

Desolate 1031

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Book 30: Ancient Cultivator Chapter 6: Battling Alone

A towering ray shrine was floating there within the dark void of chaotic space, and an awe-inspiring group of cultivators were inside it.

At the highest place within the shrine sat a silver-masked, silver-robed man. He was the Ninedust Sectlord, and his name was known throughout the many territories of the nearby region. Countless living beings prostrated themselves before him and lived on his suffrage, and his vileness and his power had long ago been made known to the cultivators around him, inspiring terror in their hearts.

Below him stood three figures who were the three vice sectlords of the Ninedust Sect.

“Sectlord.” Daolord Graceful, one of the three vice sectlords, spoke out. “The ten years have concluded, but the Eastroad Sect has refused to leave. What should we do?”

“Do you really need to ask? Of course we are going to attack. We’re going to wipe them out!” Daolord Bruteflame, who had a stone-like body, roared angrily, “Without Daolord Eastroad, how can the Eastroad Sect possibly contend against our Ninedust Sect?”

“Hmph.” The graceful and handsome Daolord Cleversoul frowned as he barked, “Bruteflame, Ptariarch Eastroad was an extraordinarily powerful figure, and his lair is undoubtedly filled with many terrifying formations. We gave coercion a shot, and if we succeeded it would have been nice, but... attack by force? Hmph. Only the Sectlord himself has a shot at that. All three of us would be at risk of dying if we tried.”

The three vice sect-lords were Daolords of the Fourth Step, with Daolord Cleversoul being the strongest and the other two being weaker.

“Enough.” The Ninedust Sectlord said in a cold voice, “Since they have refused to leave, we’ll take them out.”

The three vice sect-lords, especially Daolords Cleversoul and Graceful, were all startled. Daolord Cleversoul barked, “The rest of you, retire for a moment.”

“Understood.” The other Daolords and World-level cultivators standing below them all departed, despite feeling puzzled.

“Sectlord.” Daolord Cleversoul raised his head to look at the Ninedust Sectlord. “Sectlord, are you perhaps being a bit too fixated on the Eastroad Sect? You first slew one of their Daolords, then moved the entire shrine over to the Eastroad Everworld to keep an eye over it... and now, you plan to attack it by force! The Eastroad Sect is already incredibly weak; we only need to besiege it, not actually attack it. Eventually, they will have to come out, unless they choose to never test themselves and never go out adventuring. If that is the case, then their sect will grow weaker and weaker over time. In a few chaos cycles, they’ll be finished. Why must we take the risk of attacking by force?”

“Agreed. Sectlord, are we perhaps being a bit too hasty?” Daolord Graceful asked. They all felt that this was a bit too impetuous. They could just take over the entire Eastroad Territory while keeping the Eastroad Sect trapped here! However, the Sectlord insisted on actually attacking.

“Hm. Now that the old Sectlord has passed away, the three of you must feel that I’m the easygoing, merciful type, yes? You believe there is no need to obey my orders, mm?” The Ninedust Sectlord’s voice was as cold as ice.

“We wouldn’t dare,” the three vice sectlords said respectfully.

“Since you do not dare to disobey, go and carry out my orders. Head out to the Eastroad Sect,” the Ninedust Sectlord barked.

“Acknowledged.” The three vice sectlords had no choice but to obey the order.

“Head out to the Eastroad Sect.” Soon, the order spread to the entire sect, and the towering gray shrine began to fly ever-closer to the Eastroad Everworld.

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Rumble...

The towering gray shrine pierced through the world-membrane of the Eastroad Sect, then soared through its skies like an enormous levitating mountain as it moved straight to the Eastroad Sect. It made no effort to disguise or hide what it was doing at all.

“That’s the Ninedust Sect’s shrine.”

“The Ninedust Shrine of the Ninedust Sect.”

Quite a few cultivators within the Eastroad Everworld raised their heads to stare at it, their hearts filled with shock. They knew that something big was about to happen!

“Move, move, move! Head out right away!”

“Let’s go to the Eastroad Sect and watch what happens from a safe distance. This battle between the Ninedust Sect and the Eastroad Sect will be the biggest fight in many chaos cycles in these territories. There’s no way we can miss it.”

“The Eastroad Sect is probably going to be wiped out. There’s no way we can miss this spectacle. Given what a deep foundation the Eastroad Sect has accumulated over the years, it probably won’t die without a fight. I’m guessing that one or two of the Daolords of the Ninedust Sect will die as well.”

These cultivators all chatted excitedly amongst themselves as they quietly flew towards the Eastroad Sect, preparing to watch this battle. If they missed a fight like this, they would be filled with endless regrets.

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“They are coming.”

“The Ninedust Sect is coming.”

“The Ninedust Sect has brought its main base, the Ninedust Shrine.” Word quickly spread like wildfire within the Eastroad Sect, and it was filled with a hubbub of commotion. Many of its disciples were shocked and restless. Although they had long ago known that a day like this would come, and that someone known as Daolord Darknorth had come to assist them... they couldn’t help but feel nervous and fearful now that the day had finally arrived.

The Ninedust Sect’s power was simply too great! Its fame and its might were all legendary throughout the nearby territories.

“Fellow Daoist Darknorth! Fellow Daoist Darknorth!” Daolord Thunderheat headed straight to the Void Pathway to ask Ning to assist.

“Have they arrived?” Ning, Pillsaint, Su Youji, and Naia all came out.

“The main base of the Ninedust Sect, the ‘Ninedust Shrine’, is flying straight towards us.” Daolord Thunderheat cleared his throat, obviously rather nervous. “They aren’t trying to do a blitzkrieg through teleportation or anything sneaky; they are just flying straight towards us! I imagine many cultivators have already noticed them. The Ninedust Sect is completely confident in its chances.”

Ning nodded. “No need to panic. From this moment forwards, you must obey all my orders.”

“Alright.” Daolord Thunderheat nodded.

“I’ll go meet the Ninedust Sect outside our sect.” Ning smiled.

“Outside the sect?” Daolord Thunderheat was shocked. “You can’t. If you go outside, you won’t be protected by the formations.”

“If I am not a match for them, then I’ll naturally retreat into the protective embrace of the Eastroad Sect’s formations.” Ning smiled. “Don’t worry. I won’t get in over my head.”

Unable to dissuade Ning, Daolord Thunderheat could only say, “Fellow Daoist Darknorth, you must be careful.”

“I’ll leave the defenses and formations protecting the Eastroad Sect to you, Daolord. Maintaining control over its formations will be critical to this fight,” Ning said.

“Don’t worry about that at all,” Daolord Thunderheat said.

Ning turned his head to glance at Naia, Pillsaint, and Su Youji, then smiled. “There’s no need for the three of you to participate in this fight. Would you like to enter my estate-world, or to watch from the outside?”

“I’m watching, of course,” Su Youji said hurriedly.

“How could I miss a fight like this?” Pillsaint shook his head.

Daolord Naia didn’t say anything. She just stood next to Su Youji and looked at Ning.

Ning chuckled. “Might as well. However, if things get dangerous you need to enter my estate-world. All of you are too weak, after all; once the real fight starts, the Ninedust Sectlord will probably wipe you all out with a single strike.”

In the end, they just weren't strong enough. Ning had both the Hegemon's armor as well as a powerful protective divine ability, and he also had his nine novessence arts. This was why he dared to clash against figures like Kongsan and the Ninedust Sectlord. Daolords like Naia would be finished in one blow. The difference in power was simply too great."

"All of us will listen to your orders, Master," Su Youji promised right away.

"Then I'm going to go now." Ning nodded as he flew away.

Daolord Thunderheat, Su Youji, and the disciples of the Eastroad Sect all watched as Ning left, their hearts filled with nervousness.

"I'm just worried that this Daolord Darknorth will be killed by the Ninedust Sect in an instant. If that happens, we really will be doomed."

"There's nothing else we can do. We have to place our faith in Daolord Darknorth." The Eastroad Sect's disciples really were out of options.

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Ning walked out of the Eastroad Sect, then scanned the surrounding area. Upon seeing a distant mountain peak a few hundred kilometers away, he took a single step forwards and moved to stand at the very top of that mountain.

"So this battle has finally come." Ning sat down upon a boulder atop the mountain peak, staring at the distant horizons. A hint of fire could be seen flickering in his eyes... a burning desire to do battle.

"I've now made breaks through in all five Supreme Daos that comprise my Omega Sword Dao. However, I've failed with each attempt I make to merge them together into an even stronger Omega Sword Dao." Ning frowned. The Void Pathway had actually been quite helpful to him. Prior to coming to the Eastroad Sect, Ning had only made breakthroughs in two of his Supreme Daos: the Blood Drop sword-intent and the Yin-Yang sword-intent.

The breakthrough in the Yin-Yang sword-intent had come in a natural fashion as he hastened towards the Eastroad Sect after his battle against Daolord Kongsan. As for the other three Supreme Daos, he had made those breakthroughs during the ten thousand years he had spent in the Void Pathway. Alas, to use them to form an even higher-level Omega Sword Dao required that brief moment of epiphany, a eureka moment.

"In the end, one simply cannot reach the apex through cultivation alone. Perhaps this fight will give me a chance to gain the insight I need to make a breakthrough in my Omega Sword Dao. Once I master my second-stage Omega Sword Dao, I'll be able to become a Daolord of the Second Step." Ning eagerly awaited that moment. He was slightly more powerful than he had been when he had battled Kongsan, but he hadn't made any truly transformative breakthroughs. He was in desperate need of something to stimulate him into making a breakthrough.

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Rumble... the towering gray shrine finally appeared in the horizons as it flew towards the Eastroad Sect.

"There it is."

“The Ninedust Sect has arrived.”

“They are here.” Many cultivators were hidden off in the distance, having teleported to arrive in advance of the shrine.

The towering gray shrine suddenly came to a halt in midair. The Daolords of the Ninedust Sect and its cultivators all stared off into the distance, as did the Ninedust Sectlord atop his throne. Their gazes almost instantly turned towards the mountain peak which was almost directly in front of the Eastroad Sect. There was a white-robed youth with a black sheath on his back who was on that mountain peak, and the youth rose to his feet and stared right back at them.

“A Daolord of the Second Step?” The Ninedust Sectlord murmured softly, “A puny little Daolord of the Second Step actually dares to block our advance towards the Eastroad Sect... to block my Ninedust Sect?”

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Book 30: Ancient Cultivator Chapter 7: Attack!

“Sectlord.” Daolord Clevermind looked at the Ninedust Sectlord. “This man is a mere Daolord of the Second Step. He knows that we have come, but he actually dares to stand in front of their gates. He clearly is treating us as an enemy. Hmph. Let us send one of our brothers to wipe him out.”

“Mm.” The Ninedust Sectlord calmly assented. Given his status, how could he possibly hold a mere Daolord of the Second Step in any regard?

“Brother Huzhen.” Daolord Clevermind immediately glanced downwards. “I’ll have to trouble you to get rid of this Daolord of the Second Step! You are our first attacker, and as such you need to be decisive in this victory. Shock and awe them. Make sure they know that submission and surrender is the correct decision, and that defiance leads only to death.”

“Understood,” Daolord Huzhen said respectfully. He was one of the sect’s three Daolords of the Third Step, and was quite a formidable fighter. Whoosh! Daolord Huzhen immediately flew out of the Ninedust Shrine and towards the distant mountain peak with Ji Ning on it.

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“Who is that?”

“That white-robed youth actually dares to stand in front of the Eastroad Sect and block the Ninedust Sect’s path. He’s being a bit too brash, isn’t he?”

“If my senses are correct, he appears to merely be a Daolord of the Second Step.”

The cultivators watching from afar were all staring at Ning curiously. Now that the Ninedust Shrine had descended upon this place, it made no sense for a Daolord of the Second Step to stand in its path. It was like a cricket trying to stand in the path of a carriage.

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“It’ll all be up to Daolord Darknorth.”

"I wonder if Daolord Darknorth really is as powerful as he claims or if he is just bragging. No matter what, I just don't feel safe."

"Ugh."

"Let's just watch and see."

The disciples of the Eastroad Sect were all quite nervous, especially when they saw that towering shrine hang in the air right in front of them. Would Daolord Darknorth really be able to stand up to them?

"Fellow Daoist Darknorth..." Daolord Thunderheat watched silently. He was more nervous than anyone else, as it was up to him to defend and run the entire Eastroad Sect. He was the one who had chosen to trust Ning.

