

Desolate 771

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 24: The Starlord of Fogstone Chapter 11: The Sixth General

Only when competing against a grandmaster of the sword would one truly be able to see one's own weaknesses.

Although Ji Ning's 'Sword Realm' was very formidable, allowing him to perfectly control every single sword-strike he used, its weakness was that it was too balanced. His sword wasn't fast enough, unpredictable enough, savage enough...it was lacking in many respects. When World God Blackmist used his sword-arts against Ning, Ning was completely suppressed in every respect. Blackmist's sword-arts were truly terrifying and contained an entire system within it.

The Sword World level represented a systemized understanding of the true essence of the sword, allowing one to form an entire world with it. World God Blackmist clearly had already reached that level.

Slash.

Swish.

"That's how it should be."

"The second stance of the [Nameless] sword-art...no wonder I always felt something was off."

"Right..."

During this battle, many of the questions and mysteries that had puzzled Ning were dispelled one after the other, causing Ning to feel quite excited. In his homeland of Earth, there was a saying; 'Listening to a word of wisdom from a master is more effective than ten years of reading.' When competing against such a formidable master of the sword such as World God Blackmist, Ning found that he was improving at a shocking rate. He had trained for many years but had never encountered someone as terrifyingly formidable in the Dao of the Sword before.

World God Blackmist had clearly suppressed his own level of power, allowing just a little bit of it to be put on display. If he was to allow the power of his Sword World to fully explode, it would be effortless for him to destroy an entire chaosworld.

Although Ning continued to make improvements, he was still very puny compared to the true might of this Sword World.

"A killing stance..."

"Right. This stance doesn't focus on stability; it focuses on attacking and killing."

Ning slowly began to understand.

[Nameless] sword-art, first stance – Heartsword stance.

[Nameless] sword-art, second stance – Killsword stance.

“He truly is talented in the Dao of the Sword.” Immortal Abyssus watched from on high as World God Blacklist dueled against Ji Ning. Every single streak of sword-light from Ji Ning was more powerful and fiercer than the last as his Dao of the Sword noticeably grew sharper and deadlier.

“He is improving quite quickly. My guess is that Darknorth hasn’t been training for that long,” the Starlord of Fogstone said with a smile.

“Agreed.” Immortal Abyssus nodded.

If one didn’t reach the World-level in a single chaos cycle, it was almost guaranteed that one would never reach that level.

For Ji Ning to improve so quickly when dueling with a master of the Dao of the Sword meant that he was clearly still in his early growth period. And in truth, the reason why his rate of improvement was this fast was primarily because he had never before had the chance to duel such an expert of the sword.

“B-but...” As the red-robed disciple of Immortal Abyssus watched this fight, he felt more embarrassed than anyone else.

“Now do you understand the difference between the two of you?” Ancestral Immortal Imperius laughed.

“Please don’t make fun of me, eldest apprentice-brother.” The red-robed youth said hurriedly, “Only now do I realize that Elder God Darknorth was taking it easy on me. If he had revealed such terrifying sword-arts from the very start, I probably would’ve been instantly defeated. His sword-arts have completely eclipsed the sword-arts of so-called ‘supreme Elder Gods’. He should be comparable to our five generals. Most likely you, eldest apprentice-brother, are the only one who is definitely capable of defeating him.”

“If eldest apprentice-brother fights, of course he’ll win.”

“No question.”

All of the fellow disciples agreed on this.

Chaos Immortal Abyssus had only joined this place after adventuring for many years in the outside world, and as he did so he was accompanied by his eldest disciple, Ancestral Immortal Imperius. Imperius was unfathomably strong, but he had never joined the Fogstone Army. He was a very low-key figure, but the disciples of Chaos Immortal Abyssus and the high-level members of Fogstone all knew that the most powerful figure below the World-level on this planet was actually Imperius. In fact, the five generals had once joined together to challenge him in secret, but all five of them had been defeated.

Imperius was simply a low-key man who didn’t like to fight.

Because he had been training for far more than a chaos cycle, his master and the Starlord didn’t force him to go out and adventure, allowing him to live his low-key life on Fogstone.

“Beating him wouldn’t be easy.” Imperius watched as Ning continued to battle against World God Blackmist. “All of you are underestimating him. When World God Blackmist first used an incarnation to fight, his sword-arts were actually incredibly powerful. Despite that, he still wasn’t able to do anything

to Darknorth. World God Blackmist has now used his Sword World, but Darknorth is still able to keep fighting. Although World God Blackmist is taking it easy on him, Darknorth's defensive sword-arts truly have reached a terrifying level."

"He's too stable."

"His defense is airtight and completely flawless. The other five generals each have their own special techniques, but when faced with Darknorth's airtight defense...eventually, all of them will be defeated. Even I am not confident in being able to defeat him," Ancestral Immortal Imperius said.

"Completely flawless?" The other disciples, all of whom worshipped their eldest apprentice-brother, were all shocked.

"Given how terrifying his sword-arts are...if he was to acquire a Dao sword..." Ancestral Immortal Imperius shook his head. "That would make him truly dangerous."

"Agreed." All of the other disciples nodded.

Darknorth was already incredibly powerful and an expert of the Dao of the Sword. If he had a Dao sword as well...how deadly would he become?!

Ning's 'Heartsword Realm' was a technique allowing him absolute control over himself and his sword. Even those more powerful than him would find it difficult to break his sword stances, unless the difference in power was truly enormous.

The [Nameless] sword-art was simply too formidable.

Even someone like World God Northrest, who had access to the resources of the mighty Vastheaven Palace, had been smitten by this sword-art. And even to the very day of his death, he had still been far from completely mastering the entire [Nameless] sword-art.

Whoosh.

World God Blackmist ceased his attacks.

Ning stood there, his face covered with sweat. His eyes, however, were blazing with excitement. He had been mentally exhausted just now, but he didn't care at all. This was his first time fighting against such a formidable master of the Dao of the Sword; Ning naturally valued and cherished this opportunity.

"Thank you, senior," Ning said gratefully.

Ning truly was extremely grateful.

It had been a long battle. At first, his sword-arts had continuously improved, but towards the end he was unable to improve any further. He had already made full use of all the insights and experiences he had gained during six thousand years of meditation in the Three Realms. No rate of explosive could be maintained forever. Clearly, the insights Ning had gained in recent years weren't enough to allow him to truly master the 'Killsword stance' just yet.

However, he now comprehended the majority of the 'Killsword stance'. The parts he had yet to comprehend were the hardest parts...but of course, the power of Ning's sword-arts had increased significantly as well.

"It's rare to encounter someone on Fogstone who understands the Dao of the Sword. You can come seek me out whenever you wish," World God Blackmist said with a smile.

"Understood." Ning was overjoyed.

Although Blackmist had said 'whenever you wish', Ning wouldn't be so foolish as to actually seek him out all the time. When training in the sword, one had to have both insights and actual combat experience! Only when he had enough insights would he seek Blackmist out for another duel.

"Based on how quickly I'm improving...I should be able to master the second stance in about ten thousand years." Ning mused to himself, "If I use the Heavengazer Tower, it should only take me a few centuries."

If it wasn't for World God Blackmist, Ning would probably need a hundred times as much time in order to succeed. In fact, it was entirely possible that Ning would encounter a bottleneck that would stymie him, no matter how hard he tried to breach it. With a capable teacher providing guidance, he would be able to easily make his way past those bottlenecks. A good teacher could make a tremendous difference.

"Darknorth." The Starlord of Fogstone spoke out as Immortal Abyssus and World God Blackmist both looked towards Ning.

"Starlord." Ning looked at him respectfully.

"You are quite strong indeed. Fogstone has a total of five generals. As of today, you are now the sixth." The Starlord smiled.

Ning was slightly startled. 'General' was an important rank; not only did one have to be powerful, one generally also needed to have rendered accomplishments for the organization.

"Understood," Ning hurriedly said.

"Since you are a general, we won't place too many restrictions on you," the Starlord said with a smile. "If my guess is correct, you probably haven't been training for too long."

"Right," Ning said.

"Mm. Since you've only trained for a short period of time, I imagine you are definitely working hard to try and break through to the World-level." The Starlord continued, "That means in the future, you'll go out adventuring. This is the lifeblood oath I need you to make in order to join the Fogstone Army. It is a fairly loose one." As he spoke, he waved his hand, causing a scroll to fly down towards Ning.

Ning accepted the scroll. Anyone who wished to join an organization would have to swear a lifeblood oath. However, if one merely joined as a 'guest retainer', the terms of the lifeblood oath would generally be much looser.

Ning glanced through the scroll. Indeed, this lifeblood oath was a fairly relaxed one. It placed almost negligible constraints on Ning, only requiring him to be loyal to Fogstone.

“Starlord,” Ning said respectfully. “Can we make a slight alteration to this oath?”

“Alteration?” The Starlord frowned. This oath was already an extremely loose one. “What part needs altering?”

“In the future, my journeys will most likely take me beyond the Badlands Territory,” Ning said respectfully.

“Leave the Badlands?” The three World-level experts were all puzzled.

The Badlands Territory was a vast place with many World-level experts. A territory of this size was more than large enough for an Elder God or Ancestral Immortal to adventure through.

“I don’t have a choice. I’m bound by another lifeblood oath. In the future, I’ll definitely have to leave the Badlands Territory and seek out a place known as Vastheaven Palace.” Ning immediately asked, “Might I ask the three of you, seniors, if you know where Vastheaven Palace is?”

There was no need for him to hide the fact that he had to seek out Vastheaven Palace.

These three World-level figures were all much more experienced than him. Perhaps they might know where Vastheaven Palace lay.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 24: The Starlord of Fogstone Chapter 12: Sentinel

World God Blackmist, Chaos Immortal Abyssus, and the Starlord of Fogstone were all slightly startled.

“Vastheaven Palace?” The Starlord glanced towards the other two, puzzled. “I haven’t gone to many places, just the Badlands Territory, the Cicada Territory, and three other territories. You two have been to many more places.”

“I’ve never heard of it either.” World God Blackmist shook his head. “Abyssus, you’ve journeyed through the primordial chaos for quite some time. Have you heard of Vastheaven Palace?”

Chaos Immortal Abyssus glanced downwards dubiously. “Elder God Darknorth, what is this Vastheaven Palace? Is it a region, the name of a palace, or an organization?”

“An organization. It should be quite a powerful one,” Ning said.

“Haven’t heard of it.”

Abyssus was rather puzzled. “I’ve spent countless years traveling in the territories surrounding the Badlands as well as quite a few distant territories. I’ve been to many places and collected many star maps, but I’ve never heard of an organization known as Vastheaven Palace!”

“The other World-level members of Fogstone have been to far fewer places than Abyssus has. If not even Abyssus has heard of this place, it must be located extremely far away or in a very remote area. In fact, it could’ve been wiped out many chaos cycles ago,” the Starlord said.

A chill entered Ning's heart.

World God Northrest, what did you do? You ran around in such a crazy manner that even a sword like Violetjewel was nearly destroyed, ending up in a place you didn't recognize.

This was going to be even harder than he thought!

World God Northrest had never heard of the Badlands Territory, while the Starlord of Fogstone, World God Blackmist, and Immortal Abyssus had never heard of Vastheaven Palace! It must be understood that Vastheaven Palace controlled the entire Vastheaven Territory, which meant that it should be a fairly famous organization. And yet, even someone like Immortal Abyssus who had journeyed through many territories had never heard of the place. From this, one could imagine just how far the Badlands Territory was from the Vastheaven Territory.

