gave the order, and the group of seven began to advance once more, smashing through all impediments that sought to bar their path.

1. Mahamayuri is also known as the Peacock Wisdom King, and is often shown as being or riding a peacock.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 22: True God Chapter 13: A Dangerous Zone

Whoosh! The squad continued to fly forwards, smashing through all obstacles. Even if they did encounter any problems, Kuafu would stretch out his massive leg across tens of thousands of kilometers and flatten anything in front of them.

When Ji Ning had been travelling alone, he had suffered occasional attacks from the likes of the nine bugbeasts and the Fiendgod formation, but now that he was alongside Kuafu and the rest of the True Gods things were much simpler.

“Does this feel easy?” Xingtian and Ning were flying shoulder-to-shoulder atop a cloud, and he smiled as he asked Ning this question.

Ning glanced at Xingtian’s belly-mouth. He was quite calm; he himself had once commanded a Heaven Punisher Formation before, after all. Laughing, Ning replied, “Yes. I haven’t even had a chance to fight.”

“Kuafu is the fastest person here. None of us can overtake him.” Xingtian chuckled. “And you should know that the alien Outsiders of the Primordial Ruinworld are weaker than the experts of the Three Realms to begin with. This is why they simply don’t dare to fight against us head-on when we attack. Their only recourse is to use some of the more dangerous features of the local terrain to deal with us. The Darkstill world, however, is one of the top-ranked worlds of the Primordial Ruinworld. Worlds like the Darkstill world that were taken over by powerful races are actually the least dangerous worlds of all.”

Ning nodded. It made sense. The powerful races would want to take over the best places to live. The truly deadly places weren’t suitable for life to flourish. The Three Realms, for example, was a wonderful place to live, but it had been taken over by the Nuwa Alliance and the Seamless Gate.

“That’s why we can be fairly relaxed here at the Darkstill world. Once we reach some truly dangerous worlds, however, things will become much tenser.” Xingtian instructed, “When the time comes, you’ll need to be very careful. There are some extremely dangerous regions which will spell guaranteed doom for even overlord-class Daofathers who are trapped within them.”

“Understood,” Ning replied solemnly.

It was very true that there were some places which would spell certain doom for even overlords!

The Primordial Ruinworld had ten famous danger zones, and the ‘Voidsea’ was ranked first and foremost amongst the ten.

The ‘waters’ of the Voidsea consisted of countless shattered pieces of voidspace. The pieces of voidspace all clashed against each other, generating terrifying levels of destructive power. Even top-grade Protocosmic spirit-treasures would be ground to dust by them! Only Chaos treasures would withstand their destructive force.

To this day, no one had ever dared to enter the Voidsea and face that terrifying destructive force. Not even Mother Nuwa had ever given it a try. Perhaps she gained the power to survive it after becoming a World God, but why would she be willing to take on such an unnecessary risk?

The squad continued to advance. Two days later.

“Eh?” Ning stared downwards. There was an enormous city of buildings beneath them. There were even some dazzlingly beautiful palaces amongst the strange alien edifices, but all of them were in wretched condition. Many of those buildings had clearly been chopped or blasted apart.

Kuafu glanced downwards, then let out a loud laugh. “Judging from those sword-scars, Daoist Jade Cauldron must have come here. He’s quite fast.”

“It was indeed Daoist Jade Cauldron’s squad which destroyed this ancestral homeland of the Darkstill race,” Graceful Peacock said. One of her clones was in each squad, and so she knew exactly what was going on where.

“The ancestral homeland of the Darkstill race...” Ning couldn’t help but secretly sigh. This was a war for survival. For the sake of the Nuwa Alliance’s survival, their only options were to force their enemies to flee, to surrender...or to be completely wiped out. There were no other options.

“Come. We’ve spent five days here at the Darkstill world and have completely scoured it clean. Time to go to the next world,” Kuafu said. “Let’s go.”

“Let’s go.” Ning and the others immediately continued on their journey.

This journey was quite an uneventful one. Even when they did encounter some minor problems, Kuafu and the others would deal with them. There was no need for Ning to intervene at all, and Ning was in no rush to do so. He had come to the Primordial Ruinworld to help fight and help them win. When they truly needed him, he would make his move. In fact, if they could win the entire war without him revealing his true power, that would be even better.

Ning had always been quite calm. Now that he had reached the overlord level of power, he had become even calmer and more self-assured than before.

“Those words I heard in the past were true. Only when one has become truly powerful does one have the right to be relaxed and self-assured in dealing with all things,” Ning murmured to himself.

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The Three Realms. Allclans Palace, the imperial palace of the Primordial Imperial Clan, also known as the imperial palace of the Yu the Great's clan.

During the Primordial Era, the human clans had summoned all of their major powers to come here. When the human clans had reached the true zenith of their power, they had been the rulers of the entire Primordial World. Many Fiendgods such as Xingtian or the Raindragon had long ago opted to stand alongside the human race.

Inside the palace were the Three Sovereigns of Mankind, the leaders of Daoism and Buddhism, Patriarch Subhuti, great divinity Houyi, various elite Daofathers of the Daoist Path and Buddhist Sangha, and a number of unaffiliated Daofathers. They had gathered here more than half a year ago. Ever since the war against the Primordial Ruinworld had started, they had gathered here.

But of course, most only sent incarnations or clones! The reason they were gathered here was to ensure that they could all mobilize together at a moment's notice.

“Fuxi's squad has already entered the extremely dangerous ‘Thousand Mountains’ world,” Suiren said. “This is the most dangerous world they have encountered since they launched their assault against the Primordial Ruinworld!”

“Those alien Outsiders are quite crafty.” Daoist Three Purities nodded. “They've been unwilling to fight head-on, and we haven't been able to find any of their true headquarters. We've already finished destroying the easy targets, those safer worlds. Now, our only option is to assault the extremely dangerous ones.”

“As I see it!” Suddenly, a muscular, black-armored figure seated below him boomed out in a deep voice. “Ji Ning's sudden addition to the strike team of Daofathers is going to be a problem. Things were fine in the first few months because they were only dealing with the safe worlds; in fact, he didn't even need to help out, as my old brother Kuafu and the others dealt with everything! But now they are entering the Thousand Mountains world, and that is a dangerous place indeed. When something dangerous happens, Kuafu and the others might not even be able to protect themselves, to say nothing of Ji Ning. When that happens, Ji Ning will end up slowing them down and exposing them!”

“Although I dislike Thundergod's personality,” a skinny old man with an extraordinary demeanor said, “His words aren't unreasonable. We sent out those squads after careful discussion, and every member of the squad can join together into a combination formation. But with Ji Ning thrown into the mix...no matter which squad he joins, he won't be able to work with their combination formations. At this point in time, he really could easily become a burden to them. I'm worried that he's going to make things harder for Kuafu and Xingtian's team.”

