

Desolate 1091

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 30: Ancient Cultivator Chapter 32: The History of the Terror Starsea

“Ninedust, so this is an ancestor of the Ancient cultivators?” Upon hearing the Ninedust Sectlord’s mumbles, Ji Ning turned to look curiously at the peaceful-looking man seated in the lotus position. The man seemed to be a world unto himself, and was filled with peace and benevolence. Just looking at him, Ning felt calm and tranquil in his heart. In addition, the ancient figure gave Ning a very strange feeling, a feeling similar to the one which the Ninedust Sectlord gave him.

Perhaps this was due to the fact that members of the same race would all share certain commonalities.

When Ning had first met the Ninedust Sectlord, he had no idea that the man was an Ancient cultivator. Once he met more of them, however, he would probably be able to recognize them at a glance.

“Yes. This is one of our oldest ancestors.” The Ninedust Sectlord walked over in a reverential manner. Ning followed from behind, inspecting the man closely.

There were two deceased Hegemons. The white-robed Hegemon simply lay there on the ground, and just by moving closer to him Ning began to feel as though the world around him was twisting and distorting into hallucinations. Fortunately, his soul and his mind were both very strong, and the effect was nothing more than a natural phenomena caused by the presence of the deceased Hegemon’s body. As a result, Ning was able to endure the effect. By comparison, the Ancient cultivator seated in the lotus position was much more peaceful.

After they moved closer, the Ninedust Sectlord fell to his knees and kowtowed respectfully. “Redwater pays his respects to you, ancestor.”

There was a dark-red longstaff to the side of the Ancient ancestor, and the aura emanating from it shocked Ning. “A Universe treasure?” He had seen the broken sword in the Sword Palace of the Brightshore Kingdom, and had also encountered the deceased Sword Hegemon’s dark blue greatsword in the Genesis Lands of the alternate universe. As a result, he was able to almost instantly ascertain that the dark-red longstaff next to this Ancient ancestor was also a Universe treasure.

Whoosh. A stream of light suddenly flew out from the dark-red longstaff, transforming into a bald, black-robed youth.

“Gentlemen.” The bald, black-robed youth had a calm, peaceful gaze that seemed to hold all the stars in the night sky, and his voice echoed within the cave.

“Senior,” the Ninedust Sectlord immediately called out humbly, a hint of excitement in his eyes. This was a Universe treasure! And a longstaff at that. He himself used longstaffs!

“Senior.” Ning called out with respect as well.

Any and every Universe treasure was worthy of respect, because every single one was born after experiencing endless trials and tribulations. They were utterly supreme amongst treasures, and they

would only submit to those whom they truly acknowledged. Otherwise, there was no way to control them whatsoever.

“You are the fifth and the sixth to come to this place,” the bald, black-robed youth said peacefully.

Ning was secretly stunned upon hearing this. The fifth and the sixth? When they had visited Skywind’s homeland, they had been the fourth and the fifth. It seemed as though there was another expert who had reached this place without entering Skywind’s home.

“Since you have been able to survive and reach this place, it means that you both have had a number of fortuitous encounters in your life. Before dying, Master ordained that all Ancient cultivators would have a chance to earn some rewards from him if they could pass some of his tests. If there is someone capable of passing all the tests, I would be willing to follow that person,” the youth said.

“Pass all the tests?” The Ninedust Sectlord’s eyes lit up. If he passed everything, he would gain a Universe treasure? In the past, he never would’ve even dared to imagine such a thing. It must be remembered that virtually no Eternal Emperors wielded Universe treasures, much less Daolords. Only the most ridiculously lucky of Daolords would ever have a chance to acquire a Universe treasure.

“Emperor Vulturax came to this place before. Did he fail the test?” Ning suddenly asked.

The Ninedust Sectlord was stunned. Oh, right. Patriarch Vulturax had completed his Daomerge in Skywind’s homeland. After gaining eternity, he became a major power who was second only to the Hegemons in might. Had he failed to acquire the Universe treasure as well?

“Vulturax did indeed come here. He was the only Eternal Emperor to make it here, and he gained a prize for himself.” The youth nodded. “But passing the trials requires not just power; it also requires destiny. Vulturax and I were not destined to be.”

“Dare I ask, what are the trials?” The Ninedust Sectlord was rather excited. He was willing to risk everything for this. If he was lucky, he might end up with an Eternal weapon as the prize!

“All you need to do is walk closer to Master. Master set up formations and restrictive spells in the area; once you activate them, the trials will begin,” the youth said. “The better you perform, the more gifts you shall win for yourself. I shall be the arbiter of it all.”

“Understood.” The Ninedust Sectlord immediately walked over, moving towards the peacefully seated Ancient ancestor. Suddenly, he seemed to run into an invisible barrier. A few dimensional fluctuations spread out, and he disappeared without a trace.

The youth then turned to glance at Ning. He said calmly, “You are not an Ancient cultivator. You are not permitted to earn any of my Master’s treasures.”

Ning nodded helplessly.

“I personally don’t have any bias against non-Ancient cultivators,” the black-robed youth said.

“However, Master’s dying instructions were that if our side won the Dawn War, his treasures were to be left to Ancient cultivators and Ancient cultivators alone. However, if our side lost the Dawn War, then anyone would be able to win his treasures, be they Aberrants, Chaos Godbeasts, or ordinary cultivators like yourself.”

Ning was puzzled. "The Dawn War?"

"You do not know of it?" The youth asked.

"I do not." Ning shook his head.

The youth nodded in an uncaring manner. "It was a war that caused the true downfall of the Ancient cultivators as a race. Long, long ago, the Ancient cultivators were born from the primordial chaos as the most perfect of all living beings. They unified the entire universe under their rule! Even the Chaos Godbeasts were enslaved by them, while the Aberrants were all forced to bend the knee."

Ning nodded. He had heard of this before.

"Afterwards, as time flowed on, more and more ordinary mortal beings came to be born. Ordinary mortals expanded and propagated at incredible speeds, and thus they rose to power at an inconceivable rate. They quickly became a race that was second only to the Ancient cultivators in the endless primordial chaos, and towards the end they actually became close to a match for the Ancients."

Ning couldn't help but sigh. The Dao Alliance truly was formidable.

"But then, a disaster happened. This disaster was an extremely large-scale one. Many powerful cultivators in our homeland and even in distant places within the Great Dark were forced to join hands and fight back against this tribulation."

"A tribulation?" Ning was surprised.

"Look." The youth pointed towards the slumped humanoid figure off in the distance. "You just came out of its body. You should've noticed that it is different from ordinary cultivators."

Ning nodded. Ordinary cultivators should've had divine power in their bodies. How could they have stone passageways, flame demons, earth devils, and strange planets?

"It was a member of our enemies, one of the most powerful of their kind," the youth said. "If we lost that war, we would've been annihilated. If they lost, they would've been annihilated as well. This was a war of extermination, a war for survival. Both sides fought like mad, and all of us here joined forces. Back then, our five Hegemons commanded a host of Eternal Emperors to fight back against them! Even experts came from deep within the Great Dark to reinforce us... and in the end, a great battle was fought in the place now known as the Terror Starsea."

"This battle was known as the Dawn War."

"Back then, we Ancients had a total of three Hegemons. The Dao Alliance had one Hegemon, while the Aberrants also had one Hegemon. All of them died." The youth continued, "An incredible number of powerful experts took part in that battle, and a steady stream of reinforcements came from within or beyond the Great Dark. The battle within the Terror Starsea was absolutely terrifying, and in the end I learned that the Dao Alliance, the Ancients, and the others resettled their homeland. This meant that the enemy had been defeated. We had won."

"The Dawn War was a severe blow to the Ancient cultivators. They had lost all three of their Hegemons." The bald, black-robed youth shook his head and sighed. "The Dao Alliance was actually the quickest to recover, and many of their experts eventually drifted into the endless Great Dark in search of

adventure. Do not blame Master for being unwilling to share his treasures with you; he knew that you ordinary cultivators would recover far more quickly than his race would. So long as you were not completely wiped out, there would definitely come a day where you surpassed the Ancients. For him to show a bit of selfishness in caring more about his own race is normal.”

Ning nodded. It seemed as though the Endless Territories had something of a secret history to it. No wonder the Terror Starsea was such a terrifying place; it had actually been the locale of the great Dawn War.

“So the endless Great Dark also holds many experts?” Ning asked.

“Yes, of course.” The bald, black-robed youth nodded. “There are many who have spent ages drifting through the endless Great Dark, which means it holds many powerful experts indeed. However, they are far too distant from us; even if you spent a hundred thousand chaos cycles travelling, you might not be able to reach them. Generally speaking, only Eternal Emperors would ever be so bored as to embark on such a distant journey. It was only due to how vitally important the Dawn War was that our allies hastened to the Terror Starsea, where the battle was to be held. The battle against our foes was so violent that even now the Terror Starsea is filled with countless dangers. Even Hegemons might perish here, if they aren’t careful.”

“Hah. There’s no need for a Daolord like you to know too much. In short, we wiped our enemies out and all the territories now belong to us once more.” The youth let out a chuckle. “In the end, our side on the Dawn War.”

Ning nodded slowly. It seemed as though in the past, the Ancient cultivators were actually an incredibly powerful force within the Endless Territories. They had three Hegemons! Alas, those three had perished during the war.

The Dawn War represented the end of an era and the beginning of a new one. The era of the Ancients and their unified rule had ended; the era of the Dao Alliance had begun.

“Senior, am I supposed to just stand here and wait?” Ning asked.

“Yes, you can just wait here. There really is nothing here for you. The only reason you were even able to come here was because you were alongside an Ancient cultivator.” The youth nodded.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 30: Ancient Cultivator Chapter 33: Within the Cave

“Nothing whatsoever?” Ji Ning was rather surprised by this. He then turned to glance at the white-robed form. “What about the white-robed Hegemon?”

“He was the Hegemon of the Dao Alliance,” the bald, black-robed youth said. “During that great war, he died in battle but managed to deliver a heavy wound to our enemy. My master managed to follow that up with a lethal blow, but the enemy managed to heavily wound my master before perishing. My master’s wounds were so heavy that he knew he wouldn’t be able to survive, and so he left behind his legacies and his will for future Ancients to inherit. As for the Dao Alliance’s Hegemon, he didn’t have the chance to leave behind any legacies.”

“As for his treasures... well, my master naturally took them all and arranged for them to be given to future Ancients who could pass his trials,” the youth said.

Ning blinked a few times. But those treasures were the treasures of an elder of the Dao Alliance. I’m a member of the Dao Alliance!

Still, Ning could do nothing but grumble mentally. In truth, he understood what the Hegemon must have been thinking. Once the Dawn War ended, the era of the Ancient cultivators would have come to an end as well, and the Dao Alliance would become the new rulers of the Endless Territories. He naturally had to make certain preparations for the Ancient race.

“This place we are in looks like a cave, but it is actually a sealed-off estate-world which Master once used to trap and slay his foes,” the youth said. “There’s no way for you to leave this place on your own. If you wish to leave, I can send you off.”