"Will I be able to find it within a single chaos cycle?" Ning began to worry.

"I'll help you ask the other World-level experts about Vastheaven Palace. I'll also ask my friends if any of them have heard of it," the Starlord said.

"Thank you, Starlord." Ning nodded.

The Starlord gazed downwards at Ning, then shook his head and laughed. "That's all I can really do. However...if not even Immortal Abyssus has heard of the place, it's unlikely that any of my friends would have heard of it. Mm, right. Yes, we can make a slight alteration to the lifeblood oath you need to swear in order to join the Fogstone Army." As he spoke, he pointed at the scroll. A twinkling little sparkle of star light instantly descended, covering the scroll in Ning's hands and changing its contents.

"What do you think?" The Starlord asked.

Ning lowered his head to look at it. There were now even fewer restrictions than before, and once he became a World God there would be virtually no restrictions on him whatsoever.

"If you are willing to accept this, you can swear the lifeblood oath now," the Starlord said.

"Yes," Ning said respectfully, scroll in hand. This scroll effectively acted as an oathstone on its own.

"I swear on my very life itself..."

From this day forth, Ning was now a formal member of Fogstone. Even if trillions of years passed and he became far more powerful than he was now, he would still be a member of Fogstone.

Within the hall.

After Ning swore the lifeblood oath, the gazes of the Starlord, World God Blackmist, and Immortal Abyssus all turned warmer as they looked at him. They were now on the same boat, after all.

"Per our usual rules, you should be bestowed with some treasures and techniques now that you have joined the Fogstone Army," the Starlord said. "In a short while, I'll arrange for Fushe lead you to the treasury and get your things."

"Alright," Ning said.

“However, be aware that Fogstone has many cultivators; we can’t just give you all of our treasures,” the Starlord said. “Thus, if you wish to acquire more than just the base package, you’ll have to render merits to the organization. Would you prefer to remain here on Fogstone, or would you prefer to venture outside and do battle on our behalf?”

“I’m willing to go out and do battle,” Ning said respectfully.

The Starlord smiled and nodded.

“Starlord,” Ning immediately said, “I’d like to ask you a question. How many people in the Badlands Territory know the ‘Blacklotus Guard’ technique, are Heartforce Cultivators, and are at least at the supreme Elder God level of power?”

“The ‘Blacklotus Guard’ is one of the consummate techniques of God Emperor Blacklotus. He will never teach it to an outsider, much like how we won’t teach outsiders our truly supreme skills either. Only the less important techniques will be transmitted to others.” The Starlord of Fogstone chuckled. “A Heartforce Cultivator who knows the ‘Blacklotus Guard’ and is at least a supreme Elder God...the only one who fulfills all of these requirements is one of his Nine Divine Generals, the Mindlord.”

“Does the Mindlord have a Primaltwin?” Ning asked.

“He did.” The Starlord nodded. “Based on what I know, the Mindlord’s Primaltwin headed off to the Earthdrake area roughly a chaos cycle and ended up dying there.”

Ning was startled. The Earthdrake area? Wasn’t that the area he was from? Died a chaos cycle ago? Wasn’t Old Man Yuan possessed during the Primordial Era? There couldn’t be that many coincidences.

“So it really is the Mindlord.” A flicker of a killing intent appeared in Ning’s eyes. It made sense. He had the feeling that Godfiend Witherspike was telling the truth. As an extremely powerful cultivator who was skilled in heartforce, he was generally able to tell when others were lying to him or not. Perhaps true Heartforce Cultivators like Old Man Yuan would be able to deceive him, but people like Witherspike didn’t have skills in this area.

“You have a feud with the Mindlord?” The Starlord of Fogstone asked.

“I do,” Ning said respectfully.

“Oh...” The Starlord pondered a moment, then said, “How about this? Of the chaosworlds under my command, the Windsource Chaosworld lies closest to God Emperor Blacklotus’ domain. Combat occurs quite often there, which is why we have more than three hundred Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals stationed there permanently. You can go to the Windsource Chaosworld.”

“We already have a leader for our forces there,” World God Blackmist said.

The Starlord waved his hand, manifesting an insignia that glimmered with starlight. He tossed the insignia to Ning, who hurriedly reached out to catch it. The insignia had the word ‘Sentinel’ on it.

“This is the Sentinel insignia,” the Starlord said. “From this day forth, you are my designated Sentinel. When you reach the Windsource Chaosworld, you will be my representative. All the cultivators of the Windsource Chaosworld will obey your commands.”

“Yes,” Ning said respectfully.

“Also, I’ll send the word and make sure that the news of your arrival is kept quiet,” the Starlord said.

“You’ve just joined us a short while ago; very few people know of your presence. I imagine that God Emperor Blacklotus and his forces don’t even know about you yet. Their ignorance of your allegiance to us will make it easier for you to strike out against them and take revenge. The Nine Divine Generals of God Emperor Blacklotus often travel to the Windsource Chaosworld. You’ll definitely find a chance to fight the Mindlord.”

“Thank you, Starlord.” Ning was overjoyed. This was a perfect arrangement. To be the Starlord’s Sentinel was quite a lofty position.

“Be careful.” World God Blackmist instructed, “The armies of God Emperor Blacklotus aren’t so easily dealt with.”

“Yes.” Ning was still filled with eagerness.

Sword-arts were meant for battle. Only in battle would his sword-arts be tempered and improved! Ning’s [Nameless] sword-art in particular needed both time and actual combat experience.

“Fushe, go ahead and lead Darknorth to the treasury. After he has his items, he can immediately head off towards the Windsource Chaosworld,” the Starlord instructed.

“Yes,” Island Master Fushe said respectfully.

Ning and Fushe then departed the hall together.

“What do you think?” The Starlord looked towards the other two.

“An excellent choice.” Immortal Abyssus chuckled. “We’re lucky to have such a formidable expert in the Dao of the Sword join us. My guess is that this Darknorth holds an enormous grudge against the Mindlord, which is the reason why he decided to join Fogstone to begin with. Otherwise, given his sword-arts he could have easily joined any organization aside from the Badlands Court.”

“That’s why I arranged for him to be in the Windsource Chaosworld,” the Starlord said.

The border regions between two major organizations served as a meat grinder. Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals often died there. As far as both sides were concerned, the border regions were a good place for the cultivators of both sides to gain experience through life-and-death battles. Only then would they be able to grow more quickly.

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“Congratulations, brother Darknorth. You are now our sixth general.” Island Master Fushe flew alongside Ning as they left the Abyssus Palace. “When you go to the Windsource Chaosworld as the Starlord’s Sentinel, you’ll be the undisputed leader of our forces there. Being the leader of a chaosworld is quite an excellent position. All of the cultivators in the Windsource Chaosworld will try to curry favor with you.”

“Curry favor with me?” Ning was puzzled.

“Of course. You will be guarding the place as the Starlord’s representative. You can easily cause problems for any of them. They wouldn’t dare to NOT curry favor with you.” Fushe laughed. “Look, the Starlord’s estate is over there.”

Ning turned to look, only to see an enormous, city-sized estate appear in the distance. The estate was surrounded by countless sparks of star light, as though it was the very center of the entire planet of Fogstone.

“Ordinary Elder God soldiers might exhaust themselves for an entire chaos cycle without being able to acquire the treasures and techniques you are about to get.” Fushe had a look of envy on his face as he led Ning into the Starlord’s estate.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 24: The Starlord of Fogstone Chapter 13: Statues

The Starlord’s estate was tens of thousands of kilometers in size. It was filled with countless edifices and emanated an aura of supreme power.

“What are...?” Upon entering the estate, Ji Ning immediately stared off into the distance in amazement.

As soon as he had entered, the first things he saw were those grayish-white statues, all shaped like humanoids. There was a statue of a dominating man whose hair was flying about, a statue of an icy, beautiful woman, a statue of a crazy old man who was roaring with laughter, a statue of a youth who was filled with a murderous aura...

Every single statue seemed to be almost alive. However, they were clearly just lifeless stone sculptures.

“What are those?” Ning was puzzled.

“Those are all World-level experts.” Upon seeing those distant statues, a complicated look entered Fushe’s eyes. He said softly, “Deceased World-level experts.”

“Deceased?” Ning instantly understood. “So when World-level experts of Fogstone die, they are memorialized here in the form of stone sculptures?”

Island Master Fushe slowly shook his head. “These are their corpses!”

“Corpses?” Ning was stunned. He turned his head to stare at the statues once more. There were dozens of them, and all of them were completely lifeless. They had no aura of life, divine power, or Immortal energy. It must be understood that even the corpse of an ordinary Fiendgod would radiate an aura of divine power. If a Chaos Immortal was to die, his corpse would continue to emanate an aura of extraordinary power.

But these stone statues...Ning couldn’t see anything special about them at all.

“These are all the World Gods of Fogstone who have died since time immemorial,” Fushe said softly. “They all used the [Fogstone Apocalypse] divine ability to fight against their foes, then perished in battle.”

"[Fogstone Apocalypse]?" Ning was puzzled.

"Fogstone's lineage is an ancient one, even more ancient than the lineage of the Badlands Court, the most powerful organization in the Badlands Territory. Although the Badlands Court is more powerful, Fogstone actually ranks as one of the three oldest lineages of the Badlands Territory and is far older than the Badlands Court. Actually, there are many organizations in the Badlands Territory which are older than the Badlands Court, but quite a few of them were wiped out. In the end, power is what matters. The Badlands Court was established by Daolord Badlands; it naturally is the ruler of the entire Badlands Territory."

Island Master Fushe continued, "The most powerful divine ability the Fogstone lineage possesses is the [Fogstone Apocalypse] technique. Only Fiendgod Body Refiners can train in it, and only World Gods can fully master it. This divine ability is never taught to outsiders."

Although Ning had purchased a star map and learned a bit of information about the region, the star map had included very little information about the truly peerless techniques which existed here.

"When you use this divine ability, your body will slowly transform into fogstone. If you completely master it and use it, your entire body will become transformed into fogstone." Fushe shook his head. "During the petrification process, you will become terrifyingly powerful...but there's always a catch. If you run out of divine power after you complete the transformation process, you will transform into a fogstone statue and perish."

"What?" Ning was stunned.

"This will only happen to the World Gods of Fogstone in the most dire of situations. Generally speaking, if you halt the divine ability once your divine power begins to run low, you'll be able to stay alive. These World Gods all died in battle," Fushe said softly.

Ning stared at the stone statues.

These were all World Gods who had died countless years ago...

They had been forced into dire situations where they had no choice but to go all out. Some of the World Gods died laughing, some died while furious, and some died calmly. This truly stunned Ning. It reminded him that the path of cultivation was one which was filled with countless dangers which could fell even a World God. World God Northrest was another classic example.

"Let's go," Fushe said.

"Right." Ning bowed respectfully towards the statues, then followed behind Fushe.

The first thing Ning acquired was a suit of armor. As the sixth general of the Fogstone Army, Ning was given a suit of top-grade Chaos armor.

"These are the abridged jade slips which hold information about the many techniques Fogstone has to offer." A series of jade slips floated out from the deep recesses of a dark hall. There were thousands of them, and all of them glowed with light. "The dimmer ones are the more ordinary techniques, while the brighter ones hold the elite techniques. As for the brightest slips, they hold the consummate techniques that cannot be taught to outsiders."

