

Desolate 861

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 26: World Level Chapter 12: The Curtain Call

As the ropes tightened around Arroyo's body, he couldn't help but think back to his life within that cold, grim, ancient clan of his. His father had been a remote and exalted figure. All of his father's descendants had to work hard to cultivate and fight for everything they wanted! Arroyo himself had started off as just one of many weak descendants, but he had carved out a path all his own through the corpses of the others and eventually became a master-class World God. He became his father's most cherished child! But even in his dreams, Arroyo's truest desire was to become a real member of the Aeonian race.

"I lost." Arroyo stared forwards.

The white-robed youth was standing in the air in front of him, his main sword still slung over his back. The youth produced a small golden gourd. Whoosh! A powerful sucking force was applied to Arroyo's body, and he wasn't able to fight back against it at all due to the ropes that were binding him.

Swoosh! He was sucked straight into the gourd. Once he entered the gourd, the ropes automatically released him and flew back out.

"No. No! I can't accept this. I can't!" Arroyo stared at his surroundings. There were a pair of spinning maelstroms within this gourd, one of black energy and the other of golden energy. As soon as Arroyo appeared, both maelstroms instantly exploded with terrifying levels of power as both began to grind towards him.

Grind, grind, grind. The terrifying grinding power filled every inch of the entire gourd. There was no place to run or hide at all. Arroyo's only option was to rely on his divine power and his body to resist, but once his divine power ran dry he would be ground into dust.

"Right. I still have my Hellwind Golems." Arroyo could suddenly sense those eighteen ripples of power that were linked to him from outside the gourd. Those were his golems, all of which were completely loyal to him. He wasn't dead yet, which meant they were still in his service.

"Join forces with Fukai to kill that freak. Kill him!" Arroyo sent a mental order to his eighteen Hellwind Golems. "Kill him, seize his golden gourd, then release me."

"Yes, Master." The eighteen golems responded with complete devotion.

However, Arroyo himself knew that this was all just wishful thinking. From his battle against Ji Ning, he knew exactly how fast Ji Ning was. Would his eighteen Hellwind Golems really be able to succeed in killing that freak of a cultivator, even if they worked in harmony with all those bugbeasts?

Even if they were lucky enough to actually kill Ji Ning, Ji Ning's corpse would probably fall into Fukai's hands. It would be incredibly difficult for the eighteen Hellwind Golems to snatch Ji Ning's corpse, find the gourd, then manage to release him. Still, in principle Arroyo still had a shot to stay alive. All he could do was try his best to seize it.

Golden gourd in hand, Ji Ning stared at the eighteen Hellwind Golems charging towards him. He actually felt quite relieved upon seeing this. "Thank goodness these golems didn't self-destruct."

As Ning saw it, these golems would soon be part of his property. For them to self-destruct would be a terrible waste.

During the first great war of the Three Realms, when the Lord of All Things had died his Envoys had all self-destructed. However, this was primarily because the Lord of All Things himself was very skilled in the art of constructs. He had personally created those Envoys and had naturally left behind certain self-destruct seals within them. By contrast, Ning had no way of causing any of the golems he had purchased during the treasure auction to self-destruct.

Arroyo had received these eighteen golems from his own father and similarly had no way to make them self-destruct. The creation of each golem required an enormous amount of blood, sweat, and precious materials. If one of them self-destructed, it would make all that work go to waste and render the golem useless. At most, it could be melted down to have its Five Elements essence extracted from it. Thus, golems that were available for sale would rarely have self-destruct mechanisms built into them. Generally speaking, only golems that were created for personal use by their users would possibly have self-destruct mechanisms built into them.

“What should I do? What should I do?!” Fukai was completely stunned. “Arroyo was actually captured!”

“Should I flee?” Fukai wanted to run. “But if I can’t acquire the Eternal blood, I’ll still end up dying!” They had all sworn lifeblood oaths upon accepting this mission from the Aeonian Kingdom.

To flee was to die.

Then... the only answer was to fight!

“Those eighteen Hellwind Golems haven’t given up yet. Good.” Fukai’s eyes turned bloodshot as he pointed towards Ning and roared furiously, “Kill him! Kill him for me!”

“AROOOO!” “GWRAAAAR!”

There was an awe-inspiring army of fifty-eight bugbeasts flying through the air, and they charged straight towards Ning alongside the eighteen Hellwind Golems. Alas, the Thunderlight Wings on Ning’s back simply flapped gently, allowing him to transform into an arced line that easily moved past the attacking golems and bugbeasts. When Fukai saw this, he was filled with despair... which only strengthened when Ning charged straight towards him.

“Shit. Come on then! You think you can kill me?” Fukai began to go berserk and flew straight towards his bugbeasts and the golems. If he could ensure that they were by his side, then Ning would have to go through them in order to get to him.

“Oh? Still struggling? It won’t work.” Ning frowned slightly as he suddenly reached back and placed his right hand upon the hilt of the sword he was carrying.

Clang. The Eternal weapon, Violetjewel, came out from its sheath!

Ning moved with incredible speed as he charged straight towards Fukai. However, a black-armored avian bugbeast was still able to intercept him midway.

Bang! Ning casually struck out with the palm of his left hand, almost as if he was swatting away a mosquito. His massive palm had been transformed to become roughly the same size as the bugbeast, and when it landed against the bugbeast's body it sent the bugbeast tumbling backwards.

"Let's do this!" When Fukai saw Ning pressing near, a look of delight appeared in his eyes as more and more bugbeasts and golems were gathering around him.

"This Dao-seal of mine is enough to block several of his full-force attacks. If he lands a hit on me, I'll borrow the momentum of the strike to flee far away from him, but he'll remain trapped and surrounded by all these bugbeasts and golems. He's such an idiot! How dare he actually charge straight inside?" Fukai was wildly excited upon seeing this.

Previously, Ning had relied on his speed in order to avoid the bugbeasts and golems. He had never actually engaged them in battle, and this was his first time actually putting himself 'at risk'. Fukai felt the first stirrings of hope.

Whoosh. Ning charged down from above.

Boom! His mighty body smashed into a golem, sending it stumbling backwards as Ning swept straight past it.

Finally, Ning struck out with his Eternal sword, Violetjewel. Violetjewel instantly transformed into an enormous streak of bloody light, carrying an aura of terrifying sharpness as it chopped straight towards Fukai.

[Quintessence Sword-Intent], second stance – Allgod stance!

"B-b-but..." Fukai's face suddenly turned pale. When Ning chopped downwards with that terrifying sword, the bloody, baleful aura emanating from it instantly pervaded Fukai's mind, causing even him to be filled with a feeling of uncontrollable fear.

This was different.

This was completely different from last time!

Last time, Ji Ning's sword had 'merely' been able to consume more than 20% of the energy of Fukai's Dao-seal. The stance looked the same, but the aura was far more powerful this time! Fukai's very truesoul was shuddering in horror.

BOOM! The aura of golden light surrounding him trembled, then broke apart.

When the sword-light slammed against Fukai's body, Fukai couldn't help but vomit out a mouthful of blood. He stared ashen-faced at Ning, a look of despair in his eyes. "How is this possible? How could this have happened? My Dao-seal still had 80% of its power remaining. How could it have been shattered by one strike, with that strike still carrying enough excess power to wound me!? I have a Dao armor and a protective divine ability. Can it be that his sword is as powerful as the sword of a Samsara Daolord?"

A mocking look suddenly appeared in Fukai's eyes. "Kill! Kill! All bugbeasts, begin killing your peers. Wipe out all the other bugbeasts. Kill them!" Upon seeing that terrifying strike of Ning's, Fukai finally realized what was going on.

If even his Dao-seal had been incapable of resisting a full-force attack from this monster, this monster clearly wasn't someone he could possibly contend with. Most likely, Ji Ning would be able to dispatch the bugbeasts with a single blow each. Neither Fukai nor Arroyo were a match for him.

"Kill each other! Wipe each other out! You monster, the reason you didn't even kill a single bugbeast was because you wanted to take control over them, right? Haha, in your dreams!" Fukai had gone completely insane.

Arroyo was unable to destroy the golems under his control, and Fukai was similarly unable to cause his bugbeasts to commit suicide. Bugbeasts were living creatures, after all. One of the most overriding and basic of instincts for any living creature was to stay alive! However, what Fukai could do was to order them to fight amongst themselves. In fact, one of the most common ways of rearing bugbeasts was to have weak bugbeasts fight amongst themselves and devour each other, allowing the final survivors to be incredibly strong.

Boom! Boom! Bang!

The fifty-eight bugbeasts gave up chasing after Ji Ning and began to fight amongst each other. Blood, limbs, scales, and fur flew everywhere as the bugbeasts began a wild civil war amongst themselves.

"Aww, shit." Ning had originally been planning on drawing Fukai into his gourd and slowly 'digesting' him with it, but his face now sank as he changed his mind.

"Die, then." Ning exploded forth with full power.

Violetjewel once more stabbed through the air, causing a terrifying streak of bloody light to descend. Every single blow which Ning now delivered was filled with his maximum power and was capable of destroying a fully-charged version of the Dao-seal which Fukai had just used up. There was no way Fukai could possibly withstand such a strike! Although he had Dao armor and a protective divine ability, his divine power would be quickly wrung dry by the power of these consecutive attacks.

A mere twelve blows later, Fukai was all out of divine power.

Bang! Upon the thirteenth sword-blow, Fukai's body trembled a final time, then began to split apart and crumble as though he was made out of clay. His eyes, however, were fixed towards the skies. He could still faintly see the blood-colored streak of sword-light that had been left behind by the final blow.

"Such beautiful sword-light." Fukai closed his eyes.

Fukai's body completely crumbled apart and his truesoul dissipated along with it.

Arroyo and Fukai had sought to slay Ning in order to seize the divine blood of the Eternal. Alas, in the end Arroyo had been sucked into the gourd while Fukai had been slain on the spot.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 26: World Level Chapter 13: The Three Realms

"Seven died." Although Ji Ning had seized control over the jade green globe as fast as he could, more than seven of the bugbeasts had died during those brief moments of fratricide. Now, only fifty-one remained.

“Stop!” After binding the globe, Ning immediately exerted his control over the bugbeasts and ordered, “Surround those golems!”

“Yes.” “Yes.” ...

The bugbeasts immediately acknowledged the order obediently and began to swarm around the Hellwind Golems, giving them no place to run.

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Within the golden gourd.

Arroyo’s divine power was being depleted at an incredibly fast rate as the power of those two streams of energy continued to grind down at his body. His soul was linked to the Hellwind Golems outside and so he ‘saw’ everything that had happened.

“Those who kill others and take their treasures are destined to be killed in turn, one day.”

Arroyo emanated a bloody aura because his Dao was a Dao of slaughter. He had always been the winner in his battles, and so he had advanced step by step and left a trail of corpses behind his wake. However, this battle for the Eternal blood was the most important battle in his life. If he won, he would’ve become a true member of the Aeonians and skyrocketed in status in power. However... he had failed.

“Ahahaha... today, Fukai and I have fallen to your hands. However, how many cultivators shall truly gain eternity? One day, you will fall as well. You will die as well! Ahahaha...” Arroyo laughed wildly, and as he did so the last drops of his divine power were used up. His body was shattered apart, then ground into dust.

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Ning could sense the crazed death throes of Arroyo within the gourd, but he remained quite calm.

It was true. The path of cultivation was a very difficult one to tread, and only a few Samsara Daolords existed in the Endless Territories to begin with. Samsara Daolords treaded the line between life and death with each step they took. How few of them would be able to take the final step, achieving the Daomerge and gaining true eternity for themselves?

However, Ning was determined to continue moving forward on his path, motivated by a faint, dim hope that he would never release. He hoped that one day, he would gain the power to reverse the flows of spacetime and bring his wife back to his side. This was the only way he would ever be able to see her again.

“One thing at a time.”

The eighteen Hellwind Golems had lost their master. Ning had overwhelmingly superior power and thus was quickly able to forcibly bind them.

“Time to leave.” Ning’s own godsense was spread out to cover this entire chaosworld. The disturbance caused by his battle against Fukai and Arroyo was quite enormous. Although both sides had kept control over themselves and their power, the Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals stationed in this chaosworld were still so terrified that all of them had gone into hiding and were unwilling to come out.

Ning stepped forward and through the world-membrane, returning to the primordial chaos outside the world.

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Outside the Three Realms. Within the primordial chaos.

