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Book 5: Zifu Disciple Chapter 17: Longing! Rain Line!

At a single glance, Dong Ziqi saw clearly the Ji clan's weakness. His thoughts were completely correct; Ji Ning was indeed the future pillar of the Ji clan! In this group of Ji clan experts...even if Ji Ninefire and Granny Shadow had to die, they wouldn't let Ning die!

"Ninefire, I urge you to obediently hand over the official writ." Ziqi frowned as he shouted.

"My Ji clan is indeed weak and small, which is why we are willing to offer this elemental ore mine to you without requesting any part of it. But for you to try and forcibly take over our official writ...you are perhaps going too far! The official writ is the foundation of the Ji clan. How can my Ji clan..." Ninefire's face changed halfway through his words, and he couldn't help but lower his head to look at the ground.

The ground was trembling slightly.

Dong Ziqi's group of five stood in the distance, and in their midst, the gray-robed man's eyes flashed. The ki in his body had long ago entered the ground. By the time the Ji clan's Zifu Disciples sensed it, the technique had already been executed!

"BOOM!"

Strands of green, wooden vines emerged suddenly from the ground, all of them flailing about wildly, covered with a layer of deep green light. The thin, slender strands of vines twined about each other like a tough cord rope. They suddenly emerged from the ground beneath Ning's feet, instantly wrapping themselves around Ning!

Fast!

Completely caught off-guard!

"What!" The faces of Ninefire, Granny Shadow, and the others changed. In the blink of an eye, Ji Ning, who had been standing next to them just moments ago, had been wildly entangled by those countless rattan vines.

"Quick, save Ji Ning!" Granny Shadow shouted.

"Too late!" Dong Ziqi, standing in the distance, just laughed loudly as he spoke.

Bang!

The countless vines wrapped around Ning whipped out violently, throwing him towards the ground. With a rumble, an enormous crevice appeared within the ground, with Ning and those vines already burrowed deep within the ground.

"Snowdragon Mountain, you actually..." Ninefire's face was savage.

"Release my son." Ji Yichuan was frantic as well.

Every member of the Ji clan wanted to save Ning, but the sudden emergence of those vines, which had wrapped around Ning and then thrown him underground, caused them to not know what they should do to save him.

“Hahaha...” Dong Ziqi just laughed wildly as he turned to look at the gray-robed man. “Junior apprentice-brother Muse, bring Ji Ning over here...” Dong Ziqi’s face suddenly changed, because he saw that his fellow disciple’s forehead was matted with sweat. Clearly, he was already going all out in this struggle.

“That Ji Ning is currently breaking through my technique...” The gray-robed man’s eyes had turned red, and he was pouring all of his ki into the technique.

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Underground.

A seed had grown into thousands of wooden green tendrils, which were now heavily entangling themselves around Ning. Within the entangling clutches of the vines, a Waterflame Lotus was surrounding Ning, constantly swiveling around him and frantically resisting these tendrils, unceasingly killing them one by one while the dead vines were unceasingly being reborn.

“Immortal practitioners truly have many techniques at their disposal. This technique wasn’t included in our intelligence reports. I wonder which branch member of Snowdragon Mountain used it.” Ning had suddenly suffered an attack, and this attack was too fast, giving him no time to break through before he had been thrown underground.

Due to the constriction of the tendrils, the amount of space Ning had to move in was too limited, giving him no chance to use the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] at all.

Thus, the first thing Ning had done was to execute the Waterflame Lotus.

“Swivel, swivel...” The Waterflame Lotus slowly swiveled, grinding those thin vines that wanted to entangle Ning into dust. Nearly five years had passed since that battle with Bei Zishan, and during these five years, Ning’s improvements with regards to his understanding of the Dao had only grown greater and greater.

If early on, the insight he had gained with regards to the Dao was just a thread, over the course of time, he had gained more threads of the True Meaning of the Dao.

These many thin threads...had drawn close to each other, naturally resulting in a thicker thread.

Ning’s time spent at Serpentwing Lake in particular, where he was virtually always in tune with the world...had resulted in him reaching a very high level of understanding. Actually, this was something which could only be accomplished by an Immortal practitioner who had reached a very high level of understanding. When one could always be in tune with nature and always be able to go attune with the Dao, it was only natural that one would gain many insights into the True Meaning of the Dao.

His level of understanding had risen.

Thus, the power his Waterflame Lotus now had was naturally much greater than before. That murderous grinding power alone would most likely instantly grind even peak Xiantian experts into tiny pieces in but an instant.

“Darknorth sword.” Within the Waterflame Lotus, Ning drew forth a Darknorth sword.

“Longing! Rain Line!”

Ning murmured softly to himself.

Each time he used this technique, he couldn't help but think of his mother. This technique was one which he had developed thanks to the boundless longing he felt for his mother! It was the longing each drop of rain held for each other drop which allowed them to form a line of rain...the insights Ning had gained over the past five years into the Dao had resulted in him developing many techniques, but this was the most powerful of them all.

This technique contained within it a boundless, powerful longing. It was born from the [Raindrop Sutra], but it had left the Raindrop Sutra far behind.

“Swish....”

Ning simultaneously struck out with two Darknorth swords at the same time, piercing past the Waterflame Lotus, which seemed to be like a shadow, not obstructing Ning's swords in the slightest. Ning's swords seemed to be like the caress of a mother, carrying boundless longing within them...as they summoned a large amount of natural power which directly coalesced atop the two swords.

Anyone seeing this technique would unconsciously feel a sour feeling in their hearts, sense a powerful, endless yearning.

“Crackle...” Many vines were instantly shattered. Although they were very tough, they were still chopped apart. In the face of Ning's most powerful close-combat sword technique, the technique of Zifu Disciple Muse was unable to contain Ning.

Actually, the first reason for this was that Ning's swordplay had already far outstripped that of most Zifu Disciples. Most likely, even many Wanxiang Adepts wouldn't be on par with him in this regard.

The second reason was that Ning's Fiendgod body was simply too powerful, comparable to an early-stage Fiendgod Zifu Disciple. His strength was so mighty, and his swordplay was so formidable; how hard must it be for a technique to contain him!

Sword light flashed and danced, shattering a large number of frantically twisting vines. Ning followed his sword light and rose into the sky, breaking through the earth and arriving on the surface of the ground.

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“Bang!”

Just as the Ji clansmen were worriedly looking at the ground, into the hole from whence the rattan vines had disappeared, suddenly, hundreds of meters away, the ground suddenly exploded as a ray of sword light soared into the sky. A fur-clad youth, wielding a pair of swords, his body surrounded by a Fire-water Lotus, suddenly drifted up, then landed on the ground.

“How is that possible!” Dong Ziqi's face changed dramatically. Others might not understand this technique of his junior apprentice-brother's, but he understood it very well. A sudden attack from this

technique...it would be very difficult for someone to break through it. Even if one succeeded, it would only come at great effort.

“That Ji Ning broke through?” The muscular man behind Ziqi stared as he growled, “How is that possible. I’m a Fiendgod practitioner, but even I wouldn’t be able to break through if senior apprentice-brother Muse captured me.”

Junior apprentice Ju San was the newest Zifu Disciple of the five, who had only recently established his Violet Palace.

He was just an early Zifu Disciple, but he was a Fiendgod practitioner! As an early Fiendgod practitioner...his battle strength was also amazing. It didn’t matter if others injured him, but if he landed a hit on someone else, that person would die! This was the advantage which Fiendgod practitioners had; if he trained to become a late stage Fiendgod Zifu Disciple, even Dong Ziqi would address him as ‘senior apprentice-brother’.

“He broke through?”

“How old is he?”

“Senior apprentice-brother Muse’s ‘Myriad Ancient Green Vines’ technique...was broken, just like that?” That green-haired male-female pair stared as well, their faces filled with disbelief.

In their group, Muse’s status was second only to Ziqi, precisely because of how powerful he was! In particular, his ambushing abilities with the ‘Myriad Ancient Green Vines’ had caused the other fellow disciples to feel endless admiration for him. The restricting power of those green vines was indeed tremendous. How physically strong was a Fiendgod Zifu Disciple? And yet, even such a person was unable to break through.

But the person who had broken through it...was only sixteen years old! No matter how monstrous of a genius he was, it was too...

But how could they know that Ning’s physical strength was comparable to their junior apprentice-brother Ju San to begin with. In terms of his level of attainment in the sword, he vastly outstripped Ju San by many levels!

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“Ji Ning.”

“Ji Ning.” Ji Ninefire, Ji Truekeep, Granny Shadow, and the other members of the Ji clan all stared at Ning with surprise and delight. At the same time, they felt unbearably pleased at the looks of shock and amazement on the faces of the five Zifu Disciples of Snowdragon Mountain! Simultaneously, the Ji clansmen couldn’t help but feel stunned at Ning’s power. Ninefire’s eyes actually narrowed as he sighed in his heart that he felt he was growing more and more mystified by this kid.

The Waterflame Lotus surrounding Ning vanished, and he walked over.

“Ji Ning!” A hoarse voice rang out.

Ning turned to look.

From afar, there was a gray-robed man with an ashen, pallid face who stood by Dong Ziqi's side. The man was staring fixedly at Ning. "You...what's the name of that sword technique of yours?"

"Longing." Ning said softly. "Rain Line!"

"Rain Line?" The gray-robed man stared wide-eyed in disbelief. "The power of the Rain Line technique of your Ji clan's [Raindrop Sutra] is this great?" He was quite familiar with the nine sword stances of the [Raindrop Sutra]."

"There are quite a few things that you don't know." Ning snorted coldly, no longer explaining.

This sword technique was birthed from the Raindrop Sutra, but it was no longer the same as the Rain Line technique of the past.

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Book 5: Zifu Disciple Chapter 18: The Ji Clan's Concession

"Rain Line?" Dong Ziqi murmured softly as well. The four Zifu Disciples behind him were still in a state of shock.

"This Ji Ning is even more powerful than anticipated." Ziqi pondered. "He's only sixteen years old, but even junior apprentice-brother Muse is unable to take him down! Most likely, only I will be capable of killing him." If he were to personally attack, he would have to use his Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation. Once the formation appeared, then the two sides would fight to the death, and there would be no chance to salvage the situation.

Dong Ziqi was very self-confident, but he also understood that the Ji clan's power wasn't weak either. If they were really to fight against each other, his side would lose one or two of their five Zifu Disciples.

If he could let the other side retreat in the face of encroaching difficulties, that would be for the best.

"Ji Ning, formidable."

"Well done."

The Ji clansmen all looked towards Ning. "Are you alright?" Ji Yichuan looked at his son. Seeing that his son was unwounded, he relaxed.

"Dong Ziqi!" Granny Shadow said in a fierce voice. "What was the meaning of this? You suddenly attacked a member of our Ji clan! All of us are present, and yet you still dare to behave so rashly."

"Your Snowdragon Mountain clansmen are too wild and unbridled."

The Ji clansmen were all very angry, but they still forced themselves not to attack. The opponents, after all, belonged to Snowdragon Mountain.

"Hahaha..." Dong Ziqi just laughed. "Sudden attack? That's a nasty way to put it. My junior apprentice-brother simply heard long ago that your Ji clan produced a genius with exceptional talents, and that even junior apprentice-brother Bei Zishan of our Snowdragon Mountain died in his hands. Today, when we saw this genius, he couldn't help but feel his hands itch and want to have a little spar. What, can it be

that a Zifu Disciple of our Snowdragon Mountain is forbidden from sparring with a member of your Ji clan?"

"You call that a spar?" Granny Shadow said in a fierce, hoarse voice.

"Naturally." Ziqi said. "And now, it seems that this genius of your Ji clan is indeed formidable. He was able to break through the technique of my junior apprentice-brother. Admirable, admirable."

"You..." Granny Shadow felt a fiery rage build in her belly. She had lived for nearly four centuries, but had never been angered like this before. If she didn't have other things holding her back, she would've attacked long ago, but for the sake of the rest of the Ji clan, she had to endure it.

A savage look flashed past Ziqi's eyes, and he snorted coldly. "Forget about sparring; even if we really killed that Ji Ning, what would your Ji clan do about it?" Dong Ziqi's cold, sinister eyes swept past this group of Ji clansmen, and a disdainful smile was playing at the corner of his lips, causing the Ji clansmen to feel all the more enraged.

Swollen with arrogance!

What Ziqi was doing was being swollen with arrogance, with the intention of completely suppressing the Ji clansmen!

"Patriarch." Truekeep was truly enraged now, and he shouted, "Our Ji clan cannot let ourselves be so easily abused as this. I'd rather live and stand fighting rather than die kneeling. Our Ji clan has made one concession after another, but Snowdragon Mountain just continues to advance and pressure us further. Do they really take our Ji clan to be made out of mud, for them to mold as they please? Let's go all out against them! Five of them came today. We are definitely going to make sure at least half of them die!"

"Let's go all out."

"Patriarch, let's go all out."

"They refuse to give our Ji clan a way out. We won't let them live either." Immediately, quite a few Ji clansmen began to bellow with rage.

This caused Dong Ziqi and his group of five to be slightly startled. Snowdragon Mountain was indeed mighty, but that was thanks to the main sect! The Swallow Mountain branch of Snowdragon Mountain, by itself, was more powerful than the Ji clan, true, but only to a certain point...after all, everyone only had access to Zifu Disciple level fighters at most. If they really went all out, even if Snowdragon Mountain eradicated the Ji clan, the losses to the Swallow Mountain branch would still be heavy.

"Shut your mouths." Ninefire turned and shouted mentally through his Ki, his voice reverberating within the ears of each member of the clan.

The clansmen all looked towards Ji Ninefire.

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"What are they discussing?" That muscular young man, Ju San, asked the other members of Snowdragon Mountain mentally.

“These local bumpkins.” The gray-robed Muse sent back. “They are used to life in the tribes, where they would rather break than bend. If you force them too far, they’ll go all out...we gave them a bit too much pressure, and so they are beginning to fight back.”

Dong Ziqi sent back confidently, “No need to worry. Ninefire is an old fellow who has lived for nearly four centuries. He is quite sly. He will remonstrate with and hold back those other clansmen.”

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The Ji clansmen were secretly speaking mentally to each other.