Ning stood there within the dark room, staring at the levitating jade slips. There were only twelve of the brightest jade slips.

“The consummate techniques that cannot be taught to outsiders can only be learned by the generals of the Fogstone Army, as well as the personal disciples of our World Gods,” Fushe said.

“Oh?”

Ning immediately sent his coresense forward, scanning those twelve jade slips with it.

Ning was immediately shocked by what he found.

Fogstone truly had a deep foundation! Of the twelve jade slips, three were sword-arts...and all three were extraordinary.

The most powerful was the [Illusory Starsword] technique. It had a total of nine stances, and by training to the fifth stance one would reach the Sword World stage.

“Although it is quite formidable, it’s still a bit lacking compared to my [Nameless] sword-art. The [Nameless] sword-art is even more profound and exquisite.” Ning was an expert of the Dao of the Sword; naturally, he was able to tell which was better and which was worse. The [Nameless] sword-art’s creator had to be at an incredibly, incredibly high level of mastery. This was why even his first stance, the ‘Heartsword stance’, was so profound as to allow cultivators to completely and fully control each stroke of the sword. The further one delved into the [Nameless] sword-art, the more profound it became.

As for other sword-arts, they might be quite powerful as well, but their visions and their intents were more limited in scope, making them inferior.

“I’ll continue to focus on the [Nameless] sword-art.” Ning actually ignored all three of these sword-arts.

[World of Dust], [Eternal Demonheart], [Violet Smoke Diagram], [Fogstone Apocalypse]...

These divine abilities and secret arts all made Ning sigh in amazement.

Incredible.

Simply incredible.

World God Northrest was a member of Vastheaven Palace, but he was unable to transfer its most consummate skills to Ji Ning. All the skills he had given Ning were the ones which he himself had acquired through his dangerous adventures. The [Nameless] sword-art and the [Golden Statue] divine ability were two extremely formidable techniques, but the rest of the techniques he had handed over were somewhat weaker. As for the consummate arts of Fogstone, they were superior to all but the [Nameless] sword-art.

The partial scroll of the [World of Dust] was a good example. This was a technique for devising seals and tags of tremendous power. Although the scroll was incomplete, Ning could sense from the abridged version of jade slip that this technique should be on the same level as the [Nameless] sword-art.

Unfortunately, it was incomplete. According to the records, no one was even able to gain a basic level of expertise in it; it was nothing more than an incomplete, fragmentary record of a seal-devising technique.

Although Ning's [Nameless] sword-art was also incomplete, at least the first stance through seventh stance were included in their entirety. Even World God Northrest had been able to train to the fifth stance, which proved that the [Nameless] sword-art was something which Ning could train in for a long, long period of time.

"The Fogstone Apocalypse...what a powerful divine ability." Ning sighed in amazement.

The [Fogstone Apocalypse] technique was divided into three stages.

The first stage allowed minor parts of the body to transform into fogstone, such as the hair. The transformation was a fairly minute one, but it still allowed one's divine power to increase dramatically in power.

The second stage allowed for large-scale transformation of the body, allowing even the bones to transform into fogstone.

As for the third stage, it completely transformed the entire body into fogstone, giving one a perfect fogstone body. When a World God's body was completely transformed into fogstone, his body would become as tough and as resilient as a Dao weapon. A body like this was capable of withstanding tremendously powerful explosions of divine power. The [Starseizing Hand] only allowed the hands to withstand such tremendous power; the [Fogstone Apocalypse] allowed every single part of the body to burst with absolutely inconceivable might.

The first stage alone was already comparable to the Sixth Cycle of the [Starseizing Hand].

"Choose wisely," Island Master Fushe said "You are a general. You may choose either ten of the more ordinary techniques, one of the elite techniques, or part of the consummate techniques."

The consummate techniques would not be taught in their entirety at once.

Ning carefully went through the jade slips. A long while later, he made his decision.

"I choose this, the [Fogstone Apocalypse]," Ning said.

"Ah?" Fushe was rather surprised. He had actually told Ning about the fogstone statues earlier, after all. He couldn't help but ask, "Are you sure?"

"Yes." Ning nodded.

This divine ability was extremely powerful. The second stage of it was comparable to a theoretical Seventh Cycle of the [Starseizing Hand], which Ning hadn't even been able to develop yet.

Ning had chosen this divine ability for two reasons. He wanted to train in it, but he also wanted to analyze it and use its mysteries to help him in his quest to develop the Seventh Cycle of the [Starseizing Hand]. After that, Ning would want to develop an Eighth Cycle and perhaps even a Ninth Cycle!

A short while later, Ning received the full jade slip. Within this jade slip was recorded the first part of the [Fogstone Apocalypse] technique. The first part included just the first stage and the second stage, which could both be used by Elder Gods. Only World Gods could train in the third stage.

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“Brother Fushe, I’ve been given orders by the Starlord. I’ll head out towards the Windsource Chaosworld right away.” Outside the Starlord’s estate, Ning was bidding Fushe farewell.

“The Windsource Chaosworld is a place where we often clash with God Emperor Blacklotus’ troops. Be careful, brother Darknorth,” Fushe said.

Ning nodded, then soared into the skies and headed towards the direction of the Windsource Chaosworld.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 24: The Starlord of Fogstone Chapter 14: Windsource Chaosworld

The Windsource Chaosworld was an enormous, ellipsoid sphere.

Swoosh.

A boat flew into the Windsource Chaosworld, carrying three cultivators within it. These three cultivators didn’t disguise their auras in the slightest.

“Why have the three of you come to Windsource?” The air shimmered momentarily before a black-robed Ancestral Immortal appeared. This Ancestral Immortal had a pair of wings on his back and a white horn growing out of his forehead.

“The three of us have come here to scavenge for ancient relics.” All three of the cultivators rose to their feet. They had powerful auras and were either Elder Gods or first-tier Ancestral Immortals.

“Here are three bottles of chaos nectar.” One of the three, a silver-haired cultivator, waved his hand and sent three bottles of chaos nectar over.

The black-robed Ancestral Immortal accepted the bottles, then said calmly, “Very well. I trust the three of you understand that this is a border world which lies between Fogstone and the Blacklotus Empire. Don’t get caught up in our problems.”

“We understand,” the three cultivators responded, then quickly departed on their boat.

Whoosh.

An old man whose body was surrounded by waves of blood suddenly appeared next to the black-robed Ancestral Immortal. The old man said with a smile, “Whitehorn, was that another group of treasure hunters?”

“Yes.” The black-robed Ancestral Immortal waved his hand, revealing the three bottles of chaos nectar.

“Those ancient relic sites have attracted quite a few Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals over the years. We’ve collected so much chaos nectar that my hands are starting to go limp.” The old man shook his head. “A pity that we have to offer all of it up to our superiors. It’d be wonderful if we could keep it for ourselves.”

“Do you think all of those Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals would obediently hand over those bottles if they were meant for you?” The black-robed Ancestral Immortal smirked.

The Windsource Chaosworld...

It wasn't a chaosworld that had been created through completely natural means.

The Pangu Chaosworld and the Seamless Chaosworld had started out as Worldhearts which gave birth to Fiendgods. The strongest of the Fiendgods had established the chaosworld, then perished.

The Windsource Chaosworld, however, had been artificially created by an ancient and enormously powerful figure.

That ancient figure had taken over nearly half of the chaosworld for his own use, transforming it into his own Immortal estate. After he had died, his Immortal estate had become a relic site.

The home of a powerful cultivator, even a deceased one, was an extremely dangerous place. The cultivator would have set down many layers of traps in order to ensure that it would be difficult for anyone to invade. Thus, even though this ancient figure had died, his estate remained filled with layers of dangers.

However, the techniques and treasures which the deceased figure had left behind were also powerful enough to drive countless cultivators wild.

The Windsource Ruins was an incredibly famous place. Even World Gods and Chaos Immortals had lost their lives there. To this very day, the Windsource Ruins was still filled with mysteries. However, the cultivators that managed to survive it and come back with treasures ensured that there would forever be a steady stream of fortune seekers.

Want to try your luck?

No problem. Just pay the entrance fee!

When using a spacetime transfer array, you had to pay a bottle of chaos nectar. This relic site belonged to Fogstone, and so if one wished to visit it one would have to pay the fee. World Gods and Chaos Immortals naturally didn't have to pay anything, but Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals did. Otherwise, they would be surrounded and attacked by the Fogstone Army, which would be a rather miserable ending.

The most profitable enterprise in the Badlands Territory lay in operating spacetime transfer arrays, but all twenty-one of them had been taken over by the Badlands Court! The other powers could do nothing besides envy them.

"Has the Sentinel arrived yet?" A muscular goldscale Fiendgod suddenly appeared next to them.

"Not yet." The black-robed Ancestral Immortal shook his head.

"We've been watching for him this entire time." The old man surrounded by bloody waves was a bit worried. "I wonder what sort of a personality this Sentinel has. Whitehorn and I have been managing the Windsource Chaosworld for several chaos cycles. I hope this new Sentinel won't rip us off too badly."

The Windsource Chaosworld was a world which had been established by an ancient power. Naturally occurring chaosworlds were only able to survive for a single chaos cycle before they would decay and then be reborn. The Windsource Chaosworld was protected by the Windsource Ruins within it and thus had been able to exist for an extremely long period of time.

"I heard that this Sentinel is a new general." The goldscale Fiendgod lowered his voice. "Our Fogstone Army only had a total of five generals, with him becoming the sixth. I've never met this guy either. I have no idea what he is like. Keep praying, you two."

"Right." The other two both felt rather nervous.

Sentinels were responsible for overseeing certain region. They were given tremendous amounts of power.

Just as the three of them were discussing this new Sentinel...

Swish.

A tear suddenly appeared in the skies on the opposite end of the Windsource Chaosworld. A streak of light flew out from the tear, then came to a halt. It was Ji Ning.

"Eh? Something just happened." The black-robed Ancestral Immortal, the old man, and the goldscale Fiendgod all hurried over.

As they teleported over, they saw a white-robed youth appear in midair, staring downwards towards this vast chaosworld.

"He looks identical to the painting we were given." The three of them didn't hesitate at all, immediately flying over towards Ning. The black-robed Ancestral Immortal immediately asked, "Are you the new Sentinel?"

Ning waved his hand, producing an insignia.

Rumble...

The insignia emitted a wave of overwhelming power that had an aura identical to that of the Starlord's.

"We bow in greetings to you, Sentinel." The three of them hurriedly called out respectfully to Ning. There was no way the Sentinel insignia could be counterfeited, and once the Starlord gave it to Ji Ning, he would become the only person capable of using it. No other Elder Gods or Ancestral Immortals would be able to use it.

"Mm." Ning nodded. "The three of you are...?"

"I'm Whitehorn. He's Bloodsea. The two of us are responsible for managing all affairs of the Windsource Chaosworld, great or small." The black-robed Ancestral Immortal hurriedly answered the question.

"I am Elder God Mountain Eater." The goldscale soldier was incredibly muscular, but he had a simple, honest look in his eyes. He said in a low voice, "The 321 Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals stationed in the Windsource Chaosworld all obey my commands. Per the Starlord, from this day forth I shall obey the Sentinel's commands."

Ning smiled and nodded. Given how many chaosworlds the Starlord commanded, it only made sense that he had designated certain individuals to manage them. Generally speaking, he would arrange for two Elder Gods or Ancestral Immortals to watch over each chaosworld as well as each other. In addition,

the Starlord would also occasionally send out a Sentinel to oversee certain areas and ensure that the local managers weren't plundering the worlds they were supposed to oversee.