Ning stood there at the top of the mountain peak, watching as a Daolord flew towards him with robes fluttering in the air. The Daolord called out from afar, "I am Daolord Huzhen of the Ninedust Sect. Listen up, kid. The Ninedust Sect has come to tame and subdue the Eastroad Sect. How dare you stand in our way and cause trouble for us? Are you really tired of living? I'll give you a chance to live; submit to us right away and join us, and I'll spare your life. Otherwise... today is the day you die."

His voice boomed out and echoed within the skies. Clearly, he was doing this to put on a great show. As Daolord Clevermind had instructed, he was going to shock and awe the Eastroad Sect, with the ideal outcome being terrifying them into surrender.

"Haha..." Ning stood there atop the mountain, a smile of amusement on his face as his own voice echoed through the skies as well. "Daolord Huzhen, yes? If you wish to submit to me, I'll accept you as a retainer. If you attack, you'll die here and now."

"What a joke. Go to your death, then!" Daolord Huzhen let out an angry laugh, then pointed from afar. Boom! A series of wooden planks appeared in the skies, culminating in over a thousand planks. Every single plank was covered with complex divine runes; clearly, this was a set of extremely powerful magic treasures. The divine runes began to tremble, causing the thousand-plus wooden planks to instantly form into a stream of azure sword-light that slashed through the heavens towards Ning.

Ning slowly shook his head. Just as the azure streak of sword-light reached his body, he waved his hand. Boom! The azure sword-light was actually blasted apart.

"What?" The distant Daolord Huzhen's face turned pale.

"Die, then." Ning's gaze turned cold. Instantly, the world around them began to darken as streams of sword-intent appeared out of thin air. The terrifying sword-intent condensed into sword-light that swirled around Daolord Huzhen, and then... swish! The sword-light ground him apart like countless millstones.

"N-no..." Daolord Huzhen had a look of horror on his face. He wanted to use his magic treasures to defend, but... splat. The thousands of streaks of sword-light swirled around him and ground away at his body, splintering his divine body and disintegrating his truesoul. He died on the spot.

Ning took a single step forwards, moving through the skies to stand next to the place where Daolord Huzhen had died. With a wave of his hand, he took the treasures which Daolord Huzhen had left behind.

A powerful wind was blowing through the skies, stirring his robes. Ning wanted to make use of this battle to find a way to further improve his Omega Sword Dao. How could he possibly be wary of combat?

The white-robed Ning raised his head to stare at the distant, towering gray shrine. He said in a cold voice, "Ninedust Sect, if you leave right now you'll be able to keep your lives. Otherwise... I'll kill as many as dare trespass on the grounds of the Eastroad Sect."

"Kill as many as dare trespass."

"Kill as many as dare trespass."

His voice was filled with Immortal energy and echoed throughout the skies, reverberating throughout the world. The distant cultivators watching this from afar were all stunned by this. The disciples of the Eastroad Sect and Daolord Thunderheat were speechless, and the major powers and cultivators of the Ninedust Sect were the most shocked of all.

"What? He was able to slay a Daolord of the Third Step with nothing more than manifested sword-intent?"

"He didn't even use those swords in the black sheath on his back. He didn't even enter close combat, nor did he use any magic treasures. His sword-intent alone was enough to slay a Daolord of the Third Step?"

"B-but..."

"This is terrifying."

"This is no ordinary Daolord of the Second Step. He's one of the most freakishly powerful Daolords of the Second Step in existence."

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Everyone present was stunned. The Eastroad Sect now understood that Daolord Darknorth truly did have a terrifying level of power! As for the Ninedust Sect, it now understood that the white-robed youth before them would be the greatest impediment to their designs over the Eastroad Sect.

"Brother Huzhen!"

"Huzhen!"

"Master!"

A number of anguished cries rang out from within the Ninedust Shrine, with the cultivators in question filled with rage. As for the Ninedust Sectlord, he let out a soft laugh from atop his throne. "Interesting. It seems this Daolord of the Second Step does have a few skills to rely on. Still... in the end, he is just a Daolord of the Second Step. Clevermind, Graceful, Bruteflame, do not be overconfident. We need to smash through the Eastroad Sect like rotting wood. All three of you should simultaneously attack and crush this Daolord of the Second Step."

“All three of us, attack together?” Daolord Graceful couldn’t help but want to confirm this. They were different from Daolord Huzhen, as the power gap between Daolords of the Third Step and Daolords of the Fourth Step was quite significant. To reach the fourth step meant that you were a major power who had virtually reached the absolute apex of a certain personal Dao. Daolord Clevermind in particular possessed incredible power, and was capable of killing ordinary Daolords of the Fourth Step.

“It is enough for Bruteblade and myself to attack,” Daolord Graceful said. “If we work together, we can deal with even the most freakishly powerful Daolords of the Second Step.”

“No.” The Ninedust Sectlord shook his head. “Let’s not waste any more time on a Daolord of the Second Step. All three of you should attack simultaneously and let the Eastroad Sect understand that resistance is futile.”

“Understood.” Daolord Clevermind, Daolord Graceful, and Daolord Bruteblade all assented respectfully. If the sectlord had made up his mind, then they wouldn’t dare to argue any further.

“Let’s go,” Daolord Clevermind barked, then transformed into a streak of light that flew out.

“Let’s go.” Daolords Graceful and Bruteblade followed behind him.

“All three vice sectlords are attacking. Even if this Daolord of the Second Step is one of the most legendary of geniuses, he’s definitely going to die.”

“The three vice sectlords are probably enough to crush the entire Eastroad Sect by themselves.”

The many cultivators within the Ninedust Shrine were filled with complete confidence.

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As the three flew out from the shrine, the skies instantly darkened around them. Rumble... a terrifying, endless streak of saber-light filled the skies, and at its edges was an aura of gray mist as well as boundless flames.

Saber-light, mist, and flames. They filled the skies for countless kilometers around in a manifestation of the might of the Dao of the three. The three vice sectlords had been famous in the surrounding territories for countless years now, and the manifestation of their Dao alone was enough to stun everyone present.

“The Ninedust Sect is actually sending out all three of its vice sectlords at the same time? This is a bit much, isn’t it? For a Daolord of the Fourth Step to fight against a Daolord of the Second Step is already bullying. Three against one?”

“This isn’t bullying. This is a war between the Ninedust Sect and the Eastroad Sect. This Daolord has only himself to blame for daring to get involved.”

“The Eastroad Sect wants to crush this Daolord in an instant.”

Many of the distant spectators, especially the ones belonging to the organizations of the surrounding territories, were scouts who had been placed here long ago. They couldn’t help but shake their heads and sigh. They knew just how terrifyingly strong the three vice sectlords of the Ninedust Sect were.

Every single one of them was incredibly formidable. All three at once? None of them believed the white-robed kid had a chance.

“Hmph.” Standing there in the air, Ning let out a cold snort. Rumble... endless amounts of sword-light filled the skies like a great flood, blanketing the heavens as they smashed towards the saber-light, the mist, and the flames.

The saber-light, the mist, and the flames were hurtling from one direction, while Ning’s ocean of sword-light came crashing from the other. The two curtains of power quickly collided. The blurry mist and the frenzied flames were instantly suppressed, while the frenzied saber-light clashed repeatedly in the air against Ning’s sword-light, neither able to gain an advantage over the other.

The might of their respective Daos continued clashed against each other. As for the three vice sectlords, they stared in the air towards Ning. By now, they realized that they had encountered a truly tough foe.

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Book 30: Ancient Cultivator Chapter 8: Sharpened

The two sides stared at each other from afar. This clash of Daos alone let the three vice sectlords know that in terms of insights into the Dao, this mere Daolord of the Second Step was already on par with Daolord Clevermind and superior to the other two vice sectlords! This caused their ardor to cool down. However, they remained full of confidence. There would be an enormous difference in amount of divine power and Immortal energy, after all; one was a Daolord of the Second Step, the others were Daolords of the Fourth Step!

“Attack,” Daolord Clevermind shouted mentally to the other two.

“GRWAAAWR!” Daolord Bruteflame raised his head and let out a bellow as his stony body suddenly expanded. He transformed into an enormous stone titan that was ten million kilometers tall, and his two giant stone legs slammed into the ground like the pillars of heaven themselves, causing the earth to tremble. His two arms seemed to contain the power to annihilate the heavens as he sent them smashing towards Ning.

“Interesting.” One of the Northbow swords flew out from Ji Ning’s back, falling into his hands. He transformed into the [Three Heads, Six Arms] form, all six of his arms clenched around the hilt of this sword. His sword suddenly expanded to become massive as well, and his six arms swung it outwards in a furious chop.

Omega Sword Dao –!

Ning had made breakthroughs in all five of his Supreme Daos. Although he hadn’t been able to merge them together into a higher-level Omega Sword Dao, his total combat power had still improved by a bit. He was now on par with Patriarch Clearwind in every respect, be it in using quick sword-arts, fierce sword-arts, or unpredictable sword-arts. In fact, his perfection in every area was such that his sword-arts would be enough to force Patriarch Clearwind to flee.

BOOM! The massive streak of sword-light slammed into those two enormous, heaven-overturning arms which brimmed with flames. An enormous explosion blasted out, and Ning couldn’t help but take two steps back. As for the giant stone titan, Daolord Bruteflame, he stumbled one step back as well.

“Daolord Bruteflame lives up to his reputation as an Aberrant special lifeform. The star maps of the Brightshore Kingdom described him as an Aberrant famous for his strength. However, he’s weak in terms of speed and technique,” Ning amused.

“What? A Daolord of the Second Step was actually able to fight Bruteflame head on?” Daolord Graceful was astonished.

“Not good.” Daolord Clevermind’s face paled. He knew very well that even if he struck at full power, he would still be at a disadvantage when fighting Daolord Bruteflame head-on.

“It’ll be up to you, Daolord Clevermind,” Daolord Graceful sent mentally. An incredibly dense black mist suddenly arose that instantly covered the surrounding area which could not be dispersed by the aura of Ning’s Dao. Something seemed to be swimming within that dark mist that almost instantly shot out towards the opponent.

“Oh, a competition in using soft, Yin principles?” Ning’s six Northbow swords all shot out of the sheath, and he wielded one in each of his six arms, sending sword-light flowing outwards and easily defending against the technique.

“Die, then.” The most powerful of the three, Daolord Clevermind, charged straight towards Ning with six warhammers in his hands.

Ning’s face tightened. Although Daolord Clevermind’s name implied trickery, his combat style was absolutely savage and dominating, but in a different way from how Daolord Bruteflame merely used brute force. Daolord Clevermind didn’t seem to have any obvious flaws at all.

“Excellent. The Ninedust Sect is giving me just what I want. I was hoping to have a chance to tussle a bit against comparable foes and see if I can’t perhaps evolve my Omega Sword Dao.” Ning revealed a smile. “Who would’ve thought they’d choose to send their three vice sectlords out to spar?” Three of them at the same time would give even Ning some pressure.

“Let’s do this!” Ning charged forwards.

“Kill!” Daolord Clevermind shot straight towards Ning.

“Hmph.” The distant Daolord Graceful controlled his magic treasures from afar, sending long-range attacks against Ning. He was a Ki Refiner and so wasn’t all that skilled in close combat. As for Daolord Bruteflame, he sent his giant fists smashing towards Ning time and time again, each strike comparable to Ning’s Omega Heavenbreaker attack. Ning had to be wary of him as well.

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For a time, the scene outside the Eastroad Sect was a scene of complete chaos. Black mist swirled everywhere, and an enormous titan was launching frenzied attacks in every direction. At the center of the action was the battle between the number one vice sectlord of the Ninedust Sect, Daolord Clevermind... and a white-robed youth. Thunder and lightning crackled through the air as the giant warhammers linked together into a cage of lightning around Ning, whose six swords struck out with unfathomable, mysterious power. Sometimes, they were as unfathomable as swimming dragons; at other times, they were as explosive as volcanos. In every aspect, he was as strong as Daolord Clevermind.

However, Daolord Graceful and Daolord Bruteflame continued to launch attacks from the sidelines, causing Ning to be distracted and making it so that he seemed to be consistently at a disadvantage.

“This white-robed Daolord really is powerful. He’s actually able to fight the three vice sectlords of the Ninedust Sect to a standstill!”