“Snowdragon Mountain has gone too far, true.” Ninefire sent mentally. “But no matter how arrogant they behave, we have to endure it. Or are we really going to fight against them?”

“But Patriarch, we can sign a transfer agreement with the Grand Xia Dynasty. By then, we would have the protection of the Grand Xia Dynasty, and we would even receive thirty percent of this elemental ore mine.” A muscular member of the Ji clan sent mentally.

“Fool!” Ninefire sent back. “To sign a transfer agreement with the Grand Xia Dynasty, we must first make a report, at which point an Celestial Envoy of the Grand Xia Dynasty would come to inspect this elemental ore mine. Only at the very end would a transfer agreement be signed! This process takes time. During the course of such a long period of time, our Ji clan would most likely suffer the risk of annihilation!”

“For the sake of thirty percent of an elemental ore mine, cause the entire clan to fall into the risk of annihilation?” Ninefire shouted. “Foolishness, utter foolishness! And even if we truly do succeed in signing a transfer agreement, resulting in the Grand Xia Dynasty protecting our Ji clan for a thousand years...what about after that thousand years? By then, Snowdragon Mountain would come to take revenge on our Ji clan, and our clan would still end up doomed. That’s why I would rather give this entire elemental ore mine to Snowdragon Mountain.”

“But...”

“This is too infuriating.”

“Too...”

The hearts of every Ji clansman burned with rage.

“No matter how angry and unwilling to accept it we might feel, for the sake of the Ji clan, we have to endure it all.” Ninefire sighed mentally to them. “As long as the Ji clan can continue to exist and prosper, so what if we have to suffer some mistreatment?”

“If you have to blame someone, then blame us for not being strong enough. This clearly is a stroke of luck bestowed upon us by the heavens, but we are unable to accept and make use of this elemental ore mine.” Ninefire looked towards Ning. “Ji Ning, you are the most incredible talent which our Ji clan has ever produced, since the founding of the clan. If you continue developing, even becoming a Wanxiang Adept is virtually guaranteed.”

All of the clansmen looked towards Ning, their eyes filled with hope and longing.

Right.

The hopes of the Ji clan's future rise to prominence rested on him! These Xiantian lifeforms of the Central Prefecture previously had held some doubts regarding Ning's power, as prior to this, they had only heard rumors about him...but now, they had personally witnessed Ning reveal some of his power. He had even broken through the technique of a powerful Zifu Disciple expert of Snowdragon Mountain. Ning was only sixteen years old! When they thought of Ning's potential, all of them were excited.

"However, no matter how great a genius someone is, once he's dead, he's no longer a genius." Ninefire looked at Ning. "For the sake of our Ji clan, you must survive and live a long life."

Ning nodded gently.

He thought of a person...the fourth master of the Aquatic Manor. Rampart. The man who, despite the presence of so many competitors, had successfully become the personal disciple of Immortal Juhua. There was no need to say anything about his talent...but he had died as a Wanxiang Adept.

"We members of the Ji clan will firmly remember the insults we have borne today." Ninefire looked at every member of the clan. "We have to grow strong. After we grow strong, others will not dare to insult us, look down on us."

"Right." The clansmen all nodded, and Ning nodded as well.

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Dong Ziqi and his group of five Zifu Disciples just watched to the side. Watched as the group of Ji clansmen all forcibly restrained and swallowed the anger. Seeing the looks on their faces, they couldn't help but snicker. This was something they had seen too many times. In the past, when they had acted on orders from the main sect, those minor tribes and clans had all been forced to bend their waists and lower their heads in the face of Snowdragon Mountain.

"Dong Ziqi." Ninefire turned his head to look towards Ziqi and the others.

"Finished chatting?" Ziqi looked at Ninefire. "But Ninefire, let me tell you clearly that no matter what, you must hand over the official writ for the City of Ten Thousand Swords! If you don't hand it over, then the destruction of your Ji clan will be impending!"

The members of the Ji clan were barely able to restrain their rage, which was now painted upon their faces.

They 'had' to hand over the official writ?

Wasn't this the same as forcing their Ji clan to give up their territory?

Ninefire clenched his teeth, his face ugly to behold. One word at a time, he ground out, "My Ji clan can give up the official writ and leave this land! This land will all belong to Snowdragon Mountain."

"What."

Everyone was stunned. Ning stared at the Patriarch in shock as well.

Ninefire continued to speak, grinding each word out. “But your Snowdragon Mountain must give our Ji clan an official writ as well, to give our Ji clan a place to resist! We’ll use the official writ for our City of Ten Thousand Swords in exchange for another official writ of a large commandery city of the Grand Xia Dynasty. Our Ji clan is willing to leave our homeland and depart.”

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Book 5: Zifu Disciple Chapter 19: Separation

Turn their backs on their homeland and leave?

Ji Ning forcibly suppressed the unwillingness in his heart. He wasn’t willing. He truly wasn’t willing. But he saw that all the members of the clan around him, including his father, Ji Truekeep, Granny Shadow, and the others were all silent. As long as the Ji clan could continue to survive and prosper, then they would be willing to endure even departing from their homeland!

“As long as Snowdragon Mountain will hand over an official writ.” Ninefire said in a low voice. “Then our Ji clan will immediately hand over the official writ for the City of Ten Thousand Swords!”

“Official writ?”

In the distance, Dong Ziqi and the other five looked at each other, quietly discussing this amongst each other.

“Senior apprentice-brother Ziqi, what should we do?” The green-haired woman sent mentally. “Hand over an official writ?”

“Hand over?” Ziqi looked at the green-haired woman. “Junior apprentice-sister He Xing, will you hand over one?”

The green-haired woman immediately shut her mouth.

These Zifu Disciples who had left the main sect and independently set up branches were all those who didn’t have much potential, and could be considered outer members of the sect. The commandery cities of the Grand Xia Dynasty they had taken over in the Swallow Mountain region was their foundation as well! It was also the foundation of many of their tribes, and their forces had coalesced there long ago. How could they give them up?

Hand over an official writ?

Who would hand it over?

The elemental ore mine would be given to the main Snowdragon Mountain Sect. Why should we sacrifice? Why should our tribes sacrifice? Every single commandery city had three Zifu Disciples. They had to all agree before the official writ would be relinquished! But who would be willing to relinquish a base they had built up over so many years?

“We aren’t willing to give ours up, but can it be that our fellow disciples in other areas would be willing to hand over a commandery city of theirs?” Ziqi shook his head. “Our Snowdragon Mountain has many branches, and those fellow disciples of those branches won’t care about us at all. How could they be so kind-hearted as to relinquish a commandery city for us?”

“At least, it’s impossible for our Ju clan. I don’t agree, and my uncle in the clan won’t agree either.” The muscular man said hurriedly. “Forget it. I refuse to believe the Ji clan will really dare to resist.”

“Right.”

The green-haired man nodded. “Force the Ji clan! If they resist, we will exterminate their clan! If they obey us, they will still be able to stay alive! I trust the Ji clan knows what they should do.”

“Right. This isn’t the first time we’ve done this.” The muscular man, Ju San, nodded as well.

“Then that’s what we’ll do.” The gray-robed Muse nodded as well.

Dong Ziqi looked at his four fellow disciples. Although not every member of the Swallow Mountain branch had come, since after all they couldn’t possibly summon everyone just for the sake of an elemental ore mine, these five represented all of the various internal factions of the Swallow Mountain branch.

“Fine.” Ziqi nodded. “Then that’s what we will do. Just as junior apprentice-brother Ju San said, this isn’t the first time we’ve done this.”

Snowdragon Mountain had many branches.

With so many branches, how could they take over enough commandery cities? Fighting for each one?

That was lunacy.

They could simply use the butcher’s blade and their fame to frighten others simultaneously. In truth, the vast majority of tribes would, in the end, grit their teeth and swallow their rage, voluntarily relinquishing their official writs and obediently leaving. But of course, some battles would occasionally occur, as there were no absolutes. Dong Ziqi, however, was confident that his side’s power was definitely superior to that of the Ji clan’s.

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The Ji clan was waiting.

Although they felt heartache and unwillingness, Ning and everyone else had begun to mentally prepare for leaving their homeland. As long as the Ji clan was able to continue to survive, it would all be worth it. The Ji clan was waiting for Snowdragon mountain’s response.

“Right.” Ziqi let out a light snort. “Ji Ninefire.”

Every Ji clansmen looked towards Ziqi, while Ninefire said hurriedly, “This is the final, bottom line of the Ji clan.”

“Bottom line?” Ziqi laughed coldly. “Bottom lines are meant to be broken! Ji Ninefire, you want to trade the official writ for the City of Ten Thousand Swords for another official writ? You really are dreaming. Right now, I’ll give you two options. The first option is that you defy my Snowdragon Mountain, and your Ji clan wait for annihilation. The second option is that you hand over the official writ to the City of Ten Thousand Swords. Our Snowdragon Mountain sect will permit your Ji clan to continue to live in this

area. After the elemental ore mine has been fully excavated, we will return the official writ to the City of Ten Thousand Swords to you. This is the promise of myself, Dong Ziqi!"

The faces of every member of the Ji clan changed.

What?

Promise?

What a dogshit promise! What was a promise worth? Just by a saying a few empty words, he was demanding that the Ji clan hand over their official writ?

"Ziqi." Ninefire was both furious and frantic.

"Shut your mouth." Ziqi snapped in a fierce voice, his cold, sinister eyes staring at Ninefire. "You only need to choose...to continue surviving, or to be annihilated! This is the decision for you to make, Ji Ninefire! If you choose the annihilation of your clan...well, it has been a long time since my Eight Trigrams Dragon Blood Formation has truly drawn blood."

The other four Zifu Disciples by his side all had savage looks flashing in their eyes. They were born in the main sect, and had each learned some powerful techniques. Their abilities were quite a bit superior to the abilities of ordinary, local experts. If they truly were to fight all out...there were three more Zifu Disciples in their headquarters. In total, they had eight Zifu Disciples!"

"Choose!" Dong Ziqi said coldly.

On the Ji clan's side, some people were so angry that they were trembling.

"Patriarch!" Some clansmen called out loudly.

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaah!" Ninefire raised his head, howling heroically. "I, Ji Ninefire, am ashamed to meet the ancestors of the Ji clan!"

Ning ground his teeth, his entire body trembling.

As for the distant Dong Ziqi and the other four, they watched this with cold smiles on their faces. The decision to give up an ancestral homeland would indeed cause someone to feel ashamed to meet one's ancestors. But would these local bumpkins dare to resist? Resistance meant death!

"Die!" Ninefire suddenly threw out six black spheres, which transformed into six rays of light, flying directly before Dong Ziqi's group of five.

"Thunderflame Pearls!"

Dong Ziqi and the other four were greatly startled. As they came from the main sect, they immediately recognized these very common and extremely vicious and sinister Thunderflame Pearls. They contained the power of lightning and fire, and held extremely explosive force. Once they caused them to explode...they would immediately detonate, and the power of the explosions would be very shocking. The sudden explosion of six Thunderflame Pearls at a close distance could cause even Zifu Disciples to die.

“These local bumpkin clans really do have some treasures. They are actually able to throw out six Thunderflame Pearls at one go.” Even as Ziqi was frantically dodging, this thought drifted into his mind.

The five Zifu Disciples of Snowdragon Mountain quickly separated into separate directions.

Boom...

Powerful explosions of thunder and flame burst forth, and dazzling serpents of electricity blasted out in every direction, while flames began to burn the entire area, causing the entire world to shake. The power was indeed astonishingly fierce.

“Arise!” A look of utter savagery was in the eyes of Ninefire, who had just thrown out those six Thunderflame Pearls.

Swoosh...

Suddenly, the desolate mountain wilderness in the nearby area was surrounded by mist and fog. Mist and fog appeared everywhere, and even Ning was only able to see to a distance of ten meters with the naked eye.

“Not good.” Dong Ziqi, who had just dodged the last attack and was feeling rather smug and disdainful, saw the mist which had appeared out of nowhere. His face instantly changed. “A bewildering formation!”

“That sly old fellow threw out those six Thunderflame Pearls not for the purpose of killing us, but to make sure that the five of us would all put some distance between us.” Ziqi’s face completely changed. He stared at the thick mist around him. He could only see to a distance of six meters with the naked eye. Previously, upon encountering the Thunderflame Pearls, they had all dodged at full strength, trying to move as far away as they could.

Thus, those fellow disciples had all put tens of meters of distance between each other. As long as they were more than fifteen meters away from each other, within this bewildering formation, they would be affected by the master of the formation, resulting in them moving further and further away from each other.

“This Ji Ninefire is planning to completely separate the five of us.” Ziqi was both frantic and furious.

“Senior apprentice-brother!” A distant voice rang out. “It’s a bewildering formation. We’ve all been separated. Ji Ninefire, that old bastard, is planning to kill us one by one! They will definitely have several Zifu Disciples join forces to fight against each of us one by one!”

Although he could hear the sound, within the bewildering formation, directions constantly changed, and so he couldn’t tell where it came from at all.

“Fellow apprentices Ju San, Muse, He Fang, and He Xing, are all of you together?” Ziqi called out frantically.

“I’m with my older brother.” A female’s voice rang out.

“I’m by myself.”

“I’m alone as well.”

The other two voices caused Ziqi’s heart to grow cold. He understood that although He Fang and his sister were together, Ju San, Muse, and Ziqi himself had been completely separated. And even if the two He siblings joined forces...once the Ji clan attacked together, they would also be in great danger.

“This time, I really have fallen into the trap of that old fellow.” Ziqi was both frantic and furious. “But how could he have set up this formation in advance?”

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Separated from each other within the fog of the bewildering formation, the five Zifu Disciples of Snowdragon Mountain were in a state of panic. At this time, the Ji clan’s side was both excited and shocked.

“Patriarch, why did you suddenly attack?”

“And this...this...this...what’s going on with this formation?”

All of the clansmen were stunned.

Ninefire swept everyone with his gaze, then growled, “My Ji clan isn’t a soft bone for them to chew on. They are riding on our heads to the point where they are even pissing and shitting on our faces. How can we possibly take any more of this? Rather than slink away like cowards, let’s battle to our heart’s content. In the end, my Ji clan will still have a chance!”

