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Book 5: Zifu Disciple Chapter 7: Seeing Mother

The single green leaf had Ji Ning as well as more than twenty others on it. It flew through the clouds, hurrying towards the direction of West Prefecture City.

Everyone was either seated or lying down, while Ning and Adept Mu Xiao were standing.

“Adept, prior to this, you said that Bei Zishan was from Snowdragon Mountain?” Ning asked the question he had been contemplating.

“Right. Snowdragon Mountain.” Adept Mu glanced at Ning and nodded. “Snowdragon Mountain can be considered one of the most powerful forces of the entire Stillwater Commandery, and within the school, there are multiple Primal Daoists who stand guard. Their roots are quite deep.”

Ning was secretly shocked.

Multiple Primal Daoists?

“Precisely because the school is so large and it has so many methods of training, it also possessed some evil techniques, and so naturally, it will also have some Immortal practitioners who have embarked upon an evil path.” Adept Mu said. “Snowdragon Mountain cares more about power, and thus within it, it possesses Demon practitioners, Evil practitioners, Immortal practitioners, Buddhist practitioners, and all sorts of other practitioners. It values power the most.”

Adept Mu sighed, “Precisely because within it, the ‘fish and dragons are mixed together’, many people are attracted to Snowdragon Mountain, causing its power to grow even more enormous. Some Zifu Disciples who have departed from it will establish their own territory elsewhere, under the banner of Snowdragon Mountain. They can be considered branches, I suppose. These branches will often collect some talented youths and send them to the main school. Thus, Snowdragon Mountain continues to grow more and more powerful.”

“But of course, compared to our Raindragon Guards...Snowdragon Mountain is incomparably inferior.” Adept Mu laughed. “Any one of the Loose Immortals which we Raindragon Guards have stationed here in the Stillwater Commandery is capable of eradicating the entire Snowdragon Mountain school.”

Ning nodded.

This was no joke.

Snowdragon Mountain was nothing more than a school, while the Raindragon Guards was the most powerful military force the Grand Xia Dynasty possessed, overawing the entire world. Of course they weren't on the same level.

“Look. We're here.” Adept Mu pointed into the distance. “West Prefecture City is up ahead.”

“We're here?” Ning was stunned. He saw that in the distance, there was a forest which surrounded a magnificent city. This was indeed West Prefecture City, where he had lived since he was young. Ning

couldn't help but feel stunned. "The speed at which Wanxiang Adepts travel on their magic treasures truly is astonishing! A distance of thousands of kilometers was travelled in the blink of an eye."

And then, Ning began to worry. "I wonder how Mother is doing. Mother has always been well. Why is she suddenly gravely ill?"

Within West Prefecture City.

Yuchi Snow was resting in her room, while outside of the room, her husband, Ji Yichuan, was currently speaking with Ji Ninefire.

"This is all caused by that calamity from the past." Yichuan shook his head.

Ninefire sat there, nodding slightly. "That disaster changed the destiny of the two of you, husband and wife. Yichuan, you were the most talented genius our Ji clan had produced in a thousand years. When you were a child and your father died, you suddenly began to soar...you had already established your 'Violet Palace' and embarked onto the path of Immortals as a Zifu Disciple. Unfortunately, it was all ruined."

"It doesn't matter if my future potential on the path of Immortals is gone." Yichuan shook his head and sighed. "During that disaster, the elder brother of my wife, the most powerful of us three, lost his life for the sake of protecting myself and Snow. Snow had already been badly injured, but for the sake of birthing Ning, she utilized a secret technique that used up her own lifeforce...although my future potential on the Immortal path has been destroyed, I got off the easiest, out of the three of us."

Ninefire shook his head gently, sighing.

Fate makes fools of men!

Adventuring in the vast, boundless world outside was indeed far more dangerous than living here in Swallow Mountain. Experts were as common as the clouds. There would be lucky encounters, but there would also be disastrous ones. For example, when the Yuchi siblings and Yichuan had met with that crisis, the result had been this.

"Hm?" Ninefire suddenly lifted his head.

From high up in the air, a green leaf was slashing through the skies until it landed within a courtyard. Atop this leaf were Adept Mu, Ning, Blindfish, Jadewich, and many others.

"This..." Yichuan stared in astonishment at the people in front of him, then immediately dashed over. "Jadewich, Shan, Blindfish...you all came back? What happened to all of you? How is it that all of you are injured? What have you all been doing these past days? Why did you all suddenly go missing?"

"Greetings, Patriarch." The twenty-plus Xiantian lifeforms of the Ji clan quickly recognized their Patriarch, and in unison, they immediately called out.

Ninefire naturally knew that more than twenty Xiantian lifeforms of his clan had gone missing, and he had been utterly frustrated by this affair. Now, seeing these Xiantian lifeforms all reappear, he was both

surprised and delighted. He hurriedly said, "When we realized you had gone missing, our entire Ji clan started to search for you. Are you all well?"

"Our dantians have been destroyed, but we are very lucky to still be alive." Jadewich said hoarsely.

"Dantians destroyed?" Ninefire stared, wide-eyed.

A nearby youth with long hair called out as well, "Patriarch, it was only thanks to Ji Ning as well as this Adept that we were able to survive this time."

"Adept?" Ninefire and Yichuan felt a surge of electricity in their hearts.

Adept...

Then that meant this was a Wanxiang Adept! The entire Swallow Mountain area didn't have a single Wanxiang Adept.

The two both looked at Adept Mu. Actually, when they first saw him, they had the feeling that this was an extraordinary figure. To be able to ride on a magic treasure to come here...they guessed that he was at least a Zifu Disciple, but they didn't expect that he was actually a Wanxiang Adept. They saw how Ning was standing to the side of this Wanxiang Adept, as though they seemed to be on good terms. In their hearts, they couldn't help but feel puzzled as to how Ning had managed to end up getting to know this Wanxiang Adept.

"Ji Ninefire (Ji Yichuan) greets you, Adept." Ninefire and Yichuan both said respectfully.

"Actually, I'm the one who should be thanking Ji Ning." Adept Mu laughed calmly.

"Ji Ning?" Ninefire and Yichuan looked towards Ning.

A look of worry appeared on Ning's face, and he immediately said, "I learned that Mother is gravely ill, so I invited Adept Mu to come to our West Prefecture City..."

"Snow is right inside the room." Yichuan suddenly realized, and he immediately spoke out.

Adept Mu Xiao nodded, then walked towards the nearby room. Ning and Yichuan followed behind, while Ning asked softly while walking, "Father, what happened? How could Mother suddenly have fallen ill?"

"It was that illness left behind in the past." Yichuan said. "I'll explain to you in detail later."

After entering the room, they had the maidservants leave. Aside from Snow, who was lying on the bed, only Adept Mu, Ning, Yichuan, and Ninefire were present.

Yuchi Snow opened her eyes, looking at the newcomers. She couldn't help but reveal a trace of puzzlement in her eyes.

"Snow, this is Adept Mu, whom Ning asked to come." Yichuan said hurriedly.

Hearing this, Snow immediately used her arms to prop herself up. "Yuchi Snow greets you, Adept."

"Give me your right hand." Adept Mu sat down on the stone bench next to the bed.

Snow extended her rather ashen right hand. She saw, now, that standing by the side of Adept Mu was Ning. She looked at her son...and as she did, a look of delight appeared on Snow's face.

Adept Mu stretched out with a single finger, gently tapping it on Snow's wrist. Immediately, a spot of green light, filled with life energy, spread out, quickly enveloping Snow's entire body. Ning and Yichuan, seated nearby and watching, felt restlessness in their hearts. After waiting for a good long while, Adept Mu began to frown. "Strange. Strange."

Ning, hearing this, felt nervousness in his heart. He hurriedly asked, "Adept, my Mother, she...?"

Still frowning, Adept Mu said, "Although I'm not specialized in medicine, I can tell that your Mother doesn't have any sickness. Rather, her lifeforce has been almost entirely used up...given how little lifeforce your mother has left in her body, she'll most likely be able to live just three more months."

"Her lifeforce has nearly been used up?" Ning's face changed.

"When my wife was pregnant, she was injured." The nearby Yichuan said hurriedly. "Afterwards, she then used a secret technique which spent her own vitality to protect the fetus."

Adept Mu nodded. "Your wife was originally a Xiantian lifeform, and judging from the purity of the remnants of ki in her body, she should have been a peak Xiantian lifeform. Unfortunately...that injury she suffered should have been a severe one. Her dantian was destroyed, and logically speaking, she shouldn't have been able to preserve the fetus. Your wife used a secret technique to ignite her own lifeforce in order to protect the fetus, but the cost of this secret technique was extremely great. To replenish what the usage of it cost is almost impossible."

Hearing this, Ning was flabbergasted.

His mother had been a peak Xiantian expert? Her dantian had been destroyed, and she had used a secret technique to ignite her own lifeforce to protect the fetus?

However, from what he had seen from when his mother had taught him footwork, she was indeed an expert. However, that year when he had been in his mother's womb, what exactly had happened? His parents had always intentionally hidden the truth of what had happened when his mother was pregnant from Ning, refusing to tell him.

"Adept, please save my mother." Ning said frantically.

"To save her, the only method is to extend her lifespan." Adept Mu sighed. "There are plenty of spirit pills for curing diseases, and I myself have spirit pills that can be used for Immortal practitioners to extend their lifespan. But unfortunately...to let a mortal have an extended lifespan is thousands of times more difficult than to have an Immortal practitioner extend their lifespans. This sort of medicine is something which I, in the Raindragon Guards, have only heard of. I don't even know where to find them. Most likely, only Immortals would be able to produce them."

The nearby Ninefire, hearing this, was shocked. Raindragon Guards?

"Immortals!" Hearing this, Ning felt as though his heart had suddenly turned to ice.

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Book 5: Zifu Disciple Chapter 8: Learning Acceptance

Adept Mu Xiao left that very day for Stillwater City. Before leaving, he pulled Ji Ning aside to give him advice in private. "Ji Ning, your talent is extremely high. It is guaranteed that you will walk far on the path of Immortals! Immortal practitioners have very long lifespans. Unless his friends and family are also Immortal practitioners, you will have to watch as all of them die of old age. Actually, this is a form of self-improvement with regards to your mind towards the Dao. Since you have become an Immortal practitioner...you need to be prepared. No matter how much pain you suffer, you must escape from the midst of your grief. Otherwise, it will be very hard for you to overcome the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations."

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After Adept Mu left, Ji Ninefire also immediately headed towards the mountain where Bei Zishan had hidden himself. That place, after all, had Flood Dragon Dao Battle-Armor.

Ning travelled by himself to Serpentwing Lake.

"There's still hope. My mother still has hope for surviving." Ning ran through the mountainous, forested wilderness, occasionally using his Windwing Evasion to advance. His running speed was far faster than the travelling speed of those black beasts, and after expending a large majority of his divine power, he managed to arrive at Serpentwing Lake in just two hours.

"That ancient Aquatic Manor has had multiple masters. Immortal Juhua was the third master. Ignoring the other masters, Immortal Juhua himself had lived for millions of years as a Loose Immortal. He definitely had quite a few medicines, and perhaps some of them are able to allow mortals to have extended lifespans." Ning ran across the surface of the water to the island.

"Young master."

"Greetings, young master."

There were quite a few people on the island, who had arrived long ago to build a residence there. Autumn Leaf and that young child, Bluestone, were there as well. Seeing Ning run in their direction across the surface of the water, they immediately went to welcome him.

"I have something to do. You can retire for now." Ning instructed, then immediately transformed into a blur, disappearing from their field of vision. This caused Autumn Leaf and the other servants to feel rather puzzled.

Ning soon arrived at the entrance to the cave. He continuously went deeper in, and after a few moments, he arrived at the place where he had been teleported away from last time.

"Senior."

Ning called out frantically. "Quick, let me enter the estate. I have something important to do."

The dark tunnel caverns were completely silent. There was no response at all. This caused Ning to be all the more frantic. The old black bull had originally said...that Ning should only return after he had bound the control talisman. But currently, he was just an early Xiantian lifeform. How long would it be before he would become a Zifu Disciple? His mother only had three months left. He had no other options, besides coming here and begging!

“Senior, I truly have an urgent matter involving life-and-death. I sincerely implore you, Senior, to let me in.” Ning begged frantically.

Silence.

Rumble...