The major powers seated below all began to speak their thoughts.

A few months ago, when Ji Ning had first entered the Primordial Ruinworld, they had discussed this matter. However, things weren't quite so dangerous back then as the squads hadn't encountered any of

the more dangerous worlds. None of them opposed Ji Ning's presence; his master was Subhuti, after all, while his senior apprentice-brother was Houyi. They had to give these two figures some face.

"Subhuti." After being silent for a long moment, Daoist Three Purities turned his head to look at Patriarch Subhuti.

Shennong turned to look at him as well.

Although they all liked Ji Ning very much, this was an extremely important undertaking. Personal feelings could not be allowed to interfere with their decisions. They had to make the best decisions possible for the alliance.

"Haha..." Subhuti began to laugh.

The major powers present all looked towards Subhuti in confusion.

"Subhuti, what are you laughing at?" Exalted Celestial Thundergod frowned.

Subhuti glanced sideways at Thundergod, then said, "Ji Ning definitely won't become a burden."

"Oh?"

Shennong, Daoist Three Purities, Sui ren, and the others all revealed curious looks on their faces. The major powers seated below them began to whisper amongst themselves as well.

Subhuti chuckled again but said nothing else.

"As inscrutable and mysterious as ever." Daoist Three Purities shook his head.

"When the time comes, you will know." Subhuti raised a white eyebrow at the group. Houyi, seated next to him, revealed a hint of a smile. He had known Subhuti for far, far too long. He knew exactly what type of a personality his master had.

The major powers continued to chat and jest with each other. For people as long-lived as them, a conversation or a debate about the Dao could easily last for thousands of years. In the past, before the war had begun, two of them might spend a century on a single game of chess.

Just half a day later.

"Not good." Graceful Peacock was seated below them, and in this moment her beautiful, gentle face changed dramatically. "Everyone!"

Instantly, all the major powers turned their heads to look at Graceful Peacock. Four of her clones were with the four squads while the fifth one was here at the Allclans Palace. She was responsible for sending and delivering messages.

Upon seeing the heavy look on her face, all the major powers felt their hearts clench.

"Just now, Kuafu's team was trapped inside a danger zone, the 'Earthmoan Mountain'."

"Earthmoan Mountain?" All of the major powers were shocked. Earthmoan Mountain was an extremely famous danger zone. Long ago, when the Daofathers of the Three Realms had entered the Primordial Ruinworld to test themselves, some had died there!

“Earthmoan Mountain is extremely dangerous.” Daoist Three Purities immediately said, “I’ve been there before, and I ended up being trapped for more than three thousand years. Have Tathagata go to them right away. Tathagata has the best chance of them all for overcoming Earthmoan Mountain.”

“Alright.” Graceful Peacock nodded frantically. “I’ve already informed Lord Buddha. Lord Buddha and the other three are heading there right now.”

.....

The Primordial Ruinworld. The Thousand Mountains world.

Ning had spent more than three months here in the Primordial Ruinworld. He had followed Kuafu’s team this entire time and had experienced no real danger thus far at all.

“This is the Thousand Mountains world. We have to be careful,” Graceful Peacock warned.

“Ahahaha, if any danger appears, I’ll smush it with my foot!” Kuafu hoisted up his wooden staff as he laughed loudly, but after laughing he still said to Daofather Windfate, “Windfate, keep a close watch on things.”

“Right.” Daofather Windfate nodded.

The seven of them were flying atop a cloud, and the land around them was filled with countless mighty mountains.

“Why do I suddenly have the feeling that we just went past this mountain a while ago?” Ning suddenly pointed towards the front.

“Eh?!” Kuafu stared at him, then took a close look as well. He then nodded repeatedly. “Right. We just went past this place.”

“Not good.” Daofather Windfate concentrated for a moment, then the look on his face completely changed. “This is a formation that uses mountain ranges as the base. This is an extremely large formation, and it is extremely hard to detect. They must’ve switched just a few of the nearby mountains. Even I didn’t notice anything at all earlier.”

“We are already trapped inside a formation?” Xingtian was surprised.

“We are already inside.” Daofather Windfate nodded.

“What should we do?” Kuafu hurriedly asked.

“Two options,” Daofather Windfate said. “One, we forcibly destroy the formation by wrecking all those mountain peaks. If we do that, we’ll be able to leave. But this should be a formation that was set up by Keeper Everwood, and he’s extremely skilled in the usage of plants and rocks. If he was the one to make this formation...judging from how large it is, we probably won’t be able to break it apart. The second option is to solve and break the formation itself, but we can’t do that either. Perhaps only Fuxi would be able to do that.”

As soon as his words came out...

Thump. It was like a heartbeat that rang out from deep within the ground.

Thump. Thump. Thump. One deep heartbeat after another rang out, echoing throughout the area. The 'mountain ranges' around them suddenly disappeared, transforming into endless amounts of foul water that flowed out in rivers and creeks.

The cloud which Ning's group was on had actually been completely surrounded by the reeking water.

"T-this...this is Earthmoan Mountain." Daofather Windfate's face instantly turned completely ashen. "Too late. It's all too late."

"We actually ended up being drawn into Earthmoan Mountain without even knowing it." Luwu's face had changed as well.

All of them felt their heartrates quicken.

"What a profound formation." Ning said softly, "We didn't notice anything at all earlier...and by the time we did, we had already been lured into Earthmoan Mountain."

"Lord Buddha has already been notified. He's on his way right now," Graceful Peacock said hurriedly.

"Be careful, everyone. No matter what, don't let yourself get separated." Kuafu growled savagely, "This is the most dangerous place we have encountered since entering the Primordial Ruinworld. Even if Lord Buddha comes, he'll still need time to break apart Earthmoan Mountain! We need to hang on and endure until he manages to break us free. If we cannot...then we will die in here."

"Right." Ning and the rest of the six all nodded. They now all had solemn looks on their faces. At a time like this, no one dared to be overconfident.

"The cries of the earth have already begun," Graceful Peacock said. "When the cries of the earth reach a crescendo, deadly danger shall descend upon us."

Thump! Yet another earthen heartbeat rang out, this one even louder than the previous ones. Even the endless flows of foul water around them seemed to shudder.

The Desolate Era

Book 22: True God Chapter 14: Earthmoan Mountain

Lord Tathagata the Buddha and his three companions were flying through the air like an enormous streak of golden light as they rapidly advanced towards Earthmoan Mountain.

"Graceful Peacock, can they keep holding?" Tathagata sent mentally.

There were countless beings living in Tathagata's [Buddha-Realm Within the Palm], with one of Graceful Peacock's clones being there as well.

"The heartbeat sounds are rapidly becoming stronger and louder. When the sounds reach a crescendo, the attacks will begin. Right now all of us are waiting carefully, but we have yet to be attacked," Graceful Peacock replied from within the Buddha-realm.