“No rush just yet,” Ning said. This was a place where two Hegemons had battled an enemy to the death. He naturally had to spend some time inspecting it.

“Oh, right. How long will it be before Ninedust’s trials conclude?” Ning asked.

The youth slowly shook his head. “I don’t know. If he is fast, perhaps a thousand years. If he takes a long time, even ten million years wouldn’t be out of the realm of question. Master truly did make meticulous preparations for his Ancient successors.”

“I have some retainers with me. Can I release them here and let them take a look?” Ning asked. The white-robed Hegemon’s corpse generated a powerful natural field of illusions; it might be of use to Su Youji.

“Yes.” The youth said calmly, “But if they are not Ancient cultivators, none of them will be able to gain any of my master’s legacies! Also, you are not permitted to cause any damage to the white-robed Hegemon’s corpse. He died for the sake of our homeland, and so Master set up spells in the area around him. If any of you try to cause damage to his corpse, you’ll suffer a counter-attack from Master’s spells.”

“Understood.” Ning nodded.

“A final reminder. This cave is filled with quite a few vestigial scars from the battle that was fought here, and they might be of use to you in meditating on the Dao. The others who came here in the past also allowed their servants to come out and inspect the battlefield scars. If and when you are ready to leave, just notify me.” The youth finished his words, then transformed into a stream of light that flew into the dark-red longstaff nearby.

The cave was completely silent once more. Ning scanned his surroundings. This was a place where two Hegemons had died. Ning still felt hopeful that there was perhaps some good fortune waiting for him here.

.....

Ning was now all alone within the cave. Ninedust had gone off to test himself against the trials, and so Ning had no choice but to slowly search the area for himself and see if there was anything useful for him here.

"I wonder where this enemy came from?" Ning returned to the onyx humanoid corpse that was 540,000 meters tall. "It actually managed to kill two Hegemons. Its entire corpse is probably a priceless treasure," Ning mused.

A small portion of the 'golden sand' from the shattered planet's core had allowed Ning's six Northbow swords to undergo an earthshaking transformation. Skywind's home planet was similarly extraordinary. Ning surmised that the corpse probably held other unique things within it.

"Come here." Ning waved a finger, attempting to drag the corpse into his estate-world. However, the onyx humanoid corpse just lay there slumped, not moving at all. Clearly, there was no way someone like Ning could possibly move it at all.

"Transform." Ning's body suddenly blurred as he expanded to become 540,000 meters tall as well. He was now the exact same size as the corpse. Ning reached out with his hands to grab the corpse by its elbows. Given that the target had died long ago, there was no way for it to resist him.

"Get over here!" Hands around the corpse's elbows, Ning did his best to lift it upwards... but the corpse didn't even budge in the slightest. Ning felt as though he was an ordinary man who was trying to lift up a massive mountain! There was no way to budge it in the slightest.

"Not even the corpse of a Hegemon should be this heavy. Still, it makes sense. I can't even budge or shake the planets in its body. How can I possibly move the entire corpse?" Ning tried moving the corpse multiple times, but wasn't able to so much as budge the thing. In the end, he had no choice but to give up. He couldn't help but feel even more puzzled; how had this humanoid creature been created? Was it like a golem-type magic treasure, or the Hegemon of some sort of strange, unique race?

Ning spent quite some time pondering over the humanoid corpse. It obviously was an incredibly valuable treasure, but there was nothing he could do at all.

Should he go back inside? But even when he had been fighting alongside the Ninedust Sectlord, they had still been forced to use Dao-seals to escape the corpse. Ning really didn't want to take on the risk of going back inside! In addition, he had the feeling that he probably wouldn't be able to find much within the corpse. The golden sand had only come out of the shattered planet's core because of the fatal strikes delivered by two Hegemons. Otherwise, how would Ning ever had a chance to get his hands on something so valuable?

As far as Ning could tell, the only wound on the onyx humanoid body was that wound across the chest. The other parts of its body seemed completely undamaged; it seemed unlikely that Ning would be able to gain much from it.

"What about the stone walls?" Just like the others, Ning ended up deciding to give up trying to move the humanoid corpse and instead began to inspect the walls. Might there be any treasures littered here?

None at all! Even if there had been any, the others probably would've swept them clean long ago.

Ning used his hand to gently trace some of the scars left behind on the walls. Although this cave was actually a top-grade Eternal treasure, it was covered with ancient scars from that long-ago battle. The emanations of the Dao radiating from those scars caused Ning to fall into a state of intoxication.

“These scars can be divided into representing three different types of ‘intent’. It seems they pertain to the two Hegemons and the humanoid corpse,” Ning mused.

One type of intent was an overwhelming, awe-inspiring, radiant intent.

The second intent was that of a furious, endless flood of water.

The third was that of a baleful metallic will. In terms of aura, the metallic one was actually slightly weaker than the other two intents.

“The intent of radiant light belonged to the white-robed Hegemon. The intent of water belonged to the Ancient ancestor.” Ning was able to quickly verify which belonged to which, as the two Hegemon corpses continued to emanate waves of power and presence as well. “Then that means the onyx humanoid corpse represented that metallic will. So it actually had a Dao of its own, and its own Dao was second to just that of the Hegemons.” Ning was rather amazed by all of these things.

Ning waved his hand, causing four figures to appear by his side. They were Su Youji, Pillsaint, Daolord Naia, and Daolord Bruteflame. After Ning had captured Daolord Bruteflame, the man had naturally submitted and chosen to serve Ning.

“Master.” All four of them hurriedly called out to Ning with respect as they looked curiously at their surroundings. They didn’t really pay much attention to the humanoid corpse, but the two distant Hegemon corpses caused all of them to feel stunned.

“Is that...” The four could scarcely believe it.

“Those are the corpses of a pair of Hegemons,” Ning confirmed. “Don’t just stand there like idiots. I came to this place alongside the Ninedust Sectlord, but I won’t be able to get any legacies from it. There are some battle-scars on the cave walls that you can examine which might be of assistance to you in comprehending the Dao. Youji, the closer you move to the white-robed Hegemon, the more powerful the field of illusions around it becomes. It might be of use to you.”

All four of them were completely stunned, but they quickly calmed down upon hearing Ning’s instructions. Ning trusted all four of them implicitly, because they had all sworn lifeblood oaths to him.

“Go,” Ning instructed.

“Right.”

“Scars of battle left behind by Hegemons?” They all began to explore the cave and inspect the walls. As for Ning, he lifted his head to gaze at the cave walls as well as he sought to better understand the Hegemon’s Dao. Although this wasn’t the Dao of the Sword, all Daos shared certain commonalities. Daolord Allgod, for example, delighted in training in all types of Daos. He had even trained in the Dao of the Sword! This was because all Daos had a chance to stimulate and enlighten you. There was no way Ning would allow himself to miss the chance to analyze the Dao of a Hegemon.

And so, Ning and his four retainers began to train and meditate within the cave. Su Youji trained in the Dao of Fire, while the white-robed Hegemon was a master of the Dao of Light, but both Daos were highly suited to illusions! Mastery over illusions was not exclusive to Heartforce Cultivators.

“Incredible. This is absolutely incredible. Radiance... free will... how can illusions reach such an incredible level?” Su Youji was completely stunned and dazed by what she found. She was the successor of Feixian the Exalted, and was a true master of the art of illusions and charm. However, she wasn’t even close to being a match for this Hegemon. The mere illusory ripples generated by the white-robed Hegemon’s corpse filled her with indescribable awe.

“Master, Master! Come over here, quickly!” After meditating for five months, Su Youji began to call out for Ning.

“Eh?” Ning had been seated in the lotus position, staring at the cave walls. He turned his head to look at Su Youji.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 30: Ancient Cultivator Chapter 34: Allworlds Tribulation

The cave had been completely silent, with Ji Ning and the other three retainers completely absorbed in the profound mysteries of the Dao contained within the scars on the wall. Su Youji’s sudden shout startled all four of them, and they turned to look at her as she ran towards Ning, her face filled with excitement.

“What is it, Youji?” Ning rose to his feet and began to walk towards her.

“The white-robed Hegemon was absolutely incredible. He’s just... just...” Su Youji was so excited she could barely speak properly. “Master, you have to test it out for yourself.”

“Of course he was incredible. He was a Hegemon!” Ning looked at her. “When I moved towards him, I could sense the field of illusions surrounding him. That’s why I told you to go to him and meditate there.”

“That’s not it!” Su Youji repeatedly shook her head. “Master, you probably didn’t move too close to the Hegemon’s body, right?”

“I did not.” Ning shook his head. As soon as he sensed the field of illusions start to affect him, he immediately elected to keep a safe distance from it.

“Master, if you had moved closer you would’ve found out for yourself.” Su Youji said quickly, “The closer you are, the more marvelous those illusions are. My master, Feixian the Exalted, was skilled in the arts of charm and control, and she was also incredibly skilled in the art of illusions. Do you know what the apex of mastery over illusions is?”

“The apex?” Ning frowned.

“The apex of illusions... is reality!” Su Youji’s eyes were filled with excitement. “With but a thought, you can create illusions that are as real as reality itself. That represents the utmost apex of mastery over illusions, a level at which even most Eternal Emperors wouldn’t be able to tell the illusions apart from reality and thus would easily die within the dream. I feel certain that this white-robed Hegemon’s mastery over illusions must have reached this level.

Ning's face paled slightly. The apex of illusions was reality? If you couldn't even tell the illusions apart from reality, then it really would be easy for you to perish.

"The closer I moved towards him, the more real the illusions became," Su Youji said. "Although this Hegemon died long ago and these illusions are naturally generated by his corpse, I can tell just how terrifying his mastery over illusions must have been when he was alive. I'm fairly weak, and so I wasn't able to move much closer to him. You are much stronger than me, Master. I'm sure that once you move close to him, you'll experience for yourself the illusions which are as real as reality itself. Given that the Hegemon has already died, these illusions shouldn't prove to be much of a threat to you."

"Master, you have to go test it out for yourself." Su Youji looked at Ning eagerly.

"Reality, eh?" Ning felt rather intrigued as well.

"After you experience it personally, you have to describe it for me. I have the feeling that my mastery over illusions is already close to that of my own master, Feixian the Exalted. It would be incredible if I could surpass her in this area!" Su Youji let out a sigh. "Thank goodness these illusions cannot attack people."

Generally speaking, experts who relied on illusions used them to mystify and trap their opponents, then delivered a mortal strike to slay them! The white-robed Hegemon, however, was dead. His illusions could mystify and entrap them, but there was no mechanism for actually killing them; the Hegemon himself was dead, after all.

"I'll give it a try." Ning walked towards the white-robed Hegemon.

As Ning moved closer and closer to the white-robed Hegemon, the illusions slowly began to fill his mind. Reality began to gradually dissipate, replaced by illusions which began to seep into Ning's mind. However, Ning's azureflower mist energy had only grown even more pure after he became a Daolord of the Second Step, which meant that his soul was naturally on a higher level than that of most Daolords of the Fourth Step. Given that his heartforce was at the verge of the sixth stage, he really was quite skilled in resisting illusions.