“Obey my orders!” Ninefire commanded.

All the clansmen awaited.

“Northwind, you go lead Ji Mo and the others to immediately board our birds to stealthily leave Swallow Mountain in three different streams.” Ninefire said. “They will pass down the lineage of the Ji clan.”

“Yes.”

“Ji Winterpool, immediately head to Swallow Mountain City and make a report to the Grand Xia Dynasty that an elemental ore mine has appeared within the territory of the Ji clan. I entrust this task to you. Remember, arrange for multiple messengers. You have to ensure that at least one group makes it to Swallow Mountain City.”

“Yes.”

Ninefire swept the rest with his gaze. “Everyone else who is not at the Zifu Disciple level, return to the City of Ten Thousand Swords. Leave this place to us. Go.”

With a thud, these members of the Ji clan all fell to their knees. They looked at Ninefire, Ning, Truekeep, Yichuan. Although they didn’t say anything, all of them then quickly left.

“We are the only ones left here.” Ninefire swept the remaining people with his gaze. “These five arrogant Zifu Disciples of Snowdragon Mountain have already been separated by my formation. As long as we attack them one by one, we can completely exterminate them!”

“Ji Ning.” Ninefire looked at Ning. “You are the hope of our Ji clan, and the future of our Ji clan. If the situation truly grows dire, you are to immediately use the Traceless Talisman to flee! As long as you survive, our Ji clan will not be exterminated!”

“Yes.” Ning gritted his teeth and replied.

“Prepare to kill, then.” Ninefire began to laugh loudly. “It’s been so many years since I’ve gone wild. I suddenly feel much younger, and filled with anticipation, like the first time I entered my marital bed!”

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Book 5: Zifu Disciple Chapter 20: Each Showing Their Abilities

“Patriarch, how did you come up with the idea in advance of setting up a formation?” Ji Truekeep couldn’t help but ask.

This was the question which Ji Ning and the others had on their minds as well. None of them had seen the Patriarch set up the formation, and after the Zifu Disciples of Snowdragon Mountain had come over...there was no time to set up a formation either.

Ji Ninefire glanced at the people before him. “When considering matters, one needs to take a longer view of things. When I first had an inkling of how large this elemental ore mine was, I grew concerned that it would attract the greed of Snowdragon Mountain, and so I began to take precautions against them! What if Snowdragon Mountain came and tried to pressure us? Thus, early on, I set down the formation in the area around us. If we didn’t end up fighting, fine. If we did though, then we naturally have to seize the upper hand. As for why I didn’t tell the rest of you? If I told you and let you all be aware of the great formation around us, would you have all displayed such rage and grief? Snowdragon Mountain’s people probably would have realized, found the formation, and broken through it long ago.”

“Uh...” Ning and the others all nodded.

But Ning understood as well...

Although this wasn’t very strange or mysterious once explained, earlier, everyone had been stunned and astonished by the size and scale of this elemental ore mine. None of them, however, had thought to set down a formation first. This was a matter of experience and foresight!

“No matter what, my actions cause me to feel ashamed to meet the ancestors of the Ji clan. I’ve let the Ji clan fall into peril.” Ninefire said in a low voice. “I didn’t want to choose this path at all. Choosing this path means fighting Snowdragon Mountain head on. My Ji clan must sign an agreement as soon as possible with the Grand Xia Dynasty. Once we sign the agreement, we will at least be guaranteed of a thousand years of safety. A thousand years from now, I have faith that our Ji clan would have risen to prominence. Even if we are still weak though, a thousand years is enough time for our Ji clan to have made our arrangements.”

“Now...”

“Let’s go kill them, as many as we can. The more we kill, the less pressure our Ji clan will be under.” Ninefire swept his gaze across everyone. Granny Shadow. The old servant, Ah Xing. Truekeep. Yichuan. Ning. These were the top-tier fighters of the Ji clan. “I, Shadow, Ah Xing, and Ning will join forces to kill the He siblings! Truekeep, Yichuan, the two of you go deal with Ju San.”

“Yes.”

“Yes.” Everyone acknowledged the order.

Shadow hurriedly asked, “Then what about Dong Ziqi? He’s a calamity waiting to happen. We must eradicate him early on.”

“He and Muse have located each other and joined forces already.” Ninefire said. “We will deal with them in the end.”

“Let’s go. I’ll guide you through the fog.” Ninefire immediately advanced, and Granny Shadow, Ah Xing, and Ning all followed him. The four of them were the most powerful four members of the Ji clan. As for Truekeep and Yichuan, a corridor naturally formed for them through the mist, and they advanced at high speed as well.

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Within the formation.

Dong Ziqi’s face was icy and sinister. “I actually fell into the old crook’s scheme.” In the area around him, eight black crystal balls appeared out of nowhere, each of which was the size of a person’s skull. Within them, a faint image of a draconic shadow could be seen swimming about. The eight bloody trigrams on the black robe he was wearing immediately radiated a bloody light.

The bloody light encompassed those eight distant black crystal balls.

“Arise!”

One enormous, shadowy, blood-colored dragon after another appeared in front of Ziqi. There were eight shadowy blood-colored dragons. They swirled amongst each other, constantly roving about within the formation.

“Fellow disciples, stay where you are and do not move.” Ziqi shouted, while at the same time, he controlled his Eight Trigram Blood Dragons Formation, constantly expanding the scope of the formation.

As the scope of the formation increased, those eight shadowy blood dragons also swam about in a wider and wider area. Soon, the width of the formation reached a scope of three hundred meters, encompassing the nearby Muse within it as well. This sort of large formation, which spread out in every direction...made it so that even in a bewildering formation, there was no way one would be completely bewildered!

“Senior apprentice-brother Ziqi.” The gray-robed man, Muse, said in surprised delight. He was overjoyed at having been brought within the perimeters of the Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation.

“Where are our other fellow disciples?” Ziqi looked around him.

“Not here.” Muse shook his head. “I’m the only one within your Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation.”

Dong Ziqi ground his teeth, then immediately called out in a high voice, “I am together with fellow disciple Muse. He Fang, He Xing, the two of you need to be careful. And Ju San...take care of yourself.”

“Don’t worry.”

“We siblings aren’t afraid of them.”

“If they want to kill me, I’ll make sure one of them dies as well!”

Three voices rang out.

“Damnable.” Dong Ziqi said unhappily. “We fell into that old crook’s trap. Otherwise, if the five of us joined forces, how could we be put into such a situation by the likes of the Ji clan? I myself am able to kill more than half of them. Junior apprentice-brother Muse, your accomplishments in the Myriad Ancient Green Vines technique are quite profound. If you use the Myriad Ancient Green Vines technique, can you break this formation?”

“It would be very difficult.” Muse shook his head. “Even if I could break it, I would need a very long time, and I probably wouldn’t have enough ki energy.”

“Use it as much as you can.” Ziqi said. “I have a bottle of ki recovery pills. Take it.”

“Fine.” Muse gritted his teeth. “Then I’ll hand over the defense to you, senior apprentice-brother.”

Ziqi said confidently, “You are within my Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation. Even if several of them attack together...I have no fear of them. The only thing I’m afraid of is that they won’t come for me! How detestable...if I had known earlier, I would’ve started to kill them from the start. Now, I can’t even find them, even though I want to kill them.” He, by himself, was equal to his other four fellow disciples if they joined forces. But unfortunately, although he had power, he had no place to exert it.

“Arise.”

Muse stood there, and a single seed fell into the ground.

Whoosh!

Many tendrils suddenly grew out from that seed, wildly spreading out in every direction.

“Bewildering formations will bewilder the senses.” Muse said in a low voice. “My vines will be affected by the bewildering formation as well. It will be hard for them to move in the correct direction. Still, these vines can constantly grow and expand towards empty areas...as long as they continuously fill up the area, if they continuously grow, then naturally they’ll be able to cover the entire formation, and perhaps even go beyond it. My mind is one with these vines. So long as the vines are able to leave the formation, I will know it.”

“But what I don’t know is how large this formation is. After all, when the diameter expands tenfold, the number of tendrils I need to grow is increased a hundredfold. The larger the formation is, the more exhausting it will be for my Ki.” Muse didn’t feel much confidence.

“Let’s go all out.” Ziqi gritted his teeth. “Trapped here, the only thing that will happen is that we will be butchered as they please.”

“Right.” Muse didn’t say anything further, striving to expand and empower his technique.

Rustle, rustle...

Countless vines frantically grew out and elongated, but in the bewildering formation, where they had no sense of direction, these vines grew out in a wild, unordered manner as well. Still, one thing was certain...they were to grow in the direction of areas where there were no vines! To cover as much new space as they could!

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In another area.

Ning, Ninefire, and the others were present.

“The He siblings are up front.” Ninefire said. “I’ll launch the first attack, and then part open the mist. You will see the two of them. All of you, immediately use killing attacks.”

“Right.” Ning nodded.

Whoosh!

More than seven hundred sword-type magic treasures suddenly appeared in the area around Ning, each of which glowed with a hazy white light. The swords gently ebbed and flowed, unceasingly summoning and coalescing the power of the world. Ning’s ki was constantly being transformed through these magic swords as well, and in front of him, a dazzling, eye-catching white sword light had taken form.

[Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] – Level Nine!

“What a sharp sword light.” Ninefire, Granny Shadow, and the old servant, Ah Xing, were shocked. Although they hadn’t interacted with it, they could sense how sharp this sword light was.

Granny Shadow pointed with her finger, and in front of her, three flying swords appeared as well, each of which glowed with a faint, fiery light.

Next to her, the old servant Ah Xing lifted his hand, and a warhammer appeared within it.

“Let’s do it.” Ninefire waved his hand, and a mottled, five-colored flying sword suddenly pierced through the air. Ninefire was famous for using poisons and formations...although this flying sword was a ranked magic treasure, to be more precise, it was a poison sword.

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A hundred meters in front of Ning, He Fang and He Xing, brother and sister, were present. The two had used a number of Dao-seals, and their bodies were covered by golden light. At the same time, two magic treasures were constantly flying around them, one which looked like an iron pestle, while the other was a strange-looking tiled jar magic treasure.

“We can’t see our surroundings. They will definitely ambush us. Be careful.” The green-haired man, He Fang, said softly.

“Right.” His younger sister, He Xing, was incomparably cautious as well.

Suddenly...

A five-colored flying sword suddenly descended at an astonishing speed. However, as the He siblings were constantly on-guarded, they immediately used their techniques to defend.

“Whoosh...”

The floating tiled jar suddenly emitted a large amount of green liquid into a watery curtain, which was incomparably tough and unyielding. Once the five-colored flying sword pierced into the curtain of green liquid, the speed of it immediately slowed greatly.

“Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!”

Three flying swords glowing with fiery light slashed through the skies as well. It was the three flying swords of Granny Shadow.

This instantly caused the faces of He Fang and He Xing, brother and sister, to change greatly. They hurriedly worked to block it as well, but the water curtain was beginning to be unable to withstand it.

“Bang!” An enormous black warhammer, carrying even more incomparably ferocious power, smashed straight through the quivering water curtain, and then smashed onto the golden light covering the body of He Xing, the younger sister. The golden light instantly trembled violently, as though it was about to shatter.

“Not good.”

“Quick, let’s run. If we stay here, we’re just going to serve as punching bags.” He Fang and He Xing, after having suffered successive strikes, had begun to panic. Clearly, there were quite a few enemies.

Swish!

A dazzling sword light suddenly slashed out in a lonely arc, leaving behind a beautiful, dreary afterimage as it instantly pierced through the quivering barrier of golden light covering He Xing’s body...

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Book 5: Zifu Disciple Chapter 21: The Zifu Lake

When Ji Ning’s [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] sword light swept down towards them, the graceful, lithe-bodied He Xing’s face changed. “What a terrifying sword light! There’re no other options!” Her green hair suddenly emitted a dazzling green light while at the same time, her entire body dimly glowed with a green aura. As for that sword light which had just pierced through the golden aura protecting her body, it clashed straight against that green aura. The green aura trembled, and rippling runes appeared on its surface, but in the end, with a boom, it blew apart.

The remaining energy in the sword light was quite weak now, so weak that it wasn’t even able to pierce through the protective magic treasure He Xing was wearing.

“Elder Brother! The talisman which Master gave us was broken through in just one attack.” He Xing said frantically.

This was too terrifying.

The power of that sword light was most likely close to that of a casual blow from a Wanxiang Adept. Even the talisman her master had given her to protect her was only able to take a single blow.

“Little Sister, let’s go all out.” Mu Fang gritted his teeth. “We can’t hope for a lucky break to occur. We have to treat this as our potential tomb, for us to have a chance of surviving.”

“Right.” Xing nodded.

A look of resoluteness appeared in the eyes of these two siblings. Their auras grew savage, and a layer of bloody light arose on their skin.

“Forbidden arts!” The distant attackers, Ji Ninefire, Ji Ning, Granny Shadow, the old servant Ah Xing saw this, and their faces changed.

Forbidden arts...

Generally speaking, they referred to forbidden techniques that were used through sacrificing one’s own lifespan. They could only be used at enormous cost, and once the cost was made, it was very hard to recover from it. But precisely because the cost was great, the power one had upon using a forbidden art would rapidly rise as well.

“You want to kill us? Come, then.”

“Come.”

After having used a forbidden technique, He Xing and He Fang both had savagery in their eyes.

“They are like trapped beasts right now.” Ninefire hurriedly sent mentally to the others. “Although they are surrounded and attacked by us, they are still Zifu Disciples, and they’ve used forbidden techniques. If we aren’t careful, some of us might die. We have to be cautious. We have the advantage. I’d rather we give up some opportunities than risk our lives. We just have to find a single good opportunity, at which point we can kill them.”

“Right.” Granny Shadow narrowed her eyes.

The old servant, Ah Xing, just stared at the distant He siblings, controlling that great warhammer of his.

As for Ning, he unleashed a second sword light.

The four were working together!

They wildly attacked the He siblings in unison. Amongst these five enemy Zifu Disciples, the He siblings actually had only average strength; they were ranked behind Dong Ziqi and Muse! As for Ninefire, Granny Shadow, and Ah Xing, they were old fellows who had lived for nearly four centuries, each of whom were actually a good amount more powerful than the He siblings. And that’s not even mentioning the monstrous Ji Ning!