The Windsource Chaosworld was under the management of Ancestral Immortal Whitehorn and Elder God Bloodsea.

"The three of you can simply refer to me as Sword Immortal Sunrise," Ning said. Since the Starlord was helping him to disguise his identity, Ning naturally was going to use a false name as well.

"Sword Immortal Sunrise," the three called out respectfully.

"Where is the Fogstone Army stationed? Take me there," Ning instructed.

"Right over there." Elder God Mountain Eater pointed at a distant chain of mountains. "We all live there in the Eastcalm Mountains."

The mountain range stretched out for thousands of kilometers. The Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals had all chosen mountain peaks that they liked, then settled down on their respective peaks. The distance between the mountain peaks was negligible to them; once battle began, they would be able to almost instantly gather together.

"Oh?" Ning nodded and smiled. "Then I will live there as well. Brother Mountain Eater, overseeing the Windsource Chaosworld is just a minor part of my duties. The real reason I've come here is to battle against the Blacklotus Empire by your side."

"With you by our side, general, our victory is assured." Elder God Mountain Eater chortled.

"I heard that the Windsource Ruins here are quite famous." Ning turned his head to glance at the Bloodsea and Whitehorn. "Do you have any reports on the Windsource Ruins which you can share with me? If you do, give me a copy."

"We do." The black-robed Ancestral Immortal immediately waved his hand, producing a jade slip which he respectfully offered to Ning.

"Mm. Very well then, that's all I need from you. Go do whatever you need to do," Ning instructed. "Just keep cooperating with the Fogstone Army. If there's nothing urgent, no need to come speak to me."

"Understood." "Understood."

Both Whitehorn and Bloodsea assented respectfully.

"You may leave," Ning said. Only then did the two depart.

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"He let us leave, just like that?" Elder God Bloodsea murmured in a soft voice, "Whitehorn, I thought we'd have to offer him some of our treasures. I even prepared mine already."

"I know, right? This Sentinel is a general; he definitely has very high standards. I was really worried about this. I never would've thought he'd let us leave, just like that." The black-robed Ancestral Immortal let out a sigh of relief as well. "It sounds like he doesn't really want us to bother him unless

there's something urgent. It seems as though this one really isn't planning on extorting treasures out of us."

"Right." Bloodsea felt jubilant as well.

.....

"General, all you had to do was say the word and they would've offered up their treasures like good little boys." Elder God Mountain Eater grinned at Ning. "Managing a place like the Windsource Chaosworld is a wonderful assignment. Not just any Elder God will be assigned here."

Ning shook his head. Given how powerful he now was, why would he need to extort his subordinates?

Ning turned his head to stare at the distant Eastcalm Mountains. For a long period of time, perhaps ten thousand years or even longer, he would be living in this place.

The Desolate Era

Book 24: The Starlord of Fogstone Chapter 15: Adventurers

The day after Ji Ning arrived at the Windsource Chaosworld.

Ning alighted upon an ordinary-looking planet in the midst of the primordial chaos.

"This planet is perfectly ordinary. There are trillions of planets like this one in the primordial chaos." Ning nodded slowly. "Ordinary is perfect. I'll put the prisonworld right here."

Ning waved his hand, causing a stone stele to sink down into an unfathomably deep crevice. It fell tens of thousands of kilometers, then sank deep within a dark underground river that carried it deeper into the earth.

He was going to adventure through the Badlands Territory and perhaps even leave it one day. Something dangerous might happen. He had to have a backup plan that would ensure that he would have the chance to recover! The backup clone for his true bod would remain here. Even if he lost his true body, his clone would be able to eventually recover and rebuild.

"However, according to the legends, there are some terrifyingly powerful secret arts that can simultaneously slay all of a person's clones at once." Ning was still quite wary.

The lifeblood oath was one example. If one violated a lifeblood oath, one's true body, Primaltwin, and clones would all be devoured and killed by it! This was because the true body and the Primaltwin were linked together in a very special manner that the lifeblood oath could access.

In the endless primordial chaos, there were supposedly certain terrifying figures who could use special secret arts to achieve the exact same effect, killing all the clones belonging to one's true body or Primaltwin! It didn't matter how many clones you had; you would still die! This, too, was part of the information which World God Northrest had left behind for Ning. However, these powerful secret arts were extremely difficult to train in and also incredibly rare. Less than one in ten thousand World-level experts was capable of such a technique.

As for Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals? The vast majority weren't even aware that such techniques existed.

"Even though I'll have a clone here, I still need to be careful," Ning reminded himself.

Swoosh.

Ning flew away from this planet. This planet was quite far away from the Windsource Chaosworld, and Ning had to spend more than half a day before he could finish teleporting back.

The Windsource Chaosworld. The Eastcalm Mountains. The Sunrise Courtyard.

This was a quiet, peaceful, ordinary-looking little courtyard. This was the place where Ning would live.

Whoosh.

A streak of light flew in from afar, alighting within the courtyard. It was Ji Ning, who had just returned from that distant, desolate planet.

"General." A voice rang out from outside the courtyard gates.

Ning glanced towards the gates, then smiled. "Come in."

The gates were pushed open and three goldscale soldiers walked in from outside. These three were all goldscale captains of the Fogstone Army. The leader of the three was Elder God Mountain Eater, who Ning had met the previous day. Next to him was an alluringly beautiful woman who had a bushy, snowy-white tail, and a jade-haired man who emanated a freezing aura.

"General, you headed out early in the morning. These two didn't have a chance to come pay their respects to you," Elder God Mountain Eater said with a smile.

"So these are the other two captains?" Ning looked at the other two.

Mountain Eater quickly made the introductions. "This one here is Immortal Soulflight."

"Greetings, General." The alluring female goldscale captain who had a bushy white tail spoke out, her voice tinged with mesmerizing charm.

"And this is Elder God Tearwell." Mountain Eater then introduced the icy-looking jade-haired man next to him.

"Greetings, General." Elder God Tearwell was quite respectful as well.

"The three hundred-plus Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals stationed here at the Windsource Chaosworld are usually divided up into three squads. The three of us are the captains of the squads, with the Starlord having originally assigned me to be the leader." Mountain Eater continued, "Now that you are here, General, we will of course obey your commands."

Ning nodded and smiled. "Soulflight, Tearwell, this is our first time meeting each other. In the future, we'll often be fighting by each other's sides. Please sit! Let's chat while sitting down."

The four seated themselves around a wooden table within the courtyard. Ning waved his hand, causing some fine wine to appear.

“I’m new here and don’t have a good understanding of the situation between our forces and the forces of the Blacklotus Empire. Tell me a bit about the situation,” Ning said.

“General.” Immortal Souflight’s voice was very pleasing to the ear. “This is a border world. The closest Blacklotus Empire border world would be the Songbug Chaosworld. Sometimes, they’ll ambush us; sometimes, we’ll ambush them. Generally speaking, the battles are kept fairly small-scale. Large scale battles which involve hundreds of Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals are very rare.”

“Oh?” Ning nodded slowly.

“Still, they usually ambush us more than we ambush them.” Souflight shook her head. “We control the Windsource Chaosworld and its Windsource Ruins. Every single unaffiliated Elder God or Ancestral Immortal has to pay us a bottle of chaos nectar if they wish to test their luck. Over the course of a chaos cycle, we will usually collect a cube of chaos nectar.”

A cube of chaos nectar represented a thousand bottles.

This was a sum that would make any World-level expert turn green with envy.

“That’s why the Blacklotus Empire deeply desires to take over our Windsource Chaosworld and why they launch repeated ambushes against us. However, we’ve long ago set up many layers of formations around the Eastcalm Mountains. This chaosworld is our territory. When they try to ambush us, they usually end up suffering more losses than we do.” Souflight continued, “When all of our Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals join forces, we can hold off even an enemy World God. Thus, the Blacklotus Empire has never been able to do anything to us.”

“Mm.” Ning understood.

The Blacklotus Empire lusted after the Windsource Chaosworld, but they would most likely need to mobilize their World Gods if they wanted to actually take it over. But once their World-level experts made a move, the war would instantly escalate to a dramatically different level.

Fogstone had a long history, deep roots, and more World-level experts.

The Blacklotus Empire didn’t dare to launch a large-scale war against such a powerful organization without a very good reason. That’s why the conflicts between the two were usually contained to the Elder God and Ancestral Immortal level. In truth, these ‘conflicts’ were primarily meant to help train and temper their subordinates, as only through engaging in life-and-death battles would they be able to grow and improve. Almost none of the Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals stationed here had been alive for more than a chaos cycle. But of course, the Blacklotus Empire probably also hoped that they might eventually get lucky and successfully take over the Windsource Chaosworld.

Ning chatted with three captains for a long period of time, gaining a general understanding of the disposition of the three.

Elder God Mountain Eater looked like a violent hulking brute, but he was actually a very steady figure. This was probably the reason why the Starlord of Fogstone had ordered the others to follow his lead.

Ancestral Immortal Soulflight was a very excitable individual. Each time the conversation turned to warfare and combat, her eyes would gleam with excitement. She was most likely the type that loved to fight.

As for Elder God Tearwell, he was a taciturn man.

Time continued to flow on. More than a hundred years had passed since Ning had arrived at the Windsource Chaosworld.

“Why have you come to the Windsource Chaosworld?” The black-robed Ancestral Immortal appeared within the skies, staring towards a golden-robed man that was sitting within a giant warship.

“Cut the crap. I’m here for the ruins.” The golden-robed man said lazily, “Take your bottle of chaos nectar.”

He tossed out a bottle of chaos nectar. The black-robed Ancestral Immortal caught the bottle and frowned, but remained silent. These cultivators were willing to pay the fee of a bottle of chaos nectar in order to avoid offending Fogstone, but they wouldn’t necessarily be polite about it.

Whoosh.

Space rippled like a curtain. Moments later, Ji Ning appeared.

“Eh?” Ning glanced at the golden-robed man within the large warship.

“Greetings, Sentinel. He’s an adventurer,” the black-robed Ancestral Immortal said.

“Oh.” Ning nodded. This was his first time encountering an outsider during the century he had spent here.

The golden-robed man on the warship glanced sideways at Ning, then muttered softly to himself, “Sentinel? Hmph.” He waved his hand, causing an entire host of Immortals and Fiendgods to appear next to him, all of whom had the auras of either Elder Gods or Ancestral Immortals. There had to be over a hundred of them, and all of them were extremely respectful, addressing the golden-robed man as ‘master’.

“Let’s go.” The golden-robed man seemed quite relaxed.

The great warship flew off into the distance, disappearing in the horizons as it flew towards the ruins.

“He actually has that many retainers?” Ning was surprised.

“He’s a rather famous figure amongst the Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals who go out adventuring. His name is Elder God Skysouth. He’s a supreme Elder God, but during one of his adventures he lucked into a large trove of treasures. He used those treasures to purchase over a hundred Elder God and Ancestral Immortal slaves.” The black-robed Ancestral Immortal explained, “After buying all those slaves, he then purchased an Elder God Formation! With that formation and with those Elder Gods, he’s able to use his slaves to defend against even a World-level expert for a brief period of time. That’s why he is so arrogant and brash.”

Ning nodded.

Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals enjoyed very long lives. They knew that if they didn't reach the World-level during their first chaos cycle, they essentially would have no hope of ever reaching that level. Upon realizing that they wouldn't be able to make any more breakthroughs, many of them would decide to go out 'adventuring' and exploring the ruins left behind by ancient powers.

They loved to court death, loved the feeling of adventure. A single successful expedition could result in enormous rewards.

Elder God Skysouth was a classic example. Because of one enormously successful trip, he had ended up being able to purchase over a hundred Elder Gods as well as an Elder God Formation, becoming an often-discussed figure amongst the adventuring cultivators.

"It's time I pay a visit to the Windsource Ruins myself," Ning mused to himself. On the first day he had arrived, Ning had acquired a detailed report regarding the Windsource Ruins from the black-robed Ancestral Immortal. The Three Realms was a place that was somewhat lacking in opportunities, but the Badlands Territory was a place with many legacies left behind by ancient powers.

It had been countless years, but the Windsource Ruins still had yet to be fully investigated. Even World-level experts had died within it. Clearly, the ancient power who had left behind the Windsource Ruins was someone who surpassed World Gods in power.

Given that Ning had a clone located in the prisonworld, Ning definitely had to give this place a good look.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 24: The Starlord of Fogstone Chapter 16: Entering the Ruins

Three days later.

"So this is the Windsource Ruins?" Ji Ning stood atop a cloud, staring downwards at the vast world before him. He saw an unfathomably large area that was completely covered by clouds. It must be understood that the Windsource Ruins was one the Immortal estate of that ancient power, and as such it took over nearly half of the space of the entire chaosworld. One could imagine how enormous it was!

"Time go to in."

Ning flew deep into the cloud-shrouded world.

Whoosh.

He could sense space twisting around him. Suddenly, Ning's legs went soft. Ning's face changed and he hurriedly try to fly back up.

Whoosh...

An enormous bloody maw suddenly appeared below him, delivering a fierce chomp towards him. Fortunately, Ning was able to fly quite quickly and thus was able to dodge the bite.

"I was actually teleported straight towards the swamp." Ning glanced downwards as he continued to fly high up in the air. The region below him was an incredibly vast swamp, and there was a mud-covered

beast below him that was staring straight at him. The creature had a savage look in its eyes at it slowly crawled out from the muck, revealing a lizard-like body.

“According my records on the Windsource Ruins, as soon as you enter you’ll be teleported to the swamp. It doesn’t matter where you enter from; you’ll still be sent straight here. The swamp is filled with countless bugs and beasts, some powerful and some weak. The weak ones might be merely as powerful as a True God, while the most monstrously powerful ones might be as powerful as a World God.” Ning glanced downwards once more at the beast who was now tracking him.

It was normal for powerful cultivators to rear bugbeasts within their estates.

The ancient power who had build this estate had intentionally created an enormous swamp within it for the sake of rearing certain bugbeasts. In fact, he had established a breeding loop that would ensure that the bugbeasts would continue to kill and eat each other, becoming stronger and stronger without him even needing to worry about them. Thus, even though the estate’s owner had died countless years ago, there were still a shocking number of bugbeasts in the swamp.

These bugbeasts were reared for the purpose of becoming the guardians and protectors of the estate. Thus, all outside invaders would suffer attacks from these bugbeasts.

Growl...

The lizard-shaped creature opened its mouth even wider as it suddenly soared into the skies, its body coiling upwards for many hundreds of meters as it ‘crawled’ upwards through the air.

“Die.”

A dazzling streak of sword-light slashed through the bugbeast’s army.

Snick! The bugbeast’s body was chopped into two halves. Blood sprayed everywhere as it died, and as the blood came crashing back down to the swamp it kicked up a few small muddy waves.

[Brightmoon] sword art, Shadowless stance!

Ning held a Darknorth in his hand, shrinking it from being three thousand meters in length to merely three meters.

“There are way too many bugbeasts in the swamp. I need to get out of here.” Ning immediately transformed into a black lightning serpent and began to fly away.

The Windsource Ruins’ outermost region was the swamp region. Everyone had to start from the swamp and work their way in if they wished to reach the other regions of the ruins. Even Ning found it difficult to tell north from south after he had entered the ruins. All he could do was just choose a random direction and begin flying at maximum speed.

“Eh?” Ning could sense some ripples of power from afar. He immediately began to stealthily fly in that direction.

A short while later, Ning was able to see what was happening in the distance. There was a desolate hill off in the distance, and atop the hill coiled a two-headed serpent whose body was more than ten

kilometers long. Its head was raised as it stared upwards at an enormous winged scaly monster that was right above it. Both creatures had auras of tremendous power.

"I have the feeling that in raw strength alone, both have reached the World-level of power. Still, they are fairly weak in terms of technique. It'd take me a bit of effort to kill them, but it wouldn't be too hard." Ning mused to himself, "I'll wager these two are two of the bosses of the swamp."

"GRWAAR!" The two-headed serpent let out a thunderous roar as it suddenly charged upwards.

As for the scaled monster, it plunged downwards as it attacked as well.

The entire swamp seemed to shake. Thankfully, spacetime in the Ruins was incredibly stable; even if World-level experts fought here, they wouldn't be able to shatter it. If these two creatures were battling in the outside world, they would probably cause entire chaosworlds to shatter in their wake.

"Is that...?" Ning suddenly saw a filthy looking boat appear in the distance. The boat was filled with sabers, swords, suits of armor, pearls, banners, and all sorts of other magic treasures that emanated powerful auras.

"So many treasures? And almost all of them are Chaos treasures!" Ning was delighted.

Over the course of countless years, an equally countless number of Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals had died in the swamps. The bugbeasts weren't capable of using the treasures the slain cultivators had left behind, and so the more powerful ones simply piled them together as spoils of war!

Ning suppressed his aura and bent light around him, making it so that the bugbeasts couldn't see him.

"In order to completely repair Violetjewel, I'll need to acquire an enormous amount of Five Elements essence. I have to get these treasures." Ning immediately came to this decision. "Ideally, these two creatures will kill or maim each other."

Slash!

One of the heads of the two-headed serpent was seized by the sharp claws of the scaly creature, but the other head had managed to latch its maw around the scaly creature's own head. The scaly creature struggled furiously, beating its massive wings and causing waves of mud to kick up around it.

Boom! The scaly creature's head suddenly exploded. Its aura began to grow weak and its struggling wings slowly began to sink downwards.

One of the two-headed serpent's heads had been completely crushed, but its remaining head let out an excited roar.

"GRWAAAR!"

Its roars echoed in the skies.

It then lowered its head, beginning to dine on the flesh of the scaly creature. This was how these bugbeasts lived; they would fight each other and consume each other, constantly growing and transforming. As the serpent continued to feed, its destroyed head began to slowly grow out anew.

Swish!

A figure suddenly drew close to it.

The two-headed serpent was enraged, and its undamaged head immediately turned to stare angrily at the white-robed figure.

Whoosh! Its tail suddenly moved, lashing out lightning-fast towards the offender.

“Heartsword Realm.”

Boom!

Sword-light flashed. The enormous tail was deflected towards one side, with the sword-light itself stabbing straight towards the one remaining head of the two-headed serpent. The enraged two-headed serpent opened its giant maw, revealing a pair of crystalline fangs that glistened with translucent venom.

Swish! The venom shot out from its fangs as fast as lightning.

Slash! The sword-light blurred, easily deflecting the stream of venom.

Stab! The sword-light pierced straight through the two-headed serpent’s head. The serpent’s body trembled, then slowly began to turn limp. As it fell down into the swamp, it caused the surrounding mud to tremble violently.

[Brightmoon] sword-art, Blood Drop stance!

“Thankfully, this bugbeast had already been heavily injured and had less than a third of its maximum power. Otherwise, killing it wouldn’t have been so easy.” A look of delight was on Ning’s face. The most dangerous aspect to killing a bugbeast was the possibility of the bugbeast summoning its kin! Once a bugbeast encountered a powerful invader that it couldn’t defeat, it would often let out a loud cry to summon more of its ilk.

Thankfully, the two-headed serpent had been heavily injured and Ning had been very fast. Ning hadn’t brought Violetjewel with him on this excursion to the Windsorce Ruins, as that was his most important treasure. If he died within the Ruins...losing the other treasures didn’t matter, but losing Violetjewel would be a tremendous blow. It simply wasn’t worth the risk.

Violetjewel was a sword which even World Gods and Chaos Immortals would go crazy over. So long as Ning had enough Five Elements essence, he would be able to reforge Violetjewel and allow it to reveal its true power.

“The treasures.” Ning immediately shot towards the distant hill. Next to that hill was the large, muddy boat that was filled with treasures. Those were the many treasures which the two-headed serpent had acquired over the years. Some had come from slain cultivators while some had come from slain bugbeasts.

“Twenty-one Chaos treasures. Perhaps the storage treasures will also have fine items within them.” Ning swept through the treasures with his heartforce, then waved his hand and collected the entire boat.

Swish!

Suddenly, a streak of light flew towards Ning from afar.

Ning turned his head to look.

“Well, well. Isn’t this our Sentinel? Ahaha! Hand over those treasures and I’ll spare your life.” A golden-robed man was standing atop the warship, and an entire host of Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals stood behind him.

“Elder God Skysouth?” Ning frowned.

Elder God Skysouth had over a hundred Elder God and Ancestral Immortal slaves, while Ning had left Violetjewel behind. Dealing with him would be a bit tricky.

In the Ruins, only part of the dangers came from the traps and defenses left behind by that ancient power. The other part came from the cultivators who might strike out at you out of greed!

“Hand over the treasures!” Elder God Skysouth’s face turned cold as he stood there at the front of his boat. “Otherwise, die!”

“Elder God Skysouth. I don’t wish to become enemies with you. The Windsource Ruins is a large place. There’s no need for us to fight to the death over these treasures,” Ning said.

“Fight to the death with you? You?” Elder God Skysouth finally ran out of patience. He barked coldly, “Kill him.”

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 24: The Starlord of Fogstone Chapter 17: Danger Zone

As Elder God Skysouth issued the order, all of the Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals under his command immediately began to attack.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Six streaks of light that moved faster than the limits of the Heavenly Daos charged straight for Ji Ning.

“Flee.” Ning didn’t hesitate at all, immediately using the [Ninehorn Lightning Serpent] to evade.

“Chase!” All of the Elder Gods charged straight after Ning.

Ning was powerful, but when a hundred Elder Gods joined together into an Elder God Formation, they would be able to hold off even a real World God for a period of time. If Ning was surrounded by them, he would be unable to escape! They would slowly grind him down, exhausting his reserve of divine power and Immortal energy. Ning absolutely would not permit himself to be surrounded.

“You won’t be able to escape.” Elder God Skysouth laughed coldly. He had spent quite a lot of money to purchase those two Ancestral Immortals who were capable of controlling magic treasures faster than the limits of the Heavenly Daos. They were generally responsible for briefly tying down opponents, giving the rest of the Elder Gods enough time to charge forward and trap them.

These slaves made it so that Elder God Skysouth was virtually invincible to anyone below the World level of power!

The six streaks of light chasing after Ning were six long shuttles. They clearly moved even more quickly than Ning, and they soon intercepted him and moved to block him.

“F*ck off.” Ning unleashed his full power, using [Three Heads, Six Arms] and wielding six swords simultaneously.

“Heartsword Realm!”

The six swords struck out simultaneously!

The [Starseizing Hand] was unleashed as well!