"Impressive." Ning continued his advance. Reality around him was beginning to fade away, while the illusions were becoming increasingly real. Dazzling women appeared by his side, as did rare magic treasures and vile demons...

"I can actually no longer tell apart what is real and what is not." Ning remained clear-minded, but he could no longer see any flaws in the illusions. He was now completely surrounded by illusory images, with a group of seductive beauties carrying platters of wine and food towards him.

"Break!" Ning's Dao-heart could not be shaken by such things, and so he forcibly dispelled the illusions around him. But as he continued to advance towards the white-robed Hegemon's corpse, the illusions came sweeping towards him once more. This time, they were even more persistent and pervasive.

"If I was in an actual life-or-death battle, illusions on this level would be able to affect me for a brief period of time... and during that brief moment, I would probably be struck and even killed." Ning was secretly amazed. What terrifying illusions! Thankfully, the white-robed Hegemon was already dead. It

didn't matter how long the illusions were able to trap him for; the only thing that mattered was that he could still awaken from them, given enough time.

.....

"Master is as impressive as always." Su Youji watched as Ning advanced towards the white-robed Hegemon's corpse. She couldn't help but feel rather excited by his progress. "He really is incredible. He's made it much farther than I did, and is much closer to the Hegemon's corpse. I already reached my limit much earlier; if I tried to proceed, my will and mind would've grown blurry."

Su Youji knew very well that when surrounded by passive illusions, she could allow herself to be trapped by them but her soul and her mind had to maintain a minimum level of clarity. If she couldn't even do that, then she would gradually forget who she even was and would be forever trapped in an illusory world, never to escape.

.....

Ning was finding it harder and harder to resist the illusions as well.

"Break. Break. Break!" Ning had to spend two full seconds in order to forcibly dispel the illusions this time. A stunned look was in his eyes. This was absolutely terrifying.

Two full seconds? In a fight at his level, he would've died countless times over by now.

"I'm going to keep advancing. I want to see just how powerful these illusions can become." Ning's Dao-heart remained unaffected, and his soul and his mind remained quite clear. Even though he was finding it harder and harder to break free from the illusions, he still knew that he was Ji Ning of the Three Realms. So long as his mind was still intact, he could continue advancing. As soon as he felt his mind begin to slip, he would immediately begin to withdraw!

BOOM!

As Ning took another step forward, the surrounding illusions suddenly seemed to explode and transform. The world he was in was a world of singing birds and fragrant flowers. He was in a village within a beautiful mountain valley. The forests had a few villagers within them, and Ning was an ordinary village youth who made his living as a woodcutter...

"This illusion..." Ning was dressed in rough clothes and had a woodcutter's axe over his shoulders. He stared at his surroundings, puzzled.

Off in the distance was a stream of water that looked clear and refreshing, with a few small fish swimming about in it. He could make out every single scale with perfect clarity.

Next to him was a stalk of bamboo, emanating a fragrant scent. Beneath his feet was a patch of wild grass that was covered in glistening, jewel-like dew.

"Erbaoh! Erbaoh!" An old woman's voice rang out from afar.

"Mom's calling to me." This thought suddenly entered Ning's mind.

“This illusion is absolutely terrifying. I feel as though I’ve been reborn into a new life and a new world.” Ning was stunned. “Everything seems so completely real. The smiles of the villagers, the movements of the fish, the aura of the natural world... everything seems perfectly real.” This really did seem like an actual, real world.

“Break for me!” Ning’s will was roaring loudly. BOOM! The illusory world trembled for a brief moment. The distant woman, the villagers, and even the village dogs all twisted and distorted for a brief instant.

“I said break!” Ning’s will bellowed out again. “Break! Break! Break!” Ning’s will continued to bellow furiously. He was still clear-minded. Although his will was bound and constrained by this illusory world, Ning still had the power to struggle to break free.

Rumble...

Finally, the illusory world shattered into tiny pieces.

“I took eighteen full seconds before I was able to escape?” Ning was rather stunned. He was incredibly strong in terms of resisting illusions, even amongst elite Daolords, but he had still been trapped for nearly twenty seconds before breaking free. This Hegemon was simply terrifying.

“Another step.” Ning took another step forwards. “Hmm. Have I reached the end?” Ning continued to advance, only to find that the power of the illusions had ceased to increase. No matter how further he advanced, the power did no change in the slightest. By now, Ning was less than three meters away from the white-robed Hegemon’s corpse. He was prevented from advancing any further by a formation, but the power of the illusions didn’t increase at all.

“Master, you were able to make it to the Hegemon’s corpse?” The distant Su Youji was rather excited.

“Yes.” Ning nodded. “I’ll meditate for a time. No need to disturb me.”

“Understood.” Su Youji nodded.

Things were actually still quite tough for Ning, because he was being repeatedly swept up into the illusions and forced to repeatedly break free from them. “These illusions were merely created by the Hegemon’s corpse. If he was still alive, how terrifying would his illusions be? And these illusions truly are marvelous. I can’t see any flaws in them whatsoever; they look just the same as reality itself. Fortunately, my soul is strong enough that I can maintain a modicum of clarity.”

Ning sat down in the lotus position, no longer fighting back against the illusions and allowing himself to be swept into that illusory world. “Each time I enter this illusion, I feel as though I’ve been reborn into a new world. I can’t see any flaws in the illusions at all and have to struggle to free myself. This is a good way to temper my Dao-heart and strengthen my mind. Perhaps it will be of assistance to me in breaking through to the sixth stage of heartforce.”

What Ning did not realize was that this white-robed Hegemon had used his ultimate mastery of the Dao of Light to develop his own technique, the ‘Allworld Tribulation’, and then used it to gain eternity for himself! As soon as he broke through to the Eternal level, he became a Hegemon! As a Daolord, he was a terrifyingly strong figure who had merged together two Supreme Daos. After finally mastering his own ultimate Dao, the Allworld Tribulation, he had become a truly terrifying Hegemon.

After he died, his eternal corpse naturally continued to hold some of the power and aura of his Allworld Tribulation within it. When he was still alive, the natural illusions emanating from his body would've completely swept Ning into their grasp. He would've forgotten himself, forever lost within the illusions.

The remaining power in his corpse was nothing more than a tiny fraction of the true power this Hegemon had once wielded.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 30: Ancient Cultivator Chapter 35: Heartforce, Stage Six – World

Ji Ning was completely absorbed by the Allworld Tribulation's illusions.

.....

Ning became a fisherman's child. When he was young, he would accompany his father in fishing on the sea. He eventually fell in love with a rich man's daughter, but her family looked down upon him. On one seafaring voyage, his father ended up perishing, resulting in Ning braving the oceans by himself. Slowly, the clever Ning learned more and more tricks for catching fish. He gradually accumulated a fortune, then purchased a large ship for himself. As his fishing skills continued to improve, he became a legend amongst fisherman. He eventually had over a hundred sails within his fleet, and the rich girl's family actually came to him to make amends.

This was a world without cultivation. His life was an ordinary one, and it started with him being a youth who slowly grew up, becoming a towering figure by his middle years and the patriarch of an incredibly strong and stable clan in his late years.

.....

Ning became a peerless swordsman. His sword was the number one sword of the world, and his speed surpassed everyone's imaginations.

The reason why he had returned from his drifting adventures on the oceans was because he wished to find his birth parents. Thanks to a medallion he had carried with him his entire life, he finally discovered his parents. When he was young, they had been pursued by a group of enemies and so they were forced to abandon him in front of a rich family's doorstep. Eventually, his parents had found a place to hide. They had quietly trained until they became incredibly powerful. They killed their foes, then established a mountain villa and had many other children and even grandchildren.

And right at this moment, Ning finally came back to them as well...

.....

Ning became a physician's apprentice, earnestly following his master in the practice of medicine. He lived a very ordinary life, and the physician's daughter ended up marrying him. His skill in medicine eventually surpassed his master's, and his fame and reputation quickly spread throughout the world. Although he suffered the occasional setback, with other physicians occasionally slandering him, his influence within the world continued to only grow greater and greater...

.....

Ning was a fiend, a true demon. His only ambition was to rule the entire world and force all of its many denizens to prostrate themselves at his feet. All schools and all sects had to bow before him... and those who refused would perish!

The fiendish Ning set up his own organization, and within its domain he was the master of all. No one dared to violate his command! Slowly, his area of influence began to spread as he wiped out the various other schools and sects nearby. His reputation grew greater and greater, as did his power. He became the undisputed hegemon amongst the countless evil figures of the world, and in the final battle he slew the three grandmasters of the righteous path. From that day forth, the entire world fell under his demonic, despotic might. No one dared to disobey him.

.....

One life after another. Each time, Ning lived a wonderful life. Even when he became a demonic deposit or a vile doer, he would end up becoming an invincible figure, a leader amongst devils who none could shake.

The righteous path? The evil path? An ordinary mortal? A rural nobleman? A robber baron? A low-key sect farmer who was actually the number one expert in his sect? A brilliant scholar who won the imperial exams and was given the title of 'zhuangyuan'? A down-on-his-luck scholar who encountered a fox-fairy spirit?

Each illusory life was like a form of rebirth. In truth, all of the illusory worlds were created by the Allworld Tribulation based on Ning's own memories. For example, becoming a 'zhuangyuan' was something exclusive to the world of Earth in the Three Realms. Precisely because these worlds were all created based on Ning's own memories, they all seemed very comfortable and familiar to Ning, making it easier for him to be drawn deeper into them.

.....

It was all so real. Too real. Not only was it comparable to reincarnation, it was dimming his Dao-heart and his will! An ordinary Samsara Daolord's mind would've long ago been fogged over by the endless illusions, and they would've forgotten who they were and been forever trapped by the illusions.

If Ning had come here shortly after leaving the Three Realms, even he wouldn't have been able to withstand it. However, his will and his soul had been tempered and shaped to be even more unshakeable than before. He was always able to maintain at least a modicum of clarity. Although these illusory worlds were very real and held both love and hate, family and ambition and madness... Ning was always able to keep himself at arm's length. He wasn't seduced or led astray by the illusions, and his soul and his will watched in a detached manner as this all proceeded.

.....

"Flamefairy, Master has spent far too much time in those illusions. It's been nearly a hundred thousand years. You've already become a Daolord of the Third Step, but he's still in the illusions!" Pillsaint and Su Youji were next to each other within the cave, staring towards the white-robed Hegemon's corpse and the still-seated Ning.

Su Youji gazed towards Ning. “Master was able to make it all the way to the Hegemon’s corpse. Clearly, these illusions aren’t able to do anything to him. There’s no need for you to worry. Everything will be fine. Let us wait a while longer. If something really does seem to be wrong, I’ll go over there and pull him out.”

Su Youji had broken through as well. Her path had been that of the Dao of Charm and illusions to begin with, and the white-robed Hegemon’s mastery over illusions had indeed given her new insights and epiphanies. She had gained a deeper understanding of the legacy of Feixian the Exalted, and thus her rate of improvement began to accelerate rapidly. Thanks to a temporal acceleration treasure, she finally managed to break through to become a Daolord of the Third Step after nearly ten million accelerated years.

If it hadn’t been for the insights she had gained from the white-robed Hegemon’s illusions, she probably would’ve taken ten times as long in order to make this breakthrough.