Suddenly, the surrounding space twisted, and in the cavernous area in front of him, an enormous bear’s head once more appeared. The bear’s head opened its giant mouth, swallowing Ning within it, and Ning disappeared from within the estate.

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Spacetime twisted...and then all was calm.

Ning stared in front of him. In front of him was that majestic, ancient palace hall, in the center of which were those incomparably enormous prayer mats. An old black bull ambled over and let out a sigh. “Ji Ning, didn’t I tell you to wait until you bound the control talisman, at which point you would be able to naturally sense the Aquatic Manor and come as you pleased? You are just a Xiantian lifeform. Why have you entered again?”

“Senior.” Ning said hurriedly. “My mother is gravely ill. I truly have no other methods, so I came here to beg.”

“Your mother is gravely ill?” The old black bull shook his head. “Since you have chosen the path of Immortals, you need to be prepared for these things.”

Ning hurriedly shook his head. “Senior, my mother is still young. She shouldn’t die so soon! Previously, I asked a Wanxiang Adept to help take a look at my mother...and that Wanxiang Adept said that my mother, in the past, had used a secret technique to expend her own lifeforce to rescue me. By now, her lifeforce is almost completely used up, and she only has three months of life left. To save my mother, a medicinal pill that can allow mortals to extend their lifespans is necessary. However, that Wanxiang Adept himself had only heard of such pills, and said that most likely only Immortals were in possession of them. I have no other choices, and so I came to the Aquatic Manor.”

“A medicinal pill that can allow mortals to extend their lifespans?” The old black bull sighed. “That is something that can be described as an Immortal pill. Generally speaking, only Loose Immortals or Earthly Immortals can produce such a thing.”

“Immortal Juhua was no ordinary Loose Immortal. He definitely has this sort of medicinal pill, right?” Ning asked frantically.

The old black bull looked at Ning, then shook its head. “Immortal Juhua had been alive for millions of years. His family and friends had died long ago. He had no need of such pills, and so he didn’t have any of them.”

Ning’s heart trembled.

“Then...” Ning said hurriedly. “I imagine Immortal Juhua must have left behind quite a few magic treasures. Give me a magic treasure which has a valuable comparable to that of an Immortal pill, and I’ll take it and trade...”

As soon as he said the words, Ning knew that he was making a mistake.

He cared too much about his mother's life, and so he had lost his bearings and equanimity. Even his words lacked propriety.

"Foolishness!" The old black bull shouted. "You yourself said just now that even a Wanxiang Adept has only heard of this sort of Immortal pill. You want to trade for it? With who? You, a Xiantian lifeform, hold a magic treasure on that level? If you show it off, most likely those powerful Immortal practitioners will just kill you for it. Trade for it? If you don't have enough power, how will you trade?"

"In addition! You haven't even bound the control talisman, and the only place in the Aquatic Manor you can enter is just the main palace. You aren't even able to enter the other places. On what basis am I supposed to hand over one of the magic treasures Immortal Juhua left behind?" The old black bull shook his head. "And what's more, this isn't even my decision to make."

"Not your decision to make?" Ning was stunned. "Then..."

The old black bull sighed. "I'm just the spirit of a magic treasure Immortal Juhua always kept on him! The true controller of this Aquatic Manor is the Spirit of the Aquatic Manor!"

"Spirit of the Aquatic Manor?" Ning was puzzled.

The old black bull explained, "The entire Aquatic Manor was forged by the first master, who was incredibly mysterious. Even Immortal Juhua himself felt that this Aquatic Manor has secrets which even he had been unable to discover. The Spirit of the Aquatic Manor...has been carrying out the laws and rules set forth by the first master. It won't violate the rules in the slightest."

"Teleport someone outside into this place? The Spirit of the Aquatic Manor can do that. But allow you to go to other places within the manor? Without binding the Aquatic Manor, that definitely will not be permitted." The old black bull said. "It also cannot possibly give you one of Immortal Juhua's magic treasures. After all, it is the Spirit of the Aquatic Manor. It will definitely obey the orders of the first master of the manor."

Ning was stunned.

"When, for example, the fourth master died in the outside world, the Spirit of the Aquatic Manor would at most act to find the next master." The old black bull shook his head. "We spirits of magic treasures are different from you humans. You can change. But we will definitely respect the will of our master."

Ning understood. Magic treasures were covered with all sorts of runes and bindings. For example, some golems which were forged...even long after the death of their master, the golems would still obey their original orders. The same was true for dwelling-type magic treasures. After the owner of a dwelling died, the rules the owner had set down would still be obeyed by the spirit of the dwelling.

When he understood this, Ning felt despair, deep within his heart.

The old black bull looked towards Ning. "On the path of Immortals, you will see your family and friends die of age, one after the other. You will also see some friends die in battle...you will have to learn how to accept these things! Go, now!"

Whoosh!

An enormous illusory bear's head appeared, engulfing Ning within its mouth.

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Ning returned to West Prefecture city. Returned to the side of his mother. By now, it was already late at night.

"Ning." Yuchi Snow, lying on the bed, saw her son. Her eyes immediately lit up. "Where did you go? I couldn't find you."

"Mother." Ning hurriedly walked forward, half-kneeling by her side. He held his mother's hand. "I went out for a trip. However, I won't make any more trips. I'll accompany you and stay by your side."

Snow gently stroked her son's hair. She laughed, "It's fine. If you are busy, do what you need to do. Just remember to come visit your mother."

"Alright." Ning nodded gently, and as he did, he couldn't help but shed tears.

The only thing he could do now was accompany her mother for the final three months. This was the only filial act he could now do.

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Night.

His mother had already fallen asleep. Ji Yichuan and Ji Ning, father and son, were within a hall.

"Father." Ning looked towards his father. "It is time to tell me, I think, what exactly happened in the past."

Yichuan looked at his son, and as he did, he thought of what Blindfish and the others had said regarding what Ning had done in the mountain. He understood that his son had grown up. Sighing, he said, "That year, your mother was pregnant. Your mother and I thus decided to return to the Ji clan. At that time, your maternal uncle was worried, so he escorted and protected us on the way back."

"Maternal uncle?" Ning had never before heard that he had an uncle.

"Your uncle's name was Yuchi Mount." Yichuan's eyes had a hint of memory within them. "Your uncle was exceedingly intelligent, and he also knew how to treat others. He had many friends. He had also become a Zifu Disciple early on. If it weren't because he wanted to escort myself and your mother back, your uncle probably would've had a chance at restoring and reestablishing the Yuchi clan. Unfortunately, your uncle died. He died for the sake of protecting the three of us. All three of our lives, we have because your uncle gave up his own! This great debt...is hard to repay!"

Ning, hearing this, felt a heavy feeling.

An uncle! Yuchi Mount!

He had never heard of this name. This moment was deeply engraved into Ning's heart.

“I’ve only heard that your uncle had a daughter, your maternal cousin. Unfortunately, I have no idea where your cousin is.” Yichuan shook his head and sighed. “I’m unable to repay him. Unable to repay him...”

“What exactly happened? Who harmed and killed my uncle, and also caused the roots of her illness?” Ning immediately asked. “Who was it?”

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Book 5: Zifu Disciple Chapter 9: Warmth

Ji Yichuan looked at his son. After hesitating, he said, “All I can tell you is that he is a disciple of Snowdragon Mountain, and that his grandfather is a Summit Master of one of their mountain summits, an individual on the Primal Daoist level.”

Ning’s face changed.

Primal Daoist?

“He himself is just a Zifu Disciple and not worthy of being afraid of.” Yichuan shook his head. “But behind him stands a Primal Daoist...we truly cannot irritate him! If we struggle against him, the only result will be the extermination of the entire Ji clan. This is why your mother and I have never mentioned this, nor said a single word regarding this in front of you. Ever since that, after your mother and I stealthily returned to the Ji clan, we have always remained very low-key. However, most likely that person didn’t hold your mother and I in any regard at all.

Yichuan looked at his son. “You are now an adult, and you are very talented. According to what that Adept Mu said, it is possible that you might one day join the Raindragon Guards. This is why I have told you these things. Otherwise...I had planned to never tell you.”

“What is he called?” Ning pursued this line of questioning.

“Once you become a Wanxiang Adept, I will tell you.” Yichuan said. “If I were to die, your Uncle White will tell you. That year, your Uncle White risked his life to carry your mother and flee. He saved your life, and he knew exactly what happened that year.”

Ning said frantically, “You can’t tell me now?”

“What good would it be if I did tell you?” Yichuan barked. “Will you go seek revenge? That’s just looking for death! First be patient and endure. After enduring for a few years, you’ll have calmed down as well.”

“Remember”!

Yichuan stared at Ning. “Don’t let hatred cloud your eyes. In this vast, endless world, slaughter and hatred is omnipresent. It is guaranteed that you will one day leave Swallow Mountain. In the vast world outside, those major schools, clans, and powerful sects are all hard to deal with. Snowdragon Mountain is nothing more than a millstone for you to sharpen your blade on, during your path to becoming an Immortal!”

Ning nodded slightly.

“On your hopes rest the future of both the Ji clan and the Yuchi clan, understood?” Yichuan said. “To become famous throughout this boundless world, and to make Snowdragon Mountain as well as the various other powers all lower their heads and submit to you; this is what your mother and I hope to see the most!”

“Yes.” Ning nodded solemnly.

“Make your mother and me proud of you!” Yichuan stared at his son. “My son!”

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The autumn wind blew. Dry leaves fell.

Yuchi Snow was seated on a long bench in front of her room. The beast fur pelt laid on the bench was warm and soft. There was a layer of beast fur on Snow’s body as well. Her face was even more ashen now. She held her son’s hand, then turned to say towards Yichuan, who was standing next to her, “Yichuan, bring those beast furs over.”

“Alright.” Yichuan immediately entered the room, quickly returning while carrying a pile of beast fur clothes.

“This is...?” Ning looked at the beast fur clothes.

Yichuan said, “Your mother hasn’t had anything to do in recent days, and so she’s been sewing these beast fur clothes. Every single thread and stitch is the labor of your mother’s hands.” Seated there, Snow said softly, “There’s quite a few by now. I only made twelve sets of clothes in the past three months. They are all suitable for your current size and stature. In the future, Mother won’t be able to be by your side, but these clothes will accompany you.”

Ning’s eyes stung, and he couldn’t refrain from tearing up.

“Don’t cry.” Snow gently stroked her son’s face. “I know that soon now, I won’t be able to last any longer.”

“Mother!” Ning’s voice was trembling.

“Mother has experienced many things in this life.” Snow said slowly. “When I was an infant, I lived in a large clan with unlimited, glorious prospects. When I was young, I fled alongside my Father, eventually meeting your father and adventuring alongside him, braving danger. Afterwards, I lived ten peaceful years at the Ji clan...in my life, I’ve had a father who loved me, older brothers and sisters who loved me, a man who loved me, and you...my most beloved son. I truly feel content.”

Ning’s tears were coming down nonstop. He couldn’t control them, no matter what he tried. The only thing he could do was continuously hold his mother’s hand. His mother’s hand was no longer smooth; it had become rough and leathery, like a dry leaf without any vitality.

Snow said slowly, “In your body is the bloodline of the Ji clan, as well as the bloodline of my Yuchi clan. For your mother to have had you...is your mother’s greatest pride in life.”

“Mother...” Ning stared at his mother.

“Ning, son...in the future, will you stay for a long time at Serpentwing Lake?” Snow looked at her son.

Ning nodded.

As an Immortal practitioner, one had to have a base, after all. West Prefecture City was too crowded and had too many people. Serpentwing Lake was much calmer. In addition, Serpentwing Lake had the Aquatic Manor...in the future, he would indeed often stay at Serpentwing Lake.

“After I die.” Snow looked at Yichuan, by her side. “After I am cremated, spread my ashes over Serpentwing Lake. Yichuan, you won’t be jealous, will you?”

Yichuan’s eyes were moist. He forced out a laugh. “Slightly jealous, actually. However, after I die, my ashes will also be spread over Serpentwing Lake. By then, we’ll be together again, right?”

Snow laughed.

Yichuan gently embraced his wife.

“Ning, son.” Snow’s voice was growing weaker. She smiled. “I want to look at our Yuchi clan’s Windwing Evasion. Demonstrate it for me.”

“Yes, Mother.” Ning rose to his feet.

Behind him, out of nowhere, a pair of wings appeared. And then, forcibly resisting the pain in his heart, Ning began to execute the Windwing Evasion. Ning moved about like a giant Roc, gliding through the air, landing atop of a distant roof, and then with another flash, gliding to another place. His two wings trembled, and his movements were like that of an illusion.