“Impressive. For a Daolord of the Second Step to possess such power means that he is definitely one of the most freakishly powerful of Daolords around. I’ve heard of such monsters in the past, but I’ve never seen any of them. I’ve really seen something special today.”

“Hm. It seems it won’t be that easy for the Ninedust Sect to take over the Eastroad Sect.”

The distant spectator cultivators, especially the spies from other organizations, all murmured silently to each other. With this white-robed Daolord present, conquering the Eastroad Sect would be no easy feat.

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“This will be trouble.” The Ninedust Sectlord frowned as he watched from afar. Taking over the Eastroad Sect really wouldn’t be that easy. This kid was clearly just a Daolord of the Second Step, but he was already on par with Daolord Clevermind in power. In the outside world, the Ninedust Sectlord wouldn’t care about him at all, but there was no way this white-robed Daolord would be so foolish as to engage the Ninedust Sectlord in close combat. No Daolord of such power could possibly be as foolish as that! Once the Ninedust Sectlord got involved, the white-robed Daolord would probably retreat into the protective embrace of the Eastroad Sect’s formations.

Once he was being reinforced by the formations personally left behind by Patriarch Eastroad, things would be completely different. The Ninedust Sectlord wasn’t confident in being able to slay that white-robed Daolord inside the Eastroad Sect.

Generally speaking, only when the difference in power between two sects was absolutely enormous would one be able to take over the other. Usually, the protective formations covering each set would be enough to offset any difference in power.

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“Daolord Darknorth truly is powerful.”

“He’s actually able to fight three at once and stop all three of their vice sectlords! With power like this... if he’s reinforced by our formations, he’ll probably be able to stop the Ninedust Sectlord.” The disciples within the Ninedust Sect were all rather excited. Although it looked as though Daolord Darknorth was at a disadvantage in this fight, for him to be able to resist all three at once was a testament to his strength.

Daolord Thunderheat had a look of joy on his face, but he then suddenly frowned. “Wait. I remember Daolord Darknorth saying that he was able to defeat Daolord Naia in a single blow, thanks to his secret arts. Why haven’t I seen him use any secret arts yet?” Ning had mentioned previously that his greatest power lay in his secret arts.

“If he’s already this powerful in close combat, how much stronger will he be once he uses those secret arts?” Daolord Thunderheat didn’t even dare imagine it.

“Wonderful. Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful! Again!” Ning was battling to his heart’s content. He could’ve used the nine novessence arts to end this long ago, but that would be boring. If all he wanted to do was to turtle up, he could’ve stayed inside the sect. The reason he came out was because he wanted to fight, to temper himself, to sharpen his skills and enhance his Omega Sword Dao! This battle against the three vice sectlords was doing just that, and Daolord Clevermind in particular was giving him a great deal of pressure. He naturally was gaining a few insights into sword-arts as the battle continued.

“Hahaha! Wonderful. Just wonderful!” Daolord Clevermind was enjoying the fight as well, battling with incomparable valor. He was a practitioner of the Dao of Lightning, and was skilled in high-speed explosive attacks. “Kid, you might be able to maintain your current level of power thanks to whatever divine ability you are using, but I want to see how long you’ll be able to hold it!”

“Once more time passes, he won’t be able to hold on.” Daolord Bruteflame and Daolord Graceful were filled with confidence as well. They all felt certain that this white-roed Daolord had to be relying on some sort of divine ability which allowed him to release an explosive amount of power... but the more monstrously powerful a divine ability was, the faster it depleted one’s divine power. Generally speaking, this sort of battle strategy could not be used for a long period of time. They had no idea that in a contest of endurance, Ning was superior to all three of them combined because his azureflower mist energy was only used up at an extremely slow rate... and he had an enormous amount of it.

In the blink of an eye, nearly an hour had gone by without the battle slowing down in the slightest. An hour was a very short period of time for cultivators, and the watching spectators were all quite excited by the spectacle. However, the three vice sectlords and the Ninedust Sectlor knew the truth of the matter, and they all felt something was off.

“How could he last for this long?”

“Why has his divine power been able to last this long?”

The Ninedust Sectlord and the three vice sectlords all had a bad feeling. But right at this moment...

“I’m still not quite there.” Ning secretly shook his head. “Although I’ve gained many new ideas regarding my sword-arts, to merge my five Supreme Daos of the ‘second step’ level into a new Omega Sword Dao is still not possible. It seems these three vice sectlords simply aren’t giving me enough pressure.”

Ning didn’t want to continue the fight against the three of them any longer, because they had already put all of their techniques on full display. It was no longer of any use to Ning.

“Let it end!” Ning willed it, and nine absolutely terrifying ‘dragons’ of destructive energy began to fly out from his body...

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Book 30: Ancient Cultivator Chapter 9: The Sectlord Attacks

The nine dragons coiled around each other, manifesting into a series of awesome waves through the mysteries of Ji Ning’s Omega Sword Dao that came crashing outwards...

“Oh no.” Daolord Clevermind had been in close combat with Ning, and his face instantly turned pale. He could sense the terrifying power contained within those nine mighty secret arts. “This white-robed Daolord was actually hiding terrifying secret arts up his sleeve.”

BOOM! Daolord Clevermind's six great warhammers suddenly shone with complex runes that flowed across its surface, forming shields across the surfaces of each warhammer. Soon, six bizarre shields of lightning had been formed that then joined together, resulting into a complete and seamless shield-barrier of light.

Boom! Boom! Boom! The nine novessence arts came crashing down upon the shield-barrier of light, but the lightning shield was able to hold.

"Thank goodness I had this treasure. Otherwise, I would've ended up losing my life! I need to flee right away." Daolord Clevermind's face was still pale. He immediately commanded his shields to surround him and quickly soared into the skies, retreating at more than fifty times the speed of light.

These six warhammers were no ordinary treasures. It must be understood that outside the Endless Territories lay the Great Dark. Daolord Clevermind had often enjoyed standing at the borders of the Endless Territories and staring into the Great Dark, because it made him feel calm and at peace, which helped him better understand his own Dao of the Saber. One day, while cultivating at the borders of the Great Dark, he had discovered those six great warhammers just floating there. They had been floating through the Great Dark for countless years, but they remained in perfect condition.

After he had acquired these six warhammers, Daolord Clevermind quickly discovered how incredible and special they were. They were innately heavy beyond compare, and their attacks were utterly ruinous to their foes. It must be understood that if Patriarch Clearwind once more fought Ning in a head-on clash, he would now be forced to flee within a short period of time. Daolord Clevermind was merely on par with Patriarch Clearwind, but he was able to fight Ning to a standstill primarily because of how extraordinary these six warhammers were.

When defending, he could use them to form an absolute defense of lightning. When fleeing, they would envelop him and allow him to move at a hundred times the speed of light. The only reason why he was moving slower than that was because of the nine novessence arts attacking him.

As soon as he had acquired the six warhammers, Daolord Clevermind understood that they had to have been items of great might left behind by an ancient power, perhaps even a top-tier Eternal Emperor. After acquiring them, his status within the sect became even firmer than it was before.

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"Not good." Daolord Graceful was a Ki Refiner and as such battled from afar. When he saw those nine dragon-like streams of novessence energy appear, he instantly understood that he was in mortal danger. Even his magic treasures were blasted away by those nine streams of energy, causing him to lose control over them. "If those things so much as touch me, I'm finished. I need to get the hell out of here."

Daolord Graceful gritted his teeth, then produced a black disc-shaped Dao-seal which was covered with layers of strange rippling runes, then crushed it. Swoosh. Instantly several streaks of black light circled around him... and just like that, he was teleported away and disappeared.

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaah!" The towering Aberrant stone giant, 'Daolord Bruteflame', let out agonized screams as his stony body was rent asunder by those nine novessence arts. He was completely incapable of

withstanding the assault, and his towering, ten million kilometer long body quickly crumbled to become nothing more than a boulder-sized head. A look of despair was in his eyes.

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Ning had almost instantly activated his nine novessence arts. Everything had happened far too quickly, giving the distant Ninedust Sectlord no time to intervene as well.

“Eh?” Ning frowned. “Two actually managed to escape? The battle we were just in caused distortions in spacetime, making it impossible to teleport out through normal means. Daolord Graceful, however, seemed to flee using some sort of Dao-seal. I didn’t expect that someone as unremarkable and low-key as him would actually be hiding such marvelous treasures as well.”

Ning had predicted that Daolord Clevermind might be able to escape from his killing blow; given how strong the man was, he most assuredly had some life-saving trump cards up his sleeves. But who would’ve thought that Daolord Graceful would also be able to produce such a rare item?

“Daolord Clevermind’s six great warhammers are unquestionably weapons of extraordinary power. They were actually able to block my nine novessence arts head-on! For Kongsan or the Ninedust Sectlord to do that would be one thing, but who would’ve thought Clevermind would also be capable of it? Those six warhammers truly are marvelous; they even allow him to flee at incredible speeds!” Ning couldn’t help but sigh at how extraordinary those things were.

Although many thoughts flickered through Ning’s mind, his hands moved at lightning speed as he hurled out a black gourd that flew straight towards the stony form of Daolord Bruteflame.

“Daolord Bruteflame, either submit to me or die to me.” Ning stared at Daolord Bruteflame’s stony head, the only part of him which was left undamaged. “Choose immediately.

“S-submit!” Daolord Bruteflame was utterly terrified, and he made his choice without hesitate. Swoosh! The head flew straight towards the black gourd and the field of novessence energy around it, shrinking as it quickly disappeared into the gourd.

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“Damn.” The Ninedust Sectlord’s face had tightened as soon as he saw Ning use those nine novessence arts. Battles between Daolords happened at incredible speeds, making it impossible for him to save Daolord Bruteflame.

Boom!

The Ninedust Sectlord almost instantly charge out of his shrine, a dark-red longstaff appearing in his hands and almost immediately expanding over a hundred million kilometers. He swung out with the longstaff, sending it smashing towards the incredibly distant Ning as though it was one of the pillars of the heavens.

BOOM! When the staff swept out, the world itself seemed to turn dark. When it clashed against the nine novessence arts, the energy flows of the novessence arts were thrown into a state of chaos. However, the nine novessence arts were formless to begin with, and so they quickly returned back to normal as the staff continued to smash towards Ning at high speeds.

“What a pity.” Faced with a terrifying staff-strike, Ning merely glanced sideways at the fleeing Daolord Clevermind, who was escaping thanks to his protective cage of lightning. Daolord Clevermind was fleeing at more than fifty times the speed of light right now, but if Ning used his own flying vessel he’d be able to catch the man.

The problem was, given how the thunderhammer cage was able to defend against even the nine novessence arts, it would undoubtedly be hard for Ning to breach it with any of his other attacks. His only choice was to rely on his superior azureflower mist energy to slowly fight a war of attrition which he might win, with time... but there was no time for that. The Ninedust Sectlord had come.

“Come, then. I want to see just how strong figures like the Ninedust Sectlord or Daolord Kongsan are in close combat.” Ning could sense that he had improved somewhat since the battle at Skywood City, while his strengthened nine novessence arts would be able to hamper and weaken his foe’s staff-arts. It seemed likely that Ning would be able to at least give the man a good fight.

“Break for me!” Ning gripped a single sword with all six arms, then unleashed the Heavenbreaker stance of his Omega Sword Dao.

BOOM! The obliterating staff collided head-on with the heaven-breaking sword.

Ning could sense a surge of incomparably vast and powerful energy smash into him from the collision. Even after the Hegemon armor ablated most of the power of the blow, he was still sent flying backwards.

“He actually didn’t die?” The silver-faced, silver-robed Ninedust Sectlord was rather surprised. “Hmph. Then take another hit from me.” He charged straight into the awesome field of novessence energy, and the power of this field caused him to feel even more surprised. He could sense his own speed dropping rapidly, but he was still able to endure the attacks. He couldn’t help but narrow his eyes. “This is a tough foe. His secret arts are even stronger than mine.”

The battle was simply happening too fast. Daolord Bruteflame was captured alive, Daolord Graceful disappeared without a trace, while Daolord Clevermind had fled in terror. A heartbeat later, the Ninedust Sectlord had attacked.

“What technique was that?!”

“The three vice sectlords were defeated in one strike. Even the Ninedust Sectlord has entered the fray.”

“It has to be some sort of secret art.”

“Or perhaps the unleashed of some ancient power’s Dao-seal.”