Pillsaint remained a Daolord of the Second Step. The battle-scars on the cave walls were of very limited benefit to him. He was at a fairly low level of insight, and as such the intent of a Hegemon’s Dao was mostly inscrutable to him.

As for Daolord Naia and Daolord Bruteflame, they were both Daolords of the Fourth Step. Both of them were continued to ardently study those Hegemonic battle-scars, as they were of tremendous help to them.

“After becoming a Daolord of the Third Step, my soul has continuously increased in power. Given my mastery over the art of illusions, I should be more or less able to resist the remnant energy unleashed by the Hegemon’s corpse,” Su Youji said.

“Eh?” Pillsaint’s eyebrows suddenly lifted upwards.

“Master...” Su Youji was startled as well.

An strange aura suddenly shot out from the distant, seated Ning. It was as though something had just been given birth to.

.....

One life after another. He threw himself into each life, allowing himself to experience love and hate, life and death. Each life was a wonderful one, as the illusions sought to drag Ning fully into that world and drown him within its lies.

However, each time Ning was always able to extricate himself. In the blink of an eye, thousands of worlds and lifetimes had gone by.

“Master, I’ve grown weary of the red dust of the mortal world. I wish to dedicate myself to the monastic life. Please accept me.” A white-robed youth was kneeling in front of an old monk within a monastery. But right at this moment...

Rumble... the entire world suddenly started to shake. The white-robed youth was briefly startled. He rose to his feet, scanning his surroundings. He looked at the old monk, then looked at the mountains around him. The entire world seemed to be within his gaze.

“It is time to put an end to this unending cycle of reincarnation,” the white-robed youth said.

Rumble...

The entire world burst apart, the illusions have completely collapsed. The world in front of Ning became clear once more. He was still seated in the lotus position within the cave, and roughly thirty meters up ahead of him was the white-robed Hegemon’s corpse. Although the power of the illusions remained as potent as ever, they were no longer able to affect him in the slightest... because the sea of consciousness within his mind had just undergone a fundamental transformation.

BOOOM!!!

A powerful tidal wave of heartforce shot out, drenching reality in its waters. Reality and illusions twisted together, coalescing into a single spot of light. This spot of light was almost like the Worldheart which every single chaosworld was born from.

The spot of light began to grow, and it seemed to contain a thousand planets within it. With a rumbling sound, an entire universe began to manifest inside of it as a new world was established.

This... this was his heartworld!

Heartforce, stage six – World!

Ning’s mind and heart had long ago been at the threshold of this level; all he needed was some more experience and insights, and he would have made his breakthrough. If it hadn’t been for this event, he probably would’ve needed to experience many more things and seen more worlds before finally making his breakthrough. However, the endless illusory worlds of the Allworld Tribulation had allowed him to finally see through to the nature of reality. His heartforce vaulted over that final barrier, allowing him to reach the sixth stage. He finally established his own heartworld, a world where illusions and reality intersected.

The heartworld was to Heartforce Cultivators what the Jindan chaos region was to Ki Refiners! Only if you could establish a heartworld would you be considered a true Heartforce Cultivator!

There were incredibly few true Heartforce Cultivators. The experiences Ning had undergone in the Three Realms had given him tremendous mental fortitude, and he had always had an incredibly high level of comprehension... but in the end, he had still needed the Allworld Tribulation in order to make the final breakthrough.

“From this day forth, I am a Heartforce Cultivator.

“Ki Refiners train in Immortal energy. They are skilled in secret arts and magic treasures.

“Fiendgods train in their divine body. They are skilled in divine abilities and in using weapons in close combat.

“Heartforce Cultivators establish heartworlds. They train in heartforce and know many mysterious powers that can strike at an enemy’s heart, slaying them with a thought.”

Ning nodded slightly. Ki Refiners and Fiendgods focused on reaching ever-higher levels of mastery in the Dao. Heartforce Cultivators, however, were different.

Heartforce Cultivators did not focus on the strength of their Dao; rather, they focused on the stability of their Dao. They needed extremely stable Daos and extremely stable heartworlds, as only then could those heartworlds continuously expand. The vaster a heartworld was, the more terrifyingly powerful a Heartworld Cultivator would be! A Verge-level Heartforce Cultivator could have a heartworld that was comparable in size to an entire territory!

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 30: Ancient Cultivator Chapter 36: Heartforce Cultivator

Within the cave.

Ji Ning turned and left, quickly pulling away from the white-robed Hegemon's corpse.

"Master?" Su Youji spoke out."

"Master, what happened just now?" Pillsaint was very curious. Both of them had sensed that unusual aura rippling out just now.

Ning nodded at them. "I just established my heartworld."

"Heartworld?" Both Su Youji and Pillsaint revealed shocked looks.

"Heartworld?" Daolord Naia and Daolord Bruteflame had been startled by the aura as well, and they were also stunned when they heard Ning say these things.

One only became a true Heartforce Cultivator upon being able to establish a heartworld. Heartforce Cultivators were incredibly rare! A powerful Daolord who also trained as a Heartforce Cultivator? He would definitely be dreaded by the vast majority of other Daolords.

"Yes." Ning didn't hide it from them, because they were his retainers. In the future, they'd be able to notice when he used his Heartforce Cultivator abilities to kill his foes.

"Do not disturb me." Ning waved his hand, causing the temporal acceleration cottage to appear. He then stepped into the cottage.

"A Heartforce Cultivator. Master has become a Heartforce Cultivator." Su Youji was rather stunned.

"T-this is incredible." Pillsaint, Daolord Bruteflame, and Daolord Naia could scarcely believe it. What none of them knew was that in the Three Realms, Ning had actually been even more formidable in heartforce than he had been in the Dao of the Sword. Even Subhuti had suspected for a time that he had misjudged his disciple. Was it possible, Subhuti had wondered, that his disciple was actually more suited to the path of heartforce?

And now, he had finally established his own heartworld.

.....

Within the thatched temporal cottage. Ning sat down in the lotus position. The task before him was for him to fully construct the heartworld. The larger the heartworld, the more powerful his heartforce would be.

The creation of a heartworld was an extremely intricate task. When he had been next to the white-robed Hegemon's corpse, he had been constantly assaulted by the illusions and so naturally chose to move away from its area of influence before beginning this task.

"My own heartworld." With a thought, Ning began to visualize the heartworld inside himself. Although it looked like nothing more than a tiny dot on his forehead, it contained an entire world within itself. The amount of space that could be held within that dot was theoretically limitless; it was entirely possible for it to grow to become greater than even the Badlands Territory. Ordinary Verge-level Heartforce Cultivators would generally have heartworlds that were on par with an ordinary territory in size.

If you wanted to know how powerful a heartforce cultivator was, you could find out by looking at his heartworld. The heartworld of a master-class World-level cultivator would merely be roughly comparable to a chaosworld in size! However, Ning's Dao was that of a Samsara Daolord's, and thus he was able to break through and make it far larger.

Right now, his heartworld was a blurry, foggy region.

"Arise." A voice rang out within the world, causing the mists to begin to vanish. A continent began to emerge and spread out within the void, and a sky began to appear above it which grew higher and higher...

At the same time, his heartworld began to continuously draw in more and more chaos energy. Ning's chaos jewels continuously replenished his supply of power. Relying on chaos energy from the outside world would be too slow, and he had more than enough chaos jewels. The amount of chaos energy needed to make this breakthrough was nothing to him.

Soon, the world halted its expansion. It was now over ten billion kilometers wide, covering an absolutely enormous amount of space that was comparable to a chaosworld. This entire world brimmed with sword-ki, as this was a world of the sword.

"Grow further." Ning poured his first-stage Omega Sword Dago into the heart of this heartworld, using it to try and further expand his heartworld.

Rumble... the world seemed to change in color and darken. The land mass at the very center of the heartworld began to bulge upwards as the tallest mountain within this world climbed ever-higher, stabbing like a sword into the skies from within the very center. This enormous sword emanated the aura of the Omega Sword Dao, and it was also the physical representation of this Dao. It was now more than ten billion kilometers tall, and the might of its aura washed out throughout the heartworld.

The heartworld continued to expand at a furious pace, growing to be a hundred... a thousand... ten thousand times larger than before. The rate at which it was growing was truly staggering.

"It seems as though my Omega Sword Dao is quite well-suited for the creation of this heartworld." A figure suddenly appeared at the top of the enormous sword-mountain. It was a white-robed Ning, formed by the manifestation of his will. "A world created using the Omega Sword Dao as the core is extremely stable, making it much easier for it to grow and expand."

"Mm. It finally hit the limit." Ning halted the expansion. This vast, endless world was so great in size that Ning couldn't even see to the end of it.

“Again.” Ning began the final expansion, pouring his second-stage Omega Sword Dago into the core of this world. The heartworld had already been terrifyingly large in size, and now it grew even larger. The heavens grew vaster, while the earth grew deeper. The world stretched outwards unto infinity as the enormous sword-mountain increased in height as well. It rumbled as it stretched upwards until it finally reached a height of more than ten billion kilometers in size.

Ning’s chaos jewels were being depleted at a furious pace as they provided sustenance for his heartworld’s expansion. Thankfully, this wasn’t a real world, and so the amount of chaos jewels used up was still fairly negligible to Ning. If he had to create an enormous real world of this size, even a hundred million cubes of chaos jewels would be far from enough.

After another period of time passed, everything fell still once more.

“T-this is c-crazy big...” Ning himself was shocked as his mental projection stood there atop the giant sword-mountain, staring at this seemingly infinitely large world. Thankfully, he was the creator of this heartworld and knew everything within it... which was why he knew that the heartworld was roughly comparable to a full territory in size!

How vast was a normal territory? You’d generally have to traverse it through relying on spacetime transfer arrays. A single territory was far larger than the entire Brightshore Kingdom! The Badlands Territory had roughly a hundred thousand chaosworlds within it, but the chaosworlds were all extremely distant from each other. As a result, the size of a territory was truly staggering.

“Arise.” Ning pointed off into the horizon, where a heavenly pillar suddenly began to take form. “Arise.” Ning pointed to the other direction, with yet another heavenly pillar taking shape.

Here, Ning was able to create anything at all with his will alone. Soon, five celestial pillars had appeared at the ends of this vast world, and they embodied his Blood Drop sword-intent, his Shadowless sword-art, his Yin-Yang sword-intent, his Soleheart sword-intent, and his Heavenbreaker sword-intent.

“Come forth.” Ning smiled as he stared off into the distance. The earth rumbled as chaos nectar began to appear, quickly pooling together into a lake.

Ning just laughed. He knew that all of this was imaginary, not actual chaos nectar. “According to the legends, when Heartforce Cultivators reach the true apex, their heartworlds shall transform into true worlds. When that happens, the treasures within their heartworld will become actual treasures. If you form a heartforce Eternal weapon, that Eternal weapon can be taken out from your heartworld and used in combat. You could even create precious ingredients and make them real,” Ning murmured softly.

This was the goal of every Heartforce Cultivator... however, thus far no one had ever been able to accomplish it! In truth, the goal was absolutely ridiculous and unbelievable.