Ning, in this moment, was whole-heartedly focusing on displaying the Windwing Evasion, because this was the last request of his mother.

“Wind!”

“Wind!”

As Ning displayed it, the wind blew against him, like his mother’s hand gently stroking his face. The touch of the wind was a caress of someone who didn’t want to let go.

Slowly...

Ning’s movements became all the more marvelous, and he seemed to have truly become a giant Roc, moving all the more faster and all the more freely, incomparably agile.

He was a giant Roc, a giant Roc who flew in the skies beyond the Nine Heavens. Ning, unconsciously, was unconsciously incorporating that insights he had gained that night into the True Meaning of the Wind, and merging it with the Windwing Evasion. He even incorporated some deep emotions into them, like a bird who was longing for the wind.

“The great Roc.” Snow’s eyes lit up as she watched, and she murmured softly, “The great Roc...”

She seemed to have seen her older brother.

That tall, stalwart man who had protected and cherished her since she was young. Her brother's usage of the Windwing Evasion was so similar to the way in which Ning's Windwing Evasion looked...

"Big Brother..." Snow seemed to have returned to the past.

A large courtyard. Her older brother was there, training in the Windwing Evasion, while her, as a toddler, was running around calling out, "Big Brother, Big Brother."

"Little Sis." That man, as tall and mighty as a mountain, turned to look at her.

"Big Sis, Father." She saw two more figures, one an elegant middle-aged man with a long beard, while the other was a seemingly cold and arrogant young woman. This was her father and her older sister.

"Big Brother. Big Sis. Father...I'm coming."

The child-Snow ran forward, ran to the side of her older brother, her older sister, and her father. Together again. They were finally together again...

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Lying in Yichuan's arms, Snow closed her eyes.

A peaceful smile was on her face.

"Ahh...ahhhh....aaaaaaaaaaaaah!" Yichuan opened his mouth, making some noise, but wasn't able to speak. He tightly clutched his wife, raising his head high, but the tears still came spilling out.

The distant Ning came to a halt. His entire body trembling, he took one step forward after another, walking towards his mother's side, then kneeling down.

"Mother!" Ning began to sob, a rumbling, heart-broken sound.

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The sound spread outside of the courtyard. The servants outside, hearing the sobs of their young master Ji Ning, filled with such agony, misery, and sadness, immediately understood that their mistress had already died. All of them couldn't help but to lower their heads, their tears spilling out. They would never forget this benevolent mistress of theirs.

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Ning left West Prefecture City, going to live on the island in Serpentwing Lake.

According to the dying wishes of his mother, he personally scattered her ashes within the waters of Serpentwing Lake. From that day onwards, Ning gained a new hobby. He liked to lie down atop a small boat, allowing the boat to drift freely in the waters of Serpentwing Lake.

It was like...

Lying in the embrace of his mother. So very warm.

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Book 5: Zifu Disciple Chapter 10: Unfathomably Deep

Time flowed on like water, silent and soundless. In the blink of an eye, nearly five years passed.

Serpentwing Lake. Brightheart Island.

Brightheart was the name which Ji Ning had given this island in the center of the lake. The island had multiple buildings constructed atop it, and the formerly desolate island had been made into a beautiful place, like an unearthly utopia. It was currently at the changing of seasons from spring to summer, and all sorts of flowers were blooming and eye-catching. After careful arrangements by some servants, they appeared all the more beautiful and captivating.

“Big Sis Autumn Leaf, Big Sis Autumn Leaf.” A youth dressed in blue clothes ran over while shouting.

Autumn Leaf, who had been boiling a kettle of tea, turned to look. Laughing, she said, “Bluestone, your archery lessons have concluded? Did your Master Blindfish rebuke you?”

“This...” Bluestone rubbed his head and said resignedly, “How can I not be rebuked? Each time I practice archery, Master Blindfish will always lecture me. He’ll also often compare me to Big Bro. But how can I compare to Big Bro? You know what a genius he is!”

“You need to treasure this chance.” Autumn Leaf viewed Bluestone as she might her own little brother. She said seriously, “Young master himself said that although Master Blindfish had his dantian destroyed, that just made him become even more focused on archery...and his archery abilities have risen to a whole new level. It’s only because Master Blindfish is living here on Brightheart Island and because the young master asked him to do so that he is willing to teach you. You need to work hard. If you master it, it will be a consummate technique for you.”

Bluestone immediately nodded. “I understand.”

Bluestone’s life on Brightheart Island was quite carefree. Ning whole-heartedly treated him as he would a little brother, and acted towards him as an older brother would. One could tell how close their relationship was, just by the way Bluestone addressed him; generally speaking, a younger individual would address a more senior one as ‘Elder Brother’. Only someone who grew up together and thus were very close to each other would use the term ‘Big Bro’.

“Right.” Autumn Leaf laughed and nodded.

“Where is Big Bro Ji Ning?” Bluestone asked. “Training with the sword?”

Autumn Leaf laughed, “He’s not training the sword.”

“Oh. Then he’s sleeping on Serpentwing Lake.” Bluestone laughed. After having lived on Serpentwing Lake for five years, he had become well acquainted with Ning’s habits. Ning, aside from training with the sword, spent most of his time casually drifting on Serpentwing Lake aboard a small boat while napping.

“Right. He’s sleeping.” Autumn Leaf turned to look towards that boundless lake as well.

Bluestone couldn’t help but say, “Originally, I asked Big Bro Ji Ning why he is always sleeping on Serpentwing Lake. Big Bro just said...he is training. I don’t get it. How can sleeping atop Serpentwing Lake be training? But Big Bro Ji Ning’s swordplay really is becoming increasingly more powerful. Two years ago, Commander Yichuan acknowledged that he didn’t believe he could beat him!”

“Right. The young master’s swordplay has reached an unfathomably high level.” Autumn Leaf sighed. “I once watched the young master train with the sword, and when I did, I saw some aquatic birds flew over en masse, then fly around him in a circle for some time, unwilling to leave.”

“So bizarre!” Bluestone was surprised.

“In the past, Commander Yichuan would spar once with the young master every year. Two years ago, when he felt he wouldn’t be able to win, he stopped coming. Unfortunately, the young master forbade me from watching, so I don’t know how what the battle scene between the Commander and the young master was like.” Autumn Leaf felt a hint of longing. In her eyes, the swordplay of Ji Yichuan had reached a mythical level long ago, but her young master’s swordplay had apparently reached an even higher, deeper level.

Yichuan lived on Brighthead Island as well. However, it was on the other end of Brighthead Island. He normally was a solitary, arrogant figure, forbidding anyone from approaching him, and without any servants serving him. Only Ning was permitted to go to his residence to accompany Yichuan, his father.

“I’m truly curious. What level has Big Bro reached in swordplay, exactly?” Bluestone’s eyes were filled with veneration.

“Look.” Autumn Leaf suddenly looked towards the lake.

“Huh?” Bluestone turned to look as well.

In the distance, a single boat could be faintly seen. At first, a look of delight appeared on Bluestone’s face as he took it for the boat on which Ning slept, but when he looked more closely...he saw that this was a large ship, the one which often delivered people to and from the shores of the lake. After all, quite a few people were now living on Brighthead Island, with nearly a hundred servants being present. Large amounts of food would often be delivered to the island, and some outsiders would come visit. Naturally, they had to have this ferry.

Atop the ferry.

There was a group of youths atop the ferry, and they were chatting and joking amongst themselves.

“The Central Prefecture Lord told us to come pay our respects to Ji Ning.” A big, burly-chested youth had a hint of disgruntlement in his eyes. “We are the Central Prefecture of the Ji clan. We are far more powerful than the other four Prefectures! The six of us are the most powerful members of the younger generation of the Ji clan of the Central Prefecture. To have us come spar with this Ji Ning is one thing, but he actually said that we were to come ‘pay our respect’ and have this Ji Ning ‘provide guidance to us’? And that we had to be reverential towards him?”

“Shut your mouth.” A handsome looking youth said. “The Central Prefecture Lord stated that we must be respectful and that we must address him as young master Ji Ning.”

“Fine, fine. Young master Ji Ning.” The big youth couldn’t refrain from adding, “That’s fine for the rest of us, but Ji Mo, you are the number one, ultimate genius amongst the younger generation of our Ji clan of the Central Prefecture. You became a Xiantian expert at age fifteen, and reached the level of mastery long ago in the ultimate technique of our Ji clan, the [Melody of Ten Thousand Swords]. That Ji Ning...although that young master Ji Ning became a Xiantian expert a few years earlier than you, the two

of you will simply spar at most. How can you be asked to 'pay your respects' to him and have him 'provide guidance' to you?"

"Ji Mo." A black haired woman said. "Tongzhan speaks the truth. The instructions the Central Prefecture Lord gave us, none of us will openly oppose, but in our hearts, none of us truly submit either. We are the most talented youths of the Central Prefecture, while that Ji Ning...that young master Ji Ning is only the most talented youth of the West Prefecture. No matter how much of a genius he is, at most he'll be a bit more powerful than us. How can he be qualified to have us 'go pay our respects' to him?"

"Enough, all of you."

The handsome youth's gaze was like water. He swept everyone with his gaze, and the other five youths all fell silent.

Ji Mo was, without question, the number one figure in the younger generation of the Ji clan of the Central Prefecture. In addition, ever since he had been young, he had followed by the side of Granny Shadow, and thus Mo's status was all the more unique...many people were certain that Mo would be the next Prefecture Lord of the Ji clan of the Central Prefecture.

"You all know that I follow Granny Shadow." Mo said slowly.

"Right." Looks of awe appeared in the eyes of the other five.

Granny Shadow...

In the entire Ji clan, there were two people who stood at the very pinnacle of the clan. One was the Patriarch, Ji Ninefire! The other was Granny Shadow! Granny Shadow was the sibling and younger sister of Ninefire, an old granny who had also lived for nearly four centuries. But, without question, she had been at the Zifu Disciple level for three hundred years.

The two of them were the two publicly acknowledged Zifu Disciples of the Ji clan.

As for whether or not there were other Zifu Disciples hidden in the shadows, that was hard to say. A clan would naturally want to hide some cards up their sleeves, interchanging truth and lies. This led to longevity.

"Granny Shadow personally taught me swordplay." Mo said softly. "My swordplay, compared to Granny Shadow's, is unimaginably weaker. Do you know why the six of us have been sent by the Central Prefecture Lord to Serpentwing Lake to pay our respects to Ji Ning?"

"I hear the North Prefecture, the East Prefecture, and the South Prefecture had already sent their younger generation members over to pay their respects to young master Ji Ning, and so our Central Prefecture sent the six of us as well."

"Wrong."

Ji Mo shook his head lightly.

"Our Central Prefecture is the root of the Ji clan. The Patriarch and Granny Shadow are both within our Central Prefecture." Mo said. "The territory that our Central Prefecture takes up is the greatest, and the number of Xiantian experts we have far surpasses the number the other four prefectures have. Even the

Crimson Guards are stationed in our Central Prefecture. Why, then, must our Central Prefecture act in the same manner as the other prefectures?”

“Then what’s the reason?” They all looked towards Mo.

Mo said softly, “The reason is, one year ago, Granny Shadow made a trip here to Serpentwing Lake.”

“Granny Shadow came to Serpentwing Lake?” The other five youths instantly began to think of many possibilities.

Mo said, “The Patriarch had once praised young master Ji Ning highly, saying that in the future, he would definitely be the number one expert of our Ji clan! Granny Shadow thus decided to come here to Serpentwing Lake to personally see what sort of ability this Ji Ning had...”

“And?”

“What did Granny Shadow say?” The five youths looked expectantly at Mo.

Mo’s eyes had a very strange light to them. He said slowly, “After Granny Shadow returned, I repeatedly asked her how I was in comparison to young master Ji Ning. The only thing Granny Shadow would say was that it was hard to compare. That it was hard to compare. I kept on asking her what level of swordplay this young master Ji Ning had reached, and Granny Shadow just replied with a single phrase; ‘unfathomably deep!’”

“Unfathomably deep!” The five youths were stunned. For even Granny Shadow to say such a thing...how terrifying was Ji Ning’s swordplay?

“Everyone, time to disembark.” A sailor said loudly.

Only now did the six of them look over. The ferry had already neared the shore, and from afar, various buildings arose within their vision, an amazingly beautiful sight. The six of them couldn’t help but sigh in amazement in their hearts, while Ji Mo’s eyes lit up. “This is where Ji Ning lives?”