The distant spectators as well as the Ninedust cultivators all watched both nervously and intently. This was all happening too fast, and it might end if they so much as blinked.

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Ning was not surprised by how fearlessly the Ninedust Sectlord charged into the flood of novessence energies. Daolord Kongsan had been able to withstand his nine novessence arts as well, after all. For the Ninedust Sectlord to be able to resist it made sense, as he was on par with ordinary Eternal Emperors in

power. “Hmph. Once my Omega Sword Dao reaches a higher level, my nine novessence arts will be dramatically strengthened as well. By then it won’t be this easy for you!”

“However... I’m still much weaker than figures like Kongsan and Ninedust in a head-on fight. His staff had lost 30-40% of its power when it went through my novessence arts, I think.” Ning had been smashed so far back that he had been sent flying to the very edge’s of the Eastroad Sect’s formations. Even his body felt slightly numb... and this was after the Hegemon armor had absorbed most of the impact! If he didn’t have the Hegemon armor, he probably would’ve died or suffered heavy wounds.

“Die.” The Ninedust Sectlord charged straight towards Ning, his eyes burning with rage.

“Haha. Let’s continue this fight inside the Eastroad Sect.” Ning let out a grinning chuckle, then retreated backwards and entered the protective embrace of the Eastroad Sect’s formations. In the outside world, he had been blown backwards even with the support of his nine novessence arts. There was simply no way for him to fight a battle there.

“Hmph. How impressive can the formations which Eastroad set up be?” The Ninedust Sectlord didn’t hesitate at all. Longstaff in his hands, he smashed a hole through the protective barriers and charged straight inside the Eastroad Sect.

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Book 30: Ancient Cultivator Chapter 10: Breakthrough – Daolord of the Second Step

“I’m inside.” A hint of excitement flickered through the Ninedust Sectlord’s eyes after he charged into the Eastroad Sect. He could sense fate calling straight to him. “I can sense it with increasing clarity now. Hmph. I might’ve been afraid to come here when Patriarch Eastroad was alive, but does this puny Daolord of the Second Step really think he can stop me, even if he is freakishly talented? What a joke.”

“The Emperor’s Numerancy divinations were spot on. My destiny does indeed reside within this territory. All the effort I put into seizing the position of sectlord in the Ninedust Sect was worth it.” The Ninedust Sectlord’s mind was filled with many thoughts, but he showed no mercy at all when he attacked.

“Break for me!” The longstaff in his hands swept out. Boom! Boom! Boom! It was like an endless sea of water was bellowing towards the skies, with his longstaff containing multiple waves of destructive energy which wantonly struck out against everything within the Eastroad Sect. His longstaff caused palaces to crumble, walls to collapse, and courtyards to shatter. His entrance and his attack was so sudden that some of the spectating disciples of the Eastroad Sect weren’t able to flee in time. Eleven of them were killed instantly.

“Hide immediately!” Daolord Thunderheat was shocked; the Ninedust Sectlord’s attack had simply been too fast! “Hide behind me!” As he spoke, he hurriedly took control over the formations of the Eastroad Sect.

With a hissing sound, the many formations inside the Eastroad Sect were all simultaneously activated alongside the most powerful defensive barriers. One tendril of golden flame after another began to appear, then converge upon the Eastroad Sectlord like an endless stream of golden serpents. Each

individual serpent seemed unremarkable, but the Ninedust Sectlord's face tightened when he saw them. "Patriarch Eastroad really was willing to spare no expense in setting up such an enormous formation."

Barging into another major power's base was an extremely risky maneuver. He had long ago desired to enter this place, but so long as Patriarch Eastroad was alive and his avatar stood guard over this place there was no way the Ninedust Sectlord would dare trespass.

"Get over here, right away!" Daolord Thunderheat hurriedly waved his hand, taking his various disciples and placing them into his own estate-world.

"The three of you should stop watching as well." Ning moved next to Su Youji, Pillsaint, and Naia, a solemn look on his face. "Daolord Thunderheat and I are not certain as to what powers the Ninedust Sectlord possesses. He might unleash some sort of overwhelmingly powerful killer blow that will annihilate you merely as collateral damage."

"Alright." Su Youji and the others didn't want to leave their lives up to luck, and so they all nodded obediently. Ning waved his hand, causing Su Youji, Pillsaint, and Naia to be instantly drawn into his estate-world.

By now, only three living creatures were left within the Eastroad Sect; all others had been drawn away into estate-worlds. The three were the Ninedust Sectlord, Ji Ning, and Daolord Thunderheat.

"Be careful, Daolord Thunderheat," Ning sent mentally. Daolord Thunderheat couldn't hide; he had to stay out here to control the formations.

"Don't worry. I'll stay far away from the two of you, and the formations inside the Eastroad Sect will make it impossible for the Ninedust Sectlord to even sense where I am. If I still end up dying accidentally somehow, I'll have only my poor bad luck to blame." A frenzied look was in Daolord Thunderheat's eyes. "Fellow Daoist Darknorth, the rest is up to you."

"Alright." Ning nodded.

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"That direction over there." The Ninedust Sectlord turned to follow the silent whispers of fate, moving deeper into the Eastroad Sect while continuing to defend against the golden serpents and leaving absolute destruction in his wake.

"Ninedust Sectlord, I might not be a match for you in the outside world... but for you to charge into the Eastroad Sect is far too brash." Ning once more revealed himself, his nine novessence arts at the ready.

A desire to do battle could be seen in Ning's eyes. Experts like the Ninedust Sectlord held profound levels of insight into the Dao and gave Ning a completely different type of pressure in battle, making it easier for him to gain insights into his own Dao. However, under normal circumstances a battle against such a figure would be incredibly dangerous; the slightest miscalculation might result in death. The only reason Ning was able to fight him now was because the formations of the Eastroad Sect were helping him out.

Swish! A streak of sword-light flew out towards the Ninedust Sectlord, whose face tightened slightly. "Damn. It's that irritating Daolord of the Second Step."

Hissss! Countless golden serpents swarmed around him, and the nine novessence arts rumbled as they transformed into dragons of energy which furiously hammered down upon him.

A rippling curtain of water appeared around the Ninedust Sectlord's body, but in the end his defenses were unable to hold. Still, much of the power of the attacks had been weakened. "The power of the formation, combined with this second-step Daolord's secret arts, means that I'm at best able to unleash at enth of my true power." The Ninedust Sectlord felt like an ordinary man who was trapped in mud; every single strike and movement was much slower than usual, as was the power of his blows.

Clang! Ning's sword-light came straight towards him once more. Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! His longstaff struck out like a Flood Dragon as it swept forwards, but Ning's sword-light was formless and traceless, moving without sound and springing towards him from every direction..

"His sword-arts truly are unpredictable." In the previous battle, the Ninedust Sectlord had overwhelmingly dominated Ning, and so he hadn't truly realized how tough to deal with Ning's sword-arts were. Now that his personal power had been dramatically reduced, he came to understand what a tough foe Ning truly was.

"If this continues... fighting in the Eastroad Sect's base is disadvantageous to me." The Ninedust Sectlord let out a furious roar, and his aura instantly expanded dramatically. The longstaff in his hands actually increased in size still further, allowing him to instantly overwhelm Ning and put Ning back on the defensive.

"So the new sectlord of the Ninedust Sect is as powerful as this, eh?" Ning only grew even more excited. "Perfect. The stronger he is, the better it will be for me. I just hope he isn't too much for me to handle." Ning had been itching to find a chance to train his sword-arts, and he needed this sort of terrifying pressure in order for him to gain the insights he needed.

The Ninedust Sect had a former sectlord who had been an extremely vile person. He had been the one to establish the actual sect, and back then Daolord Clevermind and the others had all been his retainers. Later on, the old sectlord had perished and the new one had risen to power. The new sectlord always wore a mask on his face and was a very mysterious figure. Each time he put his power on display, he had shown to the Brightshore Kingdom that he was on the same level of power as the likes of Daolord Kongsan.

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"Fuck. OFF!" The Ninedust Sectlord was putting more and more pressure on Ning, continuing to advance while Ning was forced to retreat. Slowly, however, the look in Ning's eyes began to change. First, a hint of puzzlement appeared. Then, a look of insight.

Why did cultivators put themselves in dangerous situations? Why did they walk the fine line between life and death? It was all because they could only make breakthroughs through epiphanies gained when under immense pressure. If they focused all of their time and effort on training in seclusion, it would be difficult for them to become truly accomplished figures.

The Ninedust Sectlord's staff-arts truly were abstruse and profound. Although Ning trained in the Omega Sword Dao, he was still just a Daolord of the First Step. As a result, the Ninedust Sectlord's 'Dao' completely outstripped Ning's in raw power, giving him an enormous amount of pressure. Under this

immense pressure, Ning became to make some breakthroughs thanks to the accumulated experiences he had gained while walking the Void Pathway for nearly a million years.

“So that is my Omega Sword Dao... level two.” A hint of a smile was on Ning’s lips.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! The nine novessence arts had been dominating and awesome to begin with, but they suddenly transformed to become even more abstruse and profound than ever before. They had clearly become much more powerful than just a short while ago, and were now as strong as the restrictive spells protecting the Eastroad Sect. The Ninedust Sectlord blanched when he saw this; moments ago he had been dominating Ning, but now he had to focus all of his energy into resisting the nine novessence arts and those little golden serpents.

The Ninedust Sectlord twirled his longstaff, struggling to defend while dodging nonstop. The shockwaves from this battle were causing the nearby palaces to all fall apart.

“If I can reach the third level with my Omega Sword Dao, my nine novessence arts might be able to reach Daolord Allgod’s level in power,” Ning mused to himself. Based on his calculations pertaining to the power of his Omega Sword Dao, when he was a Daolord of the Third Step his Omega Sword Dao would be roughly on par with the Daos of the likes of Palace Lord Dawnstar or Daolord Allgod. By then, when he infused his Omega Sword Dao into his nine novessence arts they should be just as powerful as they had been when Daolord Allgod had personally used them to suppress and entrap Emperor Melobo.

As for right now? He wasn’t able to suppress Emperor Melobo yet, but he was able to force the Ninedust Sectlord to tread lightly, whereas in the past the latter was able to defend against it without too much difficulty.

“The Ninedust Sectlord, eh? When I killed Kongsan, it was all thanks to the Hegemon Dao-seal, not my own power. If I can slay the Ninedust Sectlord with my own abilities... that would be much more interesting.” Ning immediately retreated as he sent his nine novessence arts forward along with those little golden serpents. At this point, he was able to advance and retreat as he pleased.

Ning quickly retreated tens of thousands of kilometers, then stood at an empty area and watched from afar as the nine novessence arts and the little golden snakes besiege the Ninedust Sectlord.

“Fellow Daoist Darknorth, why have you retreated?” Daolord Thunderheat asked.

“Haha, I’ve gained certain insights and wish to make my breakthrough,” Ning sent mentally. “After I do so, the Ninedust Sectlord will no longer be a problem.” Swoosh. A black flying vessel appeared, and Ning entered it. With his nine novessence arts and his flying vessel guarding him, he was ready to begin his breakthrough.

However, his breakthrough would be a two-step process. He would first make a breakthrough as a Ki Refiner, upgrading his Jindan chaos region, then make a breakthrough with his divine body as well! He was on a battlefield, after all. If he tried to breakthrough simultaneously in both aspects, he wouldn’t even be able to fight back if he ended up in serious trouble. It was best to be careful. To speed up the process, Ning elected to simply use chaos jewels.

When he had killed Daolord Kongsan, he had acquired a good number of treasures. Other treasures and curios aside, Ning had over two hundred million cubes worth of chaos nectar and chaos jewels! The

amount of chaos jewels needed to break through to become a Daolord of the Second Step was negligible for Ning.

Rumble...

The Dao-tree within Ning's Jindan chaos region began to grow.

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Book 30: Ancient Cultivator Chapter 11: Breakthrough – The Ninedust Sectlord's Goal

Every branch of the titanic Dao-tree luxuriated with foliage and stretched skywards like a dragon in flight. They had previously been 156,000 meters high, but now they began to climb once more. The tree trunk grew thicker and thicker, soon climbing to the awesome span of 252,000 meters!

252,000 meters was a limit for Daolords of the Second Step. Ordinary Daolords, when they made their cultivation breakthroughs to the second step, would generally only reach at most a height of 210,000 metres. Only after they slowly gained more insights and further perfected their Dao would they reach 252,000 meters.