"You have to be careful." Tathagata said a few more words, then turned to the three Buddhas by his side. "You should also enter my Buddha-realm for now as well. I'll be able to travel more quickly that way."

“Yes, Lord Buddha,” the other three Buddhas replied. Tathagata was the undisputed leader of the Buddhist community.

Tathagata waved his hand and collected those three Buddhas. Immediately after doing so, the midair golden streak of light surrounding him became even quicker as it flew towards Earthmoan Mountain.

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Within the castle located deep inside the Primordial Ruinworld.

“Master, success! Kuafu’s squad has already been lured into Earthmoan Mountain,” the skinny elder said jubilantly.

Godfiend Witherspike, seated atop his throne, let out a soft chuckle. “When we make a move, we have to make a big one! We let these bumpkins from the Three Realms have too easy a time of it earlier. Now, it’s time to give them a hard hit.”

“The Thousand Mountains world is a world which both we and the Seamless Gate have spent enormous time, effort, and resources building up. The entire world is a huge trap. The Nuwa Alliance obviously knows that, but they still have to charge straight inside.” The red-bearded elder let out a laugh. “They can’t locate us. All they can do is wreck the entire Primordial Ruinworld in their hunt. They have to assault and destroy every single world. It’s very possible that we’ll be able to wipe out two or three of their squads here at Thousand Mountains world.”

“Kuafu’s squad should be done for, at least.” Godfiend Witherspike nodded slowly. “As for the other three...let’s see how talented they are.”

“Ji Ning.” Celestial Immortal Blackheaven remained standing on his feet, staring at the scene being played out in midair. It was a scene showing Earthmoan Mountain, with Kuafu’s squad having already been trapped inside of it. Celestial Immortal Blackheaven let out a cold laugh. “Now that you’ve entered Earthmoan Mountain, I want to see just how you’ll survive this one!”

“Master, Buddha Tathagata is advancing rapidly towards Earthmoan Mountain,” the towering, muscular, golden-armored figure suddenly said.

“Hmph. Keeper Everwood personally set up the formations around Earthmoan Mountain, and the formations are already activated and constantly transforming. Once Tathagata charges into the formation, he’ll virtually have no chance of locating Earthmoan Mountain unless he actually destroys the formation itself. Given his power, he might actually be able to do that...but he’ll need time. By the time he succeeds, Kuafu’s squad would’ve died long ago.” Godfiend Witherspike smiled, licking his lower lips with his bright red tongue.

He, the exalted Godfiend, had been biding his time for far too long. This title, ‘Godfiend’...it was a title that had been won through countless seas of blood and mountains of severed flesh!

.....

Within Earthmoan Mountain.

THUMP!

An extremely loud heartbeat rang out from under the ground, and the sound seemed to smash against the hearts of Ji Ning and the others. The entire team floated in midair, carefully watching their surroundings.

“Ji Ning, the six of us have set up a formation; we can work together to defend against any sneak attacks. You, however, don’t have anything protecting you. I think you should enter an estate-treasure for now. After we escape from Earthmoan Mountain, you can come out once more.” Kuafu’s group of six had already joined together into an enormous formation, and they were sharing their divine power with each other. All of them were surrounded by rings of golden light.

“No need.” Ning shook his head.

Kuafu frowned slightly upon seeing this. “This is a critical situation. You can’t be headstrong, Ji Ning.”

“No need to worry about me, fellow Daoist Kuafu. When my true body was destroyed by the Seamless Gate, I still ended up surviving, right?” Ning looked at Kuafu.

Kuafu was briefly startled, then nodded. “If you aren’t willing to hide, fine. How about this? Stay inside of our formation. If there any attacks come your way, the formation will be able to help you block a few blows. This formation protects against external attacks but not internal attacks. You’ll still be able to fight back from inside the formation.”

“Alright.” Ning nodded in acceptance.

Kuafu, Xingtian, Empress Xi, Windfate, Graceful Peacock, Luwu. These six True Gods were sharing their divine power with each other. Rings of golden light were surrounding them, helping to defend against any dangers, and Ning was located within the formation itself.

The six True Gods exchanged glances with each other, feeling quite resigned. As they saw it, this Sword Immortal Darknorth was being far too rash and arrogant. Earthmoan Mountain was such an incredibly dangerous place that even the six of them had to be extremely careful. In fact, they had even asked Lord Buddha to come rescue them. Ji Ning, however, insisted on staying outside...ugh! This overconfidence stemmed from the fact that he simply hadn’t trained for long enough!

Thump! Thump! Thump! Suddenly, the ‘pulse’ began to quicken.

The illusions around them began to change as well. Previously, they had been surrounded by endless tides of foul water. Now, it suddenly changed to a dense thicket of trees. Ning and the six were all standing within the thicket.

“Hurry up and leave. Fly out of the thicket,” Kuafu said hurriedly.

Swoosh! All seven of them strove to fly out, but no matter how hard or how quickly they flew, they remained trapped within the thicket.

“We won’t be able to fly out. Without being able to see through the illusions of Earthmoan Mountain, there’s no way we can leave it at all.” Daofather Windfate shook his head after taking another look.

“When Daoist Three Purities was trapped here, he was able to rely on his incredible power to survive against the dangers present. Despite that, he was still trapped here for more than three thousand years before he was able to see the true face of Earthmoan Mountain and leave it.”

“These are all illusions.” Graceful Peacock was worried as well.

“We aren’t able to see through them and see the true face of Earthmoan Mountain,” Xingtian said with concern.

Ning carefully inspected the surrounding area as well.

Earthmoan Mountain was extremely famous. Once you entered it, you would face countless changing illusions and be perpetually trapped by them. Major powers might try to fly out with all their might, but they would remain within Earthmoan Mountain, unable to escape.

There were only two methods for leaving this place. The first was to rely on overwhelming raw power to annihilate the entire Earthmoan Mountain! However, not even Daoist Three Purities had been able to destroy this bizarre place. Most likely, only World Gods like Mother Nuwa would be able to accomplish it. There was no chance whatsoever that Ning’s group would be able to do it.

The second method was to do what Daoist Three Purities did; to see through the illusions and see the truth of Earthmoan Mountain. It would then be possible to fly out!

Lord Tathagata the Buddha was extremely skilled in seeing through illusions. The Buddhists were all quite skilled in illusions to begin with.

Bang! Suddenly, a terrifying attack descended, stabbing straight towards True God Luwu. The layers of golden light protecting True God Luwu were instantly pierced through! Judging from the way in which the piercing occurred, it appeared as the attack came from an awl-shaped object.

True God Luwu was so frightened that he immediately lashed out with his whip to block while frantically dodging.

Slash!

True God Luwu’s flank was sliced open. A large bloody wound appeared on his side, but his divine power quickly healed it.