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Book 5: Zifu Disciple Chapter 11: Ji Ning’s Sword

The six youths from the Ji clan’s Central Prefecture disembarked. From the island, four figures walked over, the leader being a beautiful woman dressed in simple, plain clothes. By her side was a youth dressed in blue, while two Crimson Guards followed them from the side. There were a total of a hundred Crimson Guards on the island, which Ji Ninefire had especially stationed here.

“I imagine you are Manager Autumn Leaf.” Ji Mo, the leader of the six youths, extended his hand, and within it, a beast skin appeared which had some words written atop it. “We are here at the commands of our Central Prefecture Lord, and we have come to pay our respects to young master Ji Ning.”

“Oh?” Autumn Leaf accepted the beast skin parchment and glanced at it.

All of the various matters pertaining to Brightheart Island were under Autumn Leaf’s control, and she had been appointed as the General Manager by Ji Ning.

Autumn Leaf carefully read through the beast skin parchment, then lifted her head and smiled. "We had already received the news previously and had been informed that six outstanding talents of the Central Prefecture were coming. Everyone, please follow me."

"We have come to pay our respects to young master Ji Ning. Might I ask when young master Ji Ning will be able to see us?"

While following Autumn Leaf, the six youths asked this question.

Autumn Leaf just said, "Everyone, don't be hasty. You will definitely see the young master today."

Soon, the six youths were led to a quiet, reclusive residence which was specially used for receiving guests. Autumn Leaf instructed a pair of maidservants, "These six are our esteemed guests from the Central Prefecture. Take good care of them."

"Yes." The two maidservants acknowledged.

"Everyone." Autumn Leaf looked at the six of them and laughed. "Once our young master has time, I will definitely come inform the six of you. Everyone, you must be tired from your journey. You can rest here for now."

After speaking, Autumn Leaf led Bluestone and the others away.

"Hmph, people of high status really are troublesome!" The tall, muscular youth, Ji Tongzhan, was so angry his eyes bulged. "What could this young master Ji Ning possibly be worrying about, living here in such a secluded, quiet little lake island? This female manager even said 'when our young master has free time'. Jeeze...they really hold us in no regard at all."

"The Central Prefecture ordered someone to convey the letter long ago to inform them of our arrival. It's one thing for young master Ji Ning to not come welcome us, but he won't even let us know when he will meet with us, and instead just has us wait here like fools?"

These youths were all the talented, favored sons of heaven.

Although they believed that Ji Ning was one level stronger than them, they were still people of the same age. For them to be slighted like this...they were rather unhappy.

"Endure it!" Ji Mo just sat there and called out to them quietly. "We are here to pay our respects. Thus, wait here obediently for young master Ji Ning to summon us."

"We're just discontent, that's all."

"Right. Everyone talks about how powerful young master Ji Ning is, but none of us have ever met him. He's only sixteen years old. How powerful can he be?" These youths all chatted amongst themselves. Even Ji Mo, seated there, in his bones had the untamed arrogance inherent to all geniuses. What one heard didn't matter. What one saw was what really mattered!

Until he personally witnessed Ji Ning's abilities, in Mo's heart, he too had a small ball of fiery anger that was currently smoldering.

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The sun had already set, and the night fog had covered the entire western horizons. The setting sun's red glow covered the earth, causing the surface of Serpentwing Lake to appear as beautiful as a painting. Far away on the surface of the lake in this 'painting', a small boat was swaying as the water pushed it forward.

"It's the young master's boat."

"It's the young master."

The maidservants had noticed long ago, and they had immediately informed Manager Autumn Leaf. Autumn Leaf and Bluestone quickly arrived on the beach, staring at that distant little boat.

Within the boat.

Ning was comfortably lying there, his eyes shut. The lake around him was completely silent, as silent as a painting. Suddenly, he could vaguely sense the auras of many people in the distance, and as he did, his eyelids twitched, then opened.

"I'm here." Ning immediately stood up, stretching lazily.

He was still dressed in those beast fur clothes. However, these were formed from the transformation of a protective magic-treasure...after all, he only had a few sets of beast fur clothes which his mother had sown for him. If he always wore them, they would eventually be ruined. Ning couldn't bear for that to happen, and so he stored them away. However, he still changed the appearance of his armor-type magic treasure into beast furs. He felt the most comfortable dressed in them anyhow.

"Splash." The speed of the boat suddenly increased rapidly, and it broke through the waves, advancing at high speed, charging towards the distant island.

Ning stood there atop the little boat, smiling as he greeted his Autumn Leaf and Bluestone.

When the boat drew near the island, it actually disappeared. Ning walked atop the waves, arriving at the beach.

"Young master." Autumn Leaf laughed as she went to welcome him.

"Big Bro Ji Ning." Bluestone immediately ran over as well, saying excitedly, "Today, six youths of the Central Prefecture came. They act so high and mighty and look down on people so much, they might as well have their eyes growing from the tops of their heads."

Ning seemed to have thought of something. "Oh? This is that group of the most talented youths of the Central Prefecture?"

"Right." Autumn Leaf nodded. "They arrived at noon."

"Have them come to the sword training field." Ning laughed. "Since the Central Prefecture had them come, their intention is for me to give these youths a sound beating."

"Alright. I'll go invite them right now." Autumn Leaf immediately said.

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The sword training field.

This was a wide area of more than three hundred meters, located in front of Ning's residence. This was the place where Ning usually trained with the sword.

"I've already drunk five bottles of water. It's almost night. He's finally willing to meet us."

"This Ji Ning has been made out to be a near legendary figure. I wonder what he's actually like."

The six men and women spoke to each other softly, all clearly quite excited. They were filled with boundless curiosity towards this legendary young master Ji Ning. Autumn Leaf led the way from up front, and they soon arrived at the sword training field. "The young master is there. You can go there."

Ji Mo and the other six looked over carefully.

In the distance, a youth dressed in beast furs could be seen standing there. From his appearance, he wasn't too tall; he was still at the same height he had been when he had broken through to become a Xiantian expert. Only, for some reason...just by standing there, Ning seemed to have become one with the surrounding area, as though the entire scene was one in a painting.

The beast fur clad youth suddenly turned, leaving that earlier state of seeming to be a person in a painting. He seemed to have transformed into an Adept. Actually, before this, Ning had fused his soul with the world and was meditating on the 'Dao'! Ever since he had moved to live on Serpentwing Lake, especially after he began to rest there on that little boat and casually drift on the surface of the lake each day, his entire soul had become incomparably peaceful and calm, and incomparably close to nature.

At the same time, Ning's swordplay had advanced by leaps and bounds. His level had risen nonstop, to the point which by now, Ning was able to infuse the 'Dao' he had learned casually and freely into his techniques. Although there was no way he could completely absorb himself into the Dao, like he had that night by the pool, to train in such a manner...was already inconceivable. This caused his swordplay to reach a truly astonishing level.

"All of you, come over." Ning spoke out.

Mo and the others all looked at this young master Ji Ning. His features were handsome and delicate, like a youth's. Only, he had a natural, reserved aura about him, an aura which one could only achieve after constantly improving upon one's mind and spirit.

"Greetings, young master Ji Ning." Mo and the rest of the six all walked forward and said respectfully.

"I heard that the most talented youth of the Central Prefecture is Ji Mo. Which of you is Ji Mo?" Ning said directly. Since he was to give them a beating, he might as well just pick the strongest one. This would be more effective.

"Me." Mo said, his eyes fierce.

Ning nodded. "What do you train in?"

"The [Melody of Ten Thousand Swords]!" Mo's eyes held great confidence within them. "I just mastered it. I hope young master Ji Ning will provide me with some guidance."

“Mastered?” Ning nodded. “The [Melody of Ten Thousand Swords] is an ultimate technique which guards our entire clan, and is extremely marvelous. Take out your sword and use your most powerful sword attack against me. Let me see exactly how well you use the [Melody of Ten Thousand Swords].”

“Alright.” Mo drew out his icy longsword. The longsword had some faint runes atop it. Clearly, this was a weapon-type magic treasure. Mo shouted out, “Young master Ji Ning, be careful.”

Swish!

Instantly, the sword transformed into countless illusions, all of which appeared and swept forward towards Ning.

Ning just stood there, watching. Just as those countless sword illusions enveloped him, he stretched out a finger and lightly tapped. “Break!” Immediately, all of the sword illusions vanished, with the true form of the longsword appearing. Tapped by Ning’s finger, the longsword which had flying towards Ning at high speed suddenly flew away on its own power.

“This...this...” Mo stared in shock, his eyes wide. The other five youths were completely stunned as well. Just by relying on his finger, he was able to flick away a sword which contained the power of the world? And they didn’t feel that Ning’s finger moved very quickly.

“How is that possible...my sword...?” Mo didn’t dare believe it. “Your force clearly wasn’t that great. How could you instantly guide my force away and make my sword fly out?”

“Let me ask you this.” Ning barked. “What techniques does the [Melody of Ten Thousand Swords] have?”

Mo hurriedly said, “The [Melody of Ten Thousand Swords] has three techniques in total. The ‘One Sword, Ten Thousand Shadows’ stance, the ‘Ten Thousand Swords Become One’, and the ‘Melody of Ten Thousand Swords’. Amongst them, the ‘Melody of Ten Thousand Swords’ is the most powerful killing technique. What I used just now was that most powerful technique, the ‘Melody of Ten Thousand Swords’!”

Ning said, “Melody of Ten Thousand Swords...Melody of Ten Thousand Swords...the most important part of it isn’t the ‘ten thousand swords’, it is in the word ‘melody’!” In recent years, Ji Ninefire had especially arranged for people to send over the various sword and saber techniques the Ji clan possessed, and Ning had flipped through all of them. At Ning’s current level, he himself could develop techniques on par with these skills. All he had to do was to get an understanding of their essence.

“Melody?” Mo was awestruck.

“Watch carefully.” Ning pointed with his finger, and a ray of sword light solidified, slicing through the air.

Immediately, the sky was filled with sword images, and the countless sword images appeared everywhere, seemingly quite similar to the ‘Melody of Ten Thousand Swords’ which Mo had just used. But at the same time, these countless, densely clustered sword shadows seemed to form into multiple musical notes, each of which had their own differences. These countless sword shadows actually formed into a single, high-pitched song.

Passion!

Celebration!

Ji Mo and the other six were completely stunned. They could actually sense a sort of joy emanating from those countless sword shadows, which seemed to have a life of their own.

“Watch now.” Ning shot out another ray of sword light, once more forming into countless blurry sword shadows. Those countless sword shadows affected each other, each of which seemed to be independent and yet which linked up with the others...the countless musical notes transformed into a song, but this song was filled with boundless killing intent, a killing intent which caused their courage to turn cold.

Every single sword shadow seemed like a soldier, and the countless soldiers were bellowing while charging forward, covering the skies and filling the skies with their killing intent.

The faces of Mo and the other five were completely ashen. They couldn't help but unconsciously retreat.

“Do you see?” The sword light from Ning's finger vanished. “This is the ‘melody’. The soul of the entire sword technique! It doesn't matter what type of soul it is; only with a soul will your ten thousand swords truly become one, and truly become the astonishing sword melody!”

The other five felt utterly astonished.

As for Ji Mo, who had an extremely deep level of accomplishment with regards to the [Melody of Ten Thousand Swords], he was thoroughly convinced and subdued. With a ‘bang’ sound, he immediately knelt down in front of Ning. “Please accept me as your disciple!”

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Book 5: Zifu Disciple Chapter 12: The World Suddenly Changes

Although Ji Mo had sincerely asked to be allowed to take Ji Ning as his master, how could Ning accept? After all, for a sword technique to have a ‘soul’, what was required was an understanding of the Dao. This wasn't something that could simply be taught! Ning next provided guidance to the others, one by one. The attitudes of these youths had immediately become incomparably humble. All of them raised issues which had normally puzzled them, and Ning naturally was able to very easily resolve them. Just in terms of sword technique alone, there was no one within the Ji clan who could compare to him.

He spent four full hours providing guidance to them, and afterwards, Ning sent them off.

“Go back and spend some time pondering these things. I won't keep you here any further.” After providing guidance, Ning himself left.

The six youths just watched longingly as Ning left. How they wished that Ning could spend some more time giving them guidance!

.....

Night.