Ji Ning, however, was different. His Omega Sword Dao truly was the omega; it would always be at the apex of power for any level he was at, and going past that would represent a fundamental, qualitative change! Similarly, there were some Daolords of the Fourth Step who would need to train for countless years before reaching the Verge, but some would be at the Verge of the Daomerge as soon as they reached the fourth step.

"However... it is much harder for me to train in my Omega Sword Dao. It took forever for me to go from being a Daolord of the First Step to being a Daolord of the Second Step," Ning sighed.

Su Youji had reached the second step long ago. As for Pillsaint, he had buried himself in his study of alchemy and broken through in a very natural manner. This was the case for most Daolords; moving from the first step to the second step was very, very easy. There were no bottlenecks involved for the vast majority of them... but Ning had technically been training for over a million years of accelerated time!

"Still, by comparison breaking through to the second step was fairly simple. Becoming a Daolord of the Third Step will be a hundred times more difficult. As for reaching the fourth step... that'll be even tougher." Ning understood that the more difficult a Dao was, the harder it would be for him to break through while training in it. Take Numerancy for example! Even someone who was as incredibly talented in this dao as Daolord Badlands was still just a Daolord of the Third Step! Ning's Omega Sword Dao was far more powerful than Badlands' Dao.

Whoosh. As the Dao-tree grew, the Jindan chaos region began to expand as well. Because Ning was using chaos jewels to make his breakthrough, no commotion was caused and no fluctuations in the surrounding primordial chaos could be observed.

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Ning's attention was completely focused upon making the necessary breakthroughs, and he spared just a bit of energy on maintaining his nine novessence arts and having them attack the Ninedust Sectlord.

“Damn. Why have these secret arts suddenly become so much more powerful?” The Ninedust Sectlord spun the longstaff in his hands, his body constantly flickering as he swept his weapon out in every direction to block the endless sea of small golden snakes and the nine mighty novessence arts.

“That’s the direction, over there. I can sense the whispers of fate growing louder and louder.” On the surface, it looked like the Ninedust Sectlord was able to fight back against the nine novessence arts and the little golden snakes, but in reality he was ‘accidentally’ moving further and further in a certain direction while dodging. He’d sometimes go left, sometimes go right, sometimes advance, sometimes retreat... but on the whole, he was moving closer and closer to the place which was calling out to him.

“That’s where my destiny lies. I’ve worked so hard to follow the Emperor’s guidance. I’ve taken over the Ninedust Sect and used it to explore all of the surrounding territories... and now, I’ve finally verified that my destiny lies within the Eastroad Sect. I’m going to grasp it, no matter what.” While it looked like the Ninedust Sectlord was being pressed quite hard, in reality everything was still under his control.

Although the formations of the Eastroad Sect and the nine novessence arts were all extremely powerful, they shared a common flaw; both were domain-type attacks. There were simply too many of those little golden serpents, and they had primarily been designed to entrap and encumber a foe, allowing Daolord Eastroad himself to deliver the actual fatal blow.

As for Ning’s nine novessence arts, they were also meant to be used as a domain-type attack. Daolord Allgod had devised this technique to entrap Emperor Melobo! They were meant to serve as a domain for trapping and surrounding an enemy. They would be able to easily smash through weaker Daolords, but only have a restrictive effect on a truly powerful one.

Whoosh. Whoosh. The Ninedust Sectlord continued to silently advance at a glacial pace, afraid of attracting the attention of Daolord Thunderheat or Ji Ning.

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“Success.” Ning revealed a look of delight within his black flying vessel. He had finally made his breakthrough. His aura was now markedly stronger than before, and his divine power and Immortal energy had both reached a fundamentally higher level than they had before. Ning quickly began to enhance the six Northbow swords on his back, guiding them in improving their quintessence cores of Sword Dao. This was what was good about Lifeblood weapons; you could continuously perfect and upgrade their quintessence cores, allowing them to grow alongside you.

Still... the requirements for the creation of a Lifeblood weapon were quite stringent. None of the treasures left behind by Daolord Kongsan were suitable for conversion into a Lifeblood weapon.

“Next, time for me to upgrade my azureflower mist energy.” Ning’s combat prowess was primarily thanks to the azureflower mist energy. He rapidly poured his divine power and his Immortal energy into the azureflower region, replenishing both with his chaos jewels as necessary. However, his azureflower region was now far larger than before, and so more time was needed to ‘fill it up’ with azureflower mist energy than had been needed for Ning to upgrade his divine body and his Jindan chaos region.

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"I can sense that it is within a hundred kilometers of me." A hint of delight flashed through the Ninedust Sectlord's eyes. "No need to delay any further. Let's do this!"

The Ninedust Sectlord suddenly struck out with the longstaff in his hands, sweeping aside the domain attacks as though he was parting the waters with them, then charged at full speed towards a certain direction. To someone like him, a hundred meters was nothing.

BOOM! He had reached a courtyard which was protected by a restrictive barrier. The Ninedust Sectlord's aura once more burst forth; clearly, he was going all-out now. The staff in his hands struck out, piercing straight through the formation and into the courtyard. It struck against a decorative 'mountain' in the courtyard which had the carving of a stone door atop it.

"There it is! So it was a treasure of the ancestors." The Ninedust Sectlord didn't hesitate at all; by now, the call from the statue was so strong that it made his heart tremble. He immediately charged over, pressing his hand against the stone door. Whoosh! The stone door immediately swung open, revealing the passageway within it.

Swoosh. The Ninedust Sectlord immediately dove into the passageway.

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"Not good." Daolord Thunderheat was far off in the distance, controlling the formations which protected the base. His face turned grim as soon the Ninedust Sectlord suddenly charged towards the courtyard which held the Void Pathway hidden within it. When the Ninedust Sectlord broke through the formation and charged into the Void Pathway without hesitating, Daolord Thunderheat's face turned bone-white.

"Fellow Daoist Darknoth!" Unable to stop the Ninedust Sectlord, Daolord Thunderheat had no choice but to call out to Ning.

"On it." Ning had no time to accumulate any more azureflower mist energy. He only had three drops of it inside his body, but he could sense that something was wrong. The decorative 'mountain' hiding the Void Pathway truly was an ordinary object with no aura at all, but the Ninedust Sectlord had actually charged straight towards it as though he knew the secrets which lay hidden inside it... then entered the Void Pathway.

Even though Ning had his nine novessence arts, he had been unable to stop the man. "I'll go deal with him." Ning immediately charged forwards, arriving in front of the artificial mountain with a whoosh. He then dove into the Void Pathway. Although it had taken him quite some effort to build up those three drops of azureflower mist energy, they were used up fairly slowly during battle and so three drops probably would be enough. Ning had been planning to build up more, but who would've thought that the Ninedust Sectlord would suddenly dive into the Void Pathway? Even in the Eastroad Sect, the secrets of the Void Pathway were only known to Daolord-level experts.

Although Ning was in hot pursuit of the Ninedust Sectlord, he continued to build up more of that azureflower mist energy, hoping to store as much as he could.

Within the Void Pathway.

As soon as the Ninedust Sectlord entered this place, he immediately saw that pathway as well as the thirty thousand soldiers who stood in two lines on each side of it. Their ancient armors, their solemn auras, and that carving of a throne off in the distance... it all caused the Ninedust Sectlord to quiver in excitement.

“That’s one of the treasures of the ancestors! Of the ancestors! I never thought that I, Redwater, would actually have a chance to come to a place set up by the ancestors. All those years of hard work were worth it, completely worth it! Haha...” The Ninedust Sectlord put away his mask, revealing a cold, grim-looking male face. This face was currently covered with excitement as he carefully reached out with his senses to scan this place’s aura.

“What secrets does this ancestral site hold within it?”

The Ninedust Sectlord’s gaze swiftly turned to that distant golden throne, because it was the throne which was issuing the strongest karmic call to him. “I’ll head there first to take a look.” Longstaff in hand, the Ninedust Sectlord charged straight towards the golden throne.

BOOM! As soon as he stepped onto the golden pathway, an enormous globe of light suddenly appeared in the void above it. The golden globe of light shot out two streaks of light into two of the nearby armored soldiers, causing them to immediately charge towards the Ninedust Sectlord.

“Break!” The Ninedust Sectlord didn’t even pause as he struck out with his longstaff, sending both of the soldiers flying far away.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! The golden globe of light shot down more and more rays of golden light, causing a continuous stream of soldiers to charge towards the Ninedust Sectlord. However, the sectlord continued to advance at high speed, smashing through all of his opposition.

Swoosh. Right at this moment, another figure appeared within the Void Pathway as well. It was a white-robed youth who bore black swords on his back.

“Ninedust Sectlord!” Ning let out a furious roar, causing all nine of his novessence arts to instantly surge outwards and attempt to constrict the Ninedust Sectlord. They shot out like Flood Dragons, moving with incredible speed and power as they almost instantly caught up to the sectlord, then coiled around him.

“You wish to stop me? I’m at the very end of a long journey. No one will stop me!” The Ninedust Sectlord’s hair flew in the air as azure light flashed within his eyes. It seemed as though he had used some sort of secret art, as he was now even stronger than he had been when battling Ning earlier. Layers of water curtains appeared around him as well, weakening the effects of the nine novessence arts and allowing him to endure all the blows aimed at him as he continued his headlong charge.

“He’s gone berserk.” Ning understood this right away, and so he flew forwards at high speed as well. As for the golden globe of light, it shot out more rays of golden light, causing more and more soldiers to appear in front of Ning and block his path as well.

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Book 30: Ancient Cultivator Chapter 12: Ancestor! Ancestor!

“Break!” Ji Ning immediately activated his [Thee Heads, Six Arms]. Six Northbow swords in hands, he swept through the armored soldiers just as quickly as the Ninedust Sectlord had. The soldiers were completely incapable of stopping him at all.

The Ninedust Sectlord and Ning advanced in succession at high speed through the pathway. By comparison, Ning was actually a bit faster as the Ninedust Sectlord was being slowed down by the nine novessence arts. As Ning chased after the sectlord, he suddenly sent a mental shout, “Sectlord, I imagine the real reason you came to the Eastroad Sect was to enter this pathway!”

“Hmph.” The Ninedust Sectlord let out a cold snort from up ahead as he continued to defeat the soldiers in his path.

“I’ve been puzzled, all this time, as to why you are doing this. If you just wanted to take over the Eastroad Territory, there was no need for you to attack the Eastroad Sect itself. It takes up almost no space, after all.” Ning sent mentally, “And there’s no way anyone can notice anything unusual about this pathway from outside... but you breached the formation protecting the area around it, then headed straight for you. You certainly know some of the secrets behind it!”

The Ninedust Sectlord completely ignored Ning, but Ning was starting to understand more and more. Ning himself had only discovered this pathway after Daolord Thunderheat had guided him to it; when he had first seen the decorative ‘mountain’, he hadn’t noticed anything special about it at all. Both Daolord Thunderheat and Ning were extremely puzzled by how the Ninedust Sectlord had flown straight towards the mountain, as though he already knew everything about it.

“You won’t be able to stop me.” The Ninedust Sectlord finally spoke, his voice icy cold.

He had been scheming this ever since Daolord Eastroad had perished. He had released word of Daolord Eastroad’s death, then ambushed and slain Daolord Overgold! He had even sent the Ninedust Shrine to stand guard outside the Eastroad Everworld, and had been keeping a quiet watch on it like a hungry wolf staring at its prey. His goal had been to cause terror and panic, hoping to force the Eastroad Sect to voluntarily flee.

If the Eastroad Sect really had fled, things would be simple. Upon fleeing, the formations within the sect would have to be withdrawn... and he would be able to follow that silent call of fate as it moved away. He would immediately attack and wipe out the fleeing Eastroad Sect! But of course, if that call of fate remained immobile, he would’ve spared the Eastroad Sect and instead headed straight to the source of the call.

In the end, his true goal was the destiny which awaited him! The reason why he hadn’t been willing to fight head-on was because he was afraid that Patriarch Eastroad might’ve left behind some sort of deadly spell or technique for his heirs. In truth, his fears were well-founded; Daolord Thunderheat did indeed have a treasure capable of unleashing a deadly attack which was more powerful than the Dao-seals bestowed by Skyaxe and Soleman. The reason why Patriarch Eastroad had dared to go off adventuring was because he had left behind an incredibly powerful protective treasure in Thunderheat’s hands to protect his home. However, this was a single-use item; since Ning had offered to help out, Daolord Thunderheat naturally forebore from using it.