.....

This heartworld formed by his second-stage Omega Sword Dao was actually the size of an entire territory. In truth, this stunned and delighted Ning considerably, as only Verge-level Heartforce Cultivators were supposed to be able to accomplish this.

Still, it made sense. The heartworld didn't really require a powerful Dao, it required a stable one! The more stable the Dao, the better. The more stable the Dao, the larger the heartworld!

There were many powerful Daolords who had incredibly powerful and fierce Daos, but those Daos wouldn't be a good fit for establishing a heartworld. The toughness of a chain depended on the strength of the weakest link! If a heartworld was to be stable, it couldn't afford to have any weak links at all.

Many Heartforce Cultivators often wandered the universe, seeking ways to further stabilize and perfect their Daos. When Ning had come up with five Supreme Daos and linked them together, he had already formed an extremely stable Dao. Now that he had truly fused them into a single Dao, the Omega Sword Dao, he had created the most perfect and stable Dao possible!

The Omega Sword Dao was not only a truly ultimate Dao, it was also the most stable of Daos! It represented the absolute limit with regards to the Dao of the Sword, and it had no flaws whatsoever. A mere second-stage Omega Sword Dao was already comparable in stability to the Daos of many Verge-level Heartforce Cultivators. The third stage of this Omega Dao would most likely put Ning at a level comparable to the most supreme Heartforce Cultivator Daolords in existence.

"There are differences in power even amongst Verge-level Heartforce Cultivators. Daolord Soleman, for example, is much weaker than the Palace Lord of the Heartforce Palace," Ning mused to himself. "Daolord Featherdress, for example, was known as the most powerful Daolord of the Endless Territories during his time."

When Ning had first been captured and sent to the Astral Islands, he had learned of the ninety-nine legacies it held. The top-ranked legacy was the heartforce legacy of Daolord Featherdress. Daolord Soleman couldn't compare to Daolord Featherdress in power; the later was once known as the number one Daolord of the Endless Territories! It must be remembered that not even the current Palace Lord of the Palace of the Heart was ranked number one in all the Endless Territories.

Clearly, there could be great differences in power amongst Heartforce Cultivators.

"My Omega Sword Dao is virtually flawless. The third stage might put me close to Daolord Featherdress' level." Ning was delighted. In the past, Daolord Featherdress' legacy was useless to him... but now, he could make use of those heartforce secret arts.

.....

As a Heartforce Cultivator, he was on roughly the same level as Daolord Soleman. Even if he was a bit weaker, he wouldn't be that much weaker. He could be considered a second-tier Heartforce Cultivator Daolord.

In close combat, his sword-arts and his Northbow swords ensured that he stood at the very peak of power amongst second-tier Daolords.

When you combined the two...

Ning knew very well that there were now very, very few Daolords who could match a freak like him.

.....

Time continued to flow on. After Ning became a Heartforce Cultivator, he began to train in the terrifyingly powerful heartforce arts which Daolord Featherdress had left behind. His heartworld was built around his Omega Sword Dao, making his heartforce incredibly pure and possess strong offensive powers. Daolord Featherdress' legacy was a bit softer and more subtle by comparison, and so Ning used the information he gained from it to create some heartforce arts of his own.

In the blink of an eye, more than sixty thousand additional years went past.

"Hahaha..." A loud laugh rang out as the Ninedust Sectlord emerged, appearing to be in an excellent mood.

Ning had been meditating silently within his temporal acceleration cottage. He now opened his eyes.

"Haha, Darknorth, were you in training? I'm really sorry that the ancestor left no legacies behind for you. You waited for me all this time for nothing." The Ninedust Sectlord smirked.

"It seems you had a fruitful experience." Ning walked out of his cottage.

"The ancestor's path was that of the Dao of Water, and he also used staff-arts. I benefited greatly." The Ninedust Sectlord was extremely smug. "Jealous, Darknorth?"

"Maybe just a bit." Ning nodded. "This Patriarch of the Dao Alliance left something for me as well."

"The Dao Alliance?" The Ninedust Sectlord turned his head, puzzled, to look towards the white-robed Hegemon's corpse. "That one over there? He left something for you?"

"Yes." Ning nodded.

"But our Ancient Hegemon took all of his treasures. There shouldn't have been anything left for you." The Ninedust Sectlord was confused.

Ning just shook his head. If it hadn't been for the white-robed Hegemon, it would've taken Ning much, much longer to become a Heartforce Cultivator. Although he had been at the cusp for some time, it was quite normal for someone to remain on the cusp for a full chaos cycle or even longer.

"Time to leave, Ninedust." Ning waved his hand, collecting the distant Su Youji, Pillsaint, Daolord Naia, and Daolord Bruteflame.

"Agreed." The Ninedust Sectlord didn't ask Ning about what he had gained. He instead turned to look at the Universe treasure, that dark-red longstaff, then said respectfully: "Senior, please send us away."

Whoosh. A streak of light flew out from the dark-red longstaff and transformed into the bald, black-robed youth.

The youth gave Ning a long look. The Ninedust Sectlord had been undergoing the trials and so did not know what had happened, but the youth knew exactly what Ning had been up to. Darknorth of the Dao Alliance had actually established his heartworld. The Universe weapon couldn't help but sigh. The Dao Alliance truly did have countless geniuses within its ranks.

"I'll send you off," the youth said. He waved his hand, causing a wave of power to surround Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord.

The Desolate Era

Book 31: Starflow Realm Chapter 1: Terror Starsea

Ji Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord instantly disappeared from the cave. Only then did the bald, black-robed youth slowly shake his head. "Although Redwater and Master had very similar Daos and both specialized in staff-arts, Redwater is just a bit too vicious and cruel. I don't like him. In fact, he hadn't even become a Daolord of the Fourth Step yet. Forget it. I'll just wait for a while longer."

Universe treasures possessed tremendous patience. They truly were eternal and undying, and so they were able and willing to wait extremely long periods of time before accepting a new master. They would rather go without than choose someone who wasn't a perfect fit.

.....

Whoosh. Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord felt the world around them blur. Moments later, they found themselves within a dark, empty region of space.

"We're out." Both of them revealed looks of delight. They could now both sense the locations of their avatars.

"I can finally sense my avatar and my Primaltwin again." Ning relaxed slightly. So long as he could sense them, he would be able to orient himself. Moments later, he frowned. "Why do I feel as though they are very, very far away?"

He was separated from his avatar by an incalculable amount of distance. He had previously travelled to Eastroad Territory, one of the border territories of the Endless Territories, and that was already very far away from Vastheaven Territory. However, compared to his current distance that was absolutely nothing.

"I can sense that the distance between myself and my avatar is greater than the size of the entire Endless Territories." The distance was so great that his senses were rather foggy, but Ning was certain that the distance was definitely vaster than the Endless Territories themselves.

"We..." The Ninedust Sectlord's face turned pale.

"Ninedust?" Ning looked at him.

"We are in the Terror Starsea." The Ninedust Sectlord's face was ugly to behold. "And we are very, very deep inside of it. Extremely deep."

"Extremely deep?" Ning's face turned pale as well. Deep inside the Terror Starsea? The Terror Starsea was the most dangerous place that they knew of. In size alone, the explored parts of it already surpassed the size of the Endless Territories! In addition, Ning had learned while in the 'cave' that the Terror Starsea was actually the battlefield of the Dawn War, with numerous Hegemon-level figures having died there. The place was filled with countless wards and dangers that were originally meant to kill Hegemons, making them incredibly dangerous.

"Are you sure we are deep inside the Terror Starsea?" Ning immediately asked. He quickly scanned his surroundings. They were in the dark emptiness of space, with a few glimmers of light off in the distance.

"I'm certain, because I've been to the border worlds near the Terror Starsea," the Ninedust Sectlord said. "I've travelled and adventured through its outer regions, and we are very, very far away from those outer regions. Based on the distance from my avatar... my best judgment is that we are more than half the size of the entire Endless Territories away from the outer regions. We're definitely deep inside."

Ning's heart turned cold. The Terror Starsea was deadly even for Eternal Emperors, while even Hegemons would tread carefully here for fear of dying. Generally speaking, even the most powerful of Daolords wouldn't dare to venture too deep inside this place. As for their current location? This place definitely qualified as not just deep, but 'incredibly deep'.

The two stood there within the endless darkness of space, both rather nervous. It would be impossibly difficult to escape the Terror Starsea and go home.

"We still have hope." The Ninedust Sectlord knew more about the Terror Starsea than Ning. He said seriously, "Darknorth, your sword-arts have transcended space itself. You can easily use it to tear open a dimensional gate and escape incredibly far distances."

"Yes." Ning nodded. He could indeed slice open dimensional passageways, then travel tremendous distances through them. It wouldn't be difficult for him to create a dimensional passageway that could traverse more than ten territories. This was far faster than even using spacetime transfer arrays!

In truth, it made sense. Given Ning's current sword-arts, so long as he was able to lock onto an enemy he would be able to slay that enemy from over a territory away! Spacetime transfer arrays would normally be needed to merely traverse such a great distance, a testament to how terrifying and important the Dao was.

The Brightshore Kingdom's Hegemon was another good example. He was able to easily appear anywhere within the Endless Territories, an ability that was far superior to Ning's.

"The explored regions of the Terror Starsea are vaster than the Endless Territories themselves! Since we are only over halfway in, that means that some Hegemons or ancient Eternal Emperors might've been here before," the Ninedust Sectlord said.

"Would you be able to ask one of those ancient powers to come guide us out?" Ning asked.

"None of them would care about Daolords like us," the Ninedust Sectlord said. "At most they would give us a star map."

"Agreed. At most, we'd get star maps." Ning was worried as well. "We'd know what was around us, but we'd still have to face any danger on our own. The two of us would only be considered second-tier even amongst Daolords. To travel such a great distance and escape the Terror Starsea... even though my sword-art transcends space, it'll be far too difficult."

"Yes, yes it will." The Ninedust Sectlord felt an enormous sense of pressure as well. He then muttered, "Why did the Universe treasure send us here?"

"You can't blame him for that." Ning shook his head. "The Dawn War was carried out in the Terror Starsea; that cave we were in is probably located deep within the Terror Starsea as well. It might be somewhere right next to us, in fact. The treasure was only able to send us here. No matter what, we

can't just give up and lay down to die. We have to fight our best. Right now, we should first acquire star maps. Perhaps a good star map will be able to guide us through a fairly safe path."

The Ninedust Sectlord laughed. "Right. Patriarch Vulturax, one of the oldest members of my race, probably came here once as well. He obviously was able to return. I'll send my avatar to find a star map first, while you should acquire one from the Dao Alliance. The Dao Alliance has the most complete star maps."

"Look over there!" The Ninedust Sectlord suddenly pointed off into the distance, a complicated look on his face. "I think I already know where we are in the Terror Starsea."

"What is it?" Ning followed the Ninedust Sectlord's finger with his gaze. Off in the distance, there was a circle of green light.

"Let's go over there," the Ninedust Sectlord said softly. "Darknorth, this part is up to you."