“Everyone, be careful. Earthmoan Mountain’s attacks are very powerful,” True God Luwu said hurriedly. “The formation is unable to completely block it. However, the formation is still able to whittle away at its power a bit. If it wasn’t for the formation, I wouldn’t have merely lost a chunk of flesh; I would’ve been ripped in half.”

“Be careful,” Daofather Windfate said solemnly. “It looks like we are surrounded by a thicket of trees, but all of that is illusory. The true scene is that of those strange objects flying towards us and attacking us.”

Ning frowned as well.

Despite being weakened by their protective formation, that strange object was still able to easily wound a True God. This was simply far too terrifying. The worst part of it was...they had no idea where it had come from. By the time they were able to notice it, its attack would have already arrived as well.

“What should I do?” Ning carefully scanned his surroundings, his eyes blazing with torch-light. He used the [Torch-Dragon’s Eye] to carefully scan the area, but the only result was that the trees and the leaves

around them became even sharper and more in-focus. He could now even see the leafy veins! But alas, he couldn't find any traces of an illusion at all.

"To see through the illusions and see the truth..."

"How am I supposed to do that? When Daoist Three Purities was trapped here, he was also unable to leave until he saw through the illusions and saw the truth." Ning frowned. "But how?"

Ning was carefully inspecting his surroundings with his physical vision, his coresense, and even his heartforce. All his senses, however, were 'seeing' exactly the same things his eyes were seeing. It was as though the trees and the thicket around them actually were real. In truth, it made sense; even Daoist Three Purities had been trapped here for three thousand years before being able to escape. Seeing through the illusions would be no easy feat!

Rumble...

Ning's heartforce rippled out from him in a series of waves as Ning used the heartforce scrying technique which World God Northrest had transmitted to him, causing his heartforce scanned through every inch of space around him. This scanning technique could be said to be the most detailed such technique in the Three Realms. It truly surpassed all other similar techniques; Ning had searched the memories of the Fiendgods and Immortals of the Pangaea prisoners but was still unable to find any heartforce scrying technique that could compare to his.

Suddenly, his rippling heartforce seemed to detect a slight wave of motion.

Bang!

An invisible object once more stabbed straight through the layers of golden light and pierced towards Empress Xi.

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Book 22: True God Chapter 15: That Tiny Wave

Empress Xi only noticed the attack after the strange object had torn through all those layers of protection. Her face instantly changed. "Not good!" She hurriedly dodged while brandishing her sleeves to block. Clang! The sharp object struck against her sleeves, then flew off towards another direction.

"Be careful, everyone." Empress Xi said hurriedly, "It is too fast; you can't let yourself be caught offguard!"

"Xingtian, do you have any more shield-type treasures?" True God Luwu asked hurriedly.

"I do." Xingtian produced a small buckler in his hand, then sent it flying towards True God Luwu. It rapidly increased in size, becoming nearly half his height. True God Luwu grabbed the buckler with one hand, using his other to continue holding onto his metal whip.

Xingtian was similarly holding a buckler in one hand and his Heaven Punisher Axe in the other. He hurriedly asked, "Anyone else need a buckler?" As he spoke his gaze couldn't help but turn towards Ning, located in the center of the formation.

Of the seven, Kuafu was the strongest. Xingtian and Empress Xi were next, but Xingtian already had a buckler while Empress xi was skilled in using her sleeves.

Next came Graceful Peacock, Windfate, and Luwu. Luwu had already acquired a buckler, while Daofather Windfate used his fan. The fan could also be used as a shield, and Daofather Windfate would actually be able to unleash more power with his fan than with a buckler. As for Graceful Peacock, her 'body' had been forged from a peacock feather that was comparable to a top-grade Protocosmic spirit-treasure. She was actually safer than any of them.

As Xingtian saw it, Ji Ning was a wielder of the sword. The sword was an offensive weapon; defensively speaking, it was comparatively lacking. He felt that Ji Ning would most likely need a buckler.

"I don't need one just yet." Ning smiled and shook his head.

"Be careful," Xingtian warned, then fell silent.

Attacks continued to rain down upon them from those invisible objects. The six True Gods all guarded carefully against the attacks, and they even decided to shrink the perimeter of their formation so as to better protect Ji Ning within it.

The six Fiendgods worked together to defend against nineteen waves of attacks. Ji Ning, by contrast, had things easy; protected in the center of the formation, he didn't suffer any attacks at all.

"Eh? It seems to have ended," Graceful Peacock said softly.

"The cries of the earth are growing softer," Kuafu agreed.

Thump. Thump.

The heartbeat ringing out from deep underground had indeed grown quieter.

"After a period of time, the sound will grow louder again and the attacks will start anew," Kuafu said.

"Let's rest for now and prepare to deal with the next wave of attacks."

"Right." The Fiendgods all had rather ugly looks on their faces.

The invisible attacks were simply too powerful, and they were also extraordinarily unpredictable. During the nineteen waves of attacks, True God Luwu had been injured three times, Daofather Windfate had been injured twice, Empress Xi and Xingtian had each been injured once, while Kuafu, Ning, and Graceful Peacock were uninjured. Each time they suffered an injury, they had to use a large amount of divine power to heal it.

Using divine power to heal one's body was extremely taxing. As more time passed the divine power would be used up, at which point they wouldn't even be able to maintain the formation! The reason why they had been able to survive the nineteen waves of attacks was because the formation served to weaken the power of those attacks. If they were to face those attacks head on, even Kuafu would be in danger of dying.

Everyone could sense death impending. The atmosphere naturally turned quite grim.

“This guy Ji Ning...all of us are so nervous, but he’s actually daydreaming?!” True God Luwu gave Ning, still located at the center of the formation, a hard look. Ning stood in the center, eyes completely blank. Clearly, his mind was elsewhere and he was completely preoccupied.

“Ugh.” True God Luwu was an amiable and honest fellow. He didn’t say anything. “We’ll do our best. If we can protect Ji Ning, we will. If we end up dying, there will be nothing more that we can do. He’s just too young.”

Ning continued to stand there, pondering to himself. “Each time there is an attack, especially when the attack draws close, I can dimly sense a hint of a ripple spread out. Clearly, the power of the attacks is so great that at a close distance, there’s no way for it to completely avoid my senses. However, I can just sense a tiny wave each time. There’s no way for me to completely verify the exact location the strange object is coming from.”

Those ripples were perhaps coming from the strange objects, but when those invisible things attacked they instantly arrived before their target, giving the defenders no time to spare.

“I need to verify and track the direction from which each attack is going to come.”

“Given how powerful these attacks are, they have to cause at least a tiny bit of spatial disruption.” Ning stared at the thickets around them. “Still...the illusions around us are simply too realistic, and the area around us is filled with multiple ripples that mask the ones coming from those strange objects.”