Only through using forbidden arts were the He siblings capable of just barely holding off the joint attacks of these four.

“Despicable, sly Ji clansmen.” He Fang and He Xing were cursing wildly while controlling their magic treasures to resist. Because they had used forbidden arts, their ability to control magic treasures had

clearly increased...in particular, the water curtain which flew out from the tiled jar was actually able to resist Ning's [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]!

This caused Ning to sigh in his heart.

His enemies were Zifu Disciples, while he himself only had peak Xiantian-level Ki. For him to be able to fight against someone at a higher level who was even using forbidden arts...the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] should be proud of itself.

"Elder Brother, that Ji Ning is too powerful." He Xing had a look of despair in her eyes. "Even going all out, I'm only able to block him alone."

"I'm almost unable to hold out any longer as well." He Fang was simultaneously blocking the other three.

Suddenly...

At the same instant, He Fang and He Xing each released a Dao-seal radiating a black light from their hands. They instantly activated the pair of Dao-seals, which immediately transformed into tens of rays of black light which quickly attacked Ninefire and the other three! Ninefire, Granny Shadow, and the old servant Ah Xing were shocked, and they hurriedly used what abilities they had to resist. As for Ning, he wielded two swords in his hands, with the Waterflame Lotus swiveling around his body.

"Boomboomboom..." The rays of black light pierced directly through the Waterflame Lotus, but were blocked by Ning's Darknorth swords.

But Ning couldn't help but stagger backwards, taking six heavy steps back, the ground cracking with each step.

"Such power." Ning stared at his waist. A large hole had been pierced through his waist, but in the blink of an eye, his flesh quickly grew out, regenerating the wound and not leaving behind a single scar.

"Ji Ning, it's good that we have you. Otherwise, that technique alone would have wounded us, and perhaps one of us would even have died." Ninefire was frightened as well. That black light had simply been too fast. Once it pierced through their bodies...the other three were all Ki Refiners. If they weren't careful, they would lose their lives.

Granny Shadow sent mentally as well, "These two really live up to their reputation as being members from the main sect. They have so many techniques. If we aren't careful, we might fall to one of them. Let's pull away slightly; at a longer distance, it'll be easier for us to deal with them."

"Right." Ninefire nodded. "The two of them are close to the breaking point. If we keep it up a little longer, they will definitely die."

Hearing this, Ning frowned.

The Patriarch and the other two were all Zifu-level Ki Refiners. They didn't dare fight in close quarters combat, because in close quarters combat, if one suffered an attack that was too fast and which didn't give one a chance to dodge, one could easily die. It was correct for them to decide to pull away...but Ning himself was a Fiendgod Body Refiner! How long would it take for them to continue wasting time like this? They had to end this quickly!

“Patriarch, leave it to me.” Ning shouted mentally to them, while at the same time, a pair of wing-type magic treasures appeared out of nowhere on his back. The wings fluttered, and Ning soared into the air like a giant Roc, instantly appearing in front of He Fang and He Xing, the two siblings.

“Careful.” Ninefire, Granny Shadow, and Ah Xing were all shocked, but they knew that Ning was a Fiendgod Body Refiner, and that he trained in the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]. They weren’t too worried about him.

“Perfect timing.” He Fang and He Xing, the two siblings, were startled, then delighted.

Prior to this, they had been filled with rage.

Ninefire and the others had been too crafty; they had insisted on fighting at a distance, not giving the two of them a chance to fight back! The two were all but standing there and letting others beat down on them. They didn’t dare to make the slightest mistake, because if they did, the enemies would seize the chance to kill them. But who could forever be perfect and never make a mistake? Just as they were feeling despair, Ji Ning charged over.

“After killing you, our deaths would have been worth it.”

“The genius of the Ji clan.”

The He siblings had gone mad in their desire to kill Ning.

But Ning, moving like a giant Roc, arced outwards in a curving, solitary line as he attacked He Xing. His target was her, as she had already used up a protective talisman. In front of Ning, there was a flash of sword light, and the Darknorth swords in his hands executed his most powerful attack...Rain Line!

“Bang!”

The sword light flashed outwards!

He Xing’s beautiful head was sent flying into the air, her eyes still filled with disbelief and shock.

“You...you...” The nearby He Fang stared at Ning.

There was a wound on Ning’s head, which carved straight through his forehead, but this wound quickly healed. The reason why he was able to kill He Xing, a Zifu Disciple, in a single exchange was not only that Ning’s swordplay vastly outstripped the opponent’s; it was also because Ning fought in a way where the two of them would both take ‘lethal’ wounds, allowing her to stab him with her sword. This was why he was able to kill her in a single exchange.

“You...have reached the Zifu Disciple level as a Fiendgod as well?” He Fang didn’t dare believe it.

Killing a Fiendgod Body Refiner was far more difficult than killing a Ki Refiner.

Previously, Ning had used the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], which was clearly a Ki Refiner technique. And Ning was only sixteen years old...He Fang and He Xing had both believed that given his age, Ning should only have opened his Violet Palace as a Ki Refiner! He most likely had yet to be able to open his Violet Palace as a Fiendgod Body Refiner, and should only be a Xiantian-stage lifeform. Generally speaking, a Xiantian-level Fiendgod Body Refiner’s head was still a critical area. Even someone

who trained in the number one technique, the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], would have to reach the peak Xiantian level before having no critical areas anywhere in the body. That was why He Xing had wanted to sacrifice her life in that exchange.

“Little Sister.” He Fang stared at the corpse on the ground, then suddenly let out a heroic howl. “Senior apprentice-brother Ziqi, avenge us and annihilate the Ji clan!!!”

“Back.” Ning’s face changed, and his wing-type magic treasure fluttered as he frantically retreated.

“Boom.”

He Fang suddenly exploded.

The Zifu Violet Palace in his body was like an enormous lake which contained endless amounts of lake water. This lake water was actually liquefied ki energy! When He Fang detonated his Zifu ‘lake’, all of the liquefied ki energy that had accumulated in his Zifu instantly transformed into usable Ki. Even if his body had to blow apart, he wanted to make this liquefied ki instantly transform and blast outwards. The power of this elemental blast was simply terrifying.

The savage, boundless wave of ki spread out, rippling in every direction! Instantly, the turbid wave of elemental ki blasted into the frantically retreating Ji Ning, submerging him within it!

BOOM!!!

“Ji Ning!”

“Ji Ning!” The distant Ji Ninefire and the other two were shocked.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 5: Zifu Disciple Chapter 22: Two More Remaining

Although Ji Ning had sensed in advance that something bad was going to happen, and thus had immediately used the Windwing Evasion to retreat, he was still struck on the back by the enormous surge of power, and his entire body was knocked helplessly flying, smashing a deep crater into the ground.

“Ji Ning, are you alright?”

“Ji Ning.”

The distant Ji Ninefire and the other two hurriedly flew over, staring into that deep crater with concern. Ning lay deep within the crater, fresh, crimson blood splattered everywhere. The wing-type magic treasure on his back was already twisted...but within the crater, Ning was quickly recovering. He stretched his hand out, lifting himself upwards and quickly returning to his feet.

“I’m fine.” Ning said hoarsely. That earlier explosive force had damaged even his throat. As he arose from the deep crater, the various wounds on his back were quickly healing, and the terrifying injuries his body had sustained were rapidly regenerating. Moments later, not even a scar could be seen. As for Ning’s protective magic armor, it quickly reformed into the shape of the beast fur clothes his mother had made for him.

This caused Ninefire and the other two to sigh in amazement. This was what Ki Refiners like them envied the most with regards to Fiendgod Body Refiners.

If it was them, they probably would have died long ago!

“The power of a detonating Zifu ‘lake’ truly is terrifying.” Ning sighed in amazement.

Establishing the ‘Violet Palace’ was part of the Immortal path. The Zifu was like a lake that contained liquefied ki energy. The Zifu lake was thus the foundation for an Immortal practitioner! A fruit tree that wished to bloom and birth fruits had to have a patch of land, while Immortal practitioners who wished to reach the Wanxiang level or become a Primal Immortal...had to have a Zifu lake! This was their foundation. Zifu Disciples would constantly accumulate their ki energy, expanding the size of that lake...

But once the accumulated ki energy was detonated, the first to die from the explosion would be the practitioner! Only then would others be hit by the explosion.

“This is why the three of us didn’t dare to attack in close combat. Only you, a Fiendgod Body Refiner, would dare draw near.” Ninefire said.

“Formidable.” Ning said softly.

“The life force possessed by Fiendgods truly is astonishing.” Granny Shadow said hoarsely.

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In a different area.

The eight shadowy blood dragons of the Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation roved about sinuously. In the center were Muse and Dong Ziqi. Ziqi had a gloomy look on his face, and his eyes were filled with a boundless killing intent. He truly wished to charge out and kill them. But that group of Ji clan cowards didn’t dare to come face him.

“Little Sister! Senior apprentice-brother Ziqi, avenge us and annihilate the Ji clan!!!” A fierce voice suddenly rang out, and then...a deafening, massive explosion.

Muse, seated in the lotus position, opened his eyes, which were filled with a look of sorrow. “The He siblings are dead.”

“Not only dead; he even detonated his own Zifu lake. He was forced into dire straits.” Ziqi’s voice was hoarse, and his eyes were filled with rage. He, Dong Ziqi, had actually been forced into such a terrible situation, and by the puny little Ji clan. This caused the look on Ziqi’s face to become all the more terrible. He howled savagely, “I, Dong Ziqi, swear that I will definitely annihilate the Ji clan! Definitely!” His roar rang out.

“I will definitely annihilate the Ji clan! Definitely!!!”

As Ning heard this, his face changed slightly. He could sense the wild savagery and killing intent held within this shout. By his side, Ninefire just said coldly, “If we didn’t kill them, they would still annihilate our Ji clan for not handing over the official writ! If they want to kill us, then they need to be prepared for the possibility that we might kill them. Screaming loudly now is the act of a coward.”

“Come. Let’s go deal with Dong Ziqi.” Granny Shadow ground her teeth, speaking in a hoarse voice.

“Right.” The old servant, Ah Xing, acknowledged.

Ning was filled with boundless killing intent as well...against these enemy forces who wanted to annihilate the Ji clan and give them no options, Ning wouldn’t feel a hint of pity!

“Ji Ning.” Ninefire just frowned. “Immediately go to your father’s place. Assist them in killing Ju San.”

“My father?” Ning was startled.

Can it be that his father, Ji Yichuan, and Ji Truekeep had met with trouble in their combined effort to deal with that ‘Jusan’?

“It’s Muse.” Ninefire said urgently. “Muse is currently using a magical technique, causing a large number of vines to rapidly grow out nonstop. They’ve already grown near the place where your father is. Once those vines encounter Ju San...! Dong Ziqi and Muse will quickly follow the vines and rejoin with Ju San! Once the three join forces, it will be even more difficult to kill them.”

A path through the mist had already appeared in front of Ning.

“I’ll go.” Ning transformed into a blurred shadow, quickly advancing forward.

“We’ll go deal with Dong Ziqi and Muse.” Ninefire looked towards Granny Shadow and Ah Xing. “We don’t have to kill them, but we need to disturb that Muse...ideally, making it so that Muse won’t be able to continue to use that technique of his. Those vines have grown so large...Muse definitely had to use up quite a bit of mental energy and Ki.”

“Right.” Granny Shadow and Ah Xing both nodded.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The three quickly hurried towards Ziqi...and as for Ning, as he flew forward, he saw the vines rapidly growing, but by relying on the Windwing Evasion, he was able to dodge past them and not touch them.

Soon.

From far away, the sound of explosions could be heard, and the fog grew thin as well. Ning saw two figures standing in the distance; it was his own father, Yichuan, and his clansman, Truekeep.

“Oh? Father isn’t using any magic treasures. Can it be that Father hasn’t established his Zifu yet?” As Ning hurried over, he discovered that Truekeep was currently controlling magic treasures to battle against that muscular man named Ju San, while Ning’s father, Yichuan, was brandishing his sword, releasing one last after another of sword light, each of which flowed out like a stream of water, constantly racing towards that muscular Ju San. Those blasts of sword light seemed like entangling threads, constantly restricting and binding Ju San.

Truekeep was the main force, while Yichuan was support!

“Damnable.” Ju San bellowed.

“From what the Patriarch previously said, it seems as though my father is a Zifu Disciple. But why is it that I’ve never seen Father ride on a magic treasure?” Ning was puzzled. “In fact, that year, when I suffered the attack from Serpentwing, when Father pursued Serpentwing, he didn’t ride on a magic treasure back then either. What’s the reason for this?”

Ning had asked his father before, but his father had refused to answer.

“After this battle, I’ll ask the Patriarch.” Ning buried these doubts in his heart, while at the same time, a pair of Darknorth swords appeared in his hands, while the wings on his back fluttered, sending him piercing through the air.

Prior to this, when He Fang had detonated his own Zifu Lake, the previous pair of wing-type magic treasures had been destroyed, but fortunately, Ning had quite a few sets of these unranked treasures.

“Father, Uncle Truekeep! Leave this Ju San to me!” Ning shouted loudly, then transformed into a ray of light, charging towards Ju San.

Yichuan and Truekeep both turned to look. “Ji Ning!”

“Hahaha, perfect!” From afar, mighty Ju San, who had power but no place to expend it, watched as Ning charged towards him. He was overjoyed! He was a Zifu Fiendgod Body Refiner! Fiendgod Body Refiners loved to engage in close quarters combat. Prior to this, Truekeep and Yichuan had continuously kept far away from him, and he, Ju San, was not proficient in movement techniques, and thus was completely unable to catch up.

To be constantly beaten down on, but be unable to catch up.

What sort of torment was this!

Although he had opened up his Zifu as a Ki Refiner as well, he hadn’t spent too much time and effort on learning how to ride magic treasures. His primary efforts had been expended on close quarters combat.

“Come, come, come. Let me take a look at this genius of the Ji clan and see how powerful you are.” Behind Ju San, a pair of black wings had appeared. As he went forward to engage Ning, he clearly was quite agile.