“I was very careful this entire time; I wanted to make sure that I didn’t drive the Eastroad Sect into a state of true desperation. Although I’m fairly certain I would be able to survive even their most frenzied attacks, I still probably would’ve been forced to pay a heavy price.” The Ninedust Sectlord felt quite smug. “Now, I’ve reached this ancestral site without suffering any injuries at all.”

“Wait, what?!” The Ninedust Sectlord’s face suddenly turned pale. He glanced backwards, only to see Ji Ning drawing closer and closer to him. “How could he be moving even faster than me?!” The Ninedust Sectlord was shocked.

This pathway had a total of thirty thousand soldiers, while the Ninedust Sectlord had already charged past twenty-six thousand of them. By now, every single soldier was vastly stronger than Patriarch Clearwind in his normal state. While the Ninedust Sectlord was still able to advance fairly quickly, he felt certain that the white-robed Daolord’s speed would begin to decline as the more powerful soldiers began to appear.

“This white-robed Daolord is much weaker than me. How is it that he’s moving even faster?” The Ninedust Sectlord couldn’t believe this.

“Hmph.” Ning continued to advance at high speed. Soon, he passed the twenty-six thousand soldier mark as well. He had spent more than ten thousand years in the Void Pathway, but he had never defeated this many warriors before.

“Ninedust Sectlord, was all this for the sake of that golden throne?” Ning sent mentally. He wanted to learn some of the secrets regarding the Void Pathway from watching the Ninedust Sectlord, as Ning himself hadn’t been able to discern much about it despite having spent so many years here.

The Ninedust Sectlord, however, seemed to ignore Ning’s question as he continued to battle, a cold smile on his face. “It seems you’ve made a breakthrough? No wonder your secret arts have improved so substantially.”

“It was all thanks to you. Our last battle allowed me to finally understand what was missing, and I’ve taken yet another step.” Ning continued to smash through all opposition with overwhelming fierceness in his three-headed, six-armed form.

“He really did make a breakthrough.” The Ninedust Sectlord couldn’t help but secretly feel regret. “He was already on par with Clevermind when he was a Daolord of the Second Step. That means that he should now be on par with me! And those damnable secret arts of his are causing me trouble at every turn.”

The Ninedust Sectlord clenched his teeth, continuing his headlong charge. His longstaff swept out with draconic might, causing a series of booms as it smashed and blasted its way through the various enemy soldiers. Unfortunately, Ning continued to move faster than him and was still closing the distance.

Twenty-eight thousand soldiers.

Twenty-nine thousand soldiers.

Both sides were now extremely close to each other.

“Not good. If this continues, he’s going to catch up to me. I have no choice but to use that forbidden art yet again. Ugh!” The Ninedust Sectlord suddenly let out a deep growl. His aura once more skyrocketed as an awesome burst of energy manifested around him. His aura was now stronger than even Daolord Kongsan’s aura had been. Auras were generally linked to divine power and Immortal energy; clearly, the Ninedust Sectlord’s divine body was far stronger than the bodies of most Daolords of the Fourth Step.

The first time he had used this forbidden art had been when he had broken through the barriers protecting the courtyard which held the entrance into the Void Pathway. Now, he did so again, and he grew noticeably more powerful as he strove to pull away from Ning.

“What’s this?” Ning was rather surprised by this. “The Ninedust Sectlord really does have quite a few tricks up his sleeves. Still... it won’t be of any use. He’s not escaping me.”

Twenty-nine thousand, five hundred... twenty-nine thousand, six hundred...

The soldiers were growing more and more powerful, and both Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord were starting to slow down and the distance between the two continued to shrink.

“The last two.” The Ninedust Sectlord let out a bellow as he charged against the final two soldiers. The two golden-armored soldiers opened their glowing golden eyes as they stared at the Ninedust Sectlord. BOOM! BOOM! They charged straight towards him as well.

Rumble...

The Ninedust Sectlord started to fight against the two final soldiers. He was actually unable to defeat them right away. “Why are these soldiers this powerful?!” The Ninedust Sectlord didn’t know that even Patriarch Eastroad had been forced to go all-out before just barely eeking out a victory. Now that the Ninedust Sectlord was being hampered by Ning’s nine novessence arts, it would be quite difficult for him to defeat these two final soldiers.

“Ninedust, you won’t be able to escape.” Boom! Boom! Two soldiers behind him were blasted aside as a white-robed figure charged straight for him.

“Damn.” The Ninedust Sectlord’s face was ashen. He had been forced to use his forbidden art and as a result had managed to somehow keep himself ahead of the freakishly strong white-robed Daolord, but the strength of the two final soldiers had given his enemy the chance to catch up once more.

“Fuck off!” The Ninedust Sectlord lashed out with his longstaff, striking out towards the attacking Ning in an almost whip-like blow. Thanks to his usage of that forbidden art, he was still able to unleash roughly 80% of his full power despite the encumbrance of the nine novessence arts.

Whoosh! When the staff intersected with Ning’s sword-light, it was as though it had become trapped within the gravity well of a black hole and saw all of its strength pushed off to one side.

Omega Sword Dao – Soleheart!

“You won’t be able to escape!” Ning charged forwards, an array of countless streams of sword-light slashing towards the Ninedust Sectlord.

Bang! Due to Ning's assault, the Ninedust Sectlord revealed a flaw in his defenses, resulting in one of the two soldiers landing an attack on him. The Ninedust Sectlord was actually forced to stumble five steps backwards. He was enraged to the point of lunacy, and he charged forwards again with teeth gritted.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord battled against each other while also fending off the attacks of those two soldiers. Thankfully, the two soldiers treated Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord 'equally', launching attacks against both! This was why the battle had entered a stalemate for now.

"It seems you must have used some sort of forbidden art," Ning sent mentally. "Let's see how long you can hold it."

"If you didn't have your own secret arts, you wouldn't be a match for me." The Ninedust Sectlord was furious. Even after having used his forbidden art, he was still in rather dire straits.

Ning, however, understood that there was a limit to how strong the nine novessence arts would be. He had already mastered them as a Daolord of the First Step, and back then they vastly surpassed Ning's close-combat abilities! Although he could continue to strengthen them as his Omega Sword Dao improved, his close-combat abilities would improve far more rapidly. He was already on par with the Ninedust Sectlord in close combat, which meant that those abilities were already superior to those nine novessence arts.

In the end, all secret arts were a form of external strength! If you focused too much on secret arts and not enough on your Dao, there would be a limit to how much you could improve. Still, it was true that the influence of the nine novessence arts ensured that Ning was in an advantageous position in this battle.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

The two soldiers who had been furiously assaulting Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord suddenly retreated at the same instant, voluntarily stepping back. Both Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord were stunned by this.

"They are falling back?" The Ninedust Sectlord instantly realized what was happening. A look of wild delight on his face, he charged straight towards the golden throne at the very end of the pathway.

"What?!" When Ning saw the Ninedust Sectlord furiously charge towards that golden throne, he ignored all else and the same thing.

Boom! Boom! The two figures arrived next to the golden throne at virtually the same instant.

"Weng...ba...hu...jiu..." Suddenly, an incredibly ancient and distant voice emanated from the golden globe of light. It seemed to come from the beginning of time itself, and it carried an aura of mystery and almighty power. It almost sounded like the mumbling of an ancient and powerful figure, and it caused the entire region to begin to shake. Every single part of the void around the pathway began to glow with countless strange runes, and layers of golden rippling light began to appear around the golden throne as well which swept Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord into their embrace.

“The ancestors! The ancestors!” The Ninedust Sectlord was unspeakably excited when he heard this voice. As for Ning, he was completely puzzled. He continued to keep his six Northbow swords at the ready, prepared for any danger.

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Book 30: Ancient Cultivator Chapter 13: Missing

Every part of this golden region was filled with those strange runes, with the golden throne being at the center of it all.

“What’s going on?” Ji Ning frowned. “Previously, Daolord Thunderheat told me that if you defeat all the soldiers and reach the golden throne, you would gain a legacy... but this doesn’t look like the mere transmission of a legacy. Was Daolord Eastroad lying to Daolord Thunderheat? Or was he lying to me?”

“It seems as though the Ninedust Sectlord knows something. Not only is he not worried, he actually looks excited.” Ning glanced at the nearby Ninedust Sectlord.

The Ninedust Sectlord was indeed excited after having heard that ancient, distant voice ring out from the golden globe of light.

“Ninedust, what is going on exactly?” Ning asked.

“Hmph.” The Ninedust Sectlord glanced sideways at Ning, then smiled coldly. “Do you really think I’ll tell you?”

“If you won’t, then you can forget about achieving whatever goals you have here.” As soon as Ning said these words, he sent a surge of sword-light towards the Ninedust Sectlord, the sword-light seemingly filled with the power to destroy all Daos that stood in its path.

“Stop, stop!” The Ninedust Sectlord called out frantically. The white-robed Daolord in front of him was extremely powerful, on the same level as him; if he wanted to cause trouble, something bad really might happen.

“Speak!” Ning barked. “What secrets does this Void Pathway hold?”

“I don’t know either,” the Ninedust Sectlord said hurriedly.

“Are you screwing around with me?” Ning was about to continue his attack.

“I really don’t know!” The Ninedust Sectlord hurriedly dodged, not daring to fight back for fear that the shockwaves from their battle would cause a disaster to unfold. “I’m not lying to you. I really don’t know!”

Just as Ning was attacking and the Ninedust Sectlord was dodging...

BOOM!

The ringed curtains of golden light emanating from the golden throne suddenly retracted, like the petals of a flower suddenly be drawn back into the pistil. Swish!

A streak of golden light suddenly tore through spacetime. Whoosh! Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord had both been covered by that curtain of golden light, and they instantly disappeared without a trace, leaving only the golden throne behind.

No other living beings remained within the Void Pathway.

Rumble...

More and more power emanated from that golden globe, bathing the entire golden region in a layer of golden light.

.....

Whoosh. A golden ripple of power suddenly spread out from one of the decorative 'mountains' within the Eastroad Sect. Moments later, it completely vanished without a trace.

"What?!" Daolord Thunderheat had been watching carefully from a safe distance. When he saw this, his face instantly turned pale. He appeared within that courtyard in a flash. "Where's the Void Pathway? Where'd it go? Why did it suddenly vanish?! His godsense had been infused into the formation protecting the sect, and so was able to cover and scour every inch of the region. And yet, he was no longer able to find that decorative mountain.

"Daolord Darknorth and the Ninedust Sectlord have both vanished as well?" Daolord Thunderheat was starting to panic. "I always felt certain that the Void Pathway was holding certain mysteries. Those thirty thousand soldiers were unreasonably powerful, especially the final two; those two were on par with Patriarch Eastroad himself. I imagine that when Daolord Darknorth and the Ninedust Sectlord battled within the Void Pathway, they must have activated some of its secrets."

"Well... now what should I do? Daolord Darknorth suddenly vanished. If he died, then..." Daolord Thunderheat felt rather guilty, because he did have a trump card which he hadn't used yet. Still, he couldn't be blamed for holding it back; the Eastroad Sect would need to conserve all the resources it had if it wanted to survive. It looked as though Daolord Darknorth was strong enough to hold back the Ninedust Sectlord; Thunderheat naturally hadn't been willing to use up his one and only trump card.

"Daolord Darknorth asked for nothing; he whole-heartedly wished to help my Eastroad Sect. And now, his whereabouts are unknown." Daolord Thunderheat had a complex look on his face as he murmured softly, "I promise the Eastroad Sect will never forget your benevolence."

As for the disappearance of the Void Pathway? Daolord Thunderheat felt a bit of regret, but he didn't care all that much. For it to be able to vanish despite local spacetime being completely distorted thanks to the Eastroad Sect's formations meant that it was a treasure that was beyond the Eastroad Sect's ability to control.

If it stayed here, it would only cause more trouble in the future. It was a disaster waiting to happen, not a blessing!

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Outside the Eastroad Sect. The Ninedust Shrine continued to hover there in the empty skies.

Within the Ninedust Shrine. Daolord Graceful had already fled all the way back into the shrine. Both he and Daolord Clevermind were standing in front of its gates, staring towards the distant Eastroad Sect.

“Eh?” Daolord Clevermind’s face suddenly paled. “Not good.”