“What I need to do is to separate the ripples caused by the illusions from the ripples caused by the strange objects.”

Ning had been watching closely during the last ten-plus attacks, but he was still unable to ascertain exactly where each attack was going to come from.

Thump! The heartbeat coming from deep beneath the earth suddenly began to grow stronger once more.

Thump! Thump! Thump! The heartbeats began to quicken and strengthen.

“Be careful, everyone. The next wave of attacks from Earthmoan Mountain is about to begin,” Kuafu barked.

“Right.” The other five True Gods hurriedly acknowledged him. They pumped more energy into their formation, staying on maximum alert.

As for Ning, his eyes were lidded as he circulated his soul heartforce technique, using it to attune himself to all the many varied ripples that that were occurring around them. There were ripples caused by the wind, by light, by spatial movement, by scent...Ning was able to separate out the spatial ripples, but what he needed to do right now was to identify the specific spatial ripples being generated by those strange objects.

Even for a major power like Ning, this was incredibly difficult!

Even Daoist Three Purities had ended up spending more than three thousand years before accomplishing this. Ning’s advantage lay in the formidable techniques taught to him by World God Northrest!

Whoosh!

Swish!

Slash!

The invisible attacks began to descend upon them once more.

Kuafu, Xingtian, and the rest all did their best to defend against the attacks, using all of their power.

“That seems...to be a spatial ripple caused by those strange objects...” Ning remained inside the formation, eyes half-lidded as he continued to carefully attune to the surrounding area.

“Ji Ning, I really think you should enter an estate-treasure,” Xingtian bellowed. He was fairly close to Ji Ning on a personal level. Ning, however, didn’t respond to him, instead continuing to sweep the area with his senses.

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The Three Realms, the Allclans Palace of the Primordial Imperial Clan. Many major powers were gathered in this place.

“Hurry.” Graceful Peacock frantically rose to her feet and said, “This is the third time Earthmoan Mountain is attacking us. True God Luwu has been gravely injured, and his divine power is almost used up. Once he’s completely dry, there will be no way for them to maintain the formation. Kuafu and the others are about to die in Earthmoan Mountain!”

“Tathagata.” Daoist Three Purities looked towards him.

“I’m working on breaking the formation,” Lord Buddha said hurriedly. “This should be a formation which Keeper Everwood spent enormous amounts of effort on. He’s used the countless mountains in the area to serve as his formation-bases. Although I’m breaking it apart as fast as I can, I still need more time.”

“There are no other options.” Tathagata shook his head. “Even if all of you head there right away, you’ll first have to reach their location. By the time you get there, I would’ve broken through the formation long ago.”

Daoist Three Purities nodded. It was true. Thousand Mountains world was a place filled with countless dangers. There was no way to teleport through the Void to arrive at that place. Ji Ning, Tathagata, Fuxi, and the others had all been forced to slowly fly their way there.

“Fuxi is the best at defeating formations, but he’s been tied down by those alien Outsiders of the Primordial Ruinworld,” Graceful Peacock said hurriedly. “There’s no way for him to get there in time either.”

“Everwood...” The seated Daofather Subhuti had an ugly look on his face.

In war, one of the most terrifying possibilities was fighting in an arena of your enemy’s choosing.

Their enemies had already made complete preparations in the Primordial Ruinworld. The Nuwa Alliance knew that...but no matter what, they wouldn’t be willing to give the Primordial Ruinworld the chance to ambush the victors of the Endwar. If for no other reason than to uproot an ally of the Seamless Gate,

they had to wipe out the Primordial Ruinworld! However, they were indeed worried about the deadly environment and illusions located within the Primordial Ruinworld, which was why they had only sent two of their overlord-class figures in this campaign. The other major powers would all remain on guard in the Three Realms. If something unexpected happened, they would be able to handle it.

“I’ve already unleashed all of my dharma-bodies. I’ll be able to break the formation soon,” Tathagata said with a solemn look on his face.

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Lord Buddha’s squad truly had gone all out.

The other three Buddhas who had come with him had assembled into a formation. Their holy light spread out in every direction as they launched all sorts of attacks against the land, each strike filled with the power to shatter the heavens and wreck the earth.

As for Lord Buddha, he had switched into a different form, unleashing all three of his bodies.

These three bodies were his Sakyamuni body, his Great Sun Buddha body 1, and his Medicine Buddha body 2. The three of them sent their mighty Buddha-palms smashing down from the skies, shattering apart one mountain range after another with each blow. However, each time some of the mountain ranges would once more be reborn from the natural energy of Heaven and Earth. This was clearly the power of the formation at work.

Tathagata had been born a True God of Primordial Chaos.

During the Primordial Era, he had shattered his own soul, leaving behind just a tendril of his truesoul to be reincarnated into the human race. He had become Sakyamuni, and as a result had been truly reborn. He finally was able to reach the pinnacle of power, fully mastering the five Heavenly Daos of Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, and Earth. This allowed him to manifest five mighty dharma-bodies! However, actually using these five dharma-bodies consumed a terrifying amount of energy. He would only activate them all when he was truly going all-out.

He had brought three of his five dharma-bodies in this campaign against the Primordial Ruinworld, leaving behind two of them to guard the Three Realms.

Daoist Three Purities had his ‘Three Pure Ones’ technique. Tathagata, in term, had five dharma-bodies, with the most powerful naturally being his true Sakyamuni body.

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“Tathagata’s quite powerful.” Godfiend Witherspike let out a sigh as he saw the scene playing out of Tathagata breaking apart the formation with utterly ruinous power. “These aboriginals only have inferior Ki Refining techniques; they are clearly Ancestral Immortals, but only third-tier ones! And yet, despite that, the most monstrously talented amongst them have gained incredible insights into the Dao.”

“Fuxi’s been tied down for now as well.”

“Keeper Everwood’s formations are quite formidable. Even if other major powers were to make their way over, they would still need to spend a considerable amount of time to break through the formation.

After doing so, they would then need to actually enter Earthmoan Mountain! Earthmoan Mountain is filled with countless illusions; to actually locate Kuafu's squad will require time as well. I estimate that Kuafu's squad should already be at the verge of breaking down," Godfiend Witherspike mused softly to himself.

"Given how furious and frantic Tathagata is in trying to break through the formation as quickly as possible, Kuafu's squad should be close to being done for," Celestial Immortal Blackheaven said with a laugh.

All of them were just guessing, of course. Earthmoan Mountain was one of the most hazardous of regions that had been naturally created from the Primordial Ruinworld. Even the alien Outsiders were unable to scry inside of it to see what was happening.

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The situation inside Earthmoan Mountain truly had turned grim. True God Luwu and Daofather Windfate had ashen looks on their faces, and their bodies were covered with bloody wounds. They no longer had enough divine power to repair and heal their bodies.