A black-robed Ji Ning was standing here within the primordial chaos, staring towards the Three Realms. Although his Primaltwin had stood guard over the Three Realms this entire time, his lifeblood oath made it so that he was completely unable to actually re-join the Three Realms. Only upon reaching Vastheaven Palace and completing the lifeblood oath would Ning be able to return to the Three Realms.

Rumble...

After mastering the 'Sword World', Ning was now capable of seeing through the primordial chaos and into the Three Realms.

The many 'secrets' of the Three Realms were no longer secrets to Ning. Everything was laid bare before his eyes, including its structural underpinnings as well as its core. He could even see an illusory, formless river that flowed through everything within it. This was the River of Destiny.

In truth, all creatures within the Endless Territories had their own destinies, and these destinies were all joined together into a great Sea of Destiny. The Three Realms was just a single chaosworld and thus it had just a single River of Destiny. The countless Rivers of Destiny of the endless chaosworlds within the territories were like countless tiny streams that would join together to form the enormous Sea of Destiny.

"The River of Destiny..." Ning's gaze pierced through the Void and the primordial chaos alike as he stared at the River of Destiny. He could see the countless truesouls that had been submerged within it as well as the destinies of cultivators and mortals alike.

"Father! Mother!"

Ning's heart trembled.

He saw them. Deep within the River of Destiny, there was a pair of truesouls who clung tightly to each other. Those were the truesouls of his father Ji Yichuan and his mother Yuchi Snow. Even though they were dead and their truesouls had been swept into the River of Destiny, they remained by each other's sides.

"Father. Mother. Wait for me just a bit longer. Your son has already become a World God. Soon, I'll head out to Vastheaven Palace. Once I reach Vastheaven Palace and complete my lifeblood oath, I'll be able to re-enter the Three Realms and draw your truesouls out from the River of Destiny." Ning's heart was shaking.

It was clearly something that he could do with ease, with but the wave of a hand. Alas, he knew that if he truly stretched so much as a finger into the Three Realms, his true body and his Primaltwin would both be attacked and destroyed by the lifeblood oath he had sworn.

"I'll wait a bit longer," Ning murmured softly.

Whoosh.

A figure suddenly appeared off in the distance. It was a white-haired, white-bearded old man dressed in Daoist robes.

“Master.” Ning looked at him.

“Ji Ning.” Subhuti smiled. Just now, he had gone to Ning’s estate within the primordial chaos but had been unable to find Ning. He knew that his disciple had to have come to this place, as this was where his disciple would often go to stare at the Three Realms. Alas, he could see everything happening within it but couldn’t take so much as a single step within it.

“You-...” Subhuti’s face suddenly changed as he stared at Ning. He took a careful look, then a second, then a third.

“The World level?” Subhuti’s voice was quavering slightly.

“Yes.” Ning nodded. “I broke through.”

An excited look was now on Subhuti’s face. “That’s wonderful. I’ve been worrying about you ever since you started your journeys into the Endless Territories. Now that you have at least reached the World level, things will be much easier for you.”

“Mm.” Ning nodded.

“However, as the saying goes there’s always a taller mountain. Even though you have reached the World level, disciple, you must not be overconfident and brash. You don’t have many supporters or helpers in the Endless Territories. You’ll have to rely on yourself for everything. Those of us in the Three Realms won’t be of much aid either. You have to be careful,” Subhuti said. Although he didn’t know what Ning had experienced thus far, the Three Realms did know a bit about the Badlands Territory and knew that it was a place of constant struggles and battles between cultivators.

For Ning to emerge unscathed and at an even higher level of power meant that he absolutely had to have experienced and survived many of those life-and-death battles.

“Don’t worry. Your disciple isn’t so foolish as to think himself invincible.” Ning laughed. “I’m still dreaming of one day meeting with Mother Nuwa, you know.”

“Have you heard any news of Mother Nuwa in the territories outside?” Subhuti immediately asked. All of the first-generation Fiendgods who were born from the primordial chaos were filled with tremendous respect and veneration towards Mother Nuwa. She had reached the World level back when she was in the Three Realms!

“I have not. I don’t have any news about her at all. In fact, there have been no new World Gods in the Badlands Territory who seem even remotely similar to her.” Ning shook his head.

“Ugh...” Subhuti shook his head as well.

“Oh, right. Master, I’d like to trouble you to help me with something. Please send word to the Three Realms right away that I am intending to transmit certain techniques, divine abilities, and secret arts to our fellow Daoists of the Three Realms.”

“Transmit?” Subhuti was surprised.

“Right. In the past, I wasn’t able to do so. Now that I’ve become a World God myself, things have changed,” Ning said. In recent years, he had killed quite a few enemies and seized their treasures, but it was rare for cultivators at this level to carry cultivation manuals on them. Everything was firmly imprinted into their minds. The only reason World God Northrest had left behind so many manuals was because he was planning to bring up a successor in the future.

Ning was now far more powerful than World God Northrest had been, but he simply hadn’t spent enough time cultivating and adventuring. The number of transmittable techniques he had acquired during his adventures could be counted on one hand. Although he could purchase certain techniques from the Badlands Everworld, he still wouldn’t be able to bring them back to the Three Realms right away. He’d have to first memorize and master them, then write them down again. This would take an extremely long period of time.

Ning had correctly predicted that by the time he finished, he would probably already have reached the World level. World God Northrest had already given Ning many techniques which he could transmit to others upon him becoming a World God himself. Now, Ning had full and free control over them.

“Good, good, good!” Subhuti said excitedly, “This is wonderful. With these powerful techniques by our side, the Three Realms might give birth to new World Gods and Chaos Immortals in the future.”

“Right.” Ning nodded.

Ning had the feeling that the Three Realms was not an ordinary place.

It was in the Three Realms that Daoist Three Purities found the incredibly valuable Nine Chaos Seals.

The Three Realms had also given birth to absolutely dazzling figures such as Nuwa and Houyi, all of whom had created their own techniques since there was no one present to teach and guide them.

“After I transmit these techniques to them, I need to go exploring the primordial chaos around the Three Realms and see if I can find the original Nine Chaos Seals,” Ning mused. Many of his fellow disciples were actually incredibly talented; they simply had never gotten access to techniques that could guide them to becoming World-level cultivators.

The Three Realms was about to undergo a true golden age of cultivation and explode in power. Ning was very eager to see this happen. If he was the only person capable of protecting the Three Realms, what would happen to it if something happened to him? If the Three Realms had numerous experts on Ning’s level within it, it would become a truly safe place for its denizens.

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A flying ship was sailing through the primordial chaos. Ning and the Flamefairy were both seated within the ship, staring out towards the primordial chaos.

“Master, were you waylaid by Fukai and Arroyo?” Su Youji immediately asked.

“I was.” Ning nodded.

“How did it go?” Su Youji asked. She didn’t know if Ning had fled on his own or if he had won that battle.

“I’m sitting right here before you. How do you think it went?” Ning smiled. “They lost. Both died on the battlefield.”

Su Youji wasn’t able to take part in that battle but had been quite worried. She knew that Fukai and Arroyo were both very powerful figures, especially Arroyo. He not only was a transcendent World God, he was also surrounded by a bloodthirsty aura that testified to his prowess in battle. Given the many treasures that they had... she couldn’t help but worry. Her life was bound to Ji Ning’s, after all. If Ji Ning died, she would be at the mercy of his killer.

“Where shall we go next?” Su Youji asked.

“Let us return to the Badlands Court first. Later, we’ll leave.” Ning stared at the outside world. His first priority was to return to the Badlands Court and get rid of the Eternal blood.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 26: World Level Chapter 14: Sell It To Me

They flew aboard the boat towards a spacetime transfer array, eventually making their way back to the Badlands Everworld.

“There it is. The Badlands Court.”

Ji Ning and Su Youji were walking atop the waves as they advanced. Soon, they reached the island located in the center of the lake, the island which held the Badlands Court. In front of the island was a crimson-haired man dressed in loose robes who smiled at the two of them. “Brother Darknorth, congratulations for becoming a World-level cultivator. Oh, the Flamefairy broke through as well? It seems this recent trip has been tremendously beneficial to the two of you.”

“Brother Qichang, why are you here?” Ning was surprised.

“Master instructed me to stay here and wait for you.” The crimson-haired man laughed. “Come, I’ll take you to meet with Master.”

Ning was secretly amazed. Daolord Badlands truly lived up to his reputation for divination. Indeed, Ning was planning to ask him to help dispose of the Eternal blood. Somehow, the Daolord knew about it even before Ning asked to speak with him, thus choosing to send a disciple out to come greet him...

“Youji, you can go to the Water Curtain Home for now,” Ning instructed.

“Alright.” Su Youji departed obediently.

“Please lead the way, brother Qichang.” Ning and the crimson-haired man advanced side-by-side. The Badlands Court was laid out in a truly intricate way and filled with many formations. If no one was around to guide him, Ning truly wouldn’t have been able to locate Daolord Badlands’ residence.

The two quickly arrived at a quiet, secluded courtyard.

The courtyard was quite simple and unadorned. Daolord Badlands was relaxing in the lotus position, a single flask of wine on the table in front of him.

“Master, I’ve brought Darknorth as instructed,” the crimson-haired man said respectfully.

“You can leave now,” Daolord Badlands instructed.

The crimson-haired man acknowledged the order, then respectfully departed. Daolord Badlands turned his gaze towards Ning. A hint of a smile on his face, he pointed at the other seat and said, “Sit.”

“Thank you, Daolord.” Ning sat down in the lotus position before Daolord Badlands.

“You’ve reached the World level? Old brother Solesky will be quite happy to hear this.” Daolord Badlands laughed. “This morning, I could sense that something was going to happen. I did some careful Numerancy and divined that there is something that you wish me to help you with.”

“Yes.” Ning immediately nodded. “There is indeed something. This junior was fortunate enough to acquire a treasure within the Allgod Estate known as the ‘divine blood of the Eternal’.”

“The Eternal blood?” A shocked look appeared on Daolord Badlands’ face.

Although he was skilled in the art of Numerancy, he wasn’t all-knowing. Divining the future through Numerancy was actually quite difficult and there would be many things that were left unclear. Using Numerancy to divine the past was actually much easier, because it involved things that had already happened. Things in the future had obviously yet to happen, and thus almost anything was possible! Future Numerancy was generally only capable of calculating out some particularly major events.

Ji Ning was specifically coming to ask Daolord Badlands for help, and so Daolord Badlands had been able to sense it. Just a simple bit of Numerancy was enough to tell him that Ji Ning was coming to ask for his assistance. By then, Ji Ning had already reached the Badlands Everworld and was heading towards the Badlands Court, giving this bit of Numerancy an extremely highly credible interval.

“Is it the Eternal blood of Emperor Melobo?” Daolord Badlands asked.

“Yes.” Ning nodded. “I hear that the Aeonians would do anything to get their hands on this Eternal blood.”

“Of course they would!” Daolord Badlands’ eyes lit up as he smiled. “That drop of Eternal blood represents half of the life energy and vitality of Emperor Melobo. It took him forever to recover from that loss. That drop of Eternal blood is uncalculably valuable to them, and it’s something which will never appear on the open market. It is more valuable and alluring to the Aeonians than you could ever imagine.”

Ning said, “I heard the spirits of the Allgod Estate say the same, which is why I’m worrying about the proper way to dispose of this Eternal blood. That’s why I came to ask you for help.”

“Right. The simplest solution is to offer it to the Dao Alliance.” Daolord Badlands chuckled. “But I have another idea, if you are interested.”

“Pray tell, Daolord.” Ning looked at him.

“Sell your drop of Eternal blood to me,” Daolord Badlands said.

“Oh?” Ning was slightly startled.

“If you offer it to the Dao Alliance, they’ll probably give you two million cubes of chaos nectar as well as grant you immediate entrance into the alliance. If you sell it to me... although I won’t be able to bring you into the Dao Alliance, I’d be willing to give you three million cubes! What’s more, given how strong you are, you’ll definitely be granted entry into the Dao Alliance in the future.” Daolord Badlands continued, “If there are any techniques or treasures that you want, just tell me and we can deduct it from that balance.”

Daolord Badlands truly wished to take possession of that drop of Eternal blood.

The Dao Alliance itself wouldn’t have much use for it, but it was still an incredibly rare and valuable item! Whenever a drop of concentrated Eternal blood appeared in the Dao Alliance, it would immediately be purchased by its most powerful Samsara Daolords or Eternal Emperors. Someone like Daolord Badlands wouldn’t even have a chance! Once those powerful Samsara Daolords acquired the blood, they would analyze it and research it to gain insights from it.