“Wing-type magic treasure?” Ning looked at the pair of wings on Ju San’s back, and his eyes couldn’t help but light up. The vast majority of Fiendgod Body Refiners would use wings, so as to make them more agile. “It should be a ranked magic treasure. I was worrying about how, after breaking through to the Zifu level, I wouldn’t have any ranked wing-type magic treasures.”

Boom!

Boom!

Two people. One came from the main sect of Snowdragon Mountain, and although he trained in a fairly ordinary Fiendgod Body Refining technique, known as the [Mighty Demon – Introductory], he was an early Zifu Disciple. Although the name of this technique seemed quite ordinary, it was quite a bit superior to the techniques the Ji clan possessed, such as the [Sutra of the Future Buddha] or [Indestructible Blood Fiend], even though those techniques had more impressive-sounding names.

Generally speaking, the more powerful a sect was, the more modest the names their techniques would be.

As for the other person, this person trained in the technique that even in the Fiendgod Era was the indisputable number one Fiendgod Body Refining technique, the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]. But this person was only a peak Xiantian.

“BANG!” “BANG!”

Ju San was wielding a greataxe, while Ning was wielding a pair of swords.

The two exchanged blows...

It was like a pair of juvenile Fiendgods from back in the Primordial Era who were fighting against each other. Instantly, the earth began to quake, then split apart, sending rocks flying everywhere! The two both had wing-type magic treasures behind them, and they they wildly battled each other in close quarters combat, completely unafraid of the occasional wounds they suffered. As for Ju San’s body, one wound after another appeared atop it.

“This Ju San’s axecraft is quite impressive. The greataxe is very large, making it so that when it defends, it is almost like a buckler.” Ning said to himself.

“Ji Ning has actually reached the Zifu level as a Fiendgod practitioner as well.” Ju San was even more shocked. “And his usage of dual swords is all the more marvelous and skilled. I’ve focused on my axecraft for nearly a century, but I actually can’t compare to his swordcraft! I’m at a disadvantage with every exchange...” Right now, he had only left two wounds on Ning’s body, and that was only because Ning had willingly accepted the blow in order to deliver one to him as well. But as for Ju San, his body had suffered over a hundred wounds on it by now. But of course, all of them had healed automatically.

Ning’s swordplay became even more ferocious and wild.

“Faster, faster, faster!”

Ning understood that as the opponent used a heavy weapon, the greataxe, he himself had to fight based on his speed. The faster Ning was, the more flaws the enemy would reveal.

“Like the wind!”

“Like the flame!”

Ning’s left and right hands each held a sword, but they used completely different swordplay techniques. One sword was as illusory as the wind, while the other sword was as aggressively scorching as a flame. Both of them were shockingly fast, and the two worked in unison, creating an explosive combination. The power of the two techniques multiplied, feeding off each other!

“Faster! Even faster!” Ning battled wildly against Ju San, raining down blows upon him.

Ju San’s movements became disordered, unable to keep up.

“SLASH!”

A sword blow that was as strangely agile and graceful as the wind slashed past the greataxe, and also slashed through Jusan's waist. Crunch. Blood flew everywhere, and Ju San was bisected.

"Here's my chance." Ning instantly entered a berserk mode.

Thunderflash Flint!

Thunderflash Flint!

Thunderflash Flint!

Ning's two swords simultaneously executed this technique. There was nothing weird about this technique, nothing savage about it; all it had was speed! One ray after another of sword light wildly chopped down on the bisected halves of Ju San's body, causing Ju San's body to constantly shatter, but Ju San's head continued to roar, "It won't be so easy to kill a Fiendgod Body Refiner!"

"Waterflame Lotus." Ning executed his final, killing stroke.

Those countless pieces of Ju San's body became enveloped within a Waterflame Lotus. The petals of the fire and water slowly swiveled against each other. After five years of training, the murderous grinding power of Ning's Waterflame Lotus had reached a terrifyingly strong level. These completely defenseless chunks of bloody flesh were completely ground into dust.

Grind! Grind! Grind!

The pieces of bloody flesh tried frantically to reconnect to each other, reforming into a person. But they were constantly being ground down by the Waterflame Lotus!

Rumble...

The chunks of bloody flesh were completely ground to dust, completely unable to reform once more.

Ju San! Dead!

"Looks like I acquired a set of ranked wing-type magic treasures in advance." Ning stretched his hand out, collecting the nearby spoils, including the wing-type magic treasures, the greataxe, the protective magic-treasures, and the various other magic treasures.

Ning turned to look.

Truekeep and Yichuan stood there watching from afar, looks of disbelief and shock on their faces. They had watched as two Fiendgod experts battled wildly and viciously against each other...it was power against power, and as soon as one fell, the other wildly charged forward to dismember him, giving him no chance at all to recover. Fortunately, Ning had his Waterflame Lotus, as otherwise it would have been hard for him to so quickly dispose of this Ju San.

"Let's go." Ning said hurriedly. "Father, Uncle Truekeep, we need to hurry up and rejoin the Patriarch. There are only two more remaining!"

"There are only two more remaining?" Truekeep and Yichuan were excited as well. They hadn't imagined that in this battle, the Ji clan would actually have achieved such a glorious success, with only two Zifu Disciples remaining now.

However, it was the most powerful two!

“Kill them.”

Ning, Yichuan, and Truekeep transferred into rays of light, hurrying back to regroup with Ninefire and the others...

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 5: Zifu Disciple Chapter 23: Life And Death – Two Choices

Moments later.

A faint fog surrounded the Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation, and one shadowy blood dragon after another swam about, look towards Ji Ning, Ji Ninefire, and the rest of the six.

“Ji Ning, don’t charge in.”

“I want to give him a try.” With a thought, Ning summoned more than seven hundred weapon-type magic treasures, which undulated up and down in the air around him, all of them radiating a dim glow. In front of Ning formed an irresistible, unblockable sword light. With a thought, the sword light formed from the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] shot through the air.

[Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] – Level Nine!

“Swish!”

The dazzling sword light charged straight into the Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation, and in the instant that it did so, the shadowy blood dragons immediately bellowed and charged forth. Cracklecracklecrackle...the sword light just managed to eradicate a single shadowy blood dragon before the power of the sword light was used up, but soon, the shadowy blood dragon once more reformed.

“What.” Ning was amazed. “I was only able to destroy a single dragon? And it almost immediately reformed?”

Dong Ziqi, within the formation, gave the distant Ning a cold, insidious look. In a hoarse voice, he said, “You live up to your reputation as being the genius of the Ji clan. Only sixteen years old...and yet you are able to destroy one of the dragons of my Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation. However, the little bit of power you have is far from being sufficient.”

“Ning, don’t charge in.” Ninefire sent mentally in a frantic voice. “This sort of formation is perfectly suited to countering Fiendgod Body Refiners. As soon as you charge within, you’ll be attacked by all eight of those blood dragons, and they will rip you to pieces.”

“I know.” Ning nodded.

Although Fiendgod Body Refiners were superior to Ki Refiners...there was no such thing as an absolute truth!

Ki Refiners had their powerful experts as well, who were able to fight against those at a higher level as them. The [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] was one such example! Or, for example, those Ki Refiners who bred countless venomous pests, which would be released out in a flood, devouring

everything in their path. Fiengod Body Refiners were more powerful, yes...but that was as a whole. On an individual level, there were incomparably glorious and talented Ki Refiners as well.

“The six of us should join forces to attack and see if we have any chance of winning.” A killing intent flashed through the eyes of Ninefire.

A flying sword flew through the air!

Venomous bugs danced out!

A sword light pierced forward!

In an instant, the entire world seemed to be filled with various techniques and attacks, which flew towards the Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation. Within the formation, Ziqi laughed wildly. “Excellent!” Those eight shadowy blood dragons, which had been peacefully swimming about, suddenly turned savage as they charged forward to welcome those attacks. They blocked one magic treasure after another, and as some of the dragons dispersed, they quickly reformed.

The eight shadowy blood dragons coiled about in a circular rhythm, forcibly taking on the attacks of Ning and the rest of the six.

“Cowards of the Ji clan, if you have any ability, come into my Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation.” Seeing that the attacks had been completely blocked, Dong Ziqi, standing within the formation, became even more arrogant. “You killed three of my fellow disciples because you had the advantage of numbers. In terms of actual ability, how could your Ji clan be a match for us? If we were to really fight, I, Dong Ziqi, would be able to annihilate you all!”

Outside the Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation, Ninefire, Granny Shadow, Ah Xing, Yichuan, Truekeep, and Ning were astonished at the power of this formation.

“Formidable.” Ninefire sent mentally. “Although I have long heard of the power of Dong Ziqi’s Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation, I’ve never fought against it. It seems that the eight dragons within the formation are all comparable to a peak Zifu Disciple. With the eight joining forces...the power is truly astonishing. Even if the six of us truly want to go all out and kill him, most likely three of us would die.”

“There’s nothing in life that has no risk.” Granny Shadow sent. “Let’s kill this Dong Ziqi!”

“Our Ji clan has too few Zifu Disciples! But Snowdragon Mountain has plenty of them. It isn’t worth it for us to die alongside these two.” Ninefire refuted.

Ning stared at the distant Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation.

What to do?

After having attacked for the amount of time needed to brew tea, although Ning had only occasionally released an attack from his [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], the ki energy in his body was more than half used up.

“Hold your attacks.” Ninefire sent. “We’ve attacked together for so long now, but we haven’t had a single chance for breaking through. If we don’t take any risks, we won’t be able to kill Dong Ziqi. In

addition, those vines are constantly growing outwards. Soon, they'll have exited the perimeters of my bewildering formation. Forget it. We'll just let them go this time."

"Let them go?" Truekeep's eyes were filled with disbelief. "Patriarch, if we lose this opportunity, in the future, Dong Ziqi will definitely come together with other Zifu Disciples. Killing him will be even more difficult."

"Fool." Ninefire sent furiously. "We aren't trying to annihilate Snowdragon Mountain. What we are trying to do...is to let the Ji clan survive for a longer period of time! The six of us need to endure for as long as we can, to endure until the Grand Xia Dynasty's Celestial Envoy arrives! Once we sign our agreement, then we will have succeeded. Our lives are more important than Dong Ziqi's life! If we go all out and three of us die so that we eventually kill the two of them...when Snowdragon Mountain comes for revenge, they'll come with an entire group of Zifu Disciples. By then, how can the remaining people delay for any longer?"

Truekeep instantly came to his senses.

Killing the enemy was secondary. What really mattered for the Ji clan was to overcome this tribulation.

They had to endure and survive until the Grand Xia Dynasty's Celestial Envoy arrived! As for killing the Zifu Disciples of Snowdragon Mountain, that was a secondary goal. Killing a few extra Zifu Disciples would reduce their future pressure, but if today, they suffered too many losses, then it wouldn't be worth it.

Within the Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation, Dong Ziqi was feeling taut and nervous as well. As the saying goes, it is hard for a pair of hands to fight off two pairs. He was faced with the attacks of six Zifu Disciples, each of which was displaying numerous techniques which filled the skies. Just now, he had just barely blocked the attacks of these six. If the Ji clan's forces were to use forbidden arts to go all out...he would be in great danger as well.

"Even if I die, I'll drag them down with me." Dong Ziqi's eyes flashed with wildness.

"Senior apprentice-brother Ziqi." Seated in the lotus position, the ashen-faced Muse suddenly opened his eyes, a look of wild joy within them. "My vines have already extended to beyond the bewildering formation."

Ziqi was stunned, and then he was overjoyed as well. "We can leave?"

If he could live, of course he would rather live than fight to the death.

"I can sense the location of that vine. By following my senses, we can charge straight out." Muse hurriedly rose to his feet. "Senior apprentice-brother Ziqi, control the Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation. We're going to leave."

A green leaf appeared out of nowhere.

The green leaf extended to the size of multiple meters, and Muse and Ziqi stepped atop the leaf. Around them, those eight bloody dragons continued to swim about. Clearly Ziqi was continuously maintaining the Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation.

"Let's go."

Swoosh!

The green leaf began to fly in a strange, zig-zagging manner, occasionally advancing, then retreating, then turning, then retreating, then retreating, then advancing...the movements were completely bizarre. But in truth, this was caused by the disruptions to their sense of direction within the formation. Although it seemed as though they were constantly changing directions, in truth, they were moving towards the outside this entire time.

Whoosh...

Standing atop the leaf, Muse and Ziqi suddenly saw the desolate mountain forests outside.

"We're out."

"We're out. We made it out." Ziqi and Muse both had looks of surprise and joy on their faces. They had been trapped within the bewildering formation and unable to escape, giving their enemies complete control over what to do. That was indeed quite torturous. Now that they had escaped, they naturally felt incomparably jubilant.

"Ji clan!" Ziqi gritted his teeth.

Muse's face was sinister as well. "Three of my fellow disciples have died miserable deaths here. How can we not avenge this great enmity?"

"Ji clan!" Dong Ziqi's voice echoed for hundreds of kilometers. "Just wait for your clan to be annihilated!"

Swoosh!

A green leaf instantly slashed through the skies, quickly disappearing into the horizon.

And as it did, six figures walked out from within the bewildering formation. It was Ninefire and the other five. Ninefire turned to look towards the distant, desolate mountain forests, and he spied several figures from afar. Ninefire said in a booming voice, "Riverbank clan, Kou clan, Blackfire Sect..." As soon as he spoke, one figure after another flew over at high speed.

"Forgive us for being unable to assist."

"Brother Ninefire, it wasn't appropriate for us to intervene."

One mental voice after another was sent over.

And then, those figures mounted on their magic treasures and flew away, departing. All of the Zifu Disciples of the various powers in the Swallow Mountain region had been drawn here by those earlier elemental waves of energy. Although they weren't able to see the battle between the Ji clan and Snowdragon Mountain, they were able to guess what had happened. In particular, upon hearing Dong Ziqi's final, angry words, they could tell what those words had implied.

"Alas." Watching as those figures left, Ninefire shook his head. "This elemental ore mine has major implications. It will definitely draw the attention of even more Zifu Disciples of Snowdragon Mountain. No wonder the Blackfire Sect, the Riverbank clan, and the Kou clan weren't willing to interfere."