Swish! Yet another ruthless, cruel attack by an invisible object.

Ning's eyes had been lidded this entire time, but now they suddenly opened. His eyes sparkled like the stars as he murmured softly to himself, "I finally found it."

1. The Sanskrit name is 'Vairocana'
2. The Sanskrit name is Bhaisajyaguru

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 22: True God Chapter 16: Wokejade Realm

"Luwu, Windfate, give up for now. I'll take you into my estate-treasure," Kuafu shouted.

"No!" Although True God Luwu was usually an amiable and honest fellow, he was currently quite resolute and unyielding. "Kuafu, you know very well how dangerous Earthmoan Mountain is. The only reason we are still alive is because of the formation. Once we enter the estate-treasure, the two of us will be able to live for a bit longer, true. But the rest of you will no longer have the formation protecting you. You won't be able to hold on for much longer."

"Every single cell of my body is formed from divine power. Although I'm out of actual power, I can still convert my body into divine power. I can still hold," True God Luwu growled.

"We'll keep holding." Daofather Windfate nodded, his eyes filled with cold resolve. "Kuafu, don't go soft on us. There's no way out for the six of us. This campaign against the Primordial Ruinworld is actually the final precursor to the Endwar. There will always be casualties in war. It is now my time to die, and I won't shirk back."

Kuafu, Empress Xi, Xingtian, and Graceful Peacock all felt quite torn. However, they understood that this was indeed the best decision when keeping the big picture in perspective. The bodies of True God Luwu and True God Windfate were indeed manifested from large amounts of divine power. They absolutely

were capable of continuing to hold on, but only at a price...the price being that they could die at any moment from an attack!

“Keep holding,” Kuafu growled.

“Protect Luwu and Windfate!” Xingtian let out a howl, then turned to look towards Ji Ning. “Ji Ning, do your best to help Windfate and Luwu.”

Xingtian had always felt very well-disposed towards Ji Ning. It was one thing for Ji Ning not to help out when they were travelling around, but things were now different; they were trapped here in the deadly environs of Earthmoan Mountain. Ji Ning was quite safe at the center of the formation, but he hadn't even helped out a single time! This caused Xingtian to feel quite displeased.

Swish!

Ning suddenly made his move.

In a single instant, he stepped out of the center of the formation. He actually stabbed out with his sword, and a dazzling rainbow aura of swordforce sparkled around the tip of the sword.

Kuafu, Xingtian, and the rest of the six True Gods were instantly dumbfounded.

Ji Ning had actually left the formation? Kuafu and the others were about to immediately rebuke him for doing so.

But he had then struck out with his sword? Why did he do that?

Rainbow-colored sword-light? T-that was...

Ning's sudden actions had caused the six True Gods to be instantly and completely stupefied.

Clang! A clanking sound rang out.

Ning's sword-tip seemed to have stabbed onto something. An incredibly loud collision could be heard as space around the sword-tip began to ripple violently.

“Get over here.” Ning's sword spun about, transforming into a black hole that possessed astonishing absorptive power. It was able to forcibly entangle and entrap the invisible object.

The sword-light completely surrounded the invisible object, forcing it to finally reveal its true form. A strange object that was shaped like the horn of an ox had appeared. It was completely black in color, but it was also covered with strands of violet-colored vein lines. It was sharp at one end and blunt at the other.

“Mm?” Ning reached out and grabbed the object.

“Heavy wokejade?” Ning mused to himself. If one was to voyage through the endless primordial chaos, one naturally had to first become familiar with many of the strange objects within it. World God Northrest had transmitted a great deal of this information to Ning, who was able to recognize this object at a glance. “It's actually heavy wokejade? This is quite a valuable mineral. However, no one in the Three Realms is capable of smelting it.”

Heavy wokejade was incomparably resilient. Even prior to smelting and forging, it was as tough and resilient as a Chaos treasure. This truly was an extremely precious mineral.

"In the future, I'll enter the primordial chaos and travel to Vastheaven Palace. Perhaps it will be of use to me at some point." Ning waved his hand, collecting the item and pulling it into his estate-treasure.

Ning then turned his head to look behind him.

The six True Gods were staring at him, rather dazed. Empress Xi's mouth was open, as though she wanted to say something, but no words could come out.

"Ji Ning." In the end, it was the straightforward and blunt Kuafu who spoke out. "Your swordforce reached the fifth stage?"

"Yeah." Ning nodded.

"...Why didn't you tell us earlier?" Kuafu asked.

"Well, we didn't run into any danger that you couldn't easily deal with, Kuafu. There was no real need for me to get involved," Ning said with a laugh.

The nearby Xingtian said hurriedly, "Ji Ning, are you able to see through the illusions of Earthmoan Mountain?" If he was, they'd be able to leave this place.

"Yes." Ning nodded.

Luwu, Windfate, and the others all felt relieved. Although they had mentally prepared themselves for death, staying alive was naturally much preferred.

"Follow me," Ning said.

"Follow Ji Ning, everyone!" Kuafu said hurriedly, "Do what he says."

"Right." The six True Gods all immediately followed behind Ning, who advanced with sword in hand.

"Another one is coming." Ning once more struck out with his sword. His sword-arts flashed out in an unpredictable, ephemeral manner. It instantly struck against yet another invisible attacking object. Ning's sword-art once more transformed into a black hole, trapping the second invisible object as well.

"Earthmoan Mountain should be a 'Wokejade Realm'." Ning once more reached out with his hand to grab the piece of heavy wokejade. He glanced at it, then tossed it into his estate-treasure. "In all the Three Realms, I'd wager that no one knows as much as me about Earthmoan Mountain."

The endless primordial chaos was filled with countless dangers, and World God Northrest had recorded details regarding many of them. If you were to foolishly adventure through the primordial chaos without knowing about some of the dangerous types of regions within it, you truly would be courting death. No one would be able to save such a fool.

Wokejade Realms were a type of danger zone which World God Northrest had written about. Based on the information Ning had, he was able to quickly ascertain that Earthmoan Mountain was a type of Wokejade Realm.

“Ji Ning, how long before we can leave?” Empress Xi looked at Ji Ning in a different way now. Fifth-stage swordforce, and sword-arts that surpassed the Heavenly Daos; these two points alone ensured that Ji Ning had to be very close to the overlord level of power! His single-target attacks would be even more terrifying than Kuafu’s!

“Don’t worry,” Ning said. “Earthmoan Mountain is essentially a world unto itself; if you don’t see through its illusions, there’s no way to escape it at all. When we talk about ‘seeing the truth’, we aren’t talking about literally seeing through all the illusions. Rather, what I can do is just barely get a sense of where those strange objects are going to attack from. Through them, I can get a rough sense of direction.”

“Through those strange objects?” Windfate, Graceful Peacock, Luwu, and the others were all puzzled.