"Alright." Ning drew his Northbow sword, then with a flicker of sword-light created a dimensional passageway before them. The Ninedust Sectlord and Ning both entered the beautiful rainbow dimensional passageway.

They flew side-by-side through this different spatial continuum, advancing rapidly towards their target.

"Time to exit." The two flew out from the glowing dimensional passageway, having arrived at another patch of empty, blank dark space. They were already more than ten territories away from their previous location.

"Eh?" Ning stared forwards in astonishment. Up ahead was an enormous green whirlpool that was surrounded by layers of green light. The green light was filled with boundless vitality, and the rocks and boulders that flew close to it quickly turned white in color, then disappeared into nothingness. Next to the green whirlpool there was a similarly sized black whirlpool which was devouring everything nearby it, sucking all stones, shattered corpses, and various items that flew nearby into itself.

A green whirlpool and a black whirlpool. The former was filled with life energy, but it sucked all the life from the surrounding area and destroyed it. The latter was filled with death energy and devoured everything around it.

The two seemed to be parts of a whole. Although they were diametrically different, neither interfered with the other at all.

"What are those?" Ning could hardly believe it. He could sense that they were still very far away, but the two whirlpools looked absolutely enormous. Ning's best guess was that these two whirlpools were each roughly the size of a hundred territories.

"This is the one thing in the Terror Starsea which terrifies all six organizations... the Yin-Yang Samsara Wheels," the Ninedust Sectlord said softly. "Do you know? Long, long ago, the Yin-Yang Samsara Wheels was smaller than a single territory."

Ning's face turned pale. "Are you saying that it is growing?"

"Yes. It is growing." The Ninedust Sectlord nodded. "The Yin-Yang Samsara Wheels... the life wheel draws away all vital energy, while the death wheel devours and destroys all. They are stealing and

devouring all the life and matter from the area around them, and as they do so they continuously grow larger and larger. The rate at which they are growing is only increasing. In the future, they will grow to encompass the entire Terror Starsea. In fact, they'll swallow the entirety of the Endless Territories and destroy all within it. It is destined for the Endless Territories to be destroyed one day."

"What?!" Ning could hardly believe it. The Endless Territories were doomed to destruction?

"When the six powers originally discovered the Yin-Yang Samsara Wheels, they immediately began to panic. All three Hegemons sought to work together to destroy it." The Ninedust Sectlord shook his head. "Unfortunately, any attacks launched against it were all swallowed. The energy of the attacks just made it grow bigger. There was simply no way to harm it in the slightest."

"The most supreme Emperor-class cultivators and a few of the most powerful Daolords all know of this." The Ninedust Sectlord looked at Ning. "Given your power, I imagine the Dao Alliance would soon inform you of this."

Ning stared at the distant Yin-Yang Samsara Wheels.

They'd continuously grow until the day they wiped out the Endless Territories?

"This is something which was naturally born from the endless primordial chaos. There is no way cultivators can possibly resist something like this," the Ninedust Sectlord said. "However, there's no need for us to worry too much. Based on our current predictions, it'll be more than a million chaos cycles before it starts to destroy the Endless Territories. As Daolords, if we fail our Daomerge we'll definitely die within 108,000 chaos cycles. Let the Hegemons and Emperors deal with this problem."

Ning stared at the distant Yin-Yang Samsara Wheels, still unable to believe what he was hearing. "The Endless Territories... are doomed to be destroyed?"

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 31: Starflow Realm Chapter 2: Travelling

Those two enormous whirlpools continued to slowly spin in the darkness of space, continuously absorbing and devouring all things around them.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Even the empty void of space around them was being continuously shattered and devoured as the power of chaos and all other prime essence ripples were drawn into the Yin-Yang Samsara Wheels.

"Nothing can stop them at all?" Ji Ning stared at them, murmuring softly to himself.

"Yes. Nothing can stop them." The Ninedust Sectlord shook his head.

.....

As Ning's true body was staring, stunned, at the Yin-Yang Samsara Wheels, his avatar in the incredibly distant Vastheaven Palace of the Endless Territories was off to visit Daolord Solesky.

Within a private courtyard. Daolord Solesky's avatar was relaxing with some wine while staring at the darkened horizons.

"Big brother Solesky," the golden-robed Ning called out.

"Ji Ning." Solesky turned to look at him, then suddenly started to laugh. "This is rather diverting."

"Why are you laughing, big brother?" The golden-robed Ning was rather surprised.

Solesky smiled. "I'm laughing because both of us are avatars! Two avatars are holding a meeting with each other... haha..."

The golden-robed Ning was briefly startled before letting out a chuckle as well. Both of their true bodies were outside, adventuring. Avatars were much weaker, but they'd be strong enough to stand guard over a school or clan.

"Ever since you created an avatar, you've been spending your time strengthening it. Aside from the Kongsan matter, you haven't come to see me at all." Daolord Solesky asked, "Why is it that you've suddenly come to seek me out?"

"There is indeed something I need help with." The golden-robed Ning nodded. "I'm currently trapped in the Terror Starsea."

"Trapped in the Terror Starsea?" Daolord Solesky leapt to his feet, no longer relaxed in the slightest. He said solemnly, "Where in the Terror Starsea?"

"Close to the Yin-Yang Samsara Wheels," Ning said.

Daolord Solesky's face immediately turned ugly to behold. "W-why the hell did you go there? Even I have only heard of that thing from an old friend of mine. Supposedly, they are the most terrifying things within the Terror Starsea. Even the almighty Hegemons are helpless against them; if they tried to charge into those wheels, they would instantly be obliterated by them! They are still continuing to slowly grow larger. Supposedly, in the distant future they might even sweep over the entire Terror Starsea, then devour all of the Endless Territories and wipe it out completely."

Ning nodded. "I have heard the same."

"But that's something that should only happen a long, long time for now. We probably won't live long enough to see that." Daolord Solesky said seriously, "The Yin-Yang Samsara Wheels are extremely deep within the Terror Starsea. Not even the most overwhelmingly powerful Daolords would dare to venture that deep. Why did you go there?"

"It wasn't my choice." Ning shook his head. "I had an unexpected encounter, resulting in me being transferred there."

"Transferred?" Daolord Solesky shook his head and sighed.

"Big brother Solesky, do you have a map of the Terror Starsea?" Ning asked.

"I do." Daolord Solesky nodded. "I reached the Verge long ago, and so I sought out every opportunity possible for succeeding in my Daomerge. As a result, I prepared star maps of the Terror Starsea for

myself, and they include the location of the Yin-Yang Samsara Wheels. However, they are too far away. If you wish to exit the Terror Starsea, you'll have to traverse a distance equivalent to more than half of the Endless Territories."

"Wait a moment. I'll prepare a copy for you." Daolord Solesky waved his hand, sending his Immortal energy out and forming an enormous star map in the air. This star map was filled with many markings and pathways.

It took roughly the amount of time needed to prepare a kettle of tea before Daolord Solesky finished drawing the complete star map. By then, Ning had silently memorized it all.

"This star map of mine came from the Dao Alliance," Daolord Solesky said. "It won't be easy to find a more detailed one."

"This will be enough." Ning nodded, his heart heavy.

"Be careful." Daolord Solesky truly was worried. As he saw, Ning's chances of surviving this were quite slim.

.....

Deep within the Terror Starsea, close to the titanic Yin-Yang Samsara Wheels. Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord stood shoulder-to-shoulder in the darkness of space, staring at the enormous representation of annihilation in front of them.

"I have a star map now," Ning said.

"My avatar has gone out to beg a meeting with Patriarch Vulturax. I trust I shall acquire a map of my own soon," the Ninedust Sectlord said. "Have you looked at that star map of yours yet? What do you think?"

"This is going to be very hard." Ning shook his head. "I've already taken a look at things. The 'safest' route will still require us to go through sixty-two dangerous zones. Given our current power, our chances of surviving will be less than ten percent."

"Sixty-two?" The Ninedust Sectlord frowned. "Darknorth, your sword-arts transcend space itself. We should be able to avoid many of those dangerous regions, no?"

"I've already factored that into my considerations." Ning said helplessly, "Without it, we would have to go through more than five hundred danger zones! That would be certain death."

"Damn." The Ninedust Sectlord stared at his surroundings. "How the hell did we end up this deep inside?"

Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord really did feel rather aggrieved. They had been teleported all the way from the Eastroad Sect, only to find themselves incredibly deep inside the Terror Starsea.

"Ninedust, perhaps Emperor Vulturax will have a better path than the one I found," Ning said. "My star map isn't all that detailed."

“Right. Wait for now. My avatar is now meeting with Patriarch Vulturax,” the Ninedust Sectlord said expectantly.

Ning waited as instructed. A short while later...

“Haha, I have the star map.” The Ninedust Sectlord suddenly began to chuckle merrily.

“And?” Ning looked at him.

“There’s hope after all.” The Ninedust Sectlord was extremely excited. He waved a finger, sending out his Immortal energy to form an enormous star map in the void of space. “This is the star map which Patriarch Vulturax bestowed upon me. He once exited the same cave we did, and he also came out in this general area. He was much more powerful than us, and so he was able to return home with ease. However, he made repeated trips back to hear in search of the cave again, and so he is actually very familiar with this region and this route.”

“The safest route for us to take is this one.” The Ninedust Sectlord pointed towards a newly created route on the map. “Other powerful Daolords would find this route a difficult one, but your power over space will allow us to take it.”

Ning stared at the star map of energy hanging in the air, an excited look on his face.

“There are four danger zones in total. We must first pass through Dreamdust Way, then enter the Starflow River. After passing through the entire Starflow River, we’ll exit from this point. We will then traverse two fairly short danger zones... and then we’ll be out safely.” The Ninedust Sectlord said excitedly, “There are four danger zones in total. For three of them, we should be able to traverse them safely if we use the protective resources we have at our disposal. The only tougher part will be the Starflow River.”

Ning nodded. Both of them had multiple life-preserving resources. They might not have enough Dao-seals for traversing several dozen or several hundred danger zones, but three? Both felt quite confident in their chances.

“The Starflow River?” Ning said, worried, “We have to pass through the entire thing?”

“Yes.” The Ninedust Sectlord nodded. “That’s the only real obstacle before us. Based on my calculations, we’ll have to spend at least three hundred thousand years traversing it. The other places, all combined, will only require perhaps ten years. Most of our time will be spent going through the entire Starflow River.”

The Starflow River was an enormous area that was like an enormous river of stars flowing through the darkness of the void. To traverse it would take a very long period of time.

To them it wouldn’t be too dangerous, and both stood a good chance of making it out alive. However, they’d still be in there for quite some time. The more time passed, the more variables might appear and the more danger might arise. The entire Terror Starsea was the battlefield for the Dawn War, after all, and the Starflow River was part of it. It wouldn’t be that easy.

“For us, this truly is the safest route we can try.” Ning nodded. “The route I suggested earlier gave us less than a ten percent chance of surviving. This one, I’d say our chances are fifty-fifty.”

“Agreed.” The Ninedust Sectlord nodded.

Fifty-fifty wasn't bad at all. Given Ning's ability to transcend space and the incredibly detailed map and route which Patriarch Vulturax had given them, they now stood a very good chance of surviving.