In the Swallow Mountain region, the Ji clan, the Blackfire Sect, the Riverbank clan, and the Kou clan were allied with each other, and they jointly resisted Snowdragon Mountain and the Ironwood clan.

But what they jointly resisted was the Swallow Mountain branch of Snowdragon Mountain! But this elemental ore mine...soon, the Zifu Disciples of the main Snowdragon Mountain Sect would come to attack Swallow Mountain, and when that happened, for them to annihilate the Blackfire Sect, Riverbank clan, and Kou clan would be simplicity itself. Of course they didn't dare interfere. No matter how great the benefits might be, they still wouldn't dare to intervene.

"Patriarch, what should we do now?" Truekeep spoke out.

Ning and the others turned to look at their Patriarch.

Ninefire said slowly, "This time, the Swallow Mountain branch of Snowdragon Mountain has suffered severe losses. Three of their Zifu Disciples are dead. They will definitely invite their comrades from throughout the region to have them hurry over here. Given the allure of this elemental ore mine, there will be a large group of Zifu Disciples who will attack Swallow Mountain."

Ning and the others all nodded.

"They will definitely invite those nearest Swallow Mountain. Given the speed of Zifu Disciples, they'll probably arrive in just a day or two." Ninefire said. "We have two options."

"The first option."

"We can hide." Ninefire said. "We can make it so that the Zifu Disciples of Snowdragon Mountain are unable to find it. We only need to hide for a few days, and wait for the Angel arrives to sign a transfer agreement with us. This is a fairly safe route...but it will thrust the countless clansmen of our Ji clan into mortal danger."

"The Zifu Disciples will be here soon, within just a day or two. In just a short day or two, the hundreds of thousands of tribesmen and clansmen belonging to our Ji clan won't be able to make it far." Ji Ninefire sighed. "When the group of Zifu Disciples of Snowdragon Mountain find that they are unable to locate us, to give vent to their rage, they will massacre our clansmen, or perhaps seize them and sell them off as slaves. This is normal."

The faces of Ning and the others all changed.

Hundreds of thousands of their compatriots!

"The second option." Ninefire said. "We publicly state that we will be in a certain location, and that we will set up a formation there. We publicly declare...that Snowdragon Mountain can come and kill us there, if they are able to."

"Snowdragon Mountain is a major sect. Sects like them care deeply about their reputation. If we publicly set up this formation, once their Zifu Disciples come, they will definitely attack the formation full force in an attempt to break it. They won't lower themselves to go slaughter a group of mortals. If they did so, once the word spread, this would be a great stain on Snowdragon Mountain's reputation. But if we hide, resulting in them being unable to find the 'culprits', they will definitely massacre the people of the Ji clan, so as to demonstrate how the supremacy of Snowdragon Mountain is not to be challenged.

Ning and the others all nodded.

Right.

Major sects cared about their reputation!

If they hid, then those Zifu Disciples would use the excuse of wanting to demonstrate how the supremacy of their sect was not to be challenged, and go massacre the members of the Ji clan, so as to warn others.

But if the Ji clan's experts stood out and openly proclaimed they would be at a certain location within a formation, then the enemies would no longer be able to go act against those ordinary mortals.

"Everyone, speak. What choice should we make?" Ninefire looked at his clansmen.

The Desolate Era

Book 5: Zifu Disciple Chapter 24: The Stone Room Within the Mine

Misty fog coiling about, Ji Ning just stood there, looking at his five elders. The Patriarch, his father, and the others were all very calm. Clearly, they had already made their decision.

"I am the Patriarch." Ji Ninefire said very calmly. "For the sake of the Ji clansmen. For the sake of the Ji clan's reputation! I will stand out and welcome this battle with Snowdragon Mountain!"

Granny Shadow said in her hoarse voice, "I've lived nearly four hundred years. Can it be that I, Ji Shadow, am going to hide so as to live for a few more years while watching my clansmen fall into danger? In addition, I feel very happy that I'll be able to face death with my elder brother."

"Wherever my mistress is, I shall be there." The old servant, Ah Xing, actually spoke out, a rare event indeed.

"It's enough for we three old fellows to be there." Ninefire smiled.

"Patriarch!" Truekeep spoke out. "I know the limits of my own talent. Even amongst the Zifu Disciples of the Ji clan, I am only average. It's virtually impossible for me to become a Wanxiang Adept! This battle...is the most critical battle which will determine the fate of my Ji clan. I cannot hide from it."

Yichuan smiled as well. "Patriarch, you know my situation as well. My Immortal path is shattered. I don't want to die a silent, meaningless death. I must participate in this battle."

"The two of you..." Ninefire shook his head.

Ning, hearing this, was stunned.

His Immortal path was shattered?

Didn't his father always say that his heart was focused on following the Immortal path? Why did that change?

"Father, you said your Immortal path is shattered?" Ning stared at his father in disbelief.

Yichuan looked at his son, a rather complicated look on his face. "Actually, while adventuring in the Darknorth Sea, I had already broken through to the Zifu Disciple level. Afterwards, when your mother

became pregnant with you, I had already reached to the middle Zifu level. I led your mother, wanting to return to Swallow Mountain, but your maternal uncle was worried, so he escorted us back."

Ning listened intently.

He knew that a calamity had occurred on the way back.

"Afterwards, we met with a disaster." Yichuan said. "Your mother was badly injured, but your Uncle White led you back. Your uncle and I both executed forbidden arts, using all our might to delay the enemy! During that battle, your uncle died while I was badly injured. Because I used a forbidden art for too long a period of time, the damage done to my Zifu Violet Palace was too great, and my Violet Palace became warped and atrophied, unable to expand again in the future. In other words, it is impossible for me to increase my power. I will forever remain a mid-level Zifu Disciple."

"Because of the atrophication of my Zifu, I'm only able to draw out a hint of the ki energy within my Zifu." Yichuan shook his head. "There's no way I can ride on a magic treasure with just that tiny strand of Ki! Thus, I focus on my swordplay, with that strand of ki being the foundation of it. I draw forth the power of the world with every single blow of sword light."

"But of course." Yichuan said somberly. "I can still use a forbidden art one more time, forcibly drawing out a large amount of ki energy from within my Zifu. But given how my Zifu is already warped...there's no need to repeat what I said earlier. Once I use a forbidden art, most likely within one hour, my Zifu will completely shatter, and I will be transformed into a cripple. In other words...I, your father, can only be a Zifu Disciple for one more time. After one last bout of glory, I will become a cripple."

Ning was stunned.

No wonder his father's swordplay was so powerful! No wonder his father never rode on a ranked magic treasure!

"My Immortal path is shattered. I only have one opportunity to use this forbidden art again." Yichuan looked at his son. "Previously, I was keeping this opportunity in abeyance for you. I wanted to protect you. I wanted you to hold on to my jade sword, and upon encountering any danger, you would shatter that jade sword, and I would immediately hurry over to you. Even if you encountered a Zifu Disciple, I would have the power to rescue you. For the sake of my son, it would have been worth it."

Ning's heart was trembling.

So the truth was...

So the truth was, his father had been planning on this.

"But you no longer need my protection." Yichuan smiled. "Your mother is dead as well. My Immortal path is shattered. And you are an adult, now. I have nothing holding me back. I will not retreat, this time. This will be the last battle I shall ever fight, and it will also be the most glorious battle of my life. If I die, I would rather die in this battle, die for the sake of the Ji clan!"

Ning stared at his father, at his father's smile. His father rarely smiled, but the smile on his father's face was a very relaxed one. Although Ning felt bitter pain in his heart, he didn't try to dissuade his father.

.....

Of the six, five of the elders were preparing to do battle.

"I..." Just as Ning spoke out.

Ninefire barked, "It's one thing for us to go risk our lives, but you, Ji Ning! You are the hope of our Ji clan! Your talent is something which our clan has never given birth to before! You must continue to live!"

"Patriarch, I know what you mean." Ning shook his head. "But I am not willing to hide and just watch as you risk your lives. I am not willing!"

"You..." Ninefire said, enraged.

"But Patriarch, don't worry. I'm not a brash and mindless brute. If I see that the situation is unsalvageable, I will immediately leave and save my own life." Ning looked at the Patriarch. "I have a Traceless Talisman. I imagine, Patriarch, you know how powerful the Traceless Talisman is. Once I activate it, I will instantly be able to travel to a distance of up to ten thousand kilometers." Ever since his mother had died, his father had given the Traceless Talisman to Ning.

Ninefire was stunned.

The Traceless Talisman? Of course he knew that the Ji clan of the West Prefecture had this treasure. He had once desired it, but the Ji clan had its rules which no one could violate.

"Since that's the case." Ninefire nodded. "Fine. You can come along with us. But if the situation grows unsalvageable, you must immediately leave."

And thus, right here, within the desolate mountain forest filled with the fog of the bewildering formation, the six members of the Ji clan made their decision. Together, they would battle against Snowdragon Mountain.

"There are only six of us." Ninefire was actually filled with a boundless martial spirit. "As for Snowdragon Mountain, after their Swallow Mountain branch suffered such a loss, they will definitely invite some of their fellow disciples from the surrounding branches to come. By then, an entire group of Zifu Disciples will attack us en masse, and perhaps even a Wanxiang Adept might come as well! Fighting them head on is idiocy. What we need to do is to delay. Thus, we must set up multiple layers of formations."

"Right. Formations. Patriarch, you are the most skilled amongst us in formations." Truekeep was filled with anticipation as well."

"I will set up multiple layers of large formations." Ninefire looked towards the other five. "Leave the formation setting to me. What the rest of you need to do is come up with ideas to improve your own fighting abilities, such as perhaps using some of the supreme guardian treasures of your respective prefectures..."

Everyone nodded.

"Also!"

Ninefire lowered his head, looking into the ground. "Beneath this desolate wilderness, in an area with a circumference of thousands of kilometers, there lies hidden an enormous elemental ore mine! But the

strange thing is, prior to this, nobody had ever discovered it. The vein is very close to the surface, yet nobody discovered it. In addition, previously, there had been such a powerful, forceful elemental energy wave.”

“Right.” Ning nodded as well.

Indeed. It had been the elemental energy ripple that had attracted their attention to this place. It was very bizarre.

“Perhaps a strange, incredible treasure has just entered the world.” Ninefire said. “The elemental energy ripple that came prior to this could have been created by the emergence of this unique treasure, which might have caused the surrounding area to transform into an elemental ore mine.”

“Or perhaps an Immortal was training here. When Immortals train, the amount of elemental energy they consume is as vast as an ocean.” Ninefire sighed. “If they train for a long period of time, an elemental ore mine will naturally form.”

Granny Shadow frowned. “Elder Brother, are you saying...?”

Ning and the others all looked at Ninefire.

“I am guessing.” Ninefire’s eyes held a hint of desire. “That this elemental ore mine must have a secret behind its origins. Perhaps it has some treasures within, or some precious items left behind by an Immortal! Even items casually discarded by an Immortal...are enough to allow our Ji clan’s power to increase greatly.”

“Patriarch, are you suggesting...?” Truekeep grew excited as well.

“Treasures?” Yichuan and the others all stared towards the ground.

Ninefire nodded. “Let’s dig into the ground and do an investigation. Perhaps we might find something.”

“Right.”

“Let’s go.”

Each of them felt that the words of the Patriarch were reasonable. That elemental energy ripple from earlier had indeed been bizarre, and it was also strange that this elemental ore mine had never been discovered. Perhaps some treasure was hidden within.

“Ji Ning.” Ninefire looked at Ning. “That protective lotus technique of yours seems to dig very quickly. It’ll be up to you. We’ll follow from behind you.”

Ning nodded. “Fine. I’ll begin, then.”

.....

Rumblerumblerumble...

Ning controlled his Waterflame Lotus, making it swivel through the ground, constantly digging deeper into it. Those elemental stones were easily broken through, carving out a tunnel. Ning moved quickly and constantly, digging deeper and deeper, while Ninefire and the rest of the five were behind him.

“His speed is so fast.” Truekeep sighed in amazement, following from behind.

“When we started digging, we were fast as well, but after exhausting a large amount of our Ki, we had to begin to slow down. But Ji Ning is completely relying on borrowing the power of nature.” Ninefire had already been able to see through Ning’s Waterflame Lotus, and that it was formed from natural power.

They continued to go deeper.

“Ji Ning, wherever the quality of the elemental ore is the finest, that is where you should dig.” Ninefire said. “If there are any treasures present, they should be located at wherever the elemental energy is the strongest.”

Ning nodded.

He had noticed as well...that different areas had different quality elemental stones. Some places only had low-grade elemental stones, while other places had quite a bit of high-grade elemental stones.

“Rumblerumblerumble...” The Waterflame Lotus drilled down, like a giant dragon swimming through the underground ore deposit, constantly boring in the direction of high-grade stones.

After an hour...

“The majority of stones here are high-grade stones. You can pick them out with ease.”

“This is a precious location.”

“So many high-grade elemental stones.”

Although they knew all along that this was a rich vein, they hadn’t imagined that this elemental ore mine would actually have a location within it with such an abundance of high-grade elemental stones.

“Bang!” Suddenly, an explosive sound.

Ning came to a sudden halt, causing Ninefire and the other four behind Ning to come to a startled halt as well.

“What is it?” Ninefire asked hurriedly.

“In front of me, there is a very tough, unyielding stone. My Waterflame Lotus is actually unable to drill through.” Ning said, puzzled. The power of his Waterflame Lotus was now tremendous, and generally speaking, even forged weapons would be shattered by it, to say nothing of rocks. “It really is strange.”

Rumblerumblerumble...

The Waterflame Lotus quickly swept away the nearby stones, allowing Ning to get a good look at what was in front of him; a very flat, rocky surface.

“This is...?” Ning was puzzled. Ninefire, Yichuan, and the others were puzzled as well.

Ning continued to control his Waterflame Lotus to scatter aside the surrounding elemental stones...and soon, what appeared before their eyes was part of an enormous stone room, with a door in front of it.

“This...this...”

“This is a stone room! Manmade! Even Ji Ning’s Waterflame Lotus is unable to break through it. This is no ordinary stone room; it must have been left behind by an Immortal.”

The members of the Ji clan all revealed looks of wild joy on their faces.

Deep within the ground, more than a hundred kilometers down, in the heart of this elemental ore mine, they had discovered a stone room. Who amongst them would believe that it was a common room?