“What’s wrong?” Daolord Graceful immediately asked.

“I can no longer sense the Sectlord’s presence.” Daolord Clevermind said frantically, “The Sectlord has one of my talismans on him; I can sense him from several territories away. But now, I can no longer sense his presence at all.”

“What?!” Daolord Graceful’s face paled as well. Daolord Clevermind’s position within the Ninedust Sect was second only to the sectlord’s himself, which was why he was on very good terms with the sectlord. Each had given talismans to the other.

“The Sectlord should still be be alive, but I can no longer sense him.” Daolord Clevermind said frantically, “The Sectlord is probably in a very, very distant place. Alternately, he might be trapped in a dangerous place which prevents any information being transmitted outwards. However, a site capable of blocking off my senses would definitely be an incredibly dangerous place. There shouldn’t be any such place within the Eastroad Territory.”

“It seems as though the Eastroad Sect holds certain mysteries within it,” Daolord Graceful said softly.

“That white-robed Daolord was incredibly strong. Now, even our Sectlord is in trouble.”

“Mm.” Daolord Clevermind turned to stare at the Eastroad Sect with great trepidation.

“Let’s keep waiting here for the Sectlord to return,” Daolord Graceful said.

And so, the Ninedust Sect permanently stationed itself outside the Eastroad Sect. They would wait for their sectlord’s return... but even after waiting more than a hundred thousand years, their sectlord still did not returned.

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Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord were both rather nervous as the streak of golden light grabbed both of them and sent them hurtling through spacetime.

“Where in the world are we going?”

“How could a spacetime teleportation last for this long?” Ning kept his [Three Heads, Six Arms] divine ability active, and he continued to warily wield all six Northbow swords in his hands. It was extremely difficult to use spacetime teleportation across such a great distance. Even spacetime transfer arrays were all fairly close to each other, allowing the various formations to interlink and send people from territory to another. The spacetime tunnels created by the almighty Brightshore Hegemon and the Paragon of Pills covered a much greater distance, but this golden spacetime tunnel? Based on Ning’s perception regarding spacetime, they should be hurtling towards an incredibly distant place.

“Ninedust, do you really have no idea where we are being sent to?” Ning glanced at the nearby Ninedust Sectlord.

The Ninedust Sectlord glanced at Ning, then let out a cold snort. “No idea.”

Ning didn't doubt this at all, because he could sense how nervous the Ninedust Sectlord was.

The two just stood there calmly, neither daring to move. If they got into a fight and disturbed the flows of spacetime around them, who knew where they would end up? They might disappear into the endless Great Dark, where they could fly for thousands of chaos cycles without seeing a single other living being. That would be horrifying.

Whoosh.

The changing flows of spacetime around them suddenly came to a halt, allowing them to vaguely make out what was hidden outside the field of golden light.

"We've arrived." Both Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord were even more cautious now. The golden light slowly dissipated, allowing them to clearly see an enormous stone passageway in front of them. A number of boulders were levitating within the stone passageway, which was brimming with blazing flames.

"Eh?" Both Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord stood there in midair. A curtain of water emerged from the Ninedust Sectlord's body, blocking off the flames. As for Ning, the nine novessence arts appeared and swirled around him, defending him from the fire.

"Such powerful fire. I imagine they would roast Daolords of the Third Step to death." Ning was rather amazed.

"What type of fire is this?" The Ninedust Sectlord was puzzled as well. He had seen many things, but still had no idea what these flames were.

"And those boulders?" Both of them turned their attention towards the levitating boulders. These flames were capable of killing Daolords of the Third Step, but weren't able to damage these boulders at all. Those boulders were definitely extraordinary items.

"Those things have to be treasures." Both Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord immediately charged forwards. Ning stabbed out with his sword, seeking to carve out a large boulder from the crooked, curved 'walls' of the stone corridor. As for the Ninedust Sectlord, he swung his longstaff and delivered a fierce blow to the stone walls of the passageway.

Bang! Boom!

Two explosions rang out against the stone walls, which rumbled as invisible ripples spread out across its surface. BOOM! A shockwave burst out and struck Ning, knocking him flying backwards. A second shockwave was applied to the Ninedust Sectlord, whose body seemed to shudder and briefly transform into a flowing stream of water as he flew backwards.

"Such incredible power. The shockwave generated by me stabbing at the sword seemed to be several times stronger than my blow." Ning rose into the air once more, a nervous feeling in his heart. "And it seems as though all of the stones within this stone passageway are part of one entity." When he had stabbed out with his sword, he felt as though the entire stone wall had joined together to unleash a surge of counter-force.

“Damn.” The Ninedust Sectlord rose into the air as well. For a moment, his body had transformed into a human-shaped pool of water, but he now returned to his normal appearance as he glanced at the distant Ning. “The kid actually managed to endure that counter-force with such ease? It seems as though he has a protective divine ability that is just as tough as mine.”

Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord both had rather blazing looks in their eyes. Both were amongst the ranks of the most talented of Daolords, on the same level as Kongsan... and yet, they weren’t even able to harvest any rocks from this stone wall. This meant the stone here was definitely quite extraordinary... and the more marvelous an item was, the more valuable it was.

Swoosh. Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord immediately charged towards the floating boulders and bits of stone, waving their hands and collecting as much as they could.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Although it was quite difficult to collect each of those rocks as they were all incredibly heavy, in the end it was still possible to store them within an estate-world.

“Master! Master! I can no longer sense my clone!” The servant within Ning’s estate-world who was responsible for maintaining contact with the Brightshore Kingdom suddenly sent a frantic mental message to Ning.

“Right.” Ning, however, was quite calm. He had sensed long ago that this was an extraordinary place; in truth, as soon as the teleportation had begun he almost instantly lost contact with both his Primaltwin and his avatar. The last time something like this had happened, he had gone into the alternate universe!

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Book 30: Ancient Cultivator Chapter 14: An Unkillable Form

Two figures could be seen darting through the blazing flames within that stone corridor, collecting the various stones that were hanging there in the air. A short while later, Ji Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord had completely collected all of the levitating stones as far as they could see. After collecting the final pieces, they turned to stare at each other with vigilance in their eyes.

“Our battle has resulted in both of us being trapped in this unknown region. It can be said that the ties of karma bind us together... but I don’t even know your Daoist title,” the Ninedust Sectlord said.

“I am Darknorth.” Ning revealed a smile. “Given our current situation, there’s no need to continue hiding things from each other. I trust you know much more about this place than I do, Lord of the Ninedust Sect.”

The Ninedust Sectlord shook his head. “I really know nothing about this place.”

“Oh?” Ning raised an eyebrow. “Well, it truly is an odd place.” Ning scanned his surroundings as he spoke. “These flames... I can’t even tell what type of flames they are. I can’t recognize the stone here either. Even my godsense and my heartforce are constrained, preventing me from exploring any further.”

“Quite.” The Ninedust Sectlord had a solemn look on his face as well as he scanned the area, a restless feeling in his heart. Suddenly...

Whoosh. A fiery-armored figure suddenly flew out of a turn in the tunnel ahead of them. This humanoid figure's entire body was brimming with flames, and his hair was a blazing red color as well.

"Eh?" Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord simultaneously turned to look at the blazing figure.

"The two of you truly are daring, to have infiltrated your way to this place without anyone noticing." The humanoid figure spoke in a cold, piercing voice. "For me to end up stumbling into you two... it seems my luck today is quite decent. Prepare to die." After speaking, the blazing figure transformed into a streak of blazing light that seemed to draw in the flames which filled the entire stone passageway, forming a fiery halo of energy around him.

Looks of puzzlement appeared on the faces of both Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord.

"Halt!" The Ninedust Sectlord barked, "We have no idea who you are."

"Have you mistaken us for someone else?" Ning asked.

"Your lies won't save you." The flaming figure let out a furious shout, manifesting a scimitar in his hand.

"If that's how you wish to behave, go ahead and die." An angered look flashed through the Ninedust Sectlord's icy, sinister face. He swung out his longstaff, seeming to manifest an endless ocean of water which carried the roaring song of the sea with it, then struck out against the blazing figure with a boom.

Although the blazing figure used his scimitar to defend, he was blown backwards and smashed against the stone walls of the passageway.

"He didn't die?" The Ninedust Sectlord was rather surprised. Although he hadn't struck out with full force, most Daolords of the Fourth Step would've perished from that blow. Who would've thought that this flaming humanoid would actually have survived?

"It seems you are fairly strong." The fiery figure growled, "Good. The stronger you are, the better. After I kill you, it'll feel even better when I feast on your corpses. Die!"

"Feast on me?" The Ninedust Sectlord said furiously, "Die, you imbecile." This time, he used his staff to strike out with full force.

BOOM! The longstaff caused cracks in space to appear around it as it struck forwards, the power of the blow causing the entire area around them to shake and tremble. This blow was not just fast and savage, it also seemed to carry the cadence of the waves of the ocean, moving sometimes fast and sometimes slow. The flaming creature sought to defend against this attack, but its scimitar wasn't even able to touch the longstaff. The head of the longstaff smashed directly against the fiery creature's chest, and it was like the heavens themselves had crashed down upon him. The flaming creature instantly let out a frenzied scream... and with a boom, the creature's body instantly blew apart.

"Imbecile." The Ninedust Sectlord showed no mercy at all, striking a second time with his longstaff with the intention of completely annihilating its shattered body. Whoosh! The longstaff swept out, completely smashing apart the shattered remnants of the creature's body and dispersing it into flames once more.

"Kill me? You want to kill me?! You aren't able to kill me!!!" A furious voice rang out as a large amount of the flames within the stone corridor gathered together and almost instantly reformed into the

flaming humanoid. He still wore that armor around him, and his scimitar was completely undamaged as well.

“What?!” Ning had simply been observing with interest, but now his face began to turn pale. “He didn’t die? His body was completely shattered, but he still didn’t die?”

For normal cultivators, once their bodies were completely destroyed they would lose their lives. Only unique types of cultivation could result in ‘unkillable forms’, such as the virtually indestructible ‘darkness incarnate’ form of Daolord Kongsan. Palace Lord Dawnstar was far more powerful than Kongsan; Kongsan was just barely comparable to ordinary Eternal Emperors, while Palace Lord Dawnstar was able to kill them with ease. The difference in power between the two was obvious... and yet, due to having an ‘unkillable form’, Kongsan could be ground into dust but then transform into darkness incarnate, ensuring that he didn’t die! Very few people had techniques like this, and it was this technique which made Kongsan so famous.

“An unkillable form?” The Ninedust Sectlord had a look of shock on his face.

“Not just an unkillable form; he’s also able to harvest the flames floating around in this region.” Ning frowned. “His aura didn’t weaken in the slightest.”

“Ahahaha! The two of you are dead meat.” The flaming creature once more charged towards them, an angry howl escaping his lips.

“Let me give it a try,” Ning barked.

“Alright. You go!” The Ninedust Sectlord wasn’t certain in his own chances to succeed.

Ning wielded just a single sword, raising it up high with all six arms clutching it by the hilt.

“DESTROY!!”

The entire region began to tremble and shake. It was like a volcano was building up its power, preparing for a final explosion. Ning’s sword-light suddenly slashed through the air, chopping down furiously upon the flaming creature’s form.

BOOM! This was Ning’s most savage and most dominating strike. It caused the creature’s entire body to shudder, then completely break apart.

“Nine novessence arts, go!” With but a thought, Ning sent nine dragons of energy flying out of his body. Rumbling, they transformed into a chaotic Yin-Yang Sword Domain and furiously ground away at the scattered bits of the flaming creature’s body. The creature’s body quickly dissipated into flames, but the nine novessence arts completely covered the entire area with their domain, continuously extinguishing the flames. After a very long period of time, the mysterious flames in the area were finally and completely extinguished.

“Dead.” Ning dispelled his nine novessence arts.

“That took forever.” The Ninedust Sectlord nodded slightly.

Hiss...

Suddenly, a spark appeared in the air in front of them. The spark quickly grew in size, transforming into a towering conflagration that then once more coalesced into that blazing, flame-covered humanoid figure.

“What?! Even after being completely annihilated, it can rise anew from the void?” The Ninedust Sectlord could hardly believe it. “B-but...”

“That’s not possible. I had already completely extinguished it, leaving behind not even so much as a trace of its aura. How could it be born anew?” Ning couldn’t believe it either. “This ‘unkillable form’ it has is terrifying.”