Ning was seated in the lotus position on his bed mattress, training. Elemental energy was constantly surging towards him, entering his body and liquefying into Ki. After a long time, when he sensed that his dantian had become somewhat swollen, Ning came to a halt.

“Most likely, within a few more months, I will be able to establish my ‘Violet Palace’ as a Ki Refiner.” Ning said to himself. “However, to reach the Zifu Disciple level as a practitioner of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] will require me to reach the seventh level of that art. I wonder how long it will be before I reach it.”

By now, he had already reached the peak of power as a Xiantian lifeform as both a Ki Refiner and as a Fiendgod Body Refiner.

The technique he was using to train as a Ki Refiner was an ordinary technique of the Ji clan, known as the [Water Element Art]. The quality of the ki provided by those who trained in this technique was fairly poor, but it was easy to breakthrough to become a Zifu Disciple! Given Ning’s current level of understanding regarding the Dao, once the accumulated ki in his body reached a certain level, he could rely on it to immediately establish his Zifu ‘Violet Palace’!

“This [Water Element Art] is a very ordinary technique.” Ning said to himself. “It can only allow a person to train to the Zifu Disciple level. After establishing the ‘Violet Palace’, I’ll have to acquire a new Ki Refining technique.”

The further a Ki Refining technique allowed one to progress, the more valuable it was.

“When the time comes, I must find a more formidable Ki Refining technique.” Ning pondered to himself. “The [Water Element Art] is, in the end, a very superficial technique. If I continue to use this sort of superficial technique in the future...most likely, my development in Ki Refining will come to a halt at the Wanxiang level.”

This was the difference between a high class technique and a low class technique!

A high class, hard-to-learn technique was hard to start training in, but it allowed one to begin slowly walking in the right direction, constantly advancing on firm footing.

As for low class techniques, they made it easy for one to establish the ‘Violet Palace’, and if one went all out, one had the chance to reach the Wanxiang Adept level. But...to become a Primal Daoist? There was no hope of it whatsoever.

The Ji clan, after all, was a fairly low level clan. It didn’t have any high class Fiendgod Body Refining techniques or Ki Refining techniques. It did have the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] technique, which was unique in that it was widely spread throughout the lands. The other Ki Refining techniques the clan possessed were all very poor; this was why the likes of Ji Ninfire and Granny Shadow had been training for nearly four centuries, but were still at the Zifu Disciple stage.

“I have to go out adventuring.” Ning was rather eager. “I’ll wait to establish my Violet Palace first. By then, I will be better equipped to protect myself. The little power I have right now is still rather insufficient.”

Ning knew his own power quite well.

As a Ki Refiner, he was at the peak Xiantian level; however, half a year ago, he had already become capable of executing the ninth level of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], and his attack power should have reached the peak Zifu Disciple level! His weakness was that his ki was used up too quickly, and that he wasn’t able to fight for as long as most Zifu Disciples.

As a Body Refiner, he had reached the peak Xiantian level in the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]. He was already comparable to early, ordinary Zifu Disciple level Fiendgod Body Refiners! Given his current life force, even if his skull was pierced through, he still wouldn't die! Although his attack power was somewhat weaker than that of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], once battle truly began, his body was still the more powerful aspect of the two.

"Although the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] is incomparably sharp..." Ning said to himself. "If I were to encounter a Zifu Disciple who is an Fiendgod Body Refiner and whose body is incomparably durable, even if I can chop through his body with a ray of sword light, his body would quickly heal."

"Against Zifu level Ki Refiners, I can give them a good fight, even if they are peak Zifu Disciples."

"But against Fiendgod Body Refiners...I can deal with early stage ones, but anything stronger than that will be hard." Ning knew this very well. "I wonder what I need to do to breakthrough in the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]. Transform Yin and Yang...Blood-Drop Rebirth...what must I do to achieve this?"

Not dying when one's head was cut through wasn't much.

But if he could reach the seventh stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], he would possess the ability to regenerate himself from a single drop of blood! Life energy as powerful as this made it extremely hard for other Zifu Ki Refiners to deal with him. To kill an Fiendgod Body Refiner expert...how hard it was! The only way was to slowly exhaust the expert of all his divine power.

"Blood-Drop Rebirth." Ning was filled with eagerness.

Actually, the current Ning was already an absolute monster. For attack, he had the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]! He had also become a peak Xiantian in the number one Fiendgod Body Refining technique, and even Zifu Disciples would find it hard to kill him! It was hard for others to kill him, but by relying on the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], he could kill others from far away.

"Not enough, not enough. If Bei Zishan's insect swarms were ten times greater in number, they would still be able to kill me through exhausting my power.." Ning didn't dare to be the slightest bit incautious.

He still remembered what the old black bull had told him...

That he was not to underestimate any Immortal practitioner! You are formidable, but aren't others also in possession of formidable techniques?

"Whew."

Ning shut his eyes, beginning to visualize the [Nuwa Painting]. The visualization of the Nuwa Painting was something he continuously did. The reason he was now able to execute the ninth level of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] was primarily thanks to the power of his divine will.

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The sky slowly brightened.

Ning, seated quietly in the lotus position on his bed, suddenly opened his eyes, frowning as he carefully reached out with his senses.

“Was it just me?” Ning murmured to himself.

“Rumble...” A surge of incomparably powerful elemental energy rippled outwards, washing through Serpentwing Lake in an instant like a huge, roaring wave. This enormously powerful elemental ripple caused Ning’s face to change. Swish! He flew straight out from the window, flying to the crown of a large tree and staring outwards.

“Northward.”

Ning stood there atop the tree’s crown, staring into the distant north. The incomparably savage elemental ripple had come from the north.

It was like the ripple caused by a stone being thrown into a pool of water. In a distant point to the north, incomparably powerful natural, elemental ripples were being cast out in every direction....one ripple after another surged outwards, sweeping out for thousands of kilometers, constantly broadcasting outwards.

“What a terrifying elemental energy ripple.” Ning was amazed and stunned. “To be able to arouse such a powerful elemental aura...the rate at which I absorb elemental energy when training, compared to this ripple, is like the light of a firefly compared to the glorious splendor of the sun and the moon. What is going on? What has caused such a powerful ripple?”

Swoosh!

From another place within the island, a figure flew out, leaping across the tops of some trees and buildings, advancing at high speed. Soon, the figure reached Ning’s side. It was Ji Yichuan, clad in a white beast fur jacket.

“Father.” Ning looked at his father.

“You felt it as well.” Yichuan looked solemnly towards the north.

“Right. The north.” Ning nodded, then said with incomparable solemnity, “A terrifying elemental energy ripple. It was inconceivably strong. Given what I sensed, if I’m not mistaken, this elemental energy ripple should have originated from thousands of kilometers to the north.”

Yichuan nodded as well. “I didn’t sense it as clearly as you did, but the impression I received was essentially the same.”

“Father, what on earth happened to cause such a powerful elemental energy ripple?” Ning hurriedly asked.

“There are many possibilities.” Yichuan said. “It is possible that a duel between Immortals has caused these elemental ripples. It is also possible that an ancient relic site has suddenly emerged! It’s also possible that an Immortal magic treasure has revealed itself!”

Ning’s face changed. “Then our Ji clan...”

The land thousands of kilometers to the north remained the territory of the Ji clan. The West Prefecture City of the Ji clan was to the southwest of the Central Prefecture City. The region thousands of kilometers to the north was one of the centermost areas of the entire Ji clan!

“No matter which of the possibilities it is, it isn’t good for our Ji clan.” Yichuan said in a low voice.

Ning’s face became ugly.

A battle between Immortals? An emergence of a relic site? An Immortal magic treasure revealing itself? Other unknown possibilities? How could the Ji clan, whose most powerful experts were only on the Zifu level, possibly withstand these things?

“Come, let’s take a look.” Yichuan said.

“Fine.” Ning was incomparably worried as well. At the same time, he immediately used his ki to send his voice to Autumn Leaf, who was staying in a room not too far from his own. “Autumn Leaf, I’m heading out. You are in charge of Brightheart Island.”

Swoosh!

The two flew into the air at high speed, then running across the waves, quickly transformed into blurred rays of light which advanced to the north at high speed. At their level, when they put all their energy into their footwork techniques, they were actually rather faster than even the Azure Firebird, and many times faster than ordinary mounts.

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Book 5: Zifu Disciple Chapter 13: Immortal

A thousand kilometers south of the City of Ten Thousand Swords, the only commandery city of the Grand Xia Dynasty which was under control of the Ji clan. This place was a desolate mountain forest, completely ordinary and unremarkable! However, in the air above this desolate mountain forest, an enormous vortex had appeared! This was a rainbow vortex, thirty thousand meters high, its influence omnidirectional.

This enormous rainbow vortex was wildly pulling in the surrounding elemental energy. Because the collection of elemental energy was too vigorous, and the density of the collected energy was too high, the swirling pressure compacted it to the point where a rainbow of colors had appeared. This enormous elemental vortex...agitated the elemental aura in the surrounding area to surge outward in waves, causing those powerful ripples to broadcast in every direction!

This elemental vortex was shaped like a sharp awl, pointed directly downwards towards the ground. Clearly, the origin of this natural vortex was directly located within the ground region of that desolate mountain forest.

“Whoosh!”

A male figure appeared in the air, amidst the vibrating elemental energy. This man had long, loose hair, and wore black, traditional robes which had a strange beast embroidered onto them. He wore a crested crown on his head, and his face was as pale as jade. He naturally emanated a lofty aura, and his gaze was directed downwards, staring towards that origin point which the swirling, enormous elemental vortex was ‘pointing’ towards.

“Oh?” The black robed man nodded slightly. “This Anomaly...it should be that someone has reached the Void stage and become an Earth Immortal! I wonder if which side this new Earth Immortal belongs

to...this is Swallow Mountain. The number of large tribes, schools, and sects located near Swallow Mountain can be counted on one hand. The closest one is the Heavenly Saint Sect! Can it be that one of the Primal Daoists of the Heavenly Saint Sect has made a breakthrough? But if it were one of the Primal Daoists of the Heavenly Saint Sect, there should be protectors and guardians nearby.”

While pondering, he continued to stand there, watching quietly in mid-air.

The appearance of an Anomaly such as this meant that this person had already succeeded. It would be too late to stop it.

Rumble...

The enormous elemental vortex suddenly collapsed, causing the nearby elemental energy to violently tremble, but soon everything returned to normal. Right at the moment that the elemental vortex collapsed...a man appeared out of nowhere, garbed in fiery red robes and carrying three greatswords on his back. His two temples had hints of white hair, and he swept the area with a lightning-like gaze, soon noticing the black robed man who stood in the distance in mid-air.

“Congratulations, my fellow Daoist, for having returned to the Void and become an Earth Immortal!”
The black robed man laughed.

“Might I ask who you are, fellow Daoist?” The man carrying the three greatswords on his back asked immediately. He didn’t dare to be discourteous either; he knew that the Anomaly generated by his breakthrough had lasted for only a short period of time. For someone to be able to sense it and also hurry over in such a short period of time...that was no ordinary feat.

The black robed man laughed. “I am Northmont Skyfall! And you, fellow Daoist?”

The red robed man, hearing this, was shocked.

Northmont?

Throughout the Stillwater Commandery, this surname was known to represent the most exalted force present; the Marquis of Stillwater! The Marquis of Stillwater was of the Northmont clan! Ever since the time when the Grand Xia Dynasty unified the world and bequeathed marquisdoms, the Northmont clan and the Marquis of Stillwater had been in control of this region. Their roots were extremely deep, far more so than any of the other forces present in Stillwater Commandery. The only organization capable of competing for supremacy in this region was the Raindragon Guard, which represented the Grand Xia Dynasty itself!

A look of delight was on the red robed man’s face as he said hurriedly, “So it is Immortal Laxiao! I was wondering who within the Stillwater Commandery could instantly notice this elemental Anomaly, and had guessed that only the Northmont clan of Stillwater was capable of this! I didn’t expect that the famous, world-renowned Immortal Skyfall had come in person. Compared to you, Immortal Skyfall, I’m just a junior. I imagine that you, Immortal Skyfall, have never even heard of my name. However, I did have a nickname in the past; Daoist Firedragon. Immortal Skyfall, have you heard of me?”

This Immortal Skyfall who stood before him was a Loose Immortal who had lived for tens of thousands of years. The longer Loose Immortals lived, the more terrifying they became. Although he was confident

in being able to stay alive if Immortal Skyfall attacked, he knew that in terms of power, as a new Earth Immortal, he was probably a level weaker in strength.