It must be understood that this drop of Eternal blood was the concentrated blood essence distilled from more than half the blood and flesh of a mighty Eternal Emperor of the Aeonian race. This had represented an enormous drop in Emperor Melobo’s power. No Eternal Emperor would be willing to make such a sacrifice... and the number of Aeonian Emperor’s could be counted on one hand to begin with!

Thus, the ‘set’ price of two million cubes which the Dao Alliance was willing to pay was an incredibly low price.

Daolord Badlands naturally grew desirous of this drop of blood...

Daolord Badlands was actually a dazzling talented Daolord as well. As the Goldeye Golem had put it, if he was able to reach the Verge of the Daomerge then he would become a terrifyingly powerful figure who would be as strong as Daolord Allgod had been.

Dazzling talents such as him naturally were filled with tremendous ambitions! In the past, he didn’t have that much wealth; even if you placed that drop of Eternal blood in front of him, he wouldn’t pay it much attention. But in order to get his assistance, Daolord Solesky had prepared a gift of tremendous value for him. Daolord Solesky was a Palace Lord of Vastheaven Palace and had been alive for an extremely long period of time, accumulating enormous amounts of wealth. He had offered roughly twenty million cubes of chaos nectar for Daolord Badlands’ assistance!

Some of those treasures were meant for Daolord Badlands to rebuild his avatar.

As for the other treasures?

Daolord Badlands actually had numerous plans for them, but now that Ji Ning had brought a drop of Eternal blood to his doorstep, he suddenly changed his plans.

“Perhaps some of my children will be able to draw out the power of the Aeonians from within that drop,” Daolord Badlands mused to himself. “My divinations indicate that there is a better than 20% chance of them succeeding in this endeavor. First, Daolord Solesky came bearing fabulous gifts. Now, my young friend Ji Ning is asking me to help him deal with this Eternal blood. This is a karmic blessing which destiny has bestowed upon me. I have to seize it!”

“What do you think?” Daolord Badlands looked at Ning.

“I’m in no rush to join the Dao Alliance. All I want to do is get rid of this Eternal blood as soon as I can,” Ning said with a laugh. “Selling it to the Dao Alliance, selling it to you... it’s all the same to me.”

“Good.” Daolord Badlands laughed. “Three million cubes of chaos nectar. The average networth of most powerful Daolords is roughly in this range. My young friend Ji Ning, you must make sure not to waste this tremendous blessing. Tell me, which treasures, techniques, and divine abilities do you desire? I’ll help you find them and buy them. But of course, if all you want is chaos nectar then I can provide that as well!”

What would be the point of acquiring that much chaos nectar? Was he supposed to eat it like food? The best solution was for Ning to use it to help himself grow more powerful as soon as possible.

“I want to acquire the final part of a divine ability,” Ning said. “This divine ability is known as the [Golden Idol].”

“The protective divine ability, [Golden Idol]?” Daolord Badlands nodded. “That won’t be too hard. I can buy it for you from the Dao Alliance. Do you want it for yourself or do you wish to be able to teach it to others? If you wish to be able to teach it to others, the price will be dozens of times higher.”

“I’ll use it for myself.” Ning wasn’t going to waste his money like that.

“This divine ability is quite powerful. It can make your body as tough as a top-grade Dao weapon. Abilities on this level are fairly rare. I’ll help you buy it, but it’ll take two hundred thousand cubes of chaos nectar.”

Ning was secretly speechless. This was even more valuable than a Pseudo Samsara Pill!

If it cost that much just for him to train in, then wouldn’t that mean a version he could transmit to others would cost several million cubes? No wonder that not even Vastheaven Palace had access to such a wonderful technique. Large clans and sects all had many expenses they had to pay. World God Northrest switched to training in the [Golden Idol] after acquiring it, but he had only gained access to the upper portion and the middle portion.

“Generally speaking, only Samsara Daolords need to have bodies that are as tough as top-grade Dao weapons,” Daolord Badlands said. “Honestly, I don’t know why you are in such a rush to buy it. Still, you now are worth more than three million cubes of chaos nectar. Buying it won’t cause you much trouble.”

Ning smiled. He might not be a Daolord, but he did have a body that was comparable to a Daolord’s body!

“What else do you need?” Daolord Badlands asked.

“I’ve heard of an Eternal treasure known as the Elementum Waterflame Gourd,” Ning said. “I wish to buy it.”

“Right, right! That is indeed a good treasure. It is fairly cheap, but extremely useful for World-level experts.” Daolord Badlands immediately nodded. “This gourd will require roughly half a million cubes.”

The Elementum Waterflame Gourd...

It held both Firecloud Lightning as well as Watersmoke Lightning within it. Both were considered types of Dao-level lightning! These were two of the nine types of Dao lightning which Ning would need in order to train in the secret art of lightning known as [Novessence Thunder] technique. By buying this item, Ning would be able to use these two types of lightning for now as well as use them to train in the [Novessence Thunder] later. Two birds with one stone!

Dao lightning was extremely expensive because capturing it was incredibly difficult. A single type of Dao lightning would generally be worth a minimum of two hundred thousand cubes of chaos nectar. Firecloud Lightning and Watersmoke Lightning were two fairly common types of Dao lightning. There were certain rare types of Dao lightning that simply couldn't be found on the market at all. Even Daolord Allgod had only found nine types of lightning that were suitable for his usage!

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 26: World Level Chapter 15: Violetjewel's Background

Ji Ning had long ago decided that he was going to train in the [Novessence Thunder] secret art. Alas, while he was in the Allgod Estate he didn't even have access to nine types of chaos lightning, and so he was in no rush to start learning the technique just yet. After mastering nine types of chaos lightning, he would then test out mastering the nine types of Dao lightning with this technique.

However, according to the secret art's descriptions, only World-level cultivators could train in chaos lightning while only Samsara Daolords could train in Dao lightning. Thus, for now Ning simply purchased two of the relevant types of Dao lightning. In all honesty, he probably couldn't afford purchasing all nine types; even Daolord Allgod was only able to get nine!

"The lower portion of the [Golden Idol] and the Elementum Waterflame Gourd. That's not even a million cubes." Daolord Badlands looked at Ning. "Need any other treasures?"

"The Mirrorsnow Paintings. I need the second and the fourth paintings. Would I be able to buy these two?" Ning asked.

Daolord Badlands glanced at Ning, then chuckled. "It seems this trip to the Allgod Estate truly was a lucky one for you. The Mirrorsnow Paintings hold the legacy of Emperor Mirrorsnow within them. Although he had released a total of forty of these paintings into the Endless Territories, there's simply far too many cultivators. How about this? I'll ask the Dao Alliance and see if anyone is willing to sell those two paintings. However, I can't guarantee they'll be available."

"If we can get it, let's give it a shot." Ning didn't try to force it.

"Anything else?" Daolord Badlands asked.

"Daolord, please take a look at this." Ning drew Violetjewel from its sheath on his back. Given that the two were discussing a business deal worth three million cubes of chaos nectar, a single Eternal weapon truly didn't mean much. Some Eternal weapons were worth as little as ten thousand cubes, while valuable ones were still generally worth just a few hundred thousand cubes. Eternal weapons worth over a million cubes were very rare.

“This sword has been by my side for an extended period of time. Its previous owner was big brother Northrest, who named it ‘Violetjewel’.” Ning continued, “I wish to understand where it came from and want to see if I can get five more matching sets of this Eternal sword.”

Just so. Since he had three million cubes of chaos nectar to use up, Ning wanted to ensure that he’d be able to wield six Eternal weapons in any future battles! This would allow his attack power to increase dramatically, and he’d feel confident in battling even an enemy Daolord.

This was all because Ning’s [Nameless] sword-art was a technique that allowed for an airtight defense. If Ning used all six swords to focus on defense, then so long as the opponent wasn’t overwhelmingly more powerful Ning would still be able to survive.

“Oh? Violetjewel?” Daolord Badlands accepted the sword, then gently stroked its blade. As he did so, Ning released his control over the sword-intent hidden within Violetjewel’s quintessence core, letting its savage, bloodthirsty aura surge outwards.

“Just so. It truly is Violetjewel.” Daolord Badlands nodded.

“It ‘truly is?’” Ning was puzzled.

“This would be considered a middle-grade Eternal weapon.” Daolord Badlands laughed. “Once you become a Daolord of the First Step, you’ll be able to unleash the full power of this Eternal weapon. For now, it’ll be more than enough for you to wield while you remain within the World level.”

Ning nodded. In truth, low-grade, middle-grade, high-grade, and top-grade Eternal weapons were all the same to Ning. If the sword-intent contained within an Eternal weapon’s quintessence core was too powerful, Ning wouldn’t be able to make much use of it. Just as Daolord Badlands said, Ning would probably only be able to fully unleash the power of Violetjewel when he became a Daolord of the First Step.

Even if Ning was given a top-grade Eternal sword, he wouldn’t be able to unleash much of its power for now.

“You said that this sword’s previous owner called it ‘Violetjewel’. This wasn’t a name he chose at random,” Daolord Badlands said. “This is the name given to the sword by the Eternal Emperor who forged it.”

“It was forged by an Eternal Emperor?” Ning was quite curious.

“Long, long ago, that Eternal Emperor was an Emperor of the Dao Alliance! However, he ended up choosing to venture into the Endless Dark long ago. His name was Emperor Violetmount. Before he left the Endless Territories and entered the Endless Dark, he spent an extremely long period of time to create a total of ninety-nine middle-grade Eternal weapons which he named Violetjewel, nine top-grade Eternal weapons which he named Bloodpeak, and a terrifying weapon infused with all of his insights into the Dao of the Sword which he named the ‘Violetmount Sword’.”

Ning was speechless upon hearing this. Ninety-nine Violetjewel swords? Nine Bloodpeak swords? A Violetmount sword?

This was all done by Emperor Violetmount?

“So you wish to procure five more Violetjewels?” Daolord Badlands asked.

“Yes, I would ideally like to buy five of them.” Ning nodded.

Daolord Badlands nodded. “Although Emperor Violetmount originally created ninety-nine of them, some of them ended up being lost over the course of many years. Others are currently being used by other cultivators. Thus, buying five will be quite difficult. Still, I’ll ask the Dao Alliance to help out. Their power is spread throughout the entire Endless Territories; they just might be able to locate a few of these swords.”

Daolord Badlands looked at Ning. “I have to warn you in advance, this situation is completely different from the situation we saw in the treasure auction. Treasures in that auction all start at a very low reserve price, and even the final price for each item won’t be particularly high. Since you are actively seeking out these specific items, they will definitely cost you much more.”

Ning understood this quite well. The treasure auctions were all fairly cheap; buying treasures at the normal ‘listed’ price in the outside world would generally cost significantly more! As for someone like Ning who was actively looking for very specific items, the price would definitely be even higher.

“How high would it be?” Ning asked.

“A single Violetjewel sword generally goes for just a hundred thousand cubes or so. However, since you are actively seeking out this specific sword it’ll probably take a hundred and fifty thousand, maybe even two hundred thousand,” Daolord Badlands said.

“Any price below two hundred thousand is acceptable,” Ning said. He was no fool. If the price was too high, it really wouldn’t be worth it.

It must be understood that middle-grade Eternal weapons would generally go for anywhere from thirty thousand to sixty thousand cubes of chaos nectar in the treasure auctions. The normal list price, however, would be around a hundred thousand cubes.

Since Ning was actively seeking out these specific swords, the price could rise to as much as two hundred thousand cubes. In all honesty, this was quite a high price. Two hundred thousand cubes would be enough to easily buy a high-grade Eternal weapon during a treasure auction. If you were lucky, you might even be able to snag a cheap top-grade Eternal weapon!

“Anything else?” Daolord Badlands asked.

“Oh, that’s plenty. I don’t need anything else for now,” Ning said.

“Good. How about this? Give me a bit of time, roughly half a year or so, and I’ll give you a million cubes of chaos nectar for you to use it as you see fit,” Daolord Badlands said. “As for the treasures you are seeking, since I’ll need to ask the Dao Alliance to help out it’ll probably take a good deal longer. If we are lucky, it might take just four or five years. If we are unlucky, it might take a few decades. If there are any leftover cubes of chaos nectar, I’ll hand that over to you as well.”

“Thank you, Daolord,” Ning said.