“Right.” Ning nodded.

“Those things that are attacking us are formed deep underneath the ground. They are expelled with astonishing power through Earthmoan Mountain’s eruptions,” Ning said. “The closer we are to the core of Earthmoan Mountain, the more powerful those objects will be. The farther away we are, the weaker they will be.”

“I heard Daoist Three Purities say the same.” Empress Xi nodded. “However, that’ll only allow you to get a very crude sense of direction. In addition, Earthmoan Mountain’s dangers aren’t just limited to those invisible objects.”

“Right...I heard that Earthmoan Mountain can also give birth to terrifyingly powerful attractive forces that can devour even major powers,” Graceful Peacock said hurriedly.

Ning nodded. “That is indeed the case.”

Wokejade Realms were usually in the ‘eruption’ phase, but they occasionally had a ‘devouring’ phase as well! Each time there was a ‘devouring’ phase, the closer you were to the core the more powerful the attractive force would be. Once you were actually swallowed inside...it was virtually guaranteed that you would perish, even if you were an Ancestral Immortal or an Elder God. It would take some truly impressive and extraordinary measures for you to survive. If you were able to safely enter the deep recesses of the realm, you would be able to acquire an enormous amount of heavy wokejade. The heavy wokejade itself was formed through countless eruption cycles and devouring cycles, resulting in the swallowed objects being refined into priceless treasures.

The pieces of heavy wokejade that ‘attacked’ Ning’s group with each eruption was just a tiny fraction of the enormous hoard of heavy wokejade that existed deep underneath Earthmoan Mountain.

“That’s why we have to move quickly. It is currently in the ‘eruption’ phase. Once the ‘devouring’ phase begins, things will become even more dangerous.” Ning still felt quite confident, and in truth only the core regions of Earthmoan Mountain would pose a threat to him. The ordinary regions were of no threat to him at all; he himself already had the power of an overlord-class figure, after all.

Ning led the way quite quickly. They only walked forward for a brief period of time before suddenly, the world turned bright. The thicket of forests around them vanished, transforming into an awe-inspiring sight of chained mountain ranges. Far off in the distance, mountains were continuously toppling and

falling apart. They could vaguely make out three mighty figures that glowed with boundless golden light. The three figures were furiously striking out with Buddha-palms, and each palm contained utterly ruinous power that was being used to annihilate the surrounding mountains.

“That’s Tathagata,” Kuafu said delightedly.

“TATHAGATA!” Xingtian called out to him in a loud voice.

Ning laughed as well. “We made it out.”

“So these are Tathagata’s dharma-bodies?” Ning stared at Tathagata’s three mighty dharma-bodies, paying especial attention to the Sakyamuni body. “He’s merely a True God and third-tier Ancestral Immortal, but his insights into the Dao are so profound that he is still able to unleash the power of an Elder God.”

The distant Lord Buddha noticed the seven tiny figures appear as well.

“Wonderful.” Finally, a smile blossomed on Tathagata’s face. His two other dharma-bodies merged into his true body, and the three Buddhas behind him flew forward towards him as well.

Tathagata’s squad of four Buddhas all flew towards Ning, and Ning’s group of seven rode a cloud towards them as well.

“You ended up escaping on your own.” Tathagata laughed. “I wonder how you did it?”

“It was Darknorth.” Graceful Peacock spoke out from within Ning’s group.

“Darknorth?” Tathagata looked towards Ning with surprise.

Kuafu agreed. “Right. Ji Ning is extremely powerful. I’m afraid that even I wouldn’t necessarily be a match for him. Three Purities was trapped here for more than three thousand years, but Ji Ning managed to lead us out after just a short period of time. Ahahaha! Once that old Daoist hears about this, I wonder what sort of an expression he will have on his face?”

And at this exact moment back in the Three Realms, Graceful Peacock was narrating everything which had just happened to the concerned major powers of the Nuwa Alliance.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 22: True God Chapter 17: Subhuti and Old Man Yuan

The Three Realms. Allclans Palace.

Graceful Peacock was narrating the entire story to the major powers present. “We were trapped in Earthmoan Mountain, and both Luwu and Windfate were heavily wounded. We were just about finished, but Darknorth...fellow Daoist Darknorth had been carefully scrutinizing everything from inside our formation, and he finally was able to see through the illusions of Earthmoan Mountain and see the truth. He walked out of our formation, then blocked several invisible attacks of Earthmoan Mountain as he led us to safety.”

“He blocked those attacks?” Exalted Celestial Thundergod asked, “Graceful Peacock, didn’t you say that the attacks of Earthmoan Mountain are extremely powerful? Empress Xi was just barely able to defend

against those attacks, thanks to the protective formation, but she was still wounded. Ji Ning walked out of the formation, and THEN blocked those attacks?”

“Right.” Graceful Peacock nodded, her eyes sparkling as she smiled. “Fellow Daoist Darknorth is one of the most peerless figures to ever exist, ever since Pangu established Heaven and Earth. He has already reached the fifth stage of swordforce.”

“The fifth stage?” Exalted Celestial Thundergod was incredulous. “How is that possible?”

The entire palace became a hubbub of commotion.

Fifth-stage swordforce?

Anyone and everyone who could reach the fifth stage of swordforce would become one of the most elite Daofathers alive. Someone like Ji Ning, who also knew the [Five Treasures] sword-art, would be even more terrifying.

“Is that true?”

“He hasn’t even trained for a thousand years, right?” The major powers were all discussing this in hushed voices.

Lord Tathagata the Buddha, seated on high, spoke out. “It is indeed so.”

Exalted Celestial Thundergod was now truly dazed. He could no longer say a word.

“Ahahaha!” Daofather Subhuti, also seated on high, started to laugh.

Next to him was Daoist Three Purities, who laughed as well. “Subhuti, you knew all along?”

Subhuti just smugly stroked his beard.

“My junior apprentice-brother truly is formidable.” Houyi laughed as well. “We have gained yet another mighty general for the Endwar.”

Exalted Celestial Thundergod was filled with many mixed emotions. He was an aloof, arrogant figure, and he originally had not held Ji Ning in any regard. Ji Ning’s performance at the Deerchaser world, though...it had caused Thundergod to feel rather upset. Still, he was able to console himself that the kid had relied on the Rahu Formation and the Envoy of All Things. The kid’s true power was still quite weak.

But now, the ‘kid’ had fifth-stage swordforce and sword-arts that surpassed the limits of the Heavenly Daos. This meant that Ji Ning was now, indisputably, the number one Sword Immortal of the Three Realms!

“Subhuti.” Finally, Thundergod spoke out. “Congratulations.”

Subhuti looked at Thundergod and chortled. “This old Daoist loves to put on airs and keep people guessing. I hope you aren’t too angry with me, Thundergod.”