“Daoist Firedragon?” Immortal Skyfall was briefly startled. He truly hadn’t heard of this figure before. He immediately said, “I truly haven’t heard of you. I imagine that prior to this, fellow Daoist, you weren’t present in the Stillwater Commandery region.”

“When I was a Wanxiang Adept, I went to the East Sea.” The red robed man immediately said. “While adventuring in the East Sea, I suddenly broke through to the Primal stage, and acquired the nickname of Daoist Firedragon. Because I was in the distant, remote East Sea...it isn’t strange that you have never heard of me, Immortal Skyfall. A hundred years ago, I returned once more to this region. Perhaps because I felt very moved upon returning to my ancient homeland, I had a sudden feeling and thus immediately found a place to start training. I sealed myself into a training cave for a hundred years, and today, I just made my breakthrough.

Immortal Skyfall nodded. “So that’s how it is. Daoist Firedragon, might I ask where your homeland was?”

“I myself am from Stillwater Commandery.” Daoist Firedragon said. “Unfortunately, my clan was eliminated long ago. I won’t lie to you, Immortal Skyfall; the purpose of this return of mine was to seek out my clansmen and rebuild my clan, and also to avenge my clan and execute this blood feud.”

“Hahaha...” Immortal Skyfall laughed clearly. “So Daoist Firedragon, you are of my Stillwater Commandery? My Stillwater Commandery now has yet another Immortal. I truly am overjoyed! It is karmic which brings the two of us together, Daoist Firedragon. As for your matters, you can consider them to be the matters of the Marquis Palace of Stillwater. There’s no need for us to continue speaking here. Come, let’s go to Stillwater City. My clan’s Lord Marquis will definitely receive you, fellow Daoist, with the greatest of ceremony.”

“Then I’ll obey your request rather than standing on ceremony.” Daoist Firedragon laughed as well.

An Immortal was someone worthy of befriending.

Immortal Firedragon was in no rush to join a side right now. He had to see what sort of offers would be made to him, after all. He knew very well that in the end, this boundless world belonged to the Grand Xia Dynasty. If he wanted to rise and to make his clan grow and prosper, it was best if he either joined with the forces of the Grand Xia Dynasty, or if he joined with the forces of the various Marquises, who had deep roots in their respective areas.

“Let’s go.” Immortal Skyfall stretched his hand out, taking Immortal Firedragon’s.

Whoosh!

They disappeared from mid-air.

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The City of Ten Thousand Swords was the base and foundation of the Ji clan. Ji Ninefire and Granny Shadow both lived within this city. What’s more, that elemental Anomaly originated from just a thousand or so kilometers from the city; given their speed, the two of them naturally soon arrived at the desolate mountain forest.

"It should be right here." Ninefire and Granny Shadow, along with an old servant, were currently standing atop a large magic calabash gourd. Ninefire was staring down at the desolate mountain forest. He said, "But why is it that it seems as though this mountain wilderness is very calm. There's nothing special here."

"I can't see anything either." Granny Shadow and the old servant were watching as well.

"Elder Brother." Granny Shadow said in her hoarse voice. "I'll go down and take a look. Ah Xing, you stay here as well."

"Mistress, let me go." The old servant let out a hoarse whisper, and then transformed into a ray of light, descending towards the desolate mountain forest below.

Granny Shadow was frantic. "Ah Xing!"

"Wait." Ninefire looked at Granny Shadow. "This old servant of yours truly is devoted to you."

The earlier, violent ripples of elemental energy clearly involved a major affair. The first person to investigate thus would be taking on great risk. Ninefire, as the Patriarch of the Ji clan, was the true pillar of the clan and thus couldn't be risked. This was why Granny Shadow was about to go down, but the old servant went down first.

"In the entire world, Ah Xing is the most loyal person to me." Granny Shadow said gently.

Moments later...

A blur from below rose into the skies, landing atop the flying gourd. It was that old servant with unbound hair and dressed in beast furs. Ninefire immediately asked, "How is it?"

"There is a large amount of elemental ore below." The old servant said in a low voice.

"A large amount of elemental ore?" Ninefire frowned. "How much?" Elemental ore contained gems which possessed elemental energy. However, the amount of elemental energy which people were able to absorb each day was limited, generally speaking. At a certain point in time, it would be impossible to absorb any more. Ordinary elemental gems were thus used to set up formations, or they might be useful in creating golems.

But training? They weren't very useful.

But of course, some rare natural treasures existed that didn't place much of a strain on the body, but which when ingested could provide power comparable to ten or even a hundred years of training. In addition, amongst elemental stones, there were high quality ones which had special effects. The elemental energy within high class elemental stones was very pure; when absorbing the energy within them, the body wasn't placed under much strain, and thus by using them, in a single day, one would be able to make gains comparable to ten days of normal training. However, the rate of consumption of stones for training in such a way was significant as well! It wasn't so bad if one only occasionally used a piece or two of high class elemental stones, but if an Immortal practitioner wanted to use them for long term training, one would have to buy thousands or more.

This wasn't something which the Ji clan was capable of affording.

“Very many. Very many.” The old servant said solemnly. “It should be an elemental ore mine. In addition, my superficial scan turned up high quality elemental stones already.”

“What? An elemental ore mine? With high class elemental stones?” Ninefire was instantly stunned.

An elemental ore mine?

Generally speaking, certain special environments would produce elemental ore mines. But of course, one was also capable of intentionally forming an elemental ore mine. For the sake of making his breakthrough, Immortal Firedragon had to have enough elemental energy present for him to use. Thus, he was willing to pay a high price to set up a grand formation which drew in the surrounding elemental energy. Day after day, month after month, an elemental ore mine was formed.

“Elemental ore mine?” Granny Shadow revealed a look of excitement as well. “Our Ji clan is about to suddenly rise to prominence?!”

“Let’s go take a look first.” Ninefire suppressed his excitement. He immediately collected his magic gourd, and the three of them descended at high speed into the desolate mountain forest, diving into the ground to investigate.

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Book 5: Zifu Disciple Chapter 14: A Large Scale Mine

The sky slowly grew brighter. Ji Ning and his father, Ji Yichuan, were currently moving at top speed, moving towards the origin of those elemental ripples.

“Eh? I have never competed against Father in speed before. Father is actually this fast?” Ning was extremely surprised. His divine body was comparable to that of early-stage Zifu-level Fiendgod practitioners. Given that he also had the Windwing Evasion technique, one could imagine how fast he was. Even when he didn’t use his wing-type magic treasure, he was still very fast...but his father, Ji Yichuan, was able to move at the same pace as him.

“Father, your footwork technique...? Can it be that you have established your Violet Palace?” Ning use his ki to ask mentally while hurrying forward. He didn’t realize that when the disaster had occurred, aside from the injuries suffered by the Yuchi siblings, his own father, Yichuan, had been heavily wounded as well.

“No need to ask.” Yichuan clearly didn’t want to discuss it. “This speed is already my maximum.”

“Understood.” Ning nodded.

If he were to use his wing-type magic treasures, he would still be able to increase his speed by quite a bit, but there was no need.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

The two moved forward like blurs of smoke. Moving at such an astonishing speed, this distance of thousands of kilometers was traversed in just a single hour! Their speed was completely at that of the Zifu Disciple level.

“It should be in this region.” Ning came to a halt, standing atop the crown of a large, ancient tree. He stared towards a mountain forest. “The ripple originated from no more than three hundred kilometers away.”

“Should be.” Yichuan nodded as well.

“Let’s take a close look.” The two looked about carefully as they ran forward atop the trees. Soon, Yichuan jumped directly down into the ground, emerging shortly afterwards. “Ning, come over here.” Ning immediately leapt down, moving like a ray of light to the grassy area where Yichuan was currently standing.

Ning hurriedly asked, “What is it?”

“There are elemental stones underground.” Yichuan said solemnly. “And this should be an extremely rich elemental ore mine. I’ve even noticed high quality elemental stones.”

“High quality elemental stones?” Ning was shocked as well. “The area under the control of my Ji clan actually has high quality elemental stones?”

“This vein of elemental stones is extremely rich, and there are very few other ores mixed in. Still, because these are elemental stones...there’s no way to traverse through them using ground-tunneling arts.” Yichuan said. “Just by using ground-tunneling arts, I was only able to burrow to a depth of a hundred and fifty meters, which is where the elemental ore mine begins. Further down...is an extremely rich vein of elemental ore.”

Ning nodded. Ground-tunneling techniques allowed one to pass through ordinary dirt and rocks, but some special materials were completely impassable. Elemental stones, for example, were impassable.

“Swish!”

From afar, a hundred kilometers away, a golden light suddenly rose into the skies, emitting an ear-piercing sound.

Ning and Yichuan both turned to look.

“The golden arrow of the Ji clan!” Ning and Yichuan, upon seeing it, immediately used their movement techniques to hurry forward. They traversed a kilometer with every single movement. This golden arrow of the Ji clan was used as a summons, calling all of the men of the Ji clan in the surrounding area who saw it to hurry forward to its location.

.....

Ning and Yichuan saw from far away that more than ten people were present, amongst them the gray-robed Ji Ninfire and Granny Shadow. The others belonged to the Central Prefecture of the Ji clan; after all, this place was closest to the Central Prefecture City, the City of Ten Thousand Swords. These people turned to look and recognized this father-son duo.

“Yichuan, the two of you, father and son, really are fast.” Ninfire said.

“We hurried over from the City of Ten Thousand Swords, but we just arrived. You two, father and son, are located at the border regions of West Prefecture City, but you arrived as well.”

“Formidable.”

These Xiantian experts all said in praise.

“You came quite quickly.” A laugh rang out. A ray of light descended at high speed, then walked over. It was a middle-aged man dressed in beast furs.

“Truekeep, you came as well.” Ninefire smiled and nodded.

Ning saw this middle-aged figure come over. This man was named ‘Ji Truekeep’, and he was the number one figure of the Ji clan of the Northern Prefecture, on par with Ning’s father. For him to be able to hurry over from North Prefecture City so quickly...it seemed that Ji Truekeep should be a Zifu Disciple as well.

“On the surface, my Ji clan only has Ji Ninefire and Granny Shadow, two Zifu Disciples.” Ning said to himself. “However, a clan must have heirs and members amongst the younger generation who have reached the Zifu Disciple level. Now, it seems as though this Ji Truekeep truly is a Zifu Disciple. My father, given the earlier movement abilities he displayed, should also be a Zifu Disciple!”

Yichuan and Truekeep glanced at each other, nodding.

Yichuan spoke out, “Patriarch, why have you summoned us?”

“I imagine that you have discovered as well,” Ninefire said solemnly, “That underground, there is an elemental ore mine. A very rich vein of elemental ore.”

“Right.” All of the clansmen nodded, their eyes filled with excitement.

Based on the rules of the Grand Xia Dynasty, the land within ten thousand kilometers of a commandery city belonged to the master of that commandery city! As for any territories under dispute outside of that area, the ownership of those regions depended on who had the strongest fist. This elemental ore mine was extremely close to the City of Ten Thousand Swords. According to the rules set by the Grand Xia Dynasty...without question, it belonged to the Ji clan!

“Not only is this vein very rich, it is also very large.” Ninefire looked towards the surrounding area. “We will now carry out a detailed analysis and mapping of this elemental ore mine. I will fly towards the southeast. Truekeep, you fly towards the north. Shadow, you fly towards the southwest. As for everyone else, carefully investigate how deep this mine is and the quality of the ore within it. No matter what the results are, within four hours, we’ll regroup here.”

“Yes.” All of them assented.

Soon, three rays of light flew towards three different directions, while Ning, Yichuan, and the others burrowed into the ground. Because there was no way to use ground-tunneling arts through elemental ore, the only option they had to was to slowly dig through.

“Let’s go.” Ning’s body became surrounded by the petals of his Waterflame Lotus, which slowly swiveled about him, easily digging into the ground below.

This allowed Ning to easily move deeper into the ground, step by step.

As soon as he went downwards, the earth and mud above him collapsed.

But Ning just ignored it, continuing to move downwards...and he soon ran into the surface layer of the elemental ore mine. Large amounts of elemental ore were connected to each other like ugly rocks. These were all low-quality elemental stones, and just by looking at them, one wouldn't be able to see much of a difference between them and ordinary rocks. The only difference was that they emanated quite a bit of an elemental aura.

Crackle...