“Thank goodness Patriarch Vulturax has been here many times. Otherwise, there's no way we could've possibly found such a safe route.” The Ninedust Sectlord nodded. “Time to go, Darknorth.”

“Let's go. I hope both of us will make it back to the Endless Territories alive.” Ning looked at the Ninedust Sectlord.

“We'll definitely make it back alive, together!” The Ninedust Sectlord added, “I just received the ancestor's legacy. There's no way I'm going to die before making it back.”

Ning and Ninedust shared a smile. Both of them understood that this would be a dangerous, life-and-death journey. “Let's go.”

Ning and Ninedust both stood at the prow of the black vessel. Northbow sword in hand, Ning tore a black passageway with his sword-arts through the darkness of space. Swoosh! The vessel flew into the passageway, which shut behind them.

The two of them, homeward bound, had just embarked on an incredible journey.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 31: Starflow Realm Chapter 3: Heartforce Eradicator

The two advanced carefully, with Ji Ning only opening the tunnels once they found a fairly safe starting point and stopping point. Every so often, they would have to rely on the black vessel to avoid a few special areas that couldn't be traversed.

Half a month went past.

Rumble... spacetime was distorted here. Space debris filled the region, and countless dangers lurked hidden. A black vessel was paused within this field of chaotic spacetime, enduring the chaotic waves of shattered space.

Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord both stared towards the front. Up ahead of them, right in the middle of that region of chaotic space, was a bluestone road that was ten million kilometers wide. For an extremely beautiful and peaceful road to suddenly appear within this region of dark, chaotic space... they could sense that this stone path had to be hiding some sort of hidden danger.

“The Dreamdust Way.” The Ninedust Sectlord said heavily, “If we wish to go back, we need to go through four danger zones, with the most dangerous one being the Starflow River! It's so enormous that it'll take us roughly three hundred thousand years to traverse it. The second most dangerous location will be Dreamdust Way! The final two danger zones are in the outer reaches of the Terror Starsea. Given how strong we are, the danger level it will pose us should be fairly negligible.”

Ning nodded. Dreamdust Way was located very deep within the Terror Starsea and was extremely dangerous!

“I hope we won't be so unlucky as to die here.” The Ninedust Sectlord looked towards Ning. “Let's go.”

“Mm.” Ning nodded. Swoosh! The black vessel immediately flew towards that bluestone pathway.

Only by passing through Dreamdust Way would they be able to reach the Starflow River. Although very dangerous, this was comparatively the ‘safest’ path for them to reach the Starflow River.

The Ninedust Sectlord held his longstaff at the ready, his eyes narrowed as he scanned his surroundings. Clearly, he was quite nervous. He said in a low voice, “Given our vessel’s flying speed, we should be able to exit Dreamdust Way in roughly a month. One month. Just one month. We need to stay on our guard this entire month.”

Ning wielded a Northbow sword in each of his two hands as he maintained a vigilant watch. He couldn’t help but smirk. “Ninedust. You almost seem nervous.”

“Can’t blame me for being nervous. The slightest miscalculation in this pla-... careful!” The Ninedust Sectlord’s face turned pale. An azure scaled beast had suddenly appeared off in the distance. This beast had a pair of armored wings and a pair of protruding golden eyes that seemed to contain a vast world within them. Whoooosh. The azure scaled beast blinked. Moments later, more than ten thousand of similar beasts appeared next to it. All of them let out shrill, ear-piercing screeches.

“Dreamdust lifeforms. Careful!” The Ninedust Sectlord was very dangerous. “Only one of them is real. The rest are all illusory, but it can switch its true body with the illusory ones at will. It could be any of them.”

Ning stood there at the prow of his vessel, watching as the thousands of beasts charged towards them. A cold light suddenly flashed through his eyes.

Whoosh! An invisible ripple swept out like a wave towards the thousands of azure beasts. One beast suddenly let out a low, agonized scream. Its body trembled, then its golden eyes quickly grew dim as it silently collapsed.

The other azure scaled beasts all completely vanished in an instant, leaving behind that single fallen corpse. Moments later, the corpse began to automatically separate into countless motes of azure light which then began to flow into the bluestone path in a very natural manner.

“It died?” The Ninedust Sectlord turned to look at Ning, rather amazed. “Darknorth, w-what just happened? How did that Dreamdust creature suddenly die?”

Dreamdust lifeforms were terrifying creatures that were born from the unusual, unique Dreamdust Way environment. They were born with incredible skill over illusions, and were able to manifest many false bodies which they could ‘swap’ with their true bodies at will. Thus, battling against them was a very tiresome and troublesome task. Even if you were much more powerful than them, you might die to them if you weren’t careful.

“Heartforce,” Ning said.

“I knew it! I sensed it.” The Ninedust Sectlord was rather stunned. “You are a Heartforce Cultivator?” The Ninedust Sectlord had been keeping a careful vigil, wary of more Dreamdust lifeforms appearing. When he suddenly sensed that strange wave blast out, he naturally was able to calculate that it had most likely been heartforce! However, Ning had never before used heartforce techniques, and Heartforce Cultivators were incredibly rare.

“Haha. I told you earlier that the Hegemon of the Dao Alliance left something for me.” Ning smiled. “I became a true Heartforce Cultivator within that cave.”

“Haha...” The Ninedust Sectlord was overjoyed. “Splendid! My greatest worry with regards to Dreamdust Way was that we might actually be trapped by its illusions! That’s why we have to maintain constant vigilance... but I never imagined that you would’ve become a Heartforce Cultivator. Hahaha! To trap a powerful Heartforce Cultivator with illusions is no easy feat. I can finally relax a little bit and not be as nervous as I was earlier. Just keep an eye out on things.”

“Dreamdust lifeforms are skilled in more than just illusions; they can also create many false bodies and are strong in close combat,” Ning warned. “The legends say that the most powerful lifeforms here are comparable to Eternal Emperors in power. Even though I’ll be able to resist their illusions, I’m probably not going to be a match for them in close combat.”

“Mm.” The Ninedust Sectlord nodded.

“If push comes to shove, we’ll have to rely on our Dao-seals,” Ning said.

“No matter what, you being a Heartforce Cultivator means that we’ll have an easier time of it when dealing with illusions.” The Ninedust Sectlord said curiously, “What heartforce art did you use just now? It seemed quite incredible.”

“Heartforce Eradicator,” Ning replied. This was a heartforce art which Ning created himself after studying and modifying the heartforce legacy left behind by Daolord Featherdress. It was highly suited to him and also extremely powerful.

Daolord Featherdress was far more powerful than the current Palace Lord of the Heartforce Palace! Daolord Feather had been the number one Daolord of the Endless Territories in that era and had three supreme heartforce arts.

These arts were known as the [Heartforce Eradicator], [Dreamworld], and [Featherdress Soulthral Song]. Daolord Featherdress had primarily relied on the [Featherdress Soulthral Song] to become the number one Daolord of that era. The song mesmerized the soul, ensuring that even powerful Eternal Emperors would be caught by it if they weren’t careful. Even many of the most supreme of Daolords were unable to resist such a terrifying heartforce art.

Ji Ning, however, was different from Daolord Featherdress. Ning’s Dao was that of the Omega Sword Dao, an offensive Dao. Featherdress was more subtle and more guileful, and also extremely skilled in the musical arts. This was why Featherdress had been able to create the terrifying [Featherdress Soulthral Song].

The two walked different paths and naturally had very different styles. Ning had learned just a tiny bit of the [Featherdress Soulthral Song] and had barely managed to learn 20% of [Dreamworld], but he had mastered the extremely offensive [Heartforce Eradicator] art. He had then modified it to make it better suited to him, resulting in becoming even more powerful.

His heartforce lashed out like a sword, eradicating the opponent’s soul and truesoul. It was an extremely dominating attack!

However, if his foe was able to endure the attack, this heartforce art would be very ineffective. In other words, it was an 'all-or-nothing' type of attack. Daolord Featherdress had been skilled in many areas and thus was much more dangerous. In the end, Ning simply hadn't been training for long enough. He primarily relied on the power of his Omega Sword Dao. For him to be able to master and then retrofit the [Heartforce Eradicator] was already quite incredible.

"The name makes it sound pretty wild and dominating." The Ninedust Sectlord said in a resigned fashion, "I had thought that the gifts the ancestor gave me would enable me to beat you. It seems I'm not a match for you anymore."

"You really aren't a match for me now." Ning nodded.

"You little..." The Ninedust Sectlord glared at him. "You don't know the meaning of 'modesty' at all. Just you wait. When I become a Daolord of the Fourth Step... hmph! I've already gained many insights during our time in the cave. It won't take me too long to break through and become a Daolord of the Fourth Step. By then, you'll know just how awesome I am."

"It's quite normal to be stuck at a bottleneck for several chaos cycles. Don't worry, I won't abuse you too much in the interim," Ning teased.

The two bantered back and forth as they advanced on the black vessel. The reason why they were able to relax and banter was because they knew that illusions, at least, would not be a problem! Their only worry would be head-on encounters.

"Outsiders." An azure beast appeared in the distance, its golden eyes filled with a murderous look.

"Die." Instantly, more than ten thousand duplicates of it appeared, with all of them charging towards the vessel. Neither Ning nor the Ninedust Sectlord could recognize the real one, as every single body could theoretically be the real one.

"Hmph." Ning turned and swept his gaze across the beasts, his heartforce surging out like a wave. Instantly, all of the beasts vanished save for a single one that fell down dead. The corpse naturally dissipated and merged back into the bluestone road.

"Impressive, impressive. You looked at it and it died! I'm really jealous now." The Ninedust Sectlord chortled in praise. "I wonder when and if I'll ever become a Heartforce Cultivator. I'll stare at people until they die! What a wonderful life that would be."

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 31: Starflow Realm Chapter 4: Heartworld Projection, Descend!

This was the most frightening aspect of supreme Heartforce Cultivators! Their attacks were silent, fast, and incredibly deadly. Worse, not even Universe treasures were useful in defending against heartforce attacks. You could only rely on your Dao-heart, your soul, and your mental fortitude! There was no way to counterfeit any of these things. Even if you were incredibly strong in combat, if you had mental flaws then you would still die at the hands of a Heartforce Cultivator.

Long ago Ji Ning, Prince Greatjoy, Heartlord Solewind, and Waterlord Firesurge had journeyed to the Genesis Lands of the alternate universe. Together, they had tested themselves against the primessence

chains that led to the heart of that universe. Although all four of them were very similar in power, Firesurge was noticeably much weaker than the others mentally.

This was why Heartforce Cultivators had very special statuses. Even when they were slightly weaker than others, they would still be afforded with the utmost of respect by even the most powerful of Daolords!

“Die, outsider!” Yet another azure scaled beast emerged. A second later, many thousands of illusions appeared around it. This was their standard, innate attack. But Ning just glanced at all of them, then swept out with his heartforce like a sword. Whoosh! They all dissipated like smoke as a single corpse fell down.

.....

The first twelve days in Dreamdust Way were extremely relaxed. Sometimes they encountered ten of those Dreamdust lifeforms at the same time, but in each case Ning was able to wipe them out with a single glance. None of them were able to resist Ning’s [Heartforce Eradicator] at all.