“How could I be? Our Nuwa Alliance has gained yet another powerful general. I couldn’t be happier!” Thundergod replied honestly.

Subhuti nodded.

Although Thundergod was a stubborn, solitary, and arrogant figure, his loyalty to the Nuwa Alliance was absolutely beyond reproach. In the end...it had been Subhuti's dear old friend, Old Man Yuan, a figure far more powerful than Thundergod, who had ended up vacillating between the two sides. To this very day, he still had yet to join the Nuwa Alliance.

"My old friend...I truly don't wish to end up in a fight to the death against you," Subhuti murmured to himself.

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This was a damaged, badly ravaged planet, but there were two major powers present here.

An old man with a red nose was seated in the lotus position in front of a thatched cottage. Before him was a small table, and across from him sat the white-bearded Subhuti. This was one of Subhuti's incarnations.

"Congratulations. Your disciple actually reached the fifth stage of swordforce." The red-nosed elder sighed with emotion. "A pity, such a pity. I knew all along that Ji Ning's potential was extraordinarily. I really wanted to take him on as my disciple, but you refused to accept."

"I didn't actually refuse you," Subhuti said. "I told you; so long as you joined our side, you could immediately take on Ji Ning as your disciple. But you refused to accept."

"I still cannot accept." Old Man Yuan shook his head.

"Hmph."

Subhuti let out a cold laugh. "We've been fighting against the Seamless Gate for so long now. You should be able to tell that our differences are completely irreconcilable. At a time like this...you continue to waver! You said all those pompous things about 'not wanting to see all your old friends die, one by one'...but your actions now are causing even more of our old friends to die! Your words are complete bullshit!"

"Yes." Old Man Yuan nodded, a distant look in his eyes. "I admit that I said those things for the sake of saving face. All of those things I said were lies."

Subhuti just looked at him.

He felt pain in his heart.

They had all emerged together from the primordial chaos as ignorant, wide-eyed newborns. They had all supported each other, discussed the Dao together, advanced together on the path of cultivation. They were so close to each other that they were like actual brothers. Some of them had ended up dying in the chaotic wars of the Primordial Era, while others had died in the war that had ended that era. Daoist Threelives, for example, had already perished.

Not many were still alive...but this old friend of his, 'Old Man Yuan', had actually refused to stand alongside them at such a critical hour.

"You finally admit to it," Subhuti said icily.

“Yes.” Old Man Yuan shook his head. “Ever since the Primordial Era, we have suffered incursions from alien Outsiders. When we killed them, we gained some of their techniques and some of their records regarding the infinite primordial chaos. I came to understand that this place of ours is nothing more than a single chaosworld. The primordial chaos is a far vaster universe. When I learned this, I became filled with the desire to travel far away, to see more things.”

“We ‘True Gods’ who were born from the primordial chaos were nothing more than local bumpkins who were born to this region. How can we be considered ‘major powers’? We simply relied on the power we gained at birth.” Old Man Yuan shook his head. “In the endless primordial chaos, the true ‘major powers’ are the World Gods and Chaos Immortals. They are capable of easily wiping out our entire world.”

“Nuwa saw the truth long ago. The Three Realms was too small a place to contain her, and so she left to enter the vaster world outside of it.”

“I want to journey through that vast world as well.” Old Man Yuan’s eyes were filled with desire. “But I’m not strong enough yet. Those alien Outsiders, the Lord of All Things...I learned that even someone as formidable as the Lord of All Things was nothing more than a minor figure in the primordial chaos. There are many who are far more powerful than him. As for Rahu, he was an even more irrelevant figure.”

“I have to become more powerful.”

“A war for the Three Realms? A struggle between the Nuwa Alliance and the Seamless Gate? I’ve never cared about such things. Your visions are far too narrow...your gazes are focused on the Three Realms, but my gaze is focused on the endless primordial chaos.” Old Man Yuan shook his head. “I’ve never even considered risking my life in some squabble here in the Three Realms.”

“I want to leave this place. I want to become even more powerful.”

“Because I was born into the Three Realms, I wasn’t able to acquire any good techniques. I had no opportunities. Once I leave, I might be able to become a World God or a Chaos Immortal,” Old Man Yuan said eagerly. “That’s what I truly want. That’s what I truly desire!”

Subhuti continued to stare at him coldly. “Selfish! True, compared to the vast primordial chaos, the Three Realms is a very small place, and we are indeed nothing more than local bumpkins...but this is our home! The Three Realms is our home. All of us were born here, and we were all like brothers. They are now in mortal danger, but you are just going to stand by and watch? For the sake of becoming a so-called World God or Chaos Immortal, you are just going to watch as your old friends go off to fight? Go off to die?”

“I never thought that my old friend Yuan would end up like this.” Subhuti shook his head.

“Ahahaha...” Old Man Yuan actually began to laugh, laugh so hard that his beard shook. He then looked towards Subhuti with a dagger-sharp gaze. “Yes, I am selfish. The path of cultivation is a selfish path to begin with. If I’m going to walk this path, of course I need to treasure my own life. Of course I have to seize every opportunity I can find to become more powerful. Am I supposed to foolishly stand alongside the rest of you and risk everything?”

“You don’t possess any transcendental qualities. Neither we nor the Seamless Gate will permit you to remain unaligned.” Although Subhuti felt sorrow in his heart, he still tried to dissuade Old Man Yuan.

“I’ll do everything I can to get as much as I can from the Seamless Gate,” Old Man Yuan said calmly. “Don’t worry. Before the Endwar begins, I’ll leave the Three Realms and enter the endless primordial chaos. I’ll take my old friends with me, and together we shall adventure through it. As for what happens to you and the Seamless Gate? I won’t get involved.”

“Leave?” Subhuti was surprised.

“Right.” Old Man Yuan laughed coldly. “What, did you actually think that I would really fight on behalf of the Seamless Gate? No; neither your side nor the Seamless Gate is worth me risking my life for.”

“Good. Very good indeed.” Subhuti laughed hard, as though he had heard an incredibly funny joke. “During my [Dream of the Three Realms], I can see countless mortals change...but now, I see that the hearts of Fiendgods can change as well. You’ve changed. You’ve changed far, far too much compared to the Yuan who was born alongside me from within the primordial chaos.”

“Back then, I was just a newborn. I was born with mastery over a Grand Dao, but aside from that I knew nothing at all. Back then, we were too simple and naïve.” Old Man Yuan shook his head. “As far as I’m concerned, my brothers and friends are of secondary importance. My path of cultivation is of paramount importance.”

Subhuti gave Old Man Yuan a long, deep look, then disappeared into thin air.

As for Old Man Yuan, he just continued to sit there quietly. He lifted up one of the wine cups and took a small sip from it. “Once I become a World God and look back, all of this will be nothing more than a memory.”