The Waterflame Lotus easily dug downwards, and Ning continued to move down at an astonishing rate.

"So deep." Ning could sense that he had already tunneled downwards for a hundred kilometers, but he was still surrounded by a large amount of elemental stones. "The hundred kilometers above me is filled with elemental stones. How deep is this elemental ore mine? And the top of the elemental ore mine was only a few dozen meters from the surface of the ground. How is it that nobody has discovered this mine, in all this time?"

What Ning didn't understand was that before Immortal Firedragon had set up a grand formation, who could have possibly found it?

"Swoosh." He finally encountered ordinary mud yet again.

"Three hundred kilometers deep." Ning was stunned. "Ore mines are generally spread out horizontally. If even the vertical depth is so great, how wide must the mine be?"

Swoosh!

Following this, Ning immediately began moving upwards at high speed.

A long time later...

He finally emerged once more, appearing on the surface of the ground. He quickly returned to the gathering spot, where Ninefire, Granny Shadow, the old servant, and Truekeep were already present.

"Ji Ning." Ninefire looked towards Ning, his eyes lighting up. "You've already completed your investigations?"

"Right." Ning nodded. He glanced around. Traveling three hundred kilometers into the ground was far more difficult than flying thousands of kilometers in the air. Fortunately, he had been able to rely on his Waterflame Lotus, which borrowed the elemental power of the world, to move so easily. The others had to exhaust their ki in order to slowly dig.

"How deep is it?" Ninefire and the others all looked towards Ning.

"Three hundred kilometers." Ning said.

The faces of Ninefire, Granny Shadow, and Truekeep changed. They couldn't be bothered to feel amazed at how Ning had, in a single short hour, made a round trip underground of more than three hundred kilometers. This was because they were already beginning to grow panicked.

"What's wrong?" Ning hurriedly asked.

“This elemental ore mine...” Ninefire said solemnly. “We’ve finished our investigations as well. It has a circumference of at least four thousand kilometers! If it has a depth of three hundred kilometers...then this truly is an enormous large-scale elemental ore mine. To our Ji clan, such an enormous elemental ore mine isn’t a blessing; it is a calamity!”

A grand calamity!

Ning instantly understood. A stomach of a certain size could only hold a certain amount of food; if you filled it with too much, you could die from overstuffing.

“This is a rich vein, and an enormous one.” Ninefire said solemnly. “Once we begin to excavate it, the value of the ore within will definitely be countless times greater than the total assets of the Ji clan. Tell me, how can our Ji clan handle it?”

This mine...

This mine had been formed after the peak Primal Daoist, ‘Daoist Firedragon’, had paid an enormous price in order to set up a large formation to collect elemental energy, so as to help himself break through. This mine had been forming for one hundred years. If it was completely mined out, the value of it would be comparable to half the assets of an ordinary Primal Daoist. Because Daoist Firedragon had broken through to the Earth Immortal level, his horizons had been expanded and he no longer cared as much. In addition, mining the elemental ore would simply be too difficult; even a Primal Daoist probably would be too lazy to go through the mining. Only, the likes of Wanxiang Adepts would go wild with excitement for something like this.

“Then what should we do?” Granny Shadow immediately asked.

“I’m not afraid of others. I’m only afraid of Snowdragon Mountain!” Ninefire’s face was filled with worry. “The Snowdragon Mountain of the Swallow Mountain area is just a branch clan. Behind it...is the true Snowdragon Mountain Sect! A major sect which has Primal Daoists standing guard over it. And, based on my calculations and the passage of time, the Zifu Disciples of the branch sect of Snowdragon Mountain should have already arrived in the nearby area!”

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Book 5: Zifu Disciple Chapter 15: Snowdragon Mountain

Everything happened just as Ji Ninefire predicted. A thousand kilometers away from them...

There was a screen hovering in mid-air, and atop that screen, there were four figures, staring down below. Suddenly, a ray of light rose into the skies. It was a large, armored, muscular man who was standing atop a greatsword. This muscular man had a hint of a blue light glowing from his skin, and standing there in midair atop that greatsword, he looked like a Fiendgod.

“My fellow disciples.” The muscular man had a look of delight on his face. “I’ve finished my investigations. There is a large amount of elemental ore underground, with high quality elemental stones within the deposit. This is a very rich vein of elemental ore.”

“Oh?” A long-haired man who wore a black robe and had eight bloody trigrams in front and behind him nodded, then laughed. “Junior apprentice-brother Ju San, thank you for your hard work. Who would

have expected that an elemental ore mine such as this would have been hidden within the territory of the Ji clan? Right. Junior apprentice-brother Ju San, have you found any traces of mining?"

The muscular man shook his head.

The black robed man nodded in satisfaction. "The Ji clan has never sold elemental stones to outsiders. It seems that prior to this, they hadn't discovered this vein either. My fellow disciples, I'd like to trouble you to go in each direction and investigate carefully exactly how large this vein is, while I will investigate how deep it is. After finishing our investigations, we'll gather here again."

"Yes, elder apprentice-brother Ziqi." Three men and women, including the muscular man, acknowledged, then each flew away on their own flying-type magic treasures, transforming into rays of light that flew towards four different directions to investigate.

The black robed man collected his flying screen while rushing towards the ground, smashing through it and burrowing deep.

.....

A long time later.

The three men and one woman who had left earlier had already returned, flying on their magic treasures.

"Elder apprentice-brother Ziqi still hasn't finished exploring?" A green-haired man said in surprise. "It seems this mine really is quite deep."

"Based on just what we've learned, this elemental ore mine has to have a circumference of four thousand kilometers." A nearby woman whose hair was also emanating a green light said solemnly. "If it's deep as well...then this mine is going to be an astonishing one."

Right after she finished speaking.

Swoosh!

From below, a ray of light surged towards the heavens, then came to a halt. It was their black-robed elder apprentice-brother, Ziqi.

"Elder apprentice-brother Ziqi." The three men and woman bowed respectfully. Actually, all five of them were Zifu Disciples and of the same generation. Logically speaking, there was no need for them to act like this. But this Ziqi's power was definitely far above theirs.

"What an elemental ore mine. It is at least three hundred kilometers deep." The black-robed man sighed in surprise.

"Three hundred kilometers?"

"That deep?"

"The four of us have found that this mine has a circumference of four thousand kilometers. For it to also have such an astonishing depth...this elemental ore mine is simply too..." The three men and one woman were all in a state of shock. Some mines were fairly shallow, and it made sense for a mine of a

circumference of thousands of kilometers to just a few kilometers deep. But this one was three hundred kilometers deep!

The black-robed man shouted, "This elemental ore mine belongs to Snowdragon Mountain!"

"Right, it belongs to our Snowdragon Mountain!"

"We've rendered a major merit. The main sect will definitely reward us heavily."

"Our chance has come!"

The five of them were all incomparably excited. They were easily able to tell the general size and scale of this elemental ore mine and knew the value of it. The value was inconceivably high! Most likely, even those Primal Daoists that stood at the very pinnacle of power in Snowdragon Mountain would care deeply about this place.

"Elder apprentice-brother Ziqi." The green-haired woman frowned. "This place is very close to the City of Ten Thousand Swords. According to the laws of the Grand Xia Dynasty, this place should be considered as belonging to the Ji clan."

"What the hell is the Ji clan?" Ziqi snorted coldly. "Dare they intervene in Snowdragon Mountain's mine?"

The nearby green-haired man nodded. "No need to worry about the Ji clan. Snowdragon Mountain is definitely taking over this elemental ore mine! But no matter what, we can't be too incautious. According to the laws of the Grand Xia Dynasty, this place is the territory of the City of Ten Thousand Swords, which means this mine belongs to the Ji clan. Our Snowdragon Mountain cannot openly violate the laws of the Grand Xia Dynasty!"

"Right." Dong Ziqi nodded lightly.

True.

Even if they had to skirt the laws, they definitely couldn't openly challenge the Grand Xia Dynasty! Even the Marquis Palace of Stillwater Commandery, which was almost as ancient as the Grand Xia Dynasty itself, wouldn't dare to challenge the Grand Xia Dynasty!

"Right now, I'm only afraid of one thing." The green-haired man frowned. "If the Ji clan were to send someone to ally with the army of the Grand Xia Dynasty and sign a contract giving this site up to the Grand Xia Dynasty...! If they were to directly sign over this mine to the Grand Xia Dynasty, then there would be nothing that we can do!"

"Apprentice-brother Hefang speaks reason." A cold-faced, gray-robed man nodded. "We have to be careful."

"We do have to be careful." The muscular man said frantically, "The Ji clan definitely will realize that they aren't strong enough to hold this mine. If they give up the mine to the Grand Xia Dynasty, then the Ji clan will at least gain thirty percent of it! This would also result in them having the Grand Xia Dynasty supporting them. We wouldn't be able to do anything."

"Sign an agreement?"

Dong Ziqi's eyes were dark and gloomy. "It's not that easy to do!"

The other four looked towards Dong Ziqi.

"The garrison of the Grand Xia Dynasty in the Swallow Mountain region are in Swallow Mountain City." Dong Ziqi said. "The general of that garrison is a good friend of mine."

"But elder apprentice-brother Ziqi, as soon as the Ji clan makes a report and offers to transfer the mine...a mere general wouldn't dare to suppress the news. If he forcibly suppresses the report of something as major as this, and is later discovered to have done so, then the general will definitely have his soul shattered and dispersed in punishment." The green-haired man said, concerned.

Ziqi said, "I know that. He won't dare to forcibly suppress the news, but at least he'll be able to delay it!"

"Oh?" The other four looked at Ziqi as well.

"You should know." Dong Ziqi said. "The first part to signing an agreement of relinquishing a mine is the report to the higher ups! Afterwards, the higher ups will immediately send people to investigate the Ji clan's territory. Only after they have verified that there is indeed such a mine within the Ji clan's territory will they sign the contract."

The other four nodded.

This was indeed the case.

Once the report was made, someone would immediately be sent over. The efficiency would be very high.

"As soon as the report is made, we won't be able to act as we please." Ziqi said, "What we can do is to have the garrison general at Swallow Mountain City delay as much as he can...and in addition, it will take time for the person sent by the Grand Xia Dynasty to make his way over. This will be enough time for us to seize the City of Ten Thousand Swords!"

"Seize the City of Ten Thousand Swords?" The other four nodded gently.

"As long as we take over the City of Ten Thousand Swords and acquire the official writ, then we will be the masters of the City of Ten Thousand Swords. In accordance with the laws of the Grand Xia Dynasty, the mine will belong to us. Even if the Grand Xia Dynasty sends someone over...because the official writ has a new owner, there will be no way for the Ji clan to sign a contract." Ziqi said.

"Fine. We'll take over the official writ!"

"Once the official writ is in our hands, we will be the masters of the mine." Cold light flashed in each of their eyes.

Ziqi said in a low voice, "If the Ji clan dares to resist, then annihilate them!"

"Right." The other four nodded, not worried about the Ji clan at all.

"Elder apprentice-brother Ziqi, before this, when we were investigating the size of the mine, we discovered that the Ji clan's forces were within a thousand kilometers." The green-haired woman said.

“Let’s go.” Ziqi said as he let out a cold snort. “Let’s go visit the Ji clan.”

.....

Right at this moment, in the air above the elemental ore mine, quite a few Zifu Disciples were conducting investigations, including the Ironwood clan, the Riverbank clan, the Kou clan, the Blackfire Cult...they were all local forces of Swallow Mountain. Only the forces of the Grand Xia Dynasty, stationed in Swallow Mountain City, were not present.

“What a rich vein.”

“Such an elemental ore mine...just looking at it is frightening.”

.....

The desolate mountain forests. The Ji clan’s forces were gathered there, deciding what to do.

“Ji Ninefire!”

Suddenly, a gloomy voice rang out. This voice caused the faces of quite a few clansmen of the Ji clan to change. Ning’s soul, being so powerful, wasn’t impacted much. He raised his head to look. He saw that high above them in mid-air, an enormous screen was descending towards them at high speed. Standing atop the screen were five men and women, all of them with extraordinary auras.

The leader of the group was emanating a deathly cold aura. He was dressed in black, and the front and back of his robe were covered with eight bloody trigrams.

“Dong Ziqi!” Ninefire’s face changed slightly.

Ning looked carefully at the five on the screen, paying special attention to their leader, Dong Ziqi. “He is Dong Ziqi, of the Swallow Mountain branch of Snowdragon Mountain?”