“Ji Ning, don’t go too close. Beware of restrictive spells.” Ninefire said. “Keep away from it, and control your magic treasures to open the stone door at a distance.”

“Right.” Ning nodded.

All of them hurriedly retreated, while Ning directly controlled a sword-type magic treasure, sending it flying outwards and pushing at the stone door. Rumble...the stone door slowly turned, revealing an entrance. Instantly, an incomparably thick surge of elemental essence spurted out from within that stone room, causing Ning and the rest of them to feel incredibly comfortable.

“There must be Immortal treasures within.” Ninefire called out frantically.

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Book 5: Zifu Disciple Chapter 25: Establishing the Zifu

The dense elemental aura caused Ning to take a deep breath. He could feel the Xiantian ki in his dantian rumble as it continuously grew. “What pure, dense elemental energy. The elemental energy released just by opening the door to this stone room is already so dense...then what about inside the room?”

“Don’t go in rashly. There might be danger within.” Ji Ninefire hurriedly warned. “I’ll release a bug to go investigate inside.”

Ninefire opened his mouth, and a black wasp immediately flew out, quickly flying through the stone door and darting into the stone room. After a span of time of ten breaths, the black wasp flew back out, and Ninefire swallowed it once more into his body.

“How is it?”

Each of them looked at Patriarch Ninefire, who just laughed. “I’ve finished my investigation. There’s no danger at all within. Come, let’s go take a look! You follow behind me. Even if there are dangers hidden within the stone room that I could not detect, I will be the first to die. Ji Ning, you walk in the very back!”

“Right. Ji Ning needs to stay in the back.” Each of them looked towards Ning.

There was nothing Ning could do. He didn’t argue, instead just docilely following from behind. Ninefire and Granny Shadow were in the very front, and as soon as they entered, the sound of their delighted, amazed cries rang out. “What a treasure! What a treasure!” “This place definitely was a place where an Immortal trained. Definitely!”

Ning, hearing this, had an itchy feeling in his heart. What exactly was inside?

“You can all come in. I’ve swept it with my Ki. There’s no danger.” Ninefire said.

Immediately, everyone entered, and even Ning hurriedly followed them inside.

“What thick elemental energy.” This was the first thing Ning sensed when he entered; that there was an incomparably dense, natural elemental energy in this place, causing all of the pores of his body to swell open and welcome it, absorbing as much of it as they could. The entire room seemed to be filled with a visible, verdant aura of life energy. This was a natural color which would appear once natural elemental energy reached a certain density.

“Ji Ning, shut the stone door. Don’t let this elemental energy leak out. This stone room is rather special. Once the door is shut, the elemental energy won’t leak out.” NINEFIRE said.

“Yes.” Ning understood this as well. Prior to this, it was only when he had pushed the stone door open that the elemental energy had leaked out. Rumble...the stone door shut.

Ning looked curiously in detail at his surroundings.

This room was thirty meters in diameter. There was even a door nearby; there should be other rooms within as well.

“Look.” NINEFIRE pointed at a large pool, which was filled with a layer of thin green liquid. The green liquid was slowly swirling, filled with boundless life energy. The reason why the air here was emanating that incomparably dense elemental energy was because the liquid was releasing it into the air.

“I am absolutely certain.” NINEFIRE said confidently. “That it definitely was an Immortal in training who caused this elemental ore mine to be formed. He intentionally set down a formation to summon a boundless amount of natural elemental energy from the surrounding area. After many years of accumulated energy, the elemental ore mine was formed. But to an Immortal, what is necessary isn’t elemental stones, but rather, this...”

NINEFIRE pointed at the water pool filled with the layer of green liquid, incomparably certain. “Liquefied elemental essence! This is the true essence of natural elemental energy, extremely pure liquefied elemental essence!”

Ning and the others held their breaths.

Liquefied elemental essence?

If one described the elemental energy contained within high-grade elemental stones as ‘very pure’ and as being not very burdensome to the body, and capable of increasing training speed tenfold, then liquefied elemental essence...was the purest form of elemental essence, which placed no strain on the body whatsoever. One could completely absorb and convert it within a short period of time.

For example, some Immortals, after being reincarnated, would lose their memories and become ordinary mortals. Once they regained their memories, however, based on the insights they had gained into the heavenly Dao, as well as the power of their souls, they could for example obtain and make use of a legendary ‘Nine Cycles Golden Pill’, which contained an ocean’s worth of elemental energy, and which also placed no burden on the body, allowing one to quickly absorb it all within a short period of time.

Once a reincarnated Immortal regained his memory and swallowed a 'Nine Cycles Golden Pill', then just by relying on the natural elemental energy contained within the pill...he would be able to once again become an Immortal within a single day!

To improve in one's training?

Strengthen one's soul! One's level of understanding! One's techniques! Elemental energy! Not a single one of these four could be lacking! As for reincarnated Immortals, it was because they possessed the first three already, which was why they could rely on a single 'Nine Cycles Golden Pill' to instantly become an Immortal. If they didn't have the Nine Cycles Golden Pill, even reincarnated Immortals would have to slowly, step by step train and rise in power. As for ordinary mortals, if they swallowed a 'Nine Cycles Golden Pill', they would be instantly exploded by the sea of elemental energy the pill contained!

The Nine Cycles Golden Pill...was the stuff of legends.

But Ning had read about liquefied elemental essence in books before. Liquefied elemental essence, in sufficient quantities, could be comparable to a Nine Cycles Golden Pill.

"The Immortal who trained here..." Ninefire said excitedly. "He definitely had accumulated a large amount of liquefied elemental essence here. Because of his training, he had already used up the vast majority of it, leaving behind only this thin layer. But even just this thin layer...is perhaps comparable to the entire wealth of our Ji clan. And in addition, even if our Ji clan had the wealth to buy something like this, we still wouldn't be able to."

Everyone present was excited.

They all understood that liquefied elemental essence would allow a person to avoid spending a long period of time in absorbing and refining energy! Thus, it had long ago been monopolized by large sects and large clans. They might gift it to some truly monstrous talents, or some top-tier experts, making it so that they wouldn't have to waste too much time in slowly refining elemental energy. How could the Ji clan possibly be able to buy something like this?"

"Patriarch, with this, will you be able to break through to the Wanxiang Adept stage?" Ning asked hurriedly.

"Our Ji clan's training methods are fairly poor." Ninefire shook his head. "In theory, I can break through, but in reality, our Ji clan, from past to present, has never produced a single Wanxiang Adept! I've trained for nearly four centuries now. If it were possible for me to become a Wanxiang Adept, I would've broken through long ago. This liquefied elemental essence is useless to me, or for your Granny Shadow. But for you, Ji Ning, it has quite a bit of use!"

"Right. Ji Ning, you are the most suitable person for using it." Granny Shadow looked at Ning as well, her eyes filled with expectation. "You are such a genius. In truth, for you to have been born to our Ji clan has resulted in the Ji clan holding you back. You have to waste so much time in slowly accumulating elemental ki energy. If you were born within some top-tier clans, you would train much more quickly than you have thus far."

“Ji Ning, use it.” Yichuan said as well. “Don’t be hesitant and shy. I know exactly what level you are on. In terms of insight, most likely all of us are at least a level below you. By relying on this liquefied elemental essence, you absolutely can reach a higher level.”

“Right.” Truekeep, Ninefire, and the others all looked eagerly towards Ning.

Ning felt a warm feeling in his heart.

Such a treasure...

And yet, they were all leaving it for him.

“Patriarch, I won’t be shy then.” Ning said directly. “I’ll immediately take the liquefied elemental essence and begin to train.” It would be hard for him to break through as a Fiendgod Body Refiner, and even if he wanted to try, he needed the power of the Sun and the Moon...and so, this liquefied elemental essence was more suited for him in training as a Ki Refiner. He had reached the necessary level of insight long ago; he absolutely could establish his Zifu foundation!

“Good.” Ninefire and the others were filled with excitement and anticipation. To them, this liquefied elemental essence would only be able to raise their power by a limited amount. But to the most monstrously talented member of the Ji clan, Ji Ning...it would most likely increase his power tremendously.

“I’ll go look at the other rooms and see if there’s anything else we can use.” Ninefire said hurriedly.

There was the other room nearby.

In that room, there was only a stone bed, a stone chair, and a stone table. Nothing else.

“It seems this place was just the place where the Immortal shut himself in for training, while this other room was the study where the Immortal would rest and flip through Immortal manuals.” Ninefire said. “The other room is a room where the Immortal actually trained.”

“There’s nothing else.”

“No other treasures.”

Yichuan and the others took a careful look as well, but this stone room just had a primary room and a side room. It was very simple and plain, and one could tell at a glance that there was nothing else here. They used their ki energy to sweep it as well, but couldn’t find any hiding places for treasures.

“Let’s go.” Ninefire and the others returned to the main room. They looked at Ning, then instructed, “Ji Ning, you remain here and train. Remember, shut the stone door. There’s a secret mechanism above the door. Once you shut the door, no one outside will be able to open it. We’ll wait aboveground for you.”

“Fine.” Ning nodded.

Ninefire and the others all quickly left, leaving only Ning behind in the stone room. Ning pushed the door shut, locking it in place.

Training was something very important. One had to be very careful. Otherwise, if one was disturbed at an important point during the training, it would be very dangerous.

“This time...I should be able to establish my Zifu.” Ning looked at the pool, filled with that spiritual liquefied elemental essence. He didn’t hesitate any further, immediately sitting down next to the pool and immediately activating his [Water Element Art] technique. The [Water Element Art], although a very basic technique, was one in which establishing the Zifu was simple.

However, after establishing his Zifu, Ning needed to change to a different type of Ki Refining technique. Otherwise, just by relying on this poor technique, it would be quite difficult for him to become a Wanxiang Adept. In theory, it was possible, but only in theory. As for becoming a Primal Daoist? Even in theory, it was impossible!

However, Ning wasn’t impatient. He primarily trained as a Fiendgod Body Refiner, after all. In the future, he would also leave Swallow Mountain. Naturally, he would be able to acquire a higher level technique.

“Rumble...” Ning activated the [Water Element Art], and immediately began to absorb the elemental energy nearby. The elemental energy within this stone room was simply too dense, and it constantly condensed into Ki.

Ning opened his mouth.

Absorb!

Immediately, part of the liquefied elemental essence within the pool flew up into the air. Controlled by Ning’s divine will, the essence flew straight into Ning’s mouth and entered his body. As soon as the liquefied elemental essence entered his body...it instantly transformed into elemental energy. The incomparably pure elemental energy constantly circulated within his dantian, transforming directly into elemental ki energy. It was successful at a single go! It didn’t place any stress on his body at all. Ning could constantly, unceasingly continue to absorb and transform this energy.

“Rumble...” The green water-type ki in his dantian began to surge about like endless, vast waves, wildly swirling and constantly accumulating!

“Again.” Ning once more opened his mouth, drawing some liquefied elemental essence into his body.

A massive wave of energy arose within his dantian. His elemental ki energy, which originally needed a long period of time to slowly accumulate, quickly reached a limit. Boundless amounts of elemental energy swirled ferociously in his dantian under great pressure, as though the space in his dantian was too small, unable to contain so much elemental energy.

Rumble...

Instantly, something happened, like when Pangu split open the primordial chaos and created the heavens and the earth! The chaotic, monocolored dantian suddenly exploded!

In the area around Ning, who had been quietly seated in the lotus position by the side of the pool, a large amount of watery mist suddenly arose out of nowhere. In this moment, he could so very clearly sense the ‘Dao’, but soon afterwards, the feeling disappearing.

“I established my Zifu! Now that my Zifu is established, I have my foundation for continuing my training as an Immortal practitioner.” Ning said softly to himself.

Within his body, in the location where the dantian had previously been.

This was now a vast, empty, boundless space. This vast, empty space contained a limitless amount of violet ki which filled it. This strange location, quasi-real and quasi-imaginary, was the Violet Palace! Every single person, upon establishing their Zifu Violet Palace, would have the same thing. However, as to what sort of level a person would be able to train to in the future, that depended on each person's destiny and techniques.

"Absorb!" Ning opened his mouth, and more liquefied elemental essence from the watery pool into Ning's body like water.

The vast, spread-out space with violet ki instantly had the first drop of elemental ki formed from it. Soon, a large amount of ki was constantly coalescing. Within this boundless, empty, illusory void, a small pool began to form, which quickly transformed into a small pond...elemental ki continued to solidify and accumulate, and the size of the pond continued to grow as well...

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Book 5: Zifu Disciple Chapter 26: Stormclouds Approaching

Ji Ning was seated next to the pool of water in the lotus position. His aura was like that of savage waves crashing down. He continued to open his mouth, absorbing the liquefied soul essence within the pool, causing that layer of liquefied essence to quickly deplete.

But suddenly, Ning shut his mouth.

"Whew."

A smile on his face, Ning opened his eyes. He glanced at the green, liquefied soul essence in the pool. "It let me break through as a peak Xiantian expert, allowing me to establish my Zifu, then solidify my base as an early Zifu Disciple. It has saved me at least a year or two of effort. I used up a third of the liquefied essence!"

In a short period of time, just long enough to boil a pot of tea, not only had he established his Zifu, he had also solidified his base. Even Ning, at his astonishing rate of improvement, would have needed a year or two.

If I use the remaining two thirds of liquefied essence to train, I might be able to reach the mid-stage as a Zifu Disciple." Ning understood that since he had already stabilized his base as an early Zifu Disciple, by relying on the remaining liquefied essence, he absolutely had the possibility of breaking through again, but if he really were to rely on the [Water Element Art] to train to the mid-stage as a Zifu Disciple, his future Ki Refining path would become difficult.

After all, the [Water Element Art] was a very low-class technique. It was fine to use it to establish a Zifu, because every person's Zifu was the same. But if Ning was to use it to break through to the middle of the Zifu level? There would be a very negative effect on the purity of his elemental energy. This single wrong step would be something which he would be unable to undo in the future. In the future, it would become ten times or a hundred times more difficult for him to become a Wanxiang Adept.