There were two reasons Ning had chosen to ask Daolord Badlands for help. The first was that Daolord Badlands was on extremely good terms with Daolord Solesky. The second was that the formation-spirits

of the Allgod Estate had suggested that Ning go seek him out. Daolord Badlands was a dazzlingly talented figure who had an extremely resolute Dao-heart. Even if he lost all of his treasures, he wouldn't throw away his own principles or his own path.

Daolord Badlands was extremely skilled in Numerancy divination, which meant that it was actually quite rare for him to go out adventuring. His style of cultivation was quite different from that of most other Samsara Daolords. This was why he didn't have that much treasure. In truth, it was all thanks to Daolord Solesky's gift of twenty million cubes worth of treasure that he had become so wealthy.

Even so, he didn't have much actual chaos nectar. What he had was a large collection of random treasures and materials, which was why he told Ning he would need half a year for the first million cubes of chaos nectar.

Whoosh.

Ning walked back to the Water Curtain Home, his heart filled with emotions. "Eternal weapons are considered incomparably valuable to World-level cultivators, but they are nothing special to Samsara Daolords. I never would've thought that there would be ninety-nine copies of Violetjewel."

"Once I get those treasures, I'll be much more powerful than I am right now." Ning always felt as though he should do his best to convert his chaos nectar into treasures as soon as possible. Even if he eventually outgrew them in the future, he could still convert them back into chaos nectar by selling them.

"Master." Su Youji had returned to the Water Curtain Home earlier. She now came running out towards Ning.

"Youji, today we shall rest. Tomorrow, we are going to Waveshift City," Ning said.

"Waveshift City?" Su Youji immediately asked, "Why are we going there?"

"You broke through to the World level. We need to find you some suitable treasures!" Ning laughed.

"Spend some time picking what you like once we get there."

"Alright." Su Youji's eyes lit up as she nodded repeatedly. Generally speaking, the master was responsible for outfitting his retainers with treasures. Still, most masters were quite stingy.

Ning, however, wasn't stingy. And yet, he simply wouldn't be able to afford giving Su Youji a set of Eternal weapons! Su Youji was a Chaos Immortal, and Chaos Immortals generally relied on sets of many powerful weapons. If every weapon in a set was an Eternal weapon, the cost of the set would be utterly astronomical.

"Waveshift City." Another reason why Ning was heading to Waveshift City was because he needed to buy those nine types of chaos lightning. That way, he'd be able to start with the [Novessence Thunder] secret art.

The very next day, Ning and Su Youji set off for Waveshift City and went on a huge shopping spree. Fukai and Arroyo had both left behind quite a bit of chaos nectar and many treasures, giving Ning quite a bit of spare cash. Soon, the two had purchased everything they wanted, including the nine types of chaos lightning which Ning had been searching for.

The Desolate Era

Book 26: World Level Chapter 16: Novessence Thunder

Within the estate-world.

Ji Ning was seated in the lotus position atop the sandy beaches of an oceanic island. Next to him was a black gourd and four other gourds. The black gourd was the Pentabolt Gourd while the other four gourds were ordinary gourds that each held a different type of chaos lightning.

“The five types of chaos lightning within the Pentabolt Gourd are five types that I can use. I have all nine types of chaos lightning and am ready to start.” Ning began to mentally prepare the [Novessence Thunder] secret art.

Ning began to activate his Immortal energy, sending it into one of the gourds. This gourd was filled with a streak of black lightning that radiated an aura of both insidious coldness and extraordinary ruthlessness.

Ning’s Immortal energy was guided by the [Novessence Thunder] technique to form a very unique web of energy that began to envelop the chaos lightning. Chaos lightning generally wasn’t capable of defeating even weak World-level cultivators; they were only capable of dominating cultivators below that level! Given how pure Ning’s Immortal energy was thanks to his body being formed by the merging of seventeen clones, he was able to easily seize control over that streak of chaos lightning.

“Come here.” The web of Immortal energy completely surrounded that streak of insidious black lightning. No matter how much it struggled or how it flared its power, the web of Immortal energy merely expanded and contracted alongside it. The web was extremely tough and tenacious, giving the black lightning no place to run at all.

“Long ago, I risked my life and lost multiple clones in order to tame the Ninehorn Lightning Serpent... but now, compared to this technique of Daolord Allgod’s, that technique was unfathomably weak and meaningless.” Ning couldn’t help but sigh. Daolord Allgod’s technique was like an incredibly wise fisherman, with the lightning being his fish; no matter how the lightning struggled or writhed, it was completely unable to escape the control of the technique.

However, merely seizing control over the lightning was just the simplest starting point for this secret art.

Whoosh.

The web of Immortal energy squeezed around the streak of black lightning as it dragged it into Ning’s body. Soon, it was pulled into the realm of chaos which now existed inside of Ning.

The Jindan chaos region was a blurry, hazy region. At its very center stood a luxuriously flourishing Dao-tree which stood more than sixty thousand meters tall.

“Essence of lightning... take form!” Immortal energy began to ripple through the chaos ‘mud’ that existed in a corner of this chaos region, taking shape and transforming into an enormous formation. A streak of black lightning thundered down angrily upon the formation. Boom! The formation was instantly filled with Immortal energy that fed hungrily upon the power of the black lightning.

Rumble...

Countless streaks of black lightning began to flicker throughout the rune-patterns that covered the entire massive formation.

“One of the lightning essences has been contained, for now at least.” Ning nodded to himself. Establishing an essence of lightning was actually quite simple; the hardest part would be actually merging them to manifest the [Novessence Thunder] secret art. He would have to merge all nine types of chaos lightning in a manner similar to merging many ingredients into the production of a pill. Only then would the complicated secret art become usable. This would be thousands of times more difficult than simply forming the lightning essence was!

Ning himself was secretly nervous about this. Would he be able to succeed? Daolord Allgod was a master of alchemy and artificing, a truly peerless expert in these areas. Ning, however, wasn't skilled in either regard.

“Next.” Ning once again reached out, seizing control over another one of the eight types of chaos lightning after another. His vast Jindan chaos region quickly became filled with eight more types of lightning essence.

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

The nine types of lightning essence crackled and clashed against each other, each holding different types of lightning.

“The easiest part is done. Next comes the hard part, where I actually forge the [Novessence Thunder] secret art. Let's see if I can do this.” Ning felt a sense of pressure, even though this was a secret art 'merely' formed by chaos lightning; it would be much simpler than doing the same with Dao lightning.

Using nine types of Dao lightning to form the secret art would be much more complicated. Still, Ning understood that even 'merely' using nine types of chaos lightning would be incredibly hard for the vast majority of World-level cultivators.

“Begin.”

Ning's pure Immortal energy poured into the nine types of lightning essence. The process of converting the chaos lightning into lightning essence had already caused the explosive, raging power of the lightning to be tamed by the formation. This method was far superior to the technique Ning had used to tame the Ninehorn Lightning Serpent long ago.

Crackle. Hiss. Pop. The nine streaks of lightning began to fly into the air under the control of Ning's Immortal energy. They wrapped around each other, intertwining like the limbs of lovers and beginning to join together...

BOOM!

The nine types of lightning suddenly broke apart and dispersed.

“I failed.” Ning shook his head. “According to the instructions, I have to be able to merge all nine types of lightning into one in order to form the seed of this secret art. Afterwards, with the passage of time, I'll be able to use the nine types of chaos lightning through this seed in unleashing this secret art.” Ning felt a headache coming. “Although I've tamed all nine streaks of lightning, I still need to perfectly match

them together in a specific format that requires tens of thousands of steps. The lightning is simply too explosive and violent. The slightest mistake will result in failure.”

Ning’s Immortal energy was sufficiently pure, and his control over his energy was sufficiently strong. Given that his soul was being reinforced by the azureflower mist energy, it was similarly strong enough for him to maintain incredible control over the lightning. And yet, he still failed in the end. This was precisely because Daolord Allgod’s secret art was simply too detailed and complicated.

“I’ll try it again.”

Ning tried again and again to form the seed to this secret art. If he could succeed just once, the seed would be permanently formed and he wouldn’t need to spend all this energy and effort in the future. He’d be able to simply use this seed to activate the secret art!

Alas... it truly was difficult! Ning tried more than a hundred times, failing each time. Even his powerful soul was beginning to feel exhausted by the process. There was one time where he very nearly succeeded, but he ended up failing at one of the final steps.

“I’m going to rest for a while,” Ning mumbled to himself. “Simply merging nine types of chaos lightning is already incredibly difficult. How hard will it be for me to merge Dao lightning?”

“Hey...” Just as Ning was about to take a break, he suddenly noticed something within his body. “The azureflower mist energy can convert Immortal energy, divine power, and heartforce.” Ning mused to himself, “Although there’s no way for it to leave my body, it can easily enter the Jindan chaos region inside of me. If Immortal energy can be used to control the lightning, can the azureflower mist energy be used to do the same?”

The azureflower mist energy was far stronger than the Immortal energy!

“I’ll give it a try.” Ning immediately felt a hint of eagerness. Previously, he had dispersed his azureflower mist energy and sent it throughout his body, with a little residing within the Jindan chaos region as well. Now, Ning sent more and more of the azureflower mist energy into the Jindan chaos region, where it began to fly straight towards the nine types of lightning essence that crackled at the margins of the region.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

The nine types of azureflower mist energy were like nine roving dragons that burrowed straight into the nine types of lightning essence. Upon the energy entering the lightning essence, Ning was ready to give controlling them a shot.

Instantly, the nine types of chaos lightning began to fly upwards. It was extremely easy, and the chaos lightning flew about in an extremely obedient manner.

“Haha, it actually works. Using the azureflower mist energy to control the lightning is a hundred times easier than using my Immortal energy.” Ning was delighted. If previously it had been as difficult as an ordinary man wielding a gigantic greataxe, Ning now felt like he was an ordinary man who was wielding a pair of chopsticks. It was so easy!

The nine streaks of lightning coiled around in the air, mixing together in a perfect manner and transforming to become something else.

Slowly...

The nine streaks of lightning merged into eight streaks, then seven...

In the end, only one streak of lightning was left. It was a streak of crimson-gold lightning that radiated an aura of power that was so great that Ning trembled in fear. It vastly surpassed any other type of chaos lightning in power, and Ning felt certain that most likely even Dao lightning wouldn't be much stronger than it.

Boom!

The crimson-gold lightning suddenly slammed downwards, smashing against the 'mud' of the formation. Instantly, the formation drew in the power of the crimson-gold lightning. It seemed to come to life as an enormous seal took form atop it.

"The seed of the secret art has taken shape." Ning let out a sigh of relief.

In the future, the nine types of lightning essence would simply release their power and allow it to be converted by the seed, giving birth to that terrifying crimson-gold lightning.

"The [Novessence Thunder] formed by chaos lightning should be able to kill any master-class World God with a single blast." After getting a good sense for how powerful the crimson-gold lightning was, he felt even more convinced of Daolord Allgod's might.

However, given how strong Ning currently was, the [Novessence Thunder] would primarily be used as a 'domain' type effect, causing a large amount of lightning to surround and trap his foes. It must be understood that a domain that was capable of easily slaying master-class World Gods would serve as a terrifyingly strong constraint upon others!

When two individuals were on the same general level of power, for one side to be constrained in some manner would have a huge impact on a battle between them.

Daolord Allgod himself had used his nine secret arts at the same time to trap and constrain his foes. As a result, even someone like Emperor Melobo had been forced to flee. Emperor Melobo had damn near died, and in the end he had lost an enormous amount of flesh and blood which Dalord Allgod had refined into that drop of Eternal blood.

Ning was now in a superb mood after having successfully forged the [Novessence Thunder].

Two short months later, Daolord Badlands returned with a million cubes of chaos nectar. Although Ning had mentally prepared himself to receive such a vast fortune, his heart still shook when it actually entered his hands. For such a sum of chaos nectar to actually be before him was still quite a stunning sight.

For most Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals, a mere hundred bottles was already an incredible fortune.

For World-level cultivators, a hundred cubes was a shocking sum.

A million cubes was enough to cause even Samsara Daolords turn green-eyed with envy.

“I really have never seen so much of it before.” Ning was located within a miniature estate-world which held a small pond within it. Ning stared at this elegant-looking small pond, which was merely thirty meters in size. It really was quite small... but Ning’s eyes couldn’t help but shine as he stared at it. This entire pool was formed from chaos nectar!