After spending a hundred years training while living in the Windsorce Chaosworld, Ning had improved his sword-arts even more, resulting in his strikes containing even greater power.

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

The six long shuttles were all smashed away. Although Ning slightly slowed down for a brief instant, in the next instant he immediately regained his normal speed and continued to flee.

“What?” Elder God Skysouth had been watching lazily from atop his warship, but in this instant his face completely changed. “Those two Ancestral Immortals are able to attack faster than the speed of light using their treasures. He was able to instantly defeat them?”

The clash was simply too brief. It was as though those six shuttles had instantly been knocked away as soon as Ning had struck them...and thanks to his half-step World God body and the [Starseizing Hand], Ning was able to send them flying a very long distance.

Whoooooosh.

The hundred-plus Elder Gods were much slower by comparison. They were only able to watch helplessly as the white-robed youth continued to pull further and further away from them before finally disappearing into the horizons.

“Hmph.” Elder God Skysouth frowned, then let out a cold snort. “Fine. You run fast. For your sake, you’d best hope you can keep running that fast the next time I see you.”

“Let’s go,” he ordered calmly.

“Yes.” The Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals all returned to the warship, which then quickly departed the scene as well.

.....

Ning glanced backwards, then let out a sigh of relief.

“In the future, I’ll need to get a few Elder God and Ancestral Immortal servants of my own,” Ning muttered to himself. There was a great difference in power between Elder Gods and World Gods, but sometimes quantity could make up for quality! When a hundred Elder Gods joined together into an Elder God Formation, they would be able to withstand even a true World God for an extended period of time. If a thousand of them joined together into an Elder God Formation, they might very well be capable of killing some of the weaker World Gods!

However, it wouldn't be so easy for someone to acquire a thousand Elder Gods. The entire Fogstone Army only held a few thousand Elder Gods and first-tier Ancestral Immortals!

In addition, the cost of a thousand-man Elder God Formation would be even higher than the cost of a thousand Elder Gods! Without the formation, the Elder Gods would be nothing more than a pile of loose sand. Only through usage of an Elder God Formation would they be able to join together into a perfect whole.

"Time to go."

Ning continued to fly forwards at high speed.

Given how strong Ning was, the swamp region of the Ruins didn't pose much of a threat. So long as he was careful and stayed far away from any powerful auras he sensed, he would be fairly safe.

"Ah, there it is." Ning saw a chain of mountains appear off in the distance. "I've reached another part of the Ruins."

"The intelligence report I received regarding the Windsource Ruins is now essentially useless."

Ning was slightly worried. The swamp was the outermost layer and also the 'safest' region.

The other regions were controlled by the restrictive formation spells of the Ruins and would often change and transform. A place might be perfectly safe one day but transform into a death trap the next day. That was why his intelligence report was now of no use.

Whoosh.

Ning landed atop a mountain peak. Even he no longer dared to rashly fly about any longer, for fear of accidentally flying into a death trap.

"Eh?" As Ning jogged forward, he suddenly turned his head to look off into the distance.

A red-robed woman was seated in the lotus position at the top of a mountain peak. The woman's face was delicate and beautiful, with eyes as gentle as the waters of autumn. She was surrounded by hundreds of crescent blades that were wreathed by fire, causing flames to billow out all around her.

"What a beautiful woman." Ning had very high standards, but even he couldn't help but let out a sigh of praise. "Beauty like this could cause the collapse of an empire."

After glancing at her, Ning continued to jog forwards, instantly traversing ten thousand kilometers with each movement.

The red-robed woman had noticed Ning as well. She couldn't help but murmur softly to herself, "How odd. The [Libertine Dream] technique I devised carries an aura of natural charm which is far superior to those more blatant, forceful charm spells. And yet, he didn't even pause to say a word to me? Hasn't he heard of me, the Flamefairy?" [1. Su Youji is an interesting name. All three characters, Su, You, and Ji are actually surnames in Chinese as well.]

Su Youji, the Flamefairy, was quite a famous figure amongst the Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals of the Badlands Territory.

“And why is he running so quickly in a place as dangerous as this?” The fiery-robed woman mumbled to herself, “I’ve always felt that I’m pretty crazy, but he’s even crazier than me. If he keeps running around that fast, he’ll probably explore more of this place in one year than I would in ten thousand. Still, he’ll die faster than me as well. I hope you are lucky enough to survive...it’s rare for me to take a liking to someone.”

The swamp was the outermost region. After exiting the swamps, one would enter the truly dangerous regions. Generally speaking, most people would advance very carefully through these regions and move at a glacially slow pace.

However, given that the Windsource Ruins took up fully half of the Windsource Chaosworld, it truly was incredibly vast. If you moved through it slowly, you could spend a million years and still just explore a tiny part of it. Still, since Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals generally had very long lifespans, they wouldn’t be in a rush. Safety first!

Ning, however, was different.

Not only did he have a clone in the outside world, he also had mastered the ‘Heartsword Realm’ technique and had tremendous control over his surroundings. His skill empowered his boldness. In addition, he only trained for a relatively brief period of time; how could he possibly be willing to spend a few hundred thousand years here? He was planning to adventure through this place for a few years at most, then leave. Of course he had to move quickly!

“Eh?” Ning’s eyes lit up as he saw a corpse off in the distance.

“Get in here.” He flung out a Protocosmic spirit-rope, looping it over that corpse and pulling it into his estate-treasure.

The corpse would have to be destroyed, but the treasures Ning would keep.

“Keep going.” Ning was in an excellent mood. One would often encounter the corpses and skeletons of fallen cultivators in this place...but of course, if one wasn’t careful, one might easily end up joining.

The place was simply too large.

Ning spent more than a year traveling through the Ruins. Thanks to the keen senses provided by the ‘Heartsword Realm’, the protection provided by the Goldstar Beads of the Heavens, and the investigative power of his heartforce, he was able to avoid all of the most dangerous areas. Aside from Elder God Skysouth and the Flamefairy, he encountered six more cultivators. However, only one of the six tried to assault Ning; the rest steered clear of him.

As for the one who tried to attack Ning? Ning killed him, of course!

Whoosh.

Ning was jogging through a mountain forest, sometimes moving fast and sometimes moving slow. He moved at quite a unique rhythm; clearly, Ning had gotten used to this place.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Waves of power were rippling out from afar.

“Eh?” Ning’s eyes lit up. “Those waves are pretty powerful, and it seems there are quite a few of them. Let’s go take a look.” Generally speaking, when multiple people fought against each other in a dangerous region like the one he was located in right now, it was over an extremely important treasure.

Swoosh.

Ning quickly and silently moved closer to the source of the ripples, soon arriving at a mountain peak. Ning hid within the grass, peering off into the distance. Within the distant mountain gorge, he saw five Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals engaged in a battle. The five were divided into two sides, with four cultivators on one side and one cultivator on the other.

“Hellsword, there are two of these Dao weapons. Why can’t we split them? One for you, one for us. Isn’t that ideal?”

“A Dao weapon for you four fools? Die, die, die!” The lone cultivator was dressed in black robes, and his six arms were striking with six blurry streaks of sword-light. As for the other four cultivators, they were able to just barely hold him off as they supported each other.

Upon hearing these words, Ning’s eyes lit up. “Dao weapons? Two of them? Elder God Hellsword....mm, so that’s the legendary Hellsword. He truly is an expert of the Dao of the Sword. He should be on the same level of power as me.”

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 24: The Starlord of Fogstone Chapter 18: Battling Within the Ruins

“All of you, die!” Hellsword exploded with power as he wildly assaulted the other four. He knew that if this battle went on for too long other, Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals in the Windsource Ruins might be drawn to this place.

“I can’t hold any longer.”

A muscular Elder God who wielded six black staffs let out a low growl. Hellsword’s sword-light landed against his body, but only created a few sparks.

“Be careful.”

“Retreat.”

A blood-robed Elder God who had been fighting Hellsword in close combat suddenly blanched, then hurriedly split his body into two and sent his two clones fleeing in two separate directions.

Slash!

A streak of sword-light fell down upon one of the clones, slaying it.

“My divine body’s been weakened. I won’t be able to hold on for any longer.” The blood-robed Elder God continued to flee at high speed. The other three Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals cursed, but had no choice but to begin fleeing in other directions as well. They weren’t actually members of a team; they had simply joined together on an ad-hoc basis simply because Hellsword was far too powerful.

“Hmph. Those fools.” Hellsword came to a halt, grinning as he looked at the four fleeing figures.

“Eh?” Hellsword’s face suddenly changed dramatically as he immediately turned his head.

An icy ray of sword-light had suddenly appeared and was stabbing straight towards him.

“So there was one more hiding in the weeds.” Hellsword let out a savage grin, striking out mercilessly with his six swords. He wasn’t worried about the enemy attack at all; although it was quite fast, it was too simple and straightforward a strike.

BOOM!!!!

The opposing streaks of sword-light collided.

Hellsword was sent flying backwards, his face a mask of astonishment. As for the white-robed Ji Ning, he chased right after Hellsword.

[Brightmoon] sword-art, Blood Drop stance!

“What tremendous strength.” Hellsword was completely stunned. His opponent wasn’t just stronger, he was overwhelmingly stronger!

“But raw strength is useless against me.” He suddenly came to a halt, spun around, then charged straight towards Ning.

Slash! Slash! Slash! Slash! Slash! Slash!

Streaks of sword-light filled the air between the two, then both fell back.

Hellsword stared at Ning, then said in a low voice, “Who are you? Someone with such powerful sword-arts can’t possibly be an unknown figure.”

“Sunrise,” Ning said calmly.

“You must be a new expert in the Dao of the Sword,” Hellsword said coldly. “You are pretty strong. However, the Ruins aren’t a suitable place for sparring. Let’s compete after we leave this place.” After speaking, Hellsword transformed into a streak of black light, moving at light speed as he fled.

When the two had clashed, he had the feeling that Ning’s sword-arts were simply perfect. He couldn’t find any flaws at all, and so he decided to avoid wasting more time with such a troublesome opponent.

“Leaving?” Ning willed his swords to fly out.

Swish! Swish! Swish!

Nine streaks of sword-light shot out through the skies. These nine swords were all Chaos treasures that Ning had acquired in the Windsource Ruins. Although they weren’t part of a set, Ning’s Ancestral Immortal power filled them, ensuring that each of them possessed shocking levels of power. They spread out like a layered net, completely surrounding and blocking Hellsword’s path.

All nine swords moved faster than the speed of light and were thus able to quickly catch up to Hellsword.

“Damn.” Hellsword blanched as he stared at the nine swords surrounding him. “Where the hell did such a powerful expert of the sword come from? His sword-arts are completely flawless. Damn it all.”

He would rather fight against an enemy with ferocious offensive stances than someone like Ning, whose sword-arts could be described as truly flawless. One could easily succumb to a sense of despair when faced with such impeccable sword-arts.

The nine streaks of sword-light swirled around him, preventing him from fleeing any further.

“You won’t be able to escape.” Ning had already manifested three heads and six arms. He wielded six of his Darknorth swords as he charged straight towards Hellsword.

“Then let’s fight!” Hellsword went berserk as well, his eyes filled with bloodlust as he once more threw himself against Ning.

Neither would be willing to retreat. Two Dao weapons were at stake!

Dao weapons were incredibly rare, even amongst the other experts on their level. Every single Dao weapon was worth at least a cube of chaos nectar, with the best Dao weapons being worth more than ten! This was a sum of money that even World Gods would lust after. It was only natural that both Ji Ning and Hellsword went berserk over the two Dao weapons.