Dong Ziqi’s fame was widespread, and he was quietly acknowledged to be the number one expert of the six hegemons of the Swallow Mountain region!

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 5: Zifu Disciple Chapter 16: Crossing Swords

Ji Ninefire, Granny Shadow, and the others had long ago come to view Ji Ning as the future pillar of the Ji clan! They naturally had long ago allowed Ning to view the intelligence reports the clan had regarding the various ancient monsters and Zifu Disciples of the various forces spread throughout Swallow Mountain. Ning knew very well...that this Dong Ziqi was a peak Zifu Disciple, one who had come from the main sect, whose abilities were far more powerful than those available to the local tribes of the Swallow Mountain Region. Dong Ziqi’s most powerful ability was the ‘Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation’!

This was different from other great formations, which generally needed to be set up in advance. This ‘Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation’ was rather similar to the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]; one could activate it with a thought. Perhaps it wasn’t as high level and as formidable as the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], but this was a peak Zifu Disciple. When such a man used this formation,

he probably would be able to fight a new Wanxiang Adept to a standstill. This wasn't something which could be compared the likes of Bei Zishan, who had to rely on the Myriad Wraiths Banner.

"It's quite rare for us to be able to see you, fellow Daoist Dong." Ninefire's attitude was very humble. "Fellow Daoist Dong, might I ask why you have come?"

"Ji Ninefire."

The five Zifu Disciples atop the banner landed on the ground. They swept the Ji clansmen with their gaze. Their eyes were filled with lofty arrogance; clearly, they held the Ji clan in no regard. This caused Ning and the others to feel a hint of rage in their hearts, but they understood...they had to suppress it.

"The land which your Ji clan controls really is a blessed area. It actually has an elemental ore mine." Ziqi's cold, sinister eyes stared at Ninefire. "If it wasn't for the elemental energy vibrations which emanated from here two days ago, we wouldn't have had any idea. Hmph. I imagine that your Ji clan has secretly mined out quite a few elemental stones. You really are quite bold."

Looks of anger couldn't help but appear in the eyes of the Ji clansmen, but Ninefire used his ki to bark at them mentally, "All of you, endure it!"

"My Ji clan just discovered it as well." Ninefire maintained a smiling face towards Ziqi.

"Just discovered it?" Ziqi swept the Ji clansmen with his gaze. "Have you investigated the size and scale of this elemental mine?"

"Not yet." Ninefire shook his head. "All we know is that this is a rich vein of elemental ore."

Ziqi said in a cold voice, "Since you don't know, then I'll tell you. Not only is this a rich vein, it stretches to a circumference of four thousand kilometers, and is three hundred kilometers deep as well! Your tiny little Ji clan is completely unable to try and swallow such an enormous elemental ore mine; if you tried, it would choke you to death!"

"That's fine." Ninefire laughed. "In the end, my Ji clan can just offer this elemental ore mine to the Grand Xia Dynasty. By then, our Ji clan will obtain 30% of it, while the Grand Xia Dynasty will obtain 70%. In addition, our Ji clan will also receive the protection of the Grand Xia Dynasty, at which point we won't fear anyone."

Ziqi's pupils contracted.

These locals!

Although they didn't come from any sects, and thus remained Zifu Disciples despite having trained for nearly four centuries, after having lived so long, these people had become incomparably crafty. Just now, he had been so arrogant, but Ninefire had remained all smiles. However, at the critical point in their negotiations, Ninefire had directly given voice to what Snowdragon Mountain feared the most.

"Listen up!" Dong Ziqi's voice was incomparably cold. "This elemental ore mine is being taken over by Snowdragon Mountain! Don't threaten me. If you threaten me...the only result will be the destruction of the Ji clan!"

Ninefire's face changed.

The others, such as Granny Shadow, were all both angry and agitated when they heard this. Ning felt a smoldering rage burn in his heart as well. Clearly, according to the laws of the Grand Xia Dynasty, this elemental ore mine belonged to the Ji clan! But Snowdragon Mountain's people wanted to just take it from them, and in such a domineering manner?

"Fellow Daoist Dong." Ninefire suppressed his rage.

Just now, he had just decided to bring out the strongest 'threat' he could muster...so as to cause the opponents to feel nervous, and then engage in negotiations. He didn't expect that these people didn't want to negotiate at all; they acted with completely tyranny, wanting to take advantage of the Ji clan in their weakness!

"This is Swallow Mountain." Ninefire said solemnly. "The main Snowdragon Mountain Sect is millions of kilometers away, but once my Ji clan makes the report, in just a few days, the Celestial Envoy of the Grand Xia Dynasty will arrive. By then, we will just directly sign a transfer agreement. Actually, our Ji clan doesn't have that much ambition; the only thing we desire is to survive!"

"Survive?" Ziqi laughed coldly. "At least you know your own limits!"

Ninefire said, "Snowdragon Mountain can arrange for people to mine this quarry. Our Ji clan definitely will not disturb you during the mining process. After you have completed your mining...all we ask is that you remove all of your forces from the Ji clan's territory. As for the ore in this elemental ore mine, my Ji clan will not ask for a single stone of it! My Ji clan is willing to set up an Oath of Heavenly Law with your Snowdragon Mountain!"

Oath of Heavenly Law...

This was useless for ordinary mortals, but no one who had stepped onto the path of Immortal cultivation would dare to violate an Oath of Heavenly Law.

"Oh?" Ziqi hesitated.

"Elder apprentice-brother Ziqi." The nearby muscular man sent mentally through his Ki. "These conditions aren't bad. We don't care about the territory the Ji clan controls anyhow. What really matters is that elemental ore mine. Since the Ji clan is willing to allow us to harvest all of the ore within the elemental ore mine...if they are willing to set up an Oath of Heavenly Law, then they won't dare violate it."

"Idiot." The green-haired woman to the side sent mentally as well. "This is just a delaying tactic of the Ji clan! The Ji clan is going to set up an Oath of Heavenly Law with 'us', but not with those of us here. Even if we fellow disciples swear to an Oath of Heavenly Law, the high level members of the main sect can still decide to just cast us aside and exterminate the Ji clan. They definitely want us to have a high-level member of the main sect to come here and swear the oath. But we would first need to send work back, and by the time the high-level member of the main sect comes...more than enough time will have passed for the Ji clan and the Grand Xia Dynasty to have signed an agreement."

"Younger apprentice-sister, your words have merit." The gray-robed man sent mentally as well.

Dong Ziqi nodded slightly.

The Ji clansmen were still awaiting their response.

“Your Ji clan wishes to swear an Oath of Heavenly Law with Snowdragon Mountain...might I ask, which member of Snowdragon Mountain do you wish to come swear the oath with you?” Ziqi looked at Ninefire.

Ninefire laughed. “Any Wanxiang Adept is acceptable. The fate of our Ji clan rests on this agreement; naturally, we must be cautious. The weight of an oath of a Zifu Disciple of Snowdragon Mountain isn’t quite enough...and we don’t dare trust fully in it either. I imagine that you, fellow Daoist Dong, also understand that the oath of a Zifu Disciple doesn’t have much binding power over the main Snowdragon Mountain Sect.”

Dong Ziqi narrowed his eyes.

A single Zifu Disciple? The main sect could sacrifice one with but a word.

But a Wanxiang Adept was different. The main sect only had a limited number of them, and when they swore an oath, it represented the main sect swearing an oath! If the main sect dared to sacrifice even a Wanxiang Adept, wouldn’t it cause the other Wanxiang Adepts and Zifu Disciples to have an icy feeling in their hearts? To cause the Wanxiang Adepts of the clan to all have lessened loyalty, for the sake of an elemental ore mine, wasn’t worth it. Thus, it was most appropriate for a Wanxiang Adept to come and swear the oath.

“Ji Ninefire!” Ziqi said in a freezing voice. “You want a Wanxiang Adept to come and swear an Oath of Heavenly Law with you? They are high level members of my main sect, which is over a million kilometers away! After we send the message, it will take at least ten days or half a month for a Wanxiang Adept to come! Within ten day’s time, your Ji clan would most likely have secretly signed an agreement with the Grand Xia Dynasty long ago!”

“Then...” Ninefire hesitated.

“As I see it, you had best hand over the official writ!” Ziqi shouted. “Hand over the official writ for the City of Ten Thousand Swords to us! Snowdragon Mountain will continue to permit you to live within the City of Ten Thousand Swords, and everything will remain unchanged for the Ji clan...after we have completely excavated the elemental ore mine, we will return the official writ to you!”

Ninefire was frantic. “How can that be acceptable?”

“No way.” Granny Shadow said angrily as well. “The official writ is the very foundation of the Ji clan.”

Ning just watched.

These people of Snowdragon Mountain...you gave them an inch, and they attempted to take a mile! They made it sound so nice and simple; they would return the official writ after finishing the excavation? What if they didn’t? In addition, the Ji clan had already made a huge concession in being willing to offer the entire mine to Snowdragon Mountain. How could it be that Snowdragon Mountain now desired to take away the official writ as well, and ‘give it back’ in the future?

“Hmph.” Ning’s face was ugly to behold, and the same was true for the other members of the Ji clan.

“Do you think that our Snowdragon Mountain clan will lie to a petty little clan like the Ji clan?” Ziqi shouted.

“It seems as though Snowdragon Mountain has taken advantage of quite a few clans.” Ninefire was enraged as well. “Otherwise, why would a branch of Snowdragon Mountain have come to Swallow Mountain!”

Ziqi’s face changed.

Outrageous!

Ninefire actually had become harder and more forceful! Zifi swept the Ji clansmen with his gaze, noticing that youngest, solitary figure, the fur-clad youth. He immediately sent through his Ki, “Junior apprentice-brother Muse, the Ji clan only has a few Zifu Disciples. The one with the most potential is this Ji Ning; he is the one who, according to the stories, killed Zishan.”

“Ji Ning.” The gray-robed man noticed the fur-clad youth in front of them as well.

That battle he had with Bei Zishan that year...

Ning’s reputation had been spread throughout the various forces of Swallow Mountain long ago. After all, at that time, quite a few Xiantian lifeforms of the various clans had all been sent back to their own clans, causing them to become aware of how terrifying Ji Ning was, and that Ji Ning should be a Zifu Disciple! A Zifu Disciple at age eleven or twelve...how terrifying would he be in the future? The various powers had taken notice of Ning long ago, and the intelligence reports regarding Ning were thus incomparably detailed.

Everything which had happened to him since he was young, as well as his appearance and his habits...they had all been collected and compiled.

Dong Ziqi didn’t care about anyone else in the entire Ji clan; the only one he cared about was this Ji Ning! He didn’t fear the current Ji Ning; what he feared was the future Ji Ning! Given Ji Ning’s talent...in the future, it probably wouldn’t be too hard for him to become a Wanxiang Adept.

“Junior apprentice-brother Muse, the member of the Ji clan with the most potential and who poses the greatest threat is this Ji Ning. The entire Ji clan treats him as their treasure.” Ziqi sent mentally. “He is still fairly young, however, and at present, he shouldn’t be too powerful. Zishan, that fool...aside from being able to forge that Myriad Wraiths Banner, which was fairly powerful, his own level of ability wasn’t that great. In addition, the results of that battle probably had something to do with that Wanxiang Adept. Ji Ning’s own level of power is most likely not that great.”

“Junior apprentice-brother, make a sudden attack and capture Ji Ning! By then, with Ji Ning in our hands, do you think the Ji clan will dare to disobey the orders of our Snowdragon Mountain?” Ziqi sent mentally. “Even in the extremely unlikely circumstance that they don’t care about Ji Ning’s life, we will then simply kill Ji Ning. Without him, the Ji clan won’t pose a threat to us at all in the future.”

“Right.” The gray-robed man nodded.

Ning was indeed a threat to them. Nobody feared Ning right now, but they feared the future Ning.

“Junior apprentice-brother, if you suddenly use your magic technique to attack, even I will have some trouble fending it off. You shouldn’t have any problems in subduing Ji Ning.” Ziqi sent mentally. Although his power was greater than that of Muse’s, he had to first activate his Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation. By the time he did so, the Ji clan would probably be at maximum vigilance.

Thus, they had to make a sudden attack, and succeed in an instant! For this, Muse was the best choice.

“Leave it to me. I made a breakthrough in this technique of mine not long ago.” Muse sent back mentally with great confidence.

“Then we’ll just wait for you. Once you take down Ji Ning...we will have the upper hand.” Ziqi said.