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 26: World Level Chapter 17: The Trial of the Painting

After feeling stunned for a while, Ji Ning regained his normal composure. In the end, outside sources of power were extraneous. The path of cultivation was a path where one would have to rely on one’s self.

“Time to go test out the Mirrorsnow Paintings,” Ning murmured to himself.

The Mirrorsnow Paintings could only be entered once one reached the World level, and only World-level cultivators were granted entry; Samsara Daolords were unable to go inside.

“I wonder what sort of trials Emperor Mirrorsnow left behind? Time to take a look.” More than two months had passed since he had returned from the Badlands Court. It had only taken him a single day to form the [Novessence Thunder] technique. The rest of his time had been spent ruminating over the Dao of the Sword. Ning had gained quite a few insights since his battle against Arroyo.

Ning had acquired the first Mirrorsnow Painting from the crocodilian bugbeast in the Grove of Monoliths within the Allgod Estate.

Ning was now seated by the sandy shores of that oceanic island, admiring the first painting. The painting was of a beautifully decorated palace, but the artistic quality of it really was rather low.

“In I go.” Ning had bound the first Mirrorsnow Painting long ago. He now filled it with his Immortal energy, and his World-level energy instantly connected to the estate-world located within it.

Swoosh!

Ning entered the world of the painting.

“Eh?” Ning looked at his surroundings. Moments ago, he had been atop a sandy beach. Now, he was located within a towering palace that was carved out of jade. Its pillars glowed with golden light and were filled with carvings of strange beasts.

In front of Ning, far off into the distance up the stairs, there was a golden throne. A figure suddenly appeared before the golden throne. It was a tall, golden-robed man who sat down atop the throne, staring downwards towards Ning like an emperor staring at his subject.

“After so many years, a new World-level cultivator has finally entered.” The golden-robed emperor said, “Junior, the Eternal Emperor ordered me to wait here for you. All you need to do is defeat me. If you can defeat me, you’ll have passed the trial of this estate-world. The four Mirrorsnow Paintings hold a total of four estate-worlds within them. If you can pass all four trials, you shall become a true, personal disciple of the Eternal Emperor.”

“Defeat you?” Ning looked at the golden-robed emperor. “Might I ask, what techniques am I permitted to use in this attempt?”

“You are not permitted to use Immortal energy or divine power. You must rely on nothing more than your own raw physical strength, and I’ll use the same amount of strength as you. The two of us shall compete in swordplay and nothing but swordplay. Neither of us shall use divine abilities, secret arts, or anything else,” the golden-robed emperor said. “If you can defeat me, you will have won.”

Ning now understood. This was a test of his sword-arts. The four paintings represented four major challenges. Daolord Windsourc’s disciple had access to the third painting for an extremely long period of time, but he still remained unable to pass its trial. This was a testament to how difficult the trial would be.

“Come, then.” A Frostice sword appeared within Ning’s hands.

“Very well.” The golden-robed emperor rose to his feet, a broad golden longsword appearing in his hands as well. He slowly walked down the stairs, his aura growing in power as he did so. It was as though he was the one and only sovereign of this world, as though everything had to prostrate before him.

Ning’s face tightened slightly. What a terrifying sword-art! The man had yet to strike, but the sword-intent radiating from him had already caused Ning to feel a sense of danger.

“Great Firmament stance!”

Ning made his move. The Frostice sword in his hand struck out, causing the entire palace to become submerged within an endless mist of sword-light which blanketed everything. Although the Great Firmament stance was the third stance of the [Nameless] sword-art, it represented an entire Sword World. As Ning’s sword-arts and cultivation continued to improve, his Sword World would naturally become increasingly powerful as well.

The seemingly endless Sword World was like a vast net that completely encompassed the golden-robed emperor.

HUAAAANG!

The sound of a sword ‘roaring’ suddenly filled the entire palace as a golden streak of sword-light tore apart that endless Sword World. It was like the rising of the dawn sun casting its first glow of light upon the world, and it completely shattered Ning’s sword-arts apart.

Ji Ning was just barely able to use his own sword to block this attack, but he was knocked flying backwards by the force of the collision. Boom! He struck directly against the closed gate beneath him, causing a loud bang to be heard.

“What a dominating sword-art!” Ning was truly stunned.

This was a sword-art that was every bit as dominating as Arroyo’s saber-arts had been! The reason why Ning had been able to so easily defeat Arroyo was primarily because he was being reinforced by the azureflower mist energy. If it hadn’t been for his overwhelming advantage in speed and strength, and if

he had to rely on just his sword-arts, there was no way he would've been able to defeat Arroyo's saber-arts in such a way.

"CHOP!" The golden-robed emperor took another step forward, once more striking out with that towering, majestic broadsword. His sword-light flashed brilliantly, and it seemed as though nothing could stop this strike.

Whoosh. The Frostice sword in Ning's hands suddenly transformed into a black hole, seeking to ablate the power of the enemy's strike and then defeat it. However, Ning could sense that his opponent's sword was so dominating and forceful that there was no way he could shake it at all. Instead, it was his own Soleheart stance which was broken. Once more, Ning was sent flying back by the force of the collision.

He was getting absolutely mauled in this fight.

The truth of the matter was, in terms of raw sword-arts Ning wasn't quite at the level of master-class World Gods. Even though he did have the [Nameless] sword-art and the [Quintessence Sword-Intent], he was just barely on the same level as the Starlord of Fogstone. He was far from being a match for this trial which Emperor Mirrorsnow had left behind.

Only a truly dazzlingly talented figure would be qualified to become the personal disciple of Emperor Mirrorsnow.

The golden-robed emperor within the first estate-world had incredibly profound sword-arts. Most likely, even Arroyo's saber-arts were slightly less mature in comparison. Arroyo had died shortly after making his breakthrough upon the Samsara Grinders, after all; he didn't really have enough time to stabilize and build upon his gains. This golden-robed emperor's sword-arts were finely perfected and absolutely flawless. They truly had reached a level of immaculate perfection.

"Wonderful, wonderful!" Ning emerged from the first estate-world, a look of delight on his face.

During this last battle, he had been sent flying into the walls, stone pillars, gates, and staircase more than sixty times. However, Ning felt nothing but pure joy. He had spent three thousand years meditating in the Hall of Sword, but he was in bad need of actual combat experience! No matter how much time you spent in meditation and training, if you didn't have any actual combat experience you would always have flaws in your technique.

In the world of the Mirrorsnow Painting, Ning was given an opponent who had essentially reached the apex of World-level sword-arts. This battle had given Ning a clear picture of the many flaws which existed in his sword-arts.

"Even if I'm unable to become Emperor Mirrorsnow's disciple, the mere fact that I now have an incredible expert in the Dao of the Sword who will spar against me whenever I wish is of incalculable value." Of course Ning was delighted!

"Let me take a look at the third estate-world." Ning pulled out the painting that he had acquired from the Windsourc Ruins.

Ning entered the world of the painting. He found himself in a world with a beautiful mountain, a waterfall which seemed to descend from the heavens themselves, and beautiful creeks that swirled next to him.

Ning immediately saw the gray-robed fisherman located off in the distance. The fisherman simply sat there fishing.

“Finally, a new World-level cultivator.” The fisherman rose to his feet in a leisurely way, then said calmly, “I have been waiting here on the orders of the Eternal Emperor. You are not permitted to use Immortal energy, divine power, divine abilities, or secret arts. I will use the same amount of strength as you possess in a swordplay competition.”

“Understood.” Ning nodded.

“Then come.” The fisherman’s fishing rod suddenly shrank to become merely three feet long, and he pointed it straight at Ning.

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Ning was utterly trampled and demolished.

The fisherman within the third estate-world was incredible. His sword-arts were like the clouds in the sky, completely unpredictable in their movements and transformations. The power of his sword-arts seemed to be utterly inexhaustible as well as he sent out one strike after another. Ning was confident in his defensive abilities, but in the end he was simply unable to defend against the fisherman’s attacks. He ended up getting whacked in the face quite a few times by that fishing rod, and was smashed into the ground each time.

Although the golden-robed emperor’s sword had knocked Ning flying backwards, Ning was still able to use his sword to block against those attacks.

The fisherman’s sword... Ning was actually unable to withstand it!

Ning knew that the fisherman and the golden-robed emperor each used different types of sword-arts, but were more or less on par with each other. The golden-robed emperor’s sword-arts were more regal, upright, and just, and his attacks were filled with enormous power. The fisherman’s sword-arts, by contrast, were more mysterious and unpredictable.

“Nice, nice, nice! Only by battling many experts who use the sword in different ways will I get a better picture of the flaws that exist in my own sword-arts.” Ning was actually ecstatic at the beating he had just taken.

From this day forth, Ning became even more obsessed with meditating on his sword-arts. He battled against these two experts of the sword repeatedly, discovering many weaknesses in his own sword-arts and finding many areas for improvement.

The many insights into the Dao of the Sword which Ning had gained in the Hall of Swords were now finally transforming into true power. His sword-arts continuously improved with each sparring session, becoming more and more powerful.

Meditation and actual combat – the two went hand in hand. Both were necessary.

In the blink of an eye, more than ten years passed here in the Badlands Court. World God Dragonbinder had returned from the Allgod Estate as well, and the first thing he did upon returning was to go speak to Ji Ning.

“Brother Ji Ning, when I sensed the chaos energy fluctuating within the Allgod Estate I simply knew it had to be you making your breakthrough.” When World God Dragonbinder saw Ning, he felt absolutely delighted.

The two spent some time dining and chatting together. Ning had gained many things from this trip to the Allgod Estate, but so too had World God Dragonbinder. In fact, he now had a vague idea as to what his path through Samsara would be. Alas, it was still nothing more than a vague idea. To actually tread that path and become a Samsara Daolord would be very, very difficult.

Still, it was definitely an improvement. If he couldn’t even see or sense his path, how could he have any hope of walking it?

Six more years went back.

Sixteen years after Ning’s return to the Badlands Court, a Samsara Daolord came to pay a visit to the Badlands Court.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 26: World Level Chapter 18: Leaving the Badlands Territory

The Badlands Court. Flower petals could be seen everywhere, drifting to and fro.

Daolord Badlands and his wife were seated opposite a cyclopean man with a single horn on his head.

“I didn’t expect that you would be assigned to personally escort this mission, big brother Fusu.” Daolord Badlands smiled as he spoke.

“I was planning to visit the Triclopean Thundersea anyhow, which was why the Dao Alliance asked me to help escort these treasures.” Daolord Fusu smiled. “The treasures you requested included the [Golden Idol] divine ability, a few Eternal weapons that are merely middle-grade, and the Mirrorsnow Painting. I imagine you must be purchasing them for one of your disciples, yes? You know, you really should make them go out and seek their fortunes. No matter how much you favor a disciple, you can’t spoil him to this extent.”

“Big brother Fusu, you think too highly of me. How could I possibly be willing to spend this much money just to help one disciple?” Daolord Badlands shook his head. “You’ll have to forgive me for not being at liberty to disclose the reason why I have requested these items.”

“Oh...” Daolord Fusu dropped this line of conversation. He let out a laugh. “Oh, right. I heard that old man Solesky of Vastheaven Palace has begun to furiously scour the realms for important treasures. He’ll be planning to start his Daomerge soon. I heard that he’s actually come to your Badlands Territory. He probably went to Waveshift world, right?”

“Yes.” Daolord Badlands nodded. This was no secret. Many Samsara Daolords had already guessed at the truth, and a little bit of divination would be enough to show that this very likely the case.

“That old fellow is finally willing to start his Daomerge.” Daolord Fusu let out a sigh. “Still, it makes sense. Their Vastheaven Palace has just given birth to a new Samsara Daolord, and Daolord Warlord has reached the fourth step as well. Even if old man Solesky fails his Daomerge, he’ll still be able to protect Vastheaven Palace for a period of time before he perishes and his Dao vanishes. Vastheaven Palace will be able to grow considerably more powerful during this timeframe.”

Daolord Badlands nodded slowly. When one failed in the Daomerge, one’s truesoul would slowly begin to dissipate. However, given how formidable Daolords who were at the Verge of the Daomerge generally were, it would generally take an extremely long period of time for the truesoul to actually crumble away. It must be understood that even World God Northrest was able to endure for nearly a full chaos cycle before he truly died from the crumbling of his truesoul. Those ancient powers who were at the Verge would be able to last much longer.

But of course, if they went crazy and started attacking everyone around them, they would die much more quickly. Still... Daolords who had failed their Daomerge were destined to die, which make them incredibly fearsome foes to face. Some would engage in wild massacres and do things which they normally wouldn’t have dared to do, for whatever reason. Who would dare to antagonize madmen like them?