“You aren’t able to kill me! You aren’t able to kill me!” The flaming creature let out a low growl. “Come out! All of you, come out!”

Rumble...

As the flaming creature roared, a strange ripple of power quickly spread out. Just one second later, two more flaming creatures came flying out from behind the turn of the stone corridor.

“Not good.” The faces of the two cultivators turned grim.

Two creatures. Three creatures. Four creatures... one flaming creature after another began to fly out from behind the turn of the corridor.

“Not just there. There’s more coming from this side as well.” The Ninedust Sectlord turned to look at the other side of the corridor. Flaming, humanoid creatures were flooding in from both ends of the corridor.

“Let’s leave, immediately!” Ning roared.

“Let’s go!” The Ninedust Sectlord didn’t dare to hesitate either.

“Kill.”

“Kill them all.”

“Eat them.”

A total of twelve of flaming humanoids had already appeared at the two ends of the corridor, and their numbers were only growing. They began to launch a furious charge towards the two cultivators, who chose one direction and began to fight their way that way.

After Ning had developed the second level of his Omega Sword Dao, his speed had increased from ten times the speed of light to thirty times the speed of light. As for the Ninedust Sectlord, he was a bit faster than Ning. The two quickly beat aside the attacking creatures as they fled for their lives, not daring to tarry whatsoever.

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Attack! Attack! Attack!

The flaming creatures were completely unkillable; even if you wiped them out, they would be reborn out of thin air. Their ability to draw from the omnipresent flames of this place gave them almost limitless amounts of strength. No one would be able to beat them in a battle of attrition.

"I knew the ancestral lands wouldn't be so easily traversed. Shit, shit, shit!" The Ninedust Sectlord was starting to worry.

"There's just too many of them. Why are these flaming creatures everywhere?" Ning was worried as well. The two of them had been fleeing for a full hour by now, and they had thrown off many different packs of the creatures while scurrying through the various stone passageways... and yet, every single stone passageway seemed to contain these creatures, and all of them were filled with the desire to kill the two of them.

There were differences in strength amongst the flaming creatures, with some being very close to Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord in power.

"The two of us need to work together," the Ninedust Sectlord sent mentally. "We can't keep such a wary watch on each other; we'll only have a shot if we truly work together as one. Otherwise, both of us will probably die here."

"I concur. Let's swear a lifeblood oath," Ning immediately agreed.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 30: Ancient Cultivator Chapter 15: Ancient Cultivators

The stone passageways branched out like a spiderweb's web, with some being merely a few hundred kilometers wide and others being tens of thousands of kilometers wide. The widest were as much as a million kilometers wide.

They were in one of the widest stone passageways right now. Flames were blazing everywhere, and there were many of those flaming creatures living in this area. Ji Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord were able to sense from afar that these creatures would pose a lethal danger to them. They didn't even dare to move close to them, instead choosing to fly into a more narrower passageway.

Swoosh.

A flying black vessel was advancing at high speed through the air, throwing behind the fiery creatures behind them. Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord stood at the very prow of the ship, and neither of them dared to relax at all as they vigilantly scanned the horizons.

"They're coming." The Ninedust Sectlord gripped his longstaff, readying himself for the assault. As for Ning, he was in his three-headed, six-armed form and wielded all six Northbow swords in his hands. The two stood shoulder-to-shoulder, staring towards the front.

Roughly ten million kilometers up ahead, more than six flaming creatures were waiting for them at the turn of the stone passageway. Their numbers were continuing to grow. Clearly, these flaming creatures had some method of communicating to each other, and they knew that if they didn't gather in sufficient numbers there would be no way for them to stop these two invaders.

"Kill!"

Boom!

Although they were ten million kilometers away, the flying black vessel moved at a hundred times the speed of light and so passed through that distance in an instant.

“Freeze.” Ning’s nine novessence arts were already activated, and nine enormous dragons of power were surging through the area around him. They transformed into a domain of sword-intent, suppressing and binding the flaming creatures around them. It must be understood that these flaming creatures were extremely tough; the Ninedust Sectlord had been unable to shatter the first one with a half-power blow, and Ning’s nine novessence arts were similarly unable to wipe them out.

Still, the nine novessence arts definitely caused the flaming creatures to slow down substantially.

“Die!” The Ninedust Sectlord let out a low growl as he swept out from left to right with his longstaff, striking with the force of a thunderbolt. Boom! Boom! Boom! One flaming creature after another was blown up.

Slash! Slash! Slash! Silently and soundless, six of the flaming creatures were chopped through in quick succession as the tips of Ning’s Northbow swords were suddenly revealed.

Omega Sword Dao – Shadowless!

“Darknorth, flee immediately! We have to escape this stone passageway as soon as we can,” the Ninedust Sectlord sent mentally. “We can’t afford to waste any more time here. We’ll be in serious trouble if we do!”

“Alright.” Ning agreed with his assessment. After so many battles, they both knew some of the habits these flaming creatures had. They generally kept to the specific passageway they were in, and they had a special way of communicating with each other within the passageway! If they spent too much time in any specific passageway, more and more of the creatures would accumulate until finally, a veritable army of them would be on the attack.

The most disastrous battle they had been in involved more than three hundred of the flaming creatures surrounding and attacking them, three of which were nearly as powerful as the two of them. Ning had been forced to rely on the power of his nine novessence arts and the perfection of his Omega Sword Dao to just barely fend them off. The Ninedust Sectlord’s staff-arts weren’t as defensively powerful as Ning’s sword-arts, and so he had to rely on his forbidden technique instead.

The two had escaped by the skin of their teeth.

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The two of them grew increasingly crafty as time went on. They’d rely on Ning’s Shadowless evasion technique to avoid discovery for as long as possible, and they’d end or escape any battles they found themselves trapped in immediately, not wasting any time. And yet, they would still occasionally run into some trouble. These flaming creatures truly seemed to be immortal; no matter how hard they hit the creatures, they just wouldn’t die.

“There’s a tunnel over there. Hide inside it.” They flew into a new, untouched stone passageway via the flying vessel and Ning’s Shadowless evasion technique, then quickly dove into a cave opening on the stone walls.

“We can rest here for a short while.” Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord both relaxed slightly. They had been lucky enough to find a cave right after they had fled into a new passageway but before any of the

flaming creatures had discovered them. This meant they could rest for a time! Still, they could only spend a few hours, as there would be flaming creatures patrolling the entire area.

“It’s been fifteen days. Fifteen full days of nonstop running.” The Ninedust Sectlord shook his head. “These stone passageways are without end. They seem to be limitless! Every single one of them is filled with countless flaming creatures, and every single one of them is completely unkillable. The weakest ones are still comparable to Daolords of the Fourth Step! Considering how many stone passageways we’ve gone through, the number of flaming creatures we’ve fought is simply ridiculous. Why are there so many of them? Logically speaking, there should be very few creatures which have the power of Daolords of the Fourth Step.”

Ning shook his head. “They probably aren’t actual living creatures.”

“Right.” The Ninedust Sectlord nodded. “I was about to say the same thing. They seem to be part of the omnipresent flames of this region, as well as the stone walls of the various stone passageways.”

“Right.” Ning nodded as well.

They had once personally witnessed the flaming creatures disappear into the stone walls like water flowing into a desert, leaving behind no trace of its passing. It must be understood that neither Ning nor the Ninedust Sectlord were able to damage the walls at all despite launching repeated full-strength attacks against them.

“Darknorth, do you have any Thousand Origins pills or other similar types of spirit-pills?” The Ninedust Sectlord looked at Ning. “If you do, sell them to me. Judging from the way you fight and how stable you are, it doesn’t look like you are relying on some sort of forbidden technique or divine ability that explosively increases your power for brief periods of time.”

Ning chuckled. Thousand Origins pills were used to replenish Immortal energy and divine power. Using extremely powerful divine abilities or forbidden arts in battle consumed divine power a hundred times faster than normal; if the battle went on for too long, one would have to rely on spirit-pills to replenish one’s energy. The rate at which one absorbed energy from chaos jewels was simply too slow, and while chaos nectar was quite fast, using it in this matter was extremely wasteful.

Ning was primarily relying on the azureflower mist energy in battle; at most, he would also use the [Three Heads, Six Arms] divine ability, and so very little of his divine ability was used up. As for the azureflower mist energy, it was also consumed very slowly, allowing him to replenish it with chaos jewels alone. As a result, he didn’t need to rely on using spirit-pills to replenish his energy.

But of course, when the Ninedust Sectlord unleashed his full power he remained a bit stronger than Ning. There was nothing Ning could do about this; the azureflower mist energy simply couldn’t be used to execute divine abilities.

“Are you jealous of my Sword Dao?” Ning smirked.

“Your Sword Dao is indeed formidable; it can be all but described as flawless and perfect. We encountered several dangerous situations earlier, but you were able to perfectly defend against all of them. I, however, was forced to rely on my divine abilities and forbidden arts.” The Ninedust Sectlord

looked at Ning. For once, he was willing to give up a bit of his face. "I imagine you've used up very few of your spirit-pills. Sell some to me. I'll pay double the normal price."

Ning shook his head.

"Five times the normal price!" The Ninedust Sectlord said hurriedly.

Ning just looked at him.

"Ten times!" The Ninedust Sectlord gritted his teeth. "Darknorth, don't go too far."

"Ah, forget it. I'll sell it to you for ten times the normal price then. I was planning to wait until you were really panicking, then sell them to you at a hundred times the normal price." Ning let out a teasing smile. To sell a spirit-pill at a hundred times the normal price when the buyer was in mortal danger was quite common.

Ning actually had more than ten thousand Thousand Origins pills and Chaos Spirit pills. He had acquired all of them from the deceased Daolord Kongsan, as Ning himself had never used them before.

The Thousand Origins pills were somewhat cheap; each of them were normally worth around a thousand cubes of chaos nectar. As for Chaos Spirit pills, they were worth ten times as much.

The two completed their trade. The Ninedust Sectlord spent thirty million cubes of chaos nectar to buy some of Ning's spirit-pills. Finally, he let out a sigh of relief. With these spirit-pills on him, he would be able to use his powerful divine abilities without fear. In truth, he still had a good number of spirit-pills on him, but who knew how long they would be stuck in this place for? These flaming creatures really did seem to be all but endless, and he was forced to use his forbidden arts whenever they ran into a bit of trouble. Otherwise, they'd be swarmed and overwhelmed by the things.

Ning was different. Although he couldn't use any divine abilities, the unscrutableness of his Omega Sword Dao allowed him to easily escape his foes, and the Soleheart stance of his Omega Sword Dao ensured that the creatures found it nearly impossible to actually reach Ning.

"Oh, right. Ninedust, you haven't told anything me about yourself yet," Ning said. "All I know is that you are the sectlord of the Ninedust Sect, and a new one at that. But what did you do before becoming the Ninedust Sectlord? I've never heard of you before. It's odd that such a powerful Daolord as you suddenly appeared out of nowhere, and you don't exactly seem to be the low-key type."

"You want to know more about me?" The Ninedust Sectlord glanced sideways at Ning, then said smugly, "I'll tell you the truth. I'm actually just a Daolord of the Third Step."

"A Daolord of the Third Step?" Ning was surprised. How could a Daolord of the Third Step be this strong? Didn't that mean that it was all but guaranteed he would be the equal of Daolord Dawnstar once he reached the fourth step?

"But your divine body...?" Ning frowned. The Ninedust Sectlord's divine body had an aura of tremendous power, and it was far stronger than the bodies of most Daolords of the Fourth Step. It was highly unusual for a Daolord of the Third Step to have a divine body with such a powerful aura. "Are you some sort of Aberrant, or...?"

“Hmph. Those Aberrant special lifeforms are nothing. I am an Ancient cultivator, the most perfect type of creature to ever exist,” the Ninedust Sectlord said.

Ning was surprised. Although the Ancient cultivators were one of the six major organizations in the Endless Territories, they were incredibly few and rare in number, on par with the Brightshore Imperials of the Brightshore Kingdom. He didn’t expect that the Ninedust Sectlord would turn out to be an Ancient cultivator.

“As you’ll find out soon enough, this is one of the ancestral sites left behind by the ancestors of my race.” The Ninedust Sectlord looked at Ning. “I’m afraid, Darknorth, that you won’t be able to gain anything at all from this place, given that it was left by my ancestors for members of my Ancient race.”