“If I get those two Dao weapons, I might be able to extract enough Five Elements essence to completely repair Violetjewel!” Ning’s killing intent began to soar.

“What’s going on?”

The four fleeing Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals could sense powerful ripples emanating from behind them. “Who is Hellsword fighting against now?”

The four of them carefully began to creep backwards. The allure of a pair of Dao weapons was simply too great!

“Eh?”

“Who is that?”

After sneaking back, they saw a white-robed figure battling furious against a black-robed figure.

The black-robed figure was the famous, highly regarded ‘Hellsword’.

The white-robed figure was an unknown youth.

“What? Hellsword is actually at a disadvantage?” The four were all shocked. “Where did such an expert of the sword suddenly come from? He’s so strong!”

“Brother Xiuyi, what should we do?”

“What can we do? Stay far away from them and watch. If both are heavily injured, we can try to seize the opportunity to attack them. If no chance presents itself, then we’ll immediately run away after their battle concludes.”

“Brother Xiuyi’s words are reasonable.”

“This white-robed Elder God is even more terrifying than Hellsword.”

Ning and Hellsword both suspected that those four had returned to watch them, but neither really cared about the four. Four supreme Elder Gods? Pfffft. It might take them a bit of effort to kill the four, but it wouldn't be too hard. Ning's 'Heartsword stance' in particular ensured that he didn't have to worry about group attacks at all.

The two continued to focus on battling each other.

Ning's sword attacks seemed to be more casual and carefree, but they came in consecutive linked waves that made Hellsword feel as though he had no chance to even breathe.

Hellsword's attacks were more frenzied and they were filled with a thick intent of darkness.

Clang!

Sword-light flashed. Finally, a blow landed upon Hellsword's body. Ning felt as though he had just stabbed an extremely tough magic treasure. The power of the blow caused Hellsword to be knocked flying backwards, and he slammed into a distant boulder, causing it to break apart into tiny pieces that shot out in every direction.

“A protective divine ability?” Ning frowned slightly. “It seems as though I'll have to suppress and seal him.”

“What!?” Upon Ning landed a blow against him, Hellsword's face changed yet again. Clearly, his sword-arts were somewhat inferior.

“If I can't overcome you in sword-arts...”

Hellsword gritted his teeth, then manifested an enormous violet hammer that emanated mighty ripples of power.

“A Dao weapon?” Ning immediately understood. So one of the two weapons which Hellsword had acquired was a warhammer. No wonder he hadn't used it during this battle! Using sword-arts with a warhammer wasn't really effective.

However...the difference in power between the two was obvious. Hellsword had no choice but to change the way he fought.

“Die!” Hellsword brandished the violet warhammer, then struck out with it.

Rumble...

As the warhammer struck out, streaks of lightning could be seen crackling around it. It compressed space in front of it as it smashed straight towards Ning.

“What tremendous might.” Ning could instantly sense how much power this strike held. He hurriedly willed his Darknorth swords to transform into black holes that he then used to defend.

Whoosh!

The warhammer was deflected off to one side, while Ning was knocked a few steps back.

"I knew it." Hellsword had an ugly look on his face. This white-robed youth was ridiculously strong. Even though Hellsword had an advantage in weaponry, the white-robed youth was still able to defend against it with his techniques.

"A big warhammer like this must have lots of Five Elements essence inside of it." Ning now wanted the weapon even more.

"There's a total of two warhammers. You can have one, I'll keep the other. Deal?" As Hellsword continued to battle, he began to send Ning a mental message. He was willing to compromise. There was nothing he could use against Ji Ning's terrifying sword-arts, and he knew that he would definitely be defeated if this battle was to continue for much longer. This white-robed youth was also skilled in long-range attacks; there was no way he would be able to escape.

"Give me both and I'll let you off the hook," Ning sent back.

"Don't even think about it." Hellsword was beginning to go crazy.

"Then let's keep fighting."

Ning charged forward even more furiously than before, sending sword-light flashing everywhere. He even manifested a rope next to him, filling it with some of his will. If Ning was able to break through Hellsword's defenses and catch him offguard, he would use this rope to bind and capture him.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Hellsword battled on the run, and while doing so he sent furiously to Ning, "This place is the Windsource Ruins. You never know when danger is going to appear here. If you keep chasing after me like this, you'll end up in a death trap as well."

Ning just continued with his furious attacks.

The four Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals watching from afar felt breathless.

"Both of them are crazy."

"Hopefully, both of them will be killed by traps or protective formations, letting us pick up their treasures." The four watched, prayed, and chased after the Hellsword and the white-robed cultivator as those two continued their wild fight.

Boom!

Just as Ning clashed once more against Hellsword in midair...

Suddenly, a gray gust of wind suddenly appeared out of nowhere, spinning into a tornado and instantly whirling around both Ning and Hellsword. A few moments later, the tornado vanished...but with it vanished by Ning and Hellsword as well.

When the four saw this from afar, their faces all changed.

"Everyone knows that the Windsource Ruins are too dangerous to fly through. You might end up being trapped inside some formation. Those two must've been teleported straight into a death trap."

“Damn. Those two Dao weapons were swept away as well.”

Unwilling to just give up, the four of them continued to wait there for three full days, but they saw neither hide nor hair of Ji Ning and Hellsword, to say nothing of the Dao weapons. In the end, they had no choice but to leave unhappily.

The Desolate Era

Book 24: The Starlord of Fogstone Chapter 19: A Gray Wind

“Not good.” Ji Ning’s face immediately changed as that gray wind appeared, bringing with it an aura of death and stillness.

Hellsword had been driven by Ning to the brink of madness, which was why he had started to fly around in a crazed manner.

The difference in power between the two wasn’t that great, which was why Ning needed time to subdue and capture him. Ning had thought that he wouldn’t be so unlucky as to run into a protective spell during such a short battle...but alas, he really was.

Boom!

The gray wind swept both Ning and Hellsword into its grasp, and its utterly indomitable power threw the two of them flying downwards.

“What incredible power.” Ning did his best to halt his fall, but his divine power and Immortal energy were far too weak to do so.

Whooooosh.

There was an utterly enormous black pit beneath them.

Ning and Hellsword were both spun around like tops by the tornado and sent flying straight into the pit.

“Stop. Stop!” Ning instantly activated his [Three Heads, Six Arms] ability. All six of his arms dramatically increased in size as he clawed towards the edges of the pit. In midair, Ning had nothing to hold onto. Now, however, he was able to see the stone cliffs lining the edges of the pit. Ning had the feeling that if he was drawn deep into this pit by the tornado, he would probably end up dead.

He had to come to a halt! But the wind was simply too powerful.

Ning’s six arms simultaneously activated the [Starseizing Hand]. In the end, one of his hands managed to just barely clench around a pillar of rock.

Bang! Ning had been dragged down at an incredible pace. When his hand clenched around the stone pillar, his entire body came to a sudden halt. A terrifying ripping power was applied throughout his entire body, causing it to twitch. As for his hands that were using the [Starseizing Hand], they instantly went numb and slack...resulting in Ning continuing to be dragged downwards by that furious gray tornado!

Crack! Crack! Crack! The gray stone pillar that Ning had managed to grab onto earlier began to crack apart as well. Moments later, it completely shattered and was also dragged downwards by the furious tornado.

“Gotta stop.”

“Stop.”

“Stop!” Ning’s six arms wildly clutched at the surrounding walls, seeking to grasp anything that jutted out.

Rumble...

Ning finally came to a halt when three of his hands managed to simultaneously snake their way into an enormous crevice in the pit walls. Thanks to these three hands holding onto that crevice desperately, he was finally able to resist the power of the tornado.

“Whew. I stopped.” Ning let out a sigh of relief. The enormous stone crevice was thousands of meters long, and as Ning latched onto the crevice he had changed his arms to make them hundreds of meters long as well. He had dug his hands deep into the crevice, ensuring that he would be able to hang off the walls.

“No!”

Hellsword had also been dragged into the pit, and he was also clawing at the walls in an attempt to find something to hold onto. However, he was far weaker than Ning in raw strength. He managed to grab onto a jutting piece of rock, but the tearing force instantly rendered his hands completely numb and slack. He wasn’t able to slow himself down! The power of the tornado was simply too great, giving him no chance to grab onto anything.

Ning’s hands were akin to Chaos treasures, after all. He also had the power of a half-step World God body, as well as the enhancement of the [Starseizing Hand]. That was the only reason why Ning was more successful than him in coming to a halt.

Bang! As Hellsword continued to be dragged downwards, his body would occasionally smash into some jutting pieces of rock, resulting in him bouncing around the walls.

Bang!

Hellsword vomited out a mouthful of blood. These collisions were even more deadly than Ning’s sword-strikes, and he continued to smash into one jutting rock after another. Given how keen Ning’s eyesight was, he was able to clearly see Hellsword continuing to fall several hundred kilometers, smashing into the walls at least a few dozen times. It seemed as though the deeper Hellsword fell, the more powerful the tornado became. Hellsword’s body was beginning to twist and contort from the collisions.

Boom!

After smashing into a particularly sharp spear-shaped rock, Hellsword’s body actually completely blasted apart. The powerful tornado quickly ground the pieces of his body apart, completely wiping him out in body and soul. The tornado was far stronger than Ning, after all!

“A pity.” Still hanging off the stone walls, Ning could do nothing but watch as Hellsword died.

“The Dao weapons were sucked down as well.”

“But...what should I do?”

All six of Ning’s arms were clinging onto the stone crevice. He was wearing a top-grade suit of Chaos armor, and he had a powerful divine body that had trained the [Golden Statue]. He was more than capable of withstanding the power of this tornado.

“Am I supposed to just keep hanging here?” Ning spread out his heartforce, but alas it was instantly destroyed by that gray wind of destruction.

“This gray wind is capable of destroying even heartforce! How terrifying was this ancient power that erected the Windsource Ruins!?” Ning muttered softly to himself.

Ning had no idea. The strongest figure of the Badlands Territory, Daoking Badlands, had once paid a visit to the former master of this estate...and he had been thoroughly convinced of his inferiority. In fact, the reason why this place was named ‘Windsorce’ was because that ancient power had reached an utterly unfathomable level of mastery over the wind.

Neither heartforce nor coresense could penetrate the gray wind. All Ning could do was use his own eyes.

“I have to get out of here.” Ning raised his head to look upwards. The gray wind howled furiously above him, blocking his vision. Ning used his top-grade Chaos armor to form a semi-translucent barrier over his head; only then was he able to see just a little bit of the area above him.

“I have to get out of this pit. The wind is too powerful; I won’t be able to maintain a grip on any jutting pieces of rock. My only choice is to drive my entire arm deep into some of those crevices and cracks.” Ning scanned the area above him for more crevices. The gray wind had caused quite a bit of erosion to this pit, resulting in quite a few crevices appearing.

“There’s one.” Three hundreds above Ning was a slightly smaller crevice.

“Let’s go.” Ning immediately stretched one of his hands upwards.

Whoooooosh.

The furious power of the wind blasted down against Ning’s hand with the weight of a thousand stars, completely preventing him from reaching upwards. Ning did his best to fight back against it, and he found that he was able to stretch his arms out in various other directions...but to go completely against the win and reach upwards? Completely impossible.

“Won’t work. Wind’s too strong.” Ning quickly gave up the attempt.