“I envy him. I wonder how long it will be before I, too, can set my burdens aside and go to my Daomerge?” Daolord Fusu sighed. “My entire race’s prosperity rests upon my shoulders. Although my race does have another Samsara Daolord, he’s still at the first step despite an entire chaos cycle having gone by since his ascension. He still hasn’t been able to reach the second step. I fear that his potential is limited and that he won’t have the power to protect our race.”

“Big brother Fusu, perhaps you will make a sudden breakthrough that will allow you to naturally and easily succeed in your Daomerge. When that happens, you will gain eternity,” Daolord Badlands said.

“Gain eternity? The number of Eternal Emperors in the entire Dao Alliance can be counted on two hands.” Daolord Fusu shook his head. “Enough of that. Let me give you the treasures which I escorted here. The price the Dao Alliance requested was a total of 1.81 million cubes of chaos nectar.”

“1.81 million cubes?” Daolord Badlands nodded. Chaos nectar instantly began to flow out of his estate-world, automatically separating themselves into a total of 1.81 million cubes before flying towards Daolord Fusu.

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Daolord Fusu left that very day as he headed off to the Triclopan Thundersea.

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Late that night, Daolord Badlands paid a personal visit to the Water Curtain Home to visit Ji Ning.

“Daolord.” Ning was shocked. “Daolord, if there’s anything you need, all you had to do was have someone send word to me.”

“I’ve pretty much finished the process of finding those treasures you sought,” Daolord Badlands said. “I have the [Golden Idol], an Elementum Waterflame Gourd, and five Violetjewels. The Mirrorsnow

Paintings were a bit harder to find, as very few are willing to sell them once acquired. I was only able to buy a copy of the second painting for you.”

“That’s more than enough!” Ning said hurriedly.

Ning had predicted early on that most Violetjewels had probably fallen into the hands of Samsara Daolords. To them, being able to sell a middle-grade Eternal weapon for nearly two hundred thousand cubes of chaos nectar was an absolutely wonderful bargain. They would easily be able to purchase another powerful sword as well as other treasures they needed. Ning wasn’t surprised at all that they had been able to find the five copies that he needed.

Alas, the Mirrorsnow Painting was different. It was generally in the hands of World-level cultivators, and to those cultivators the paintings represented a priceless opportunity. Very few would be willing to sell off an opportunity to become a personal disciple of an Eternal Emperor. In fact, the Dao Alliance wasn’t even sure as to who was in possession of most of the paintings, as most World-level cultivators would keep their ownership secret.

“If we just round it off, the total cost is roughly 1.8 million cubes,” Daolord Badlands said. “I already gave you a million cubes previously. Let me give you another two hundred thousand cubes now, as well as these treasures.”

As Daolord Badlands spoke, he handed Ning a smooth disc of jade that held an estate-world within it.

“Thank you, senior.” Ning was very grateful.

The [Golden Idol] had cost two hundred thousand cubes while the Elementum Waterflame Gourd had cost five hundred thousand cubes. Daolord Badlands had been very clear about the price of these items, and so the total cost was around seven hundred thousand cubes.

In other words, the Mirrorsnow Painting and the five Violetjewels cost a total of 1.1 million cubes. Ning was actually quite happy with this price. Honestly, even if Daolord Badlands upped the cost a little bit, Ning wouldn’t have been able to find out.

Within a private study. The six Violetjewels were all placed atop a desk, and they each emanated absolutely identical auras of sharpness and bloodlust.

“Six Violetjewels.” Ning nodded slightly. They would be of enormous use to him and make him stronger. “With these six swords, I’ll be several times more powerful than I currently am. I should be able to give a decent fight to a Samsara Daolord of the First Step. Even if I can’t beat them, I should still be strong enough to escape.”

When Ning had battled against the fisherman in the third estate-world of the Mirrorsnow Painting, he had eventually been unable to defend against the fisherman’s rod.

However, Ning knew that one of the main reasons for this was that he had only been using a single sword. If he had six swords... it could be said that he could defend against even sixteen swords, preventing them from landing attacks upon him.

With just a single sword, Ning had been able to create an almost airtight defense. With six swords working in unison, it would be as though he was surrounded and protected by enormous bucklers. Given Ning's absolute control over the Soleheart stance, he would have no flaws in his defenses at all.

"The Elementum Waterflame Gourd." A gourd suddenly appeared out of nowhere in front of Ning. This was a red-black gourd which saw black lines intertwining and mixing together with red lines on the surface of the gourd, making it look mysterious and beautiful.

After Ning bound the treasure, he was immediately able to sense the explosive, terrifying power of the Dao lightning within it. The two types of Dao lightning within the gourd were the Watersmoke Lightning and the Firecloud Lightning. Both were filled with absolute savagery, and it made sense. All lightning was explosive and aggressive by nature, making them incredibly difficult to control."

"It really will be thousands of times more difficult to refine them than the chaos lightning." Ning couldn't help but sigh to himself.

"Let me take a look at the lower portion of the [Golden Idol]." Ning picked up a jade slip then sent his divine power into it. He could immediately sense the lifeblood oath covering the technique, as well as the various rules and regulations which the Dao Alliance had set down. Ning carefully read through everything. Once he decided there were no problems, he immediately swore the oath.

Instantly, the information regarding the lower portion of the [Golden Idol] began to fill Ning's mind...

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Three days later.

"You are going to leave?" Daolord Badlands looked at Ning, who had come to pay respects to him.

"This junior needs to return to Vastheaven Palace," Ning said. "I regret having disturbed you so often in recent days, Daolord. This junior will definitely remember all the assistance you provided."

"Mm. Sooner or later, you do indeed have to return to Vastheaven Palace. However, to go from my Badlands Territory to the Vastheaven Territory is an extremely long journey, and you will encounter quite a few dangers and ancient powers on the way. It is difficult for me to divine exactly what you shall encounter on this journey." Daolord Badlands shook his head. "Just remember one thing: caution above all else."

"This junior understands." Ning nodded.

Vastheaven Palace was very, very far away from the Badlands Territory, and the journey was quite a perilous one. Even World-level cultivators would find such a sojourn to be filled with dangers. Still, Ning felt confident that he wasn't too much weaker than most Samsara Daolords of the First Step, which meant that he should at least be strong enough to keep himself safe and survive the trip.

"Go, then." Daolord Badlands nodded.

Ning departed.

A reflective look was in Daolord Badlands eyes as he stared at Ning's back as Ning left. "According to what Dragonbinder said, when Ji Ning was an Elder God he was capable of matching master-class World

Gods in power. He can be considered a freakishly talented figure. Still... the path of cultivation is a path filled with countless dangers. I wonder how far he will make it on his path.”

Freakishly talented? That didn't count for much. Daolord Badlands himself was a freakishly talented figure, and over the course of many chaos cycles he had seen quite a few other freakishly talented figures as well. However, the vast majority of them ended up dying on their path.

If Ji Ning was his own disciple he probably would've been willing to pay almost any price, up to and including suffering severe injuries, in order to carefully divine what would happen to Ning on this journey. However, Ji Ning was just a disciple of Vastheaven Palace. There was naturally no reason for Daolord Badlands to act in such a selfless manner.

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The spacetime transfer array of the Badlands Everworld.

“First, we'll go to the Azure Sky Territory.” Ning led Su Youji into the transfer array.

“These two are requesting for the array to be activated just for them?” The Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals responsible for protecting the array were all secretly speechless. The distance from here to the Azure Sky Territory was incredibly vast. The cost of activating the array just for the two of them wouldn't be a mere hundred bottles; it would be a full cube of chaos nectar!

Still, Ning truly didn't care about the cost. Going from the Badlands Territory to the Vastheaven Territory would at most cost him roughly a thousand cubes of chaos nectar! There were also many places where there were no connecting spacetime transfer arrays. He would have to personally fly to the closest array, often through many dangerous regions.

“The Badlands Territory...” Su Youji stared towards the outside of the array. “So I, Su Youji, am actually going to have a chance to see and explore other territories.” Being powerful enough to voyage through other territories was a testament to her strength.

“The Badlands Territory!” Ning stared at the skies far above them. This was the place where he had gotten his first start after departing from the Three Realms.

Rumble...

Spacetime began to twist and distort.

The entire array began to shine with blinding light as it tore through the fabric of space and time, teleporting the two of them to a distant place in the spacetime continuum. When the light faded away, the two figures had vanished from within the array.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 26: World Level Chapter 19: Trifount Planet

More than ninety-two years went by in the blink of an eye.

The Qianyun Territory was a place that was incredibly far away from the Badlands Territory. Trifount was one of the planets located within this territory, and it was one of the core planets that were part of

a local spacetime transfer array. The spacetime transfer array was gleaming with light as it twisted and distorted spacetime. Moments later, two figures suddenly appeared within it.

The first figure was a white-robed youth who was carrying a sword on his back. The second was a fiery-robed woman. The two were Ji Ning and Su Youji, who had travelled here all the way from the Badlands Territory.

“Trifount.” Ning and Su Youji both emerged from the formation and stared off into the distance.

Rumble...

A massive geyser of water could be seen off in the distance, blasting a fountain of water thirty thousand meters into the air. The stars glittered in the skies above them, causing the water to sparkle with rainbow light. This planet was constructed in a strange way, resulting in three enormous geysers that blasted mountain-sized fountains of water high up into the air. This was the reason why the planet was known as Trifount.

“We finally reached Trifount.” Su Youji had a rather solemn look on her face. “Master, our next destination will be the most dangerous place in our journey; the Sea of Darkness.”

“Yes. Once we pass the Sea of Darkness, we won’t be too far away from Vastheaven Palace.” Ning nodded as well.

Ninety-two years...

Ning and Su Youji had travelled through many different territories, some of which they had to fly through or teleport their way through! This was why it had taken them so long. They had encountered a number of dangerous situations along the way, including some deadly environments as well as cultivators who had sought to waylay and kill them. However, none of these situations had truly been troublesome for the two of them.

They dared to ambush Ji Ning? They truly had been courting death.

“The most dangerous part of the journey from the Badlands Territory to the Vastheaven Territory is the passage through the Sea of Darkness.” Ning and Su Youji were standing alongside each other atop a tall mountain, staring off towards the distant void of space. Ning said, “Given how fast we travel... I expect it will take us eight centuries to go through the entire Sea of Darkness!”

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Suddenly, three streaks of light flew towards them from afar. They soon arrived before Ning and Su Youji, the streaks of light transforming into three cultivators who emanated auras of tremendous power. There were two men and one woman, but all three had World-level auras.

“Fellow Daoists.” The leader of the three, a fairly muscular man, walked over with a smile on his face. “Have you come to Trifount for the sake of passing through the Sea of Darkness?”

“Yes.” Ning nodded, not denying it.

The muscular man smiled. "My name is Xiang Lu. He is World God Windgrace while she is Chaos Immortal Waterswell." The handsome, violet-robed man next to him nodded towards Ning and Su Youji. "Windgrace greets you, fellow Daoists."

"Waterswell greets you, fellow Daoists." The female Chaos Immortal was just as attractive as Windgrace, and her aura was even more charming than Su Youji's.

Su Youji could be described as flickering flame, filled with alluring magnetism. This Chaos Immortal named Waterswell, however, was like a pool of gentle, soft water.

"I am Darknorth. She is the Flamefairy." Ning introduced their side as well.

"Fellow Daoist Darknorth. Fellow Daoist Flamefairy." The muscular man said, "We saw you two appear within the spacetime transfer array from afar. When we noticed how you two decided to stay here, we had a suspicion that you might be planning to travel through the Sea of Darkness. I imagine both of you know exactly how dangerous the Sea of Darkness is, and the journey is an extremely long one as well. Given how long and how dangerous the journey is, for a small group of just four or five World-level cultivators to try to pass through it by themselves is an extremely risky and difficult endeavor."

Ning and Su Youji both nodded. It was true. It would indeed be very dangerous! There were many dangers on the path from the Badlands Territory to the Vastheaven Territory, but the Sea of Darkness was the most dangerous place of them all! Even someone as powerful as Ji Ning wouldn't dare to claim 100% confidence in navigating the place successfully."