"I've already made a large leap forward and become a Zifu Disciple! Even if I break through to become a mid-stage Zifu Disciple, the amount of benefit I would see in terms of power would be limited." Ning

pondered to himself. Leaping to a new level was a qualitative transformation! But a small leap within the same level didn't have that much of an impact on his power.

Xiantian lifeforms could dominate Houtiane experts.

Zifu Disciples could dominate Xiantian lifeforms!

Even an early Zifu Disciple could still dominate most peak Xiantian lifeforms. This was a qualitative difference. To battle someone at a higher level? Difficult!

But if an early Zifu Disciple were to battle a mid-stage Zifu Disciple...it would be hard to say who the victor was. This sort of small gap within the same level didn't result in huge differences in strength.

"Even if I use up the remaining liquid, the amount of power I would gain would be limited, and it would destroy my future path. Not worth it." With a flip of his hand, Ning made a talisman appear, which had a Fiendgod word on it; 'Right'. This was the control talisman for the Aquatic Manor. Ning stared at it, an eager light flickering in his eyes. "Although I've established my Zifu, and I am confident that if I were to meet Dong Ziqi again, I would be able to suppress him and perhaps even kill him...this time, I will have to face not just Dong Ziqi by himself, but an entire group of Snowdragon Mountain experts."

"I hope this Aquatic Manor...will allow my power to rise to a new level."

"Given that this Aquatic Manor was able to produce the likes of Immortal Juhua, it should be extraordinary." Ning said eagerly. A drop of green elemental ki passed from his hand into the talisman, quickly binding it.

A surge of ancient-feeling power seemed to awaken, causing Ning to feel the desire to worship it from the depths of his heart.

"What a fellow." Ning stared at the talisman. "I really wonder who the first master of the Aquatic Manor was."

"Let's go."

Ning immediately arose, while at the same time, with a flip of his hand, he produced a palm-sized jade bottle. This was an unranked magic treasure. Although it was the size of his palm, it was able to contain within it thousands of kilograms of fine wine. Ning had quite a few storage-type magic treasures like this one. For example, when Ning had undergone the Fiendgod Bloodforging process in the Aquatic Manor, he had used one such gourd to contain a thousand kilograms of blood.

"Go in." Ning stared at the liquefied elemental essence in the pool. Summoning his divine will, ripple, ripple...the liquefied essence rose into the air, passing through the neck of the jade bottle. Every single drop was put in, leaving not a single drop remaining.

"I wonder which Immortal left behind this stone room." Ning, before leaving, took a final glance around the room. "It has caused such a calamity to my Ji clan, but it also allowed me to establish my Zifu in advance."

Ning understood in his heart that this wasn't the fault of that Immortal; if he had to blame someone, he could only blame the Ji clan for being too weak.

“Whoosh!”

He left the stone room. Ning then used his Waterflame Lotus, which swiveled about him, carving a path straight out from within this elemental ore mine. He quickly charged upwards at a constant pace. Ning knew that it would take some time for him to charge a hundred kilometers upwards, and so two magic treasures appeared in his hands; one was a palm-sized flying boat magic treasure, while the other was a pair of black wing-type magic treasures.

The flying boat had belonged to Bei Zishan, while the black wings had belonged to Ju San. They were both ranked magic treasures.

“Now that I’ve reached the Zifu level! I am able to use these ranked magic treasures.” Ning understood that when reaching a new level, one benefit was a qualitative improvement to his personal strength, while another benefit was that the type of magic treasures he could use had also risen. These two benefits, combined, made it so that Zifu Disciples could absolutely dominate Xiantian lifeforms.

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Boom!

A petal of the Waterflame Lotus burst forth from the ground, with Ning behind it.

“Ji Ning.” In the distance were Ji Ninefire, Granny Shadow, and the others. They had long since dispersed and recollected the surrounding bewildering formation, and the sight of the desolate mountain forests had returned. Only, in parts of the forest, the traces of the earlier battle could still be seen.

“Patriarch. Father.” Ning hurriedly walked over.

“You came out quite quickly. We just arrived on the surface not long ago.” Ninefire and the other four walked over, laughing. “Truekeep just emerged moments ago as well.”

Ning thought about it. He had been in training for as much time as it takes to brew a pot of tea; the amount of time he had spent boring through the ground had actually been greater than that. The Patriarch and the others had most likely had to spend more time boring through the ground than he did...and so, doing the math, it seemed as though they probably really did emerge at roughly the same time.

“Right, Ji Ning.” Ninefire asked. “Prior to this, when you killed Ju San. What magic treasures did you acquire?”

“Quite a few.” Ning said.

The nearby Grany Shadow explained in detail, “We need to do an accounting of these treasures, to see who they are most useful for. This is the easiest way to put them to good use.”

Ning nodded. “Jusan had one flying transportation magic treasure, one storage magic treasure, one protective magic treasure, one magic greataxe, and a pair of magic wings! The magic wings are useful to me, but the others are not.” Ning had already acquired a ranked storage magic treasure, a transportation magic treasure, and a protective magic treasure from Bei Zishan. Thus, only this pair of ranked wing-type magic treasures was useful for him.

“What do you need?” Ninefire looked at Ning.

“Swords!” Ning said. “I only need ranked flying swords. Other things are useless to me. The more ranked flying swords, the better.”

His two sources of combat power were close quarters combat and the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation].

In particular, now that he had established his Zifu, the power of his [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] had naturally grown only greater. However, if he continued to use unranked swords...his power would most likely only rise by one or two levels. If, however, he was able to completely exchange them for ranked swords, Ning felt that he would probably be able to give even a Wanxiang Adept a good fight.

“Ranked flying swords? The more the better?” Ninefire, Granny Shadow, the old servant Ah Xing, and Yichuan all repeated softly, then offered one or two flying swords each.

“All together, we have five flying swords that we don’t need for now.” Ninefire looked at Ning. “Is it enough?”

Ning was rather disappointed.

Five?

Useless.

His [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] required at least nine swords to be used together in order to work and creation a formation base! And nine formations bases were required for each [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] formation! In other words, the smallest unit, the ‘formation base’, required at least nine ranked swords. And, to make his [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] truly transform in power, he needed at least eighty one ranked flying swords. Only by using them as the foundation would the power of the other, unranked swords become truly explosive.

But of course, the ideal solution would be to only use ranked flying swords...

According to Ning’s calculations, if he only used ranked flying swords, he would only be able to use the third level of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]. But the power of it would be incomparably greater than before! Quality was even more important than quantity!

“How many do you need?” Ninefire asked.

“I need seven ranked flying swords. The more, the better. If I had several hundred, it would be even better.” Ning laughed. Sword-type magic treasures were very common; Ning had acquired a pair of ranked flying swords from Bei Zishan alone. If they could come up with another seven, then Ning would have nine in total, enough for a single, smallest unit ‘formation base’. With this formation base as the core, the power of the entire [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] would double or triple!

“Several hundred?” Ninefire, Granny Shadow, and the others were all shocked. However, when they thought back to the scene of Ning utilizing the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], they realized that he did indeed have seven hundred plus flying swords swirling around him. It seemed as though Ning really did indeed need a large number of flying swords. But several hundred ranked magic treasures? Even if the entire Ji clan bankrupted itself, it wouldn’t be able to afford it.

“We’ll strive to help you come up with seven more swords.” Ninefire said, then changed the subject. “Snowdragon Mountain will publicize this to their comrades. Most likely, they will come for battle in a day or two. Before this, you can all go back and pick up any treasures that you need or take care of any matters that need addressing. Afterwards, we will regroup here.”

“Let’s go.”

Swoosh!

Ninefire, Granny Shadow, and Ah Xing mounted an enormous wine gourd, quickly disappearing into the horizon, leaving behind only Ning and his father.

Ning understood that this was rather like taking care of one’s post-mortem affairs.

“Father, will you return to West Prefecture City?” Ning looked at his father.

“No. To Serpentwing Lake.” Yichuan shook his head. “I want to visit Little White. The two of us are like brothers who have shared life and death together. No matter what, I have to see him again.” Yichuan had stayed for five years at Serpentwing Lake, and the Whitewater Hound had stayed with him this entire time.

“Uncle White?” Ning nodded gently.

The Godbeast ‘Whitewater Hound’ had an extremely close relationship Ning’s father. They had adventured together to as far as the Darknorth Sea. The time they had spent together was even longer than the time Ning’s father and mother had spent together. Indeed, they really were lifelong brothers.

“Let’s go.” A flying boat appeared beneath Ning’s feet, and Yichuan mounted it as well.

Whoosh!

The flying boat instantly rose into the air, quickly passing through the skies and into the clouds...

Swallow Mountain had a total of ten commandery cities. Snowdragon Mountain had three of them, which were similar to the commandery city the Ji clan controlled, the ‘City of Ten Thousand Swords’. As soon as Dong Ziqi had invaded Swallow Mountain, he had given the name of the city he had taken over the name of ‘Snowdragon City’, so as to let everyone know that this was a branch of Snowdragon Mountain!

Although afterwards, they had taken over two more commandery cities, the heart of this branch of Snowdragon Mountain remained in Snowdragon City.

“Where are they? Where are the others?”

In the air above Snowdragon Mountain, three figures stood there atop a flying screen, staring into the distance as a greef leaf hurtled through the air, with Dong Ziqi and Muse standing atop it.

“Where are the other three? All dead?” These three figures asked frantically. The three of them were the three other Zifu Disciples of the Swallow Mountain branch of Snowdragon Mountain. They were of the ‘Ju’ clan and the ‘Dong’ clan. Earlier, the Zifu Disciple belonging to the Ju clan, Ju Nianxiong, had seen that his nephew’s life-talisman had shattered, and so he had hurried over to Snowdragon

Mountain. The two elders of the Dong clan were terrified upon hearing this, knowing that something must have gone wrong.

But they didn't expect that not only had Ju San died, even the He siblings had died.

"They died. My three fellow disciples all died." Dong Ziqi gritted his teeth. "It was the Ji clan. They set up a formation early on, then suddenly attacked, causing us to be caught offguard. My three fellow disciples were ganged upon and killed one by one. With the He siblings dead, most likely that official writ was taken away as well.

Three commandery cities. They were split up between the Dong clan, the He clan, and the Ju clan. One of the official writs had been carried by the He siblings.

"The Ji clan is asking for death!" Ju Nianxiong's eyes were bloodshot.

The nearby Muse said in a cold voice, "This time, due to the elemental ripples, we went to go investigate. We discovered that there was an enormous elemental ore mine within the Ji clan's territory, with a large number of high-grade elemental stones. The entire quarry has a circumference of four thousand kilometers and a depth of three hundred kilometers.

"What!"

Nianxiong and the two elders of the Dong clan were badly startled.

"The Ji clan wasn't willing to hand it over, so we ended up in a battle." Ziqi forced the words out.

The shorter of the two elders of the Dong clan howled in a furious voice, "The main sect desperately needs an enormous elemental ore mine such as this! If we offer it to the main sect...this will be a great merit for us. The Ji clan actually dares to oppose Snowdragon Mountain? Then we'll destroy the Ji clan, we'll annihilate them all!!!"

"Of course we'll annihilate their clan!" Ziqi's eyes flashed with a cold light. "But what I fear the most is that the Ji clan will sign a transfer agreement with the Grand Xia Dynasty."

The two Dong elders and Ju Nianxiong both paused. If a transfer agreement truly was signed, then even Snowdragon Mountain wouldn't dare to interfere. Challenge the Grand Xia Dynasty? Did they want to die?

"But the Ji clan needs to first make the report, then await the arrival of the Celestial Envoy of the Grand Xia Dynasty. It will take at least three days. If we can do our best to delay, we can delay for a period of time." Ziqi said hurriedly. "So we have to hurry. We have to invite our comrades and have them arrive at Swallow Mountain as fast as possible, so that we can annihilate the Ji clan together."

"Right." Everyone nodded.

The Ji clan had killed three of their Zifu Disciples, leaving them only five. If they went and fought all out, even if they won, most likely most of them would die. No matter how great the merit they rendered would be, they had to be alive to win plaudits for it.

“The four of you, go invite the various Snowdragon Mountain branches nearest to us.” Ziqi said. “I myself will head to Swallow Mountain City to meet with the garrison general, and ask him to delay as long as possible.”

“Alright.” The four nodded.

“Invite a few dozen comrades. By then, with dozens of us together...we will utterly crush and annihilate the Ji clan with ease.” Ziqi said. “There’s virtually no danger when we join together into a group, and everyone will have a share of the glory. Those comrades will definitely come.”

“Fine.”

“Then we’ll go make a trip.”

Soon, the arrangements and travel plans were made. The other four Zifu Disciples headed separately in four different directions to invite their fellow sectmates, while Dong Ziqi headed to Swallow Mountain City.

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The vast Serpentwing Lake.

A flying boat descended at high speed from the skies, landing at one corner of Brightheart Island. This was the place where Ning’s father lived. The only thing here was a quite, secluded residence. There weren’t even any servants present, just a large, snow-white dog which lay there.

The Whitewater Hound suddenly raised his head as the flying boat descended at high speed.

“Uncle White.” Ning looked at the Whitewater Hound, feeling a surge of emotion as well. First, Ning knew that this Uncle White and his father were brothers that had fought together and risked their lives together, and that Ning’s mother and Ning himself had both been saved by Uncle White. And second, that year when gone outside of West Prefecture City every day to train archery, it had been Uncle White who had stood guard the entire time.

He watched as his father and Uncle White moved towards each other. Although Uncle White was incapable of speech, the master-servant bond allowed spiritual communication at a close distance.

Ning quietly left as well.

Very shortly.

Ning returned to his own residence, entering the quiet room which he used for training. He immediately sealed the room off. Earlier, while flying over Serpentwing Lake, Ning had already sensed the Aquatic Manor! It was just as the old black bull had said; once he bound the control talisman, he would be able to sense and directly enter the Aquatic Manor.

“During this battle, I saw that although my power was great, it was still far from being sufficient. I hope that this ancient Aquatic Manor will be useful and be able to improve my power greatly.” Ning was filled with hope and expectations.

“Let’s go in.” Ning willed it, and instantly, an enormous illusion of a grizzly head appeared in the quiet room. The enormous grizzly head opened its illusory maw, swallowing Ning with one gulp.

Ning disappeared from within the quiet room.