“If I can’t go up...”

Ning lowered his head to stare at the seemingly bottomless black pit beneath him. “Then my only choice is to go down!”

Ning looked downwards carefully. Roughly six hundred meters below him, he saw another large crevice. He immediately stretched out with a hand to grab a hold of it.

Going up meant going against the wind.

Going down meant going with the wind.

When he increased his arm to make it many hundreds of meters long, it was easy for him to snake his hand deep into the crevice. Ning sent one hand after another into the second crevice before finally letting go of the first one.

Whoosh!

Ning quickly fell downwards, then came to a halt.

“Let’s continue.” Ning glanced at his surroundings, then began to climb downwards again.

And so, Ning began to slowly make his way down through this bottomless pit of darkness.

A while later, Ning saw a sword that was jutting out from a stone pillar.

“This sword wasn’t one of Hellsword’s. Some other poor bastard must’ve been dragged in here and lost control of his weapon, resulting in it being stuck here.” Ning immediately, laboriously reached out to grab that sword, then took it into his estate.

Ning then continued his slow downwards climb.

Three hundred meters. Three thousand meters. Thirty kilometers...

By now, Ning had picked up a total of three weapons. Alas, all three were ‘merely’ Chaos treasures; none of them were Dao weapons. Still, it made sense. If a World-level expert was grabbed by the gray wind, he wouldn’t have been manhandled as badly as Ning and Hellsword had been. There were very few Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals who held Dao weapons; the chances of one of them just happening to fall down into this pit were even lower.

Ning slowly clambered down over another hundred kilometers, then took a rest and glanced at his surroundings in the hopes of finding a way out of here.

“What’s that?” Ning look downwards, surprised.

A cave had actually appeared on the walls of the pit. This was clearly a cave that had been artificially dug out, and it was many hundreds of meters wide. Although the gray wind howled past it, it didn’t go into the cave itself, making the cave a rare and welcome oasis of peace.

Because it sloped downwards and inwards, Ning wasn’t able to see it earlier. Only now, when he drew closer, did it appear before him.

“Who dug out this cave? Doesn’t matter, I suppose. I’ve used up quite a bit of my divine power after climbing so long and keeping [Three Heads, Six Arms] active for so long. I need to get in there right away.”

Ning hurriedly began to climb in its direction, then sent his arms deep into the cave entrance. There were a few jutting pieces of rock inside the cave, allowing Ning to easily gain a handhold.

Ning quickly 'shrank' his arms, resulting in the rest of his body being pulled into the cave like a rubber band.

"I'm in."

It was strange. There was no wind in this cave at all. Ning had gotten so used to the raging gray winds that he felt rather unaccustomed to the calm.

"Whew. I can finally take a break." Ning deactivated [Three Heads, Six Arms], then glanced at the gray wind which continued to rage outside of the cave. He then turned his head to carefully inspect the cave itself.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 24: The Starlord of Fogstone Chapter 20: The Nine Seals

It was extremely obvious that this cave had been dug out artificially. It had been dug out in an extremely methodical manner, and various markings that looked like fish scales could be seen on the walls. There were also some diagrams and some writing that had been left behind on the cave walls, and the cave itself emanated a strange intent that felt like flowing water. Ji Ning couldn't help but be affected by the cave's aura, and his heart became quite calm as well.

Ning was in no rush to read the words or look at the pictures. Instead, he first carefully inspected the scale-like patterns and marks on the walls.

"Very neat."

"If someone slowly dug the cave out, there's no way it could all be so neat and tiny." Ning stared at the tiny markings. "I feel as though someone must've used a divine ability to instantly scoop out the rock and make the cave."

Ning couldn't help but feel shocked by this possibility.

When he had grabbed onto that stone pillar a short while ago, the powerful tearing force from the tornado had only been able to cause a few cracks to it. He had tested out using his hands to 'dig' a handhold into the walls, but had been completely unable to succeed whatsoever. This was why Ning had chosen to find pre-existing crevices instead.

"The stone here has been nourished by the local formations and baptized by the gray wind, giving it extraordinary properties. Most likely, not even World-level experts would be able to so easily dig out a cave of such size," Ning mused to himself. He reached out with his hand, gently stroking it against the fish-scale patterns.

As he did, he suddenly could sense a strange, unique intent pouring towards him from the patterns.

"As calm...as water..."

Ning carefully inspected the cave in detail for a while longer, then turned his attention towards the writing and the diagrams on the cave walls. As Ning viewed it, those diagrams wouldn't exactly be running away. If he wasn't careful and missed something or activated a trap by accident, that would be truly disastrous.

The 'Hundred Streams of the Windsource' in these ruins are quite marvelous indeed. A pity...I would've loved to have had the chance to sit down and discuss the Dao with the fellow Daoist who created this estate. That fellow Daoist died countless years ago. In the future, when I reach the end of my own life, I shall also leave behind my Dao and allow the cultivators who come after me to get a good look at it...

I have spent more than a hundred thousand years here and have gained certain insights. Although I've only inspected a few of the streams, I can tell that there is a great difference between them and the path which I have chosen, and so it doesn't matter if I look at the rest of the Hundred Streams or not...

Here are the insights I have gained from a hundred thousand years of viewing these streams. I've recorded all of them down here. If a cultivator has the chance to come here in the future and see them, consider this a bit of karma between us.

These are the words of Waterwind!

Every single character emanated a relaxed, carefree aura.

When Ning looked at these words, he felt as though he could see that ancient power writing them down all those years ago.

"Waterwind?" Ning murmured softly to himself, "Who is that? Judging from what he wrote, he should be someone who was on the same level of power as the creator of the Windsource Ruins."

The Badlands Territory...as far as Ning knew, it didn't hold anyone by the name of 'Waterwind'.

Ning had long ago acquired intelligence reports regarding the many World-level experts. The most powerful figure in the entire Badlands was the creator of the Badlands Court, Daolord Badlands! Daolord Badlands was still alive and was unfathomably powerful; he wasn't a person who someone of Ning's level could hope to approach.

Daolord Badlands had established the Badlands Court. World-level experts were like toddlers before him.

"The Badlands Court holds a number of very famous figures, but none of them go by the moniker of 'Waterwind'," Ning mused to himself. "No, I've never heard this name before. Could it be...someone from another territory?"

Still, in the end it didn't really matter.

Waterwind talked a big game. If he was telling the truth, then he was most likely someone above the World-level of power! Even if he was 'merely' a World-level expert, he most assuredly stood at the very peak of power amongst them.

"Waterwind...Waterwind..." Ning quietly memorized this name, then turned his attention to the 'insights' which Waterwind had left behind on the cave walls.

The cave walls were covered with both writing and diagrams.

The writing consisted of the words Ning had read just now.

As for the diagrams, they contained the insights which Waterwind had gained.

The diagram was of fishes swimming in the sea. Ning saw more than ten fishes, each of which was in a different pose. Around them could be seen several ordinary-looking lines which seemed to represent the ripples of the water.

There were a total of sixteen fish and ninety-seven water ripples.

“These diagrams...?” Ning felt that these diagrams were rather odd. He gave them a closer look, carefully inspecting the water ripples and the fish for any peculiarities.

Whoooooosh.

Slowly, without Ning even noticing it, a surge of will and intent began to slowly seep outwards from the diagrams and towards Ning.

Rumble...

A vast river that was three thousand meters wide was flowing past Ning, and in the river was a fish of gigantic proportions. The river was merely three thousand meters wide, but this fish was over three hundred meters long. The fish swam with the waves, continuing to advance forward with an indomitable, unstoppable attitude.

“What the hell?” Ning stared blankly at his surroundings.

Directly in front of him was a river that was three thousand meters wide. There were several other rivers next to it, each of which was three thousand meters wide and which flowed with tremendous speed. Off in the distance, Ning could see even more rivers, but he wasn't able to get a clear glimpse of them.

Although Ning wasn't able to see those rivers clearly, he could vaguely sense that there was a total of a hundred river streams.

A hundred rivers. A hundred fish.

The rivers flowed in one direction. The fish swam in the same direction.

At the very end of the rivers, there was a place where all of them came together, a place of unstoppable power which saw the hundred streams become one.

Every single river gave Ning a different feeling, as did the fish within it.

Some of the rivers felt like the pretty girls next door.

Some of the rivers felt like scorchingly attractive vixens.

Some of the rivers felt like icy cold fairy maidens.

They all had completely different auras and intents, but they were able to perfectly join together off in the distance.

“The Hundred Streams merge together to form the Dao...but alas, if you are unable to do so, you shall die. A pity, a pity...” A sigh suddenly echoed forth from this world...and then, everything vanished.

Ning was once more within the cave, staring at the ordinary-looking pictures of fish and water ripples.

“What just happened?” Ning was puzzled. “Was that an illusion I saw just now? No...I should’ve been able to tell if that was all an illusion. It was no illusion. It was....something else...”

“After ‘Waterwind’ looked at the ‘Hundred Streams of the Windsource’, he left behind these diagrams containing his insights.” Ning raised his head to give the diagrams another look, but then he suddenly froze.

This was because when he did so, the scene he had just seen instantly began to replay in his mind.

The hundred surging rivers, the hundred swimming fish, even that final sigh...all of it appeared once more within his memories.

“It has an inexplicable feeling to it. Almost like...sadness.”

Ning silently pondered on this. The reason why Ning felt that sense of sorrow was due to that final sigh.

“But this so-called ‘hundred streams merging together to form the Dao...’” Ning had the feeling that those words contained an incredibly profound meaning to it. The more he tried to understand it, the more confused he became. However, Ning was in no rush. He sat down in the lotus position and began to slowly meditate on what he had just seen. He was so absorbed by this that he actually forgot to enter the Heavengazer Tower, as he was completely focused on the scene of the hundred streams that he had just seen.

One day after another went past.

Ning continued to sit there, as unmoving as a statue. Dust began to collect and accumulate on his body, and soon Ning looked like an actual statue.

Six years later.

Ning had been completely covered with dust...but finally, on this day, he opened his eyes, revealing a look of surprise and delight in his gleaming, crystalline gaze.

“The Hundred Streams merge together to form the Dao...the Nine Seals join together to become One...so this is how the Nine Chaos Seals actually work,” Ning murmured softly to himself.

The meaning of the phrase ‘the Hundred Streams merge together to form the Dao’ was simply too profound; he was able to just barely glean a few insights from it. However, while doing so he was able to see many similarities between it and his Nine Chaos Seals, resulting in him gaining many more insights into the ninth seal.

Before leaving the Three Realms, Ning had already mastered the eighth chaos seal. Only one was left.

A series of complicated divine runes began to appear within Ning’s eyes. All nine of the Nine Chaos Seals began to manifest within his eyes, changing and transforming in an endless pattern. In the past, it seemed as though there would never be an end to the changing runes of the Nine Chaos Seals...but once Ning mastered them, the transformations came to an end. Finally, they came together to form the image of what looked like a flower.

This image appeared on Ning’s soul itself, as well as his very truesoul.

It was an azure flower.

It was sacred, holy, natural.

The seal imprint of an azure flower began to naturally manifest itself on Ning's forehead as well. After appearing briefly, it then quickly faded away and hid itself.

“When the Nine Chaos Seals join together to become one, they become absolutely marvelous. Mother Nuwa must have reached this level as well.” Ning could sense the seal imprint of an azure flower that had appeared on his forehead, an azure flower that was gently swaying.