"That is why those of us who wish to traverse the Sea of Darkness will generally join together into a group before venturing forth." The muscular man laughed. "Our current plan is to wait until we have a total of ninety-nine World-level fellow Daoists, so that we can join together into a formation if necessary. Once we have enough people, we will head into the Sea of Darkness. We already have more than eighty fellow Daoists, and the three of us have come to ask the two of you to join us."

"Ninety-nine?" Ning and Su Youji exchanged glances.

"Don't worry. When we have enough people, all of us will swear a simple lifeblood oath that we are absolutely not permitted to attack any of our fellow travelers," the muscular man said. "With ninety-nine of us working together, we will have a better than 90% chance of traversing the Sea of Darkness."

Ning agreed with this assessment. Ninety-nine! Given how many World-level cultivators would be gathered here, some would most likely be supreme World Gods.

Once they all joined together into a formation and were able to support each other, those supreme World Gods would be comparable to Arroyo in strength! The others wouldn't be too weak either. Once they all fought together, it was likely that even Samsara Daolords of the First Step would have to stay away from them.

"Fine." Ning nodded and smiled. "Just now, the two of us were worrying about how we were going to safely traverse the Sea of Darkness. It would indeed be much safer for us if we can work together alongside so many fellow Daoists."

"Immortal Waterswell, please lead these two fellow Daoists to the others," the muscular man instructed. He then looked at Ning. "Brother Windgrace and I will have to stay here and keep an eye out

for any other World-level cultivators who we can invite to join us. Sorry for being unable to send you off personally.”

“No need.” Ning and Su Youji followed Chaos Immortal Waterswell and flew off into the distance.

“Our many fellow Daoists are all located close to this place.” After flying for just a short period of time, they reached a flat grassland. There were quite a few World-level cultivators here clustered into small groups of two or three people. A total of eighty-three cultivators were located on this plains.

“The two of you can rest here for now. We’ll head out once we reach a total of ninety-nine cultivators. I’m going to go back now and wait alongside big brother Xiang Lu.”

Although quite a few World-level cultivators had been gathered here, only twenty or thirty percent of them belonged to the Qianyun Territory. The others were all from nearby territories, with very few being from places as far away as the Badlands Territory.

Most of the people here didn’t know each other, nor did they need to know each other. After passing through the Sea of Darkness, they would all go their separate ways. Thus, they all stayed clustered in small groups of two or three, not really fraternizing with the others.

“Let’s just wait, then.” Ning and Su Youji sat down in the lotus position, waiting silently while drinking some Immortal nectar.

While waiting, Ning continuously sent out a small amount of his divine power to create incarnations which he sent into the Mirrorsnow Painting. He repeatedly challenged the expert swordsman within the third estate-world using his incarnation.

The golden-robed emperor. The fisherman. The assassin.

When dueling, these three would use the exact same amount of power as Ning. It was merely a contest of swordplay, and so Ning could simply use incarnations of divine power to carry out the sparring.

As for Ning’s true body? Ning spent his attention on training in the [Golden Idol]. Initially, Ning immediately used three hundred cubes worth of chaos jewels to upgrade his body to the Dao weapon level. After that, he began to simply train slowly in the technique, using just a small amount of chaos jewels as he did so.

To upgrade his body and make it comparable to top-grade Dao weapons would require an extremely long period of time. Ning was in no rush. It was fine to take it slow.

Fortunately, they only had to wait eleven years at Trifount before the total number of World-level cultivators reached ninety-nine.

“My fellow Daoists.” World God Xiang Lu smiled as he looked at the ninety-plus cultivators on the plains. “We’ve already gathered a total of ninety-nine World-level cultivators. It is time for us to head off into the Sea of the Darkness. Here are the formation-discs. Each cultivator can simply bind a single formation-disc.”

A total of ninety-eight discs of light appeared before him, then flew towards the other World-level cultivators.

“This is an extremely simple formation. You’ll know once you take a look at it.” World God Xiang Lu smiled.

Ning accepted a formation disc. After sending his power into it, he quickly understood that this was indeed a very simple formation. It merged all the energy of the cultivators into one mass, making it so that all the cultivators were reinforcing and supporting each other. They would all be much more powerful as a result.

There were actually many formations that were more powerful than this one, but none of the World-level cultivators here really knew each other or trusted each other. It was precisely because this formation was so simple that everyone had no suspicions regarding it and were willing to use it.

Boom.

Boom.

Boom.

As the cultivators bound the formation-discs, streams of light began to surge into the skies. The ninety-nine streams of light connected with each other, and all of the cultivators were blessed with the strength and power of the formation.

“I swear on my very life itself...”

“I swear on my very life itself...”

“I swear on my very life itself...”

The ninety-nine World-level cultivators simultaneously sent their Immortal energies into the oathstone they were surrounding. As they all swore the lifeblood oaths, they could sense the oaths of the others taking effect as well.

All of the oaths were identical. So long as they were in the Sea of Darkness, they were absolutely not permitted to launch attacks against their comrades. If the oath was violated, the assaulted party wouldn’t even need to fight back; the lifeblood oath itself would ensure that the violator’s truesoul was destroyed.

Once the oaths were sworn, the cultivators all grew noticeably friendlier towards each other. There was now at least an element of trust amongst them.

“My name is Poisonfeather. This flying vessel of mine is a top-grade Dao treasure that is specialized for long-distance flying. It should be quite suitable for traversing through the Sea of Darkness.” A bald, silver-eyed man suddenly spoke out. “We can ride it together! If anyone has any better flying treasures, we can use that instead.” 1

Soon, the cultivators all decided to use Daoist Poisonfeather’s ship for their journey through the Sea of Darkness.

“Let’s head out!”

The ninety-nine cultivators all boarded the ship, keeping the formation active as they departed from Trifount and headed off towards the Sea of Darkness.

1. Poisonfeather's name is actually 'Flying Zhen', with 'Zhen' being a Chinese mythological beast that is often called the 'Poisonfeather Bird', for self-explanatory reasons.

The Desolate Era

Book 26: World Level Chapter 20: The Sea of Darkness

The flying vessel was three thousand meters long, completely black, and was shaped like a weaver's shuttle. It continuously advanced through the dark void of space towards the vast sea before them.

If Ji Ning wished to reach Vastheaven Palace, he absolutely had to pass through the Sea of Darkness! If he went around it, it would result in an incredibly long detour. What's more, the map which Daolord Solesky had given Ning didn't even specify the details to any such detour, instead simply telling him to go straight through the sea. This was because this was actually the safest option; the other options were even more dangerous!

Although this was safer by comparison, it was still a rather dangerous trip for World-level cultivators. If they weren't careful, they would easily die in this place.

This was one of the reasons why very few World-level cultivators would embark on such long journeys! When Ning had been in the Badlands Territory, he had queried the Starlord of Fogstone regarding the location of Vastheaven Palace, but neither the Starlord nor his subordinates had even heard of it. This was because the distance between the two territories was utterly enormous. Even the Badlands Court, the most powerful organization within the Badlands Territory, only held a few cultivators who were aware of Vastheaven Palace.

"We'll reach the Sea of Darkness soon," Ning sent mentally. "I recommend you go into the golem now. Don't stray too far from my side."

"I know my own limits, Master." Su Youji was quite excited. "The legendary Sea of Darkness. Actually, I've never even heard of it before this! To think that I'm going to be going into it just a short while from now. Wow. This trip from the Badlands Territory to the Vastheaven Territory will give me something to brag about for many, many years to come."

Ning chuckled, then closed his eyes and focused on attuning to the sword-intent of his Violetjewels.

He was attuned to its sword-intent at all times as he continuously meditated on the Dao of the Sword.

Whoosh.

The flying vessel continuously teleported through the emptiness of space. Roughly a day later, they finally arrived at the borders of the Sea of Darkness.

The entire vessel was completely silent as all ninety-nine cultivators stared at the distant sea of spatial chaos. Even here, at the mere borders of the sea, they could sense the spatial waves crashing against their flying vessel.

"Everyone." World God Xiang Lu spoke out. The other cultivators turned their gazes from the Sea to him.

“According to what fellow Daoist Poisonfeather said, although this vessel is fast, it’ll still take over six hundred years to go through the Sea of Darkness. During these six hundred years, we’ll be in a state of constant danger. Thus, if anything happens I would like to ask that the more powerful experts among us to hold back. Please help out our weaker fellow Daoists. Once one of us dies, the formation will be dramatically weakened as well. The more of us die, the weaker the formation will be, making it even more difficult for us to safely traverse the Sea of Darkness,” World God Xiang Lu said.

“Naturally.”

“Since we are all on the same ship, we should all support and help each other.”

“Fellow Daoists, I hope all of us will be able to make it safely through this Sea of Darkness.”

The cultivators aboard the vessel were all quite nervous. This was the Sea of Darkness, after all. Most likely, few to none of them would dare to traverse this place all by themselves.

As for Ning, he watched quite calmly from his little corner. His original plan had been to venture into the Sea of Darkness alongside Su Youji, but that would have indeed been rather dangerous. Now that ninety-nine World-level cultivators had joined forces, if nothing went awry they would stand at least a ninety-plus percent chance of successfully traversing the Sea. If you factored in Ning’s true level of power, it could be said that they were virtually guaranteed to succeed.

Boom!

The pitch-black vessel flew forward at high speed, smashing straight into the Sea of Darkness. It continuously sped up as it flew forward, quickly breaking past the limits of the Heavenly Daos and continuing to skyrocket in speed. Soon, it reached a level of speed that was roughly double the speed of light. This was the vessel’s limit, and it began to cruise forward at this speed.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Dark, turbulent waves of distorted chaos and space repeatedly crashed the sides of the vessel.

As for the ninety-nine cultivators, they all stared intently at their surroundings. Even Ning elected to draw Violetjewel from its sheath on his back.

“What a nervous feeling.” Su Youji stared at her surroundings as well.

The World Gods and Chaos Immortals present were all extraordinary figures with extraordinary vision. Take Ji Ning, for instance. Even when he merely relied on his eyes, his current visual acuity far surpassed the level he was at back when he was an Empyrean God who used the [Torch Dragon’s Eye].

“No need to be so worried, everyone. I’ve been through the Sea of Darkness before.” A pudgy, fat-faced, chubby-eared youth next to Ning let out a merry chuckle. “The most dangerous race of creatures here in the Sea of Darkness is the race of ‘Oddbats’, but they live in groups deep within the Sea of Darkness. Based on my previous experience, we’ll generally suffer just one attack every four or five days.”

“YIIIIII!” An ear-piercing screech suddenly rang out.

A strange beast that was pitch-black in color and had a pair of bat-like wings suddenly emerged out of nowhere from the spatial waves. It brandished its fierce claws as it charged straight towards one of the cultivators atop the vessel. Fortunately, that cultivator had been keeping a vigilant watch and

immediately struck out with his enormous greataxe, the power of his blow causing space around him to congeal and turn almost solid.

“Kill.”

“Kill!”

One strange creature after began to emerge from the spatial waves, all having bat-like wings, incredibly sharp spear-like tails, and fierce claws.

“Oddbats!” Ning was wielding Violetjewel, while Su Youji had already entered her golem. She was able to control it at the same time as she controlled the many blade-like magic treasures around her.

“Kill! Kill!” One of the Oddbats flew onto the vessel and pounced straight towards Ning. Ning struck out with Violetjewel, transforming it into a streak of graceful sword-light that chopped straight towards the Oddbat’s neck. However, the Oddbat used its left claw to gracefully deflect the blow.

Clank!

When the sword clashed against the claw, a clanking sound was heard.

“According to the star map records I read pertaining to the Sea of Darkness, these Oddbat creatures have incredibly tough tails and claws, which are the hardest parts on their bodies and equivalent to Dao weapons. It seems this really is the case.” Still, Ning simply spun his sword-light in a relaxed, graceful manner.

Slash! How could a dumb creature such as an Oddbat possibly be able to defend against Ning’s marvelous sword-arts? The sword chopped straight through the Oddbat’s neck, severing its head from the rest of its body. Moments later, the Oddbat’s body began to completely break apart, leaving nothing behind.

Oddbats...

They were unique creatures that were formed from the unique environs of the Sea of Darkness. They possessed extremely low levels of intelligence, and they usually lived for only shockingly brief periods of time. Although they had World-level power, they lived for less than three centuries. Once three centuries passed, their bodies would naturally disintegrate and leave nothing behind. The only way for them to live longer was for them to undergo a fundamental evolution.

It could be said that there were three tiers of Oddbats. There were the black Oddbats, the silver Oddbats, and the golden Oddbats. The black Oddbats only lived for less than three centuries, the silver Oddbats lived for less than a chaos cycle, but the golden Oddbats could live forever.