On the thirteenth day, they finally encountered a Dreamdust lifeform that was capable of withstanding the [Heartforce Eradicator] and not perishing. This beast was noticeably larger than the previous ones that they had fought. Although it was able to survive the heartforce attack, it clearly was rather dazed by it, giving Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord a chance to charge forwards and slay it in close combat.

On the sixteenth day, they encountered an extremely tough-to-deal-with beast that was able to ignore the [Heartforce Eradicator]! It was also on the same general level of power as Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord in close combat. In the end the two had to join forces, with Ning finishing it off with a blow from his Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop.

The two continued to advance on their black vessel, but after the seventeenth day they begin to grow puzzled. “Odd. Why haven’t we seen a single Dreamdust lifeform?” Life had suddenly become quite tranquil, and they didn’t run into any of the beasts at all.

“This is odd. Extremely odd. According to Patriarch Vultur’s notes, Dreamdust Way should only grow in danger as we move deeper into it, with the Dreamdust lifeforms increasing in number and power.” The Ninedust Sectlord frowned. “It should take us roughly a month to traverse the entire Dreamdust Way. We should be at the very center of it right now. Why don’t we see so much as a single one?”

.....

The eighteenth day. The nineteenth day. The twentieth day...

Everything was very calm. No Dreamdust lifeforms appeared. Twenty-six days had gone by in the blink of an eye, and they were close to exiting Dreamdust way.

Whoosh. The black vessel continued to advance at a hundred times the speed of light. Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord stood alongside each other at the prow, staring off into the distance. Neither relaxed in the slightest. It had been ten days since they had encountered any Dreamdust lifeforms. Something was very wrong.

“Not good.” Ning’s face suddenly tightened.

“Stop!” the Ninedust Sectlord immediately called out.

The black vessel came to an immediate halt in the darkness of the void. The two of them stared off into the distance, where an entire host of azure scaled beasts had gathered. These creatures all had stooped figures, scaled wings, and protruding golden eyes. In front of them was the largest Dreamdust beast the two had seen thus far, a creature that was at least thirty meters tall. The beast at the very back was the smallest, merely fifteen meters tall.

“This looks like trouble.” The Ninedust Sectlord murmured, “Darknorth, the scaled beasts we saw previously were eighteen meters tall at best. This group is led by one that is thirty meters tall, and there are five beasts that are twenty-seven meters tall and twelve that are twenty-four meters tall. Even the weakest one is fifteen meters tall. In total, there are twenty-one of them.”

“Fifteen meters is the cutoff for surviving my [Heartforce Eradicator],” Ning sent mentally. “Clearly, the Dreamdust beasts have come prepared.”

The two sides stared at each other from afar. Off in the distance, more than a hundred more scaled beasts also stared at Ning’s group, their protruding golden eyes seemingly to hold boundless worlds within them.

“Wonderful... absolutely beautiful...” The Ninedust Sectlord suddenly had a sappy, stupid grin on his face.

“Eh?” Ning’s face tightened. He immediately sent out a surge of heartforce smashing outwards like a ripple-wave that blocked all outside sources of power, allowing the Ninedust Sectlord to immediately regain his clarity of mind.

“I-I was actually trapped by an illusion.” The Ninedust Sectlord immediately came back to his senses, a cold thrill of fear going down his spine. He stared at the distant beast leader. “I was caught in an illusion without even realizing it. No wonder the Patriarch said Dreamdust Way was dangerous and that I might die here. He told me to be prepared at all times.”

“Prepared?” Ning glanced at him.

“Yes. My original plan was to engage in a continuous mental conversation with my retainers; whenever I stopped talking, that would be a sign that I had been trapped inside an illusion and my retainer would immediately use a Dao-seal to wake me up!” The Ninedust Sectlord continued, “But since I knew that you were a Heartforce Cultivator, I didn’t go through the trouble.”

Ning couldn’t help but nod upon hearing this. This wasn’t a bad idea at all.

“Cultivators...” An ancient voice rang out from afar. “I’m impressed that you were able to resist my illusions. No wonder you were able to slay so many of my compatriots with ease... but the end result of trespassing onto Dreamdust Way will still be death.”

The largest beast’s aura washed out like a tidal wave as it pointed at the two of them. “Kill.”

“Kill.”

“Kill.”

“Kill!” All of the Dreamdust lifeforms let out enraged howls as tens of thousands of illusions appeared around them. All of a sudden, there over a million of the howling figures, and all of them charged straight towards the two.

“Use your secret art,” Ning sent mentally to the Ninedust Sectlord.

“Agreed.” The Ninedust Sectlord nodded.

BOOM! Nine energy dragons immediately flooded out of Ning’s body. These were his nine novessence arts.

WHOOSH! Curtains of rippling water appeared around the Ninedust Sectlord that quickly surged off into the distance.

It took time for secret arts to attack. Generally speaking, even the most supreme of secret arts would still only be able to fly at a hundred times the speed of light. This was a major bottleneck for cultivators and attacks alike. There were many Eternal Emperors who were unable to breach this limit.

The nine awesome secret arts and the waves of water swirled around each other, forming a perfect whole as they smashed towards the million-plus figures charging towards them.

BOOM!

Instantly, the many figures caught within the secret arts began to move much slower than before. However, all of them appeared completely unharmed. This was what made them so terrifying; there was no way to tell which one was real and which one was false.

Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord’s decision to join forces with their secret arts caused the fifteen meter beast and the eighteen meter beast to be completely locked in place, unable to move at all. The body of the fifteen meter beast actually began to shudder and slowly crumble apart. These two secret arts were simply too powerful. As for the other Dreamdust beasts, their speed dropped sharply as well.

“Die!” Ning focused his gaze upon them. Suddenly, an absolutely enormous world appeared in the void above the bluestone path. This world held tall mountains, deep canyons, and flowing rivers within it. At the very center of this world, there was an absolutely titanic mountain that was shaped like a giant sword. This enormous world was Ning’s heartworld!

Ning’s heartworld projection descended upon the bluestone road.

Heartworld projections were different from secret arts. Secret arts needed time to fly out and strike foes, but heartworld projections required no time at all. They were illusory projections and thus could descend instantly. Ning’s heartworld was absolutely enormous, on the same level as that of Daolord Soleman’s. His heartworld projection was thus just as powerful as his nine novessence arts.

When the nine novessence arts and the water curtain joined together, it had to be done in a careful way to prevent them from interfering with each other. The illusory heartworld projection, however, was able to overlap over them perfectly!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! The fifteen meter beast was already at the verge of breaking apart, while the eighteen meter beasts had been completely frozen. Both were instantly annihilated when the

heartworld projection came crashing down. The twenty-one meter beasts were now completely locked in place, while even the twenty-four meter beasts were dramatically slowed down.

“Let’s flee.” Ning immediately sent the black vessel fleeing at high speeds. There were simply too many of the remaining Dreamdust lifeforms, after all, and there was no way to tell which ones were real. There really was no way for them to kill the creatures.

“Damn. They are forcing me to use some of my own primal essence.” The beast leader had been at the front of its pack. Its tens of thousands of clones all vanished, leaving only it behind. It raised his head, letting out a bellow as a third eye suddenly appeared in its forehead. This was a completely azure light that glowed with blue light, and it stared directly at Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord.

Both of the cultivators immediately sensed that they were in mortal danger.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 31: Starflow Realm Chapter 5: The Dreamdust Runes

Ji Ning and the Ninedust Sectlord were aboard the black vessel, seeking to flee out of the bluestone road. Their secret arts and the heartworld projection had crushed to death quite a few of the weaker beasts, causing the enraged beast leader to open his third eye in his forehead. When he did so, it seemed as though that eye had become the hegemon and ruler of this entire region of space.

A strange alien script appeared directly above that eye, formed by multiple divine runes. Seventy-two of those runes came together to form a single character.

“What type of script is this?” Ning was shocked upon seeing it. “I’ve never seen this script before.” But although it was his first time seeing it, Ning was still able to sense the unfathomable, limitless power which this script contained within it. It seemed as though the only thing comparable to this ancient script was the azureflower seal that was formed by the Nine Chaos Seals.

BOOM!

The entire vast bluestone road suddenly lit up with dazzling azure light that stretched up ten thousand meters, illuminating the entire region.

The nine secret arts, the Ripplewater secret art, and Ning’s heartworld projection were all suppressed by the power of the azure light. It also reached out to grip the fleeing black vessel, causing it to drop down from a hundred times the speed of light to merely sixty-two.

“The beast leader is going all out. It has activated the Dreamdust Eye!” The Ninedust Sectlord was shocked. “Darknorth, the Dreamdust Eye contains an extremely powerful illusory component. If you can’t withstand it, you need to tell me right away.”

“I can handle it.” Ning gritted his teeth, sending out his heartforce in ringed layers to defend against the invisible attack. While doing so, he carefully scrutinized the strange character which had appeared above the beast leader’s third eye.

He had the feeling that this character contained an absolutely terrifying level of power in the realm of illusions. It must be remembered that Heartforce Cultivators were incredibly strong in resisting illusions, far stronger than the majority of Eternal Emperors! For even Ning to find this Dreamdust Eye to be so

hard to defend against meant that other Daolords, even ones as powerful as Palace Lord Dawnstar, wouldn't be able to fight it head-on. They would have to rely on special treasures in order to stay alive and have a chance to escape.

Eternal Emperors would die here as well if they weren't careful! Thankfully, Ning was a Heartforce Cultivator. This was why he dared to fight the attack head-on. One could imagine how terrifying this Dreamdust Eye attack was!

"I can sense that strange character is filled with boundless mysteries and illusions," Ning mused silently to himself. "If I could fully master it, I would be able to reach an even higher level of mastery over illusions."

Daolord Featherdress' greatest strength lay in those three mighty secret arts. Ning had only reached a high level of skill in one of them, the [Heartforce Eradicator]. Compared to other Heartforce Cultivators, he was fairly weak in illusions.

"Kill!" As the beast leader opened the Dreamdust Eye, it also transformed into a streak of light that charged straight towards them. Whoosh! It instantly moved at a hundred times the speed of light, while the black vessel was merely moving at sixty-two times the speed of light.

"It's chasing after us!" The Ninedust Sectlord was startled.

"At least its by itself." Only the beast leader was able to move at a hundred times the speed of light, with the twenty-seven meter beasts merely able to move at fifty times the speed of light.

Ning stood there at the prow of the ship, Northbow swords in hand. When he stabbed out with his sword, his right arm suddenly expanded to become a million kilometers in size as it pierced through the void. As for the Northbow sword, it expanded to become nearly ten million kilometers long, carrying an aura of overwhelming power as it stabbed towards the attacking beast leader. Ning's sword was very strange; it seemed to carry an aura of overwhelming power, but it also contained some of the mysteries of the Shadowless stance, making it difficult for the opponent to grasp and predict it.

Boom! The beast leader let out a savage bellow as it lashed out with its sharp claws, sending them directly against the edge of the Northbow sword. A terrifying burst of power was sent