However, every part of a golden Oddbat’s body was a precisely treasure. Generally speaking, when Samsara Daolords encountered them, they would immediately kill them and collect the corpse! Thus, there were very few golden Oddbats in the Sea of Darkness.

“Kill!”

Slash!

Bang!

Magic treasures flew everywhere, as did sword-light, saber-light, and divine abilities.

The cultivators aboard the flying vessel all used the various techniques they had available to quickly massacre any of the Oddbats who dared to invade their vessel. After battling for a short period of time, the remaining Oddbats all retreated.

Hundreds of Oddbats had taken part in this battle, all of black-colored ones who were fairly weak.

“That was certainly easy.”

“We beat them pretty easily.”

“I barely had a chance to even fight.”

The previously nervous cultivators all glanced at each other. Many were now much more relaxed than before.

“We were lucky this time. We only encountered black Oddbats. If a silver Oddbat had come, things would’ve been much more troublesome. I’ve heard that silver Oddbats are very nearly comparable to transcendent World Gods in power,” the chubby-faced youth chortled.

“Ol’ brother Ninehearts, can you please shut your yap? I don’t want to run into one of those silver Oddbats.” An old man next to him who had a face that looked like the withered bark of a dried tree shook his head helplessly.

“Silver Oddbats are nothing. According to the legends I heard, there are golden Oddbats as well,” the chubby-faced youth said.

Time slowly flowed on.

It was just as World God Ninehearts said. Every four or five days, they would suffer an attack. Every so often, a silver Oddbat would appear amongst the ranks of the black Oddbats!

None of the ninety-nine cultivators aboard the flying vessel were weak. Most were master-class World-level cultivators, and there were at least three supreme World-level cultivators! This was based on the amount of power they had displayed thus far.

A single supreme World-level cultivator, supported by the power of the formation, was enough to contend against one of the silver Oddbats.

“There really is strength in numbers.” Ning continued to relax in his corner of the flying vessel. Thus far, he hadn’t even used any divine abilities, much less the azureflower mist energy.

Ninety-nine World-level cultivators fighting in unison truly made for a powerful force. There was no need for Ning to fight too hard; they were able to easily defeat the repeated attacks by the Oddbats.

Three hundred and eleven years passed after their entry into the Sea of Darkness. The flying vessel continued to advance through the chaotic waves.

“Come, brother Darknorth. Drink with us!”

“Brother Poisonfeather.”

“Fairy Yun.”

The vessel was filled with the sound of laughter. Everyone was drinking and chatting, but they were also ready to engage in battle at a moment’s notice. They had gotten accustomed to fighting every few days during the past three centuries.

The battles had all been quite easy. Most of the World-level cultivators on the ship, Ning included, had yet to be forced to show their true power.

Roughly ten trillion kilometers away from them, in a region of chaotic space, an incredibly dense cluster of black Oddbats and a few silver Oddbats were ‘escorting’ a completely golden Oddbat. The golden Oddbat spread out its golden wings just a bit, its intelligent eyes staring at the distant flying vessel.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 26: World Level Chapter 21: Ambushed

“Everything has been verified?” The golden Oddbat spoke verbally, its shrill voice reverberating in a strange manner that caused ripples to appear in the already-chaotic space around it.

“Everything has been verified, your Highness. That flying vessel is indeed crewed by World-level cultivators, and there are ninety-nine of them in total.” A silver Oddbat responded respectfully to the query.

Oddbats were extremely dumb creatures, with the black ones only capable of calling out for blood and mayhem. It was difficult for them to even form complete sentences. However, once they evolved to become silver Oddbats they would gain a much longer lifespan and a dramatically increased level of intelligence. Silver Oddbats were at least comparable to ordinary mortals in intelligence.

“Ninety-nine World-level cultivators?” The golden Oddbat stared coldly towards the distant vessel. “They actually managed to mass such a large number of cultivators? That probably means they don’t have any Samsara Daolords amongst their ranks. Samsara Daolords wouldn’t bother with waiting so long, they’d just go through by themselves. Mm... since that’s the case, ehehe...”

Oddbats had a strange fetish; they delighted in eating the flesh of cultivators. They could even devour the incredibly tough bodies of most World Gods! So long as those divine bodies had not reached the Dao weapon level, the golden Oddbats would be able to crunch through them like candy. To the golden Oddbats, cultivators were the finest delicacies in existence.

This was exacerbated by the fact that Oddbats generally tended to be massacred in vast numbers by travelers. Even their kings, the golden Oddbats, would often find themselves killed by Samsara Daolords if they were careless. Thus, the race of Oddbats harbored tremendous hatred for cultivators in general.

“What luck. The Sea of Darkness is such a vast place, but I actually managed to run into a vessel of cultivators. Kill them, my children!” The golden Oddbat let out a shrill shriek as it ordered, “Wipe out all the cultivators on that vessel! Kill them all!”

“Yes.” The nine silver Oddbats assented respectfully in unison.

“Yes!” “Yes!” “Yes!” The many black Oddbats all cried out in a raucous chorus.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

The dense cluster of Oddbats all quickly passed through the spatial waves and flew towards the distant flying vessel. The Oddbats were born from within the Sea of Darkness and thus were born with the innate ability to conceal themselves within the violent spatial tempests within the Sea. This was the reason why they were able to fly close to the vessel without being detected.

The Sea of Darkness was incredibly vast, but it had very few golden Oddbats within it. Even though the vessel Ning's group was in was incredibly fast, it would still need more than six centuries to pass through the Sea. One could imagine how utterly vast it was! This was why it was extremely rare for a group to be unlucky enough to encounter a golden Oddbat. In fact, dozens of squads would often pass through the Sea without a single squad encountering one.

"Master, before we entered the Sea of Darkness you frightened me half to death with the stories about how dangerous this place is. Well? Look at how relaxed we all are!" Su Youji was seated next to Ji Ning in a corner of the vessel. The two were engaged in conversation.

"That's because you have more than ninety other cultivators fighting alongside you, helping you deal with those Oddbats. If the two of us had to deal with them all by ourselves, what do you think would happen?" Ning gave her a sideways glance.

Su Youji blinked.

What would happen?

Although Ji Ning was strong, he was still just one person. He'd only be able to deal with a portion of the Oddbats at any given point in time. Su Youji would have to rely on her golem and the bugbeasts to fight against them, but she'd still be in grave danger.

But of course, now that they had ninety-nine cultivators and a supportive formation, things were completely different.

"If I have to blame someone, I'm going to blame you for not having sufficiently detailed information," Su Youji mumbled. "The awe-inspiringly, inconceivably famous Daolord Nihilate failed in his Daomerge and is now searching for a disciple. How is it that your intelligence reports made no mention of such earth-shaking news?"

Ning couldn't help but let out an involuntarily snort.

The Sea of Darkness was an incredibly dangerous place. Although it was located next to the Qianyun Territory, in normal times it was extremely rare for cultivators to pass through the Sea, and they would only do so if they had an extremely special reason for it. It would take a very long period of time for ninety-nine World-level cultivators to be gathered. In contrast, this time they had managed to reach this figure in a very short period of time.

This was because of something which had happened on the other end of the Sea of Darkness, within the Jadesea Territory. A Samsara Daolord known as Daolord Nihilate had failed in his Daomerge, then had publicly proclaimed that he wished to take on a disciple!

Daolord Nihilate was an incredibly famous figure, especially in the surrounding territories. However, he was a solitary figure with no sect and no disciples to his name.

Now that he had failed in his Daomerge, he had suddenly realized that he didn't have any heirs at all. This was why he had chosen to accept a disciple. Daolords who had failed in the Daomerge were all at least Verge-class Daolords who were just as powerful as Daolord Solesky! If such a powerful Daolord wished to take on a disciple, almost every World-level cultivator would be willing to sacrifice almost anything in order to become that disciple!

Although this master would undoubtedly die in the future, it was a fact that even a World God like Northrest was able to survive for a full chaos cycle before his truesoul faded away. So long as Daolord Nihilate didn't go crazy and engaged in repeated, frenzied battles, he would be able to stay alive for an extremely long period of time. By the time he passed away, his guidance probably would've resulted in his student becoming a Samsara Daolord as well.

More importantly... who would dare to antagonize you if you had a master who had just failed his Daomerge? It could be said that prior to your master dying, you could do whatever you wished and be completely unchallenged. More than 80% of the people on Ning's vessel were heading to the Jadesea Territory to try and take on Daolord Nihilate as their master.

"While travelling to this place from the Badlands Territory, I heard quite a few legends and stories about things that had happened in the ancient past. I heard many stories about truly powerful Daolords who failed their Daomerge, their Daos vanishing and their lives ending..." Ning shook his head and sighed. "I really have heard of very few Daolords who succeeded in their Daomerge."

Ning was worried about Daolord Solesky. Although they hadn't had many interactions with each other, Daolord Solesky truly had treated Ning as he would a brother. In the Windsorce Ruins, Daolord Solesky had suffered severe injuries but elected to go all-out in attempting to locate Ning before even treating his own wounds. Only after he had located Ning had he calmed down and started to heal himself. Ning had felt tremendously moved by him when Ning saw this.

"Watch out!"

"YIIIIIIII!"

A sudden, shocking, high-pitched Oddbat shriek suddenly rang out. The cultivators who had been chatting calmly amongst each other instantly took control of their respective treasures and weapons, then started to attack.

Slash! Sword-light flashed in Ning's hands as he slew a black Oddbat. The creature's head went flying off, then the rest of its body dissipated into nothingness.

"What?!" Ning's face suddenly fell dramatically.

A tight, dense cluster of black Oddbats had appeared in the area around the vessel. There were far more Oddbats this time than there had ever been in the past, at least ten times more than the previous record! There had to be thousands of the things. They all circled around the vessel, causing it to slow down and eventually come to a full stop, unable to move any further.

“Transform.’ Ning’s body blurred as he manifested three heads and six arms. He now wielded six Violetjewels in his arms.

“Careful, everyone.”

“There are nine of those silver Oddbats.”

The situation instantly turned extremely grim as all the cultivators began to grow nervous. It must be understood that every single silver Oddbat was comparable to a transcendent World God in power. Even though the cultivators were all supported by the power of their formation, they had to have originally possessed the power of a supreme World God if they wished to be able to give the silver Oddbats a good fight.

Whoosh. Ning’s sword-light spun out in a beautiful arc, causing eight of the black Oddbats around him to be annihilated.

“Youji, bind this bugnest.” Ning immediately tossed a jade green globe to Su Youji. As soon as she bound it, she would be in control of the fifty-one bugbeasts stored within it. Given how ugly the situation was looking and how many Oddbats were attacking, Ning was worried that he wouldn’t be able to protect her.

“Alright.” Su Youji nodded. She wouldn’t decline or be polite at a time like this, and she immediately bound the treasure.

“Kill.”

“Kill.”

“There’s too many of these Oddbats!”

“Why are there so many?”

“Block that silver Oddbat!”

A wild battle was occurring atop the flying vessel. Magic treasures flew everywhere while World Gods charged to and fro.

“Let me deal with this silver Oddbat.”

“I’ll handle that one!”

The cultivators on the vessel had never experienced a truly dangerous situation during this trip. Quite a few of them had therefore been hiding their true power. Now, however, they had to reveal everything. There were actually more than ten cultivators who had the power of supreme World Gods! It made sense. If you wanted to become a disciple of Daolord Nihilate, you had to have enough power to back up that goal.

“Kill!”

Ning had transformed into a ghostly blur, his swords becoming even more ephemeral and unpredictable than before. They struck out lightning fast, causing Oddbats to perish wherever they went. The Oddbats were completely unable to defend against Ning’s terrifying sword-art.

During the past three hundred-plus years, Ning had often sent incarnations of divine power into the estate-worlds of the Mirrorsnow Paintings to challenge the guardians. His sword-arts were now much more powerful than they had been back in the Badlands Territory.

“Wipe out any Oddbats that get near me.” Su Youji summoned her bugbeasts, calling out a total of thirty of them to surround her and slay any Oddbats that dared to draw near her.

The black Oddbats were all quite weak, after all. These bugbeasts all had the power of master-class World Gods; plenty strong enough to deal with Oddbats.

Cultivators were engaged in fierce battles throughout the entire vessel. As a result, they were able to just barely hold their own against this assault by the nine silver Oddbats and thousands of black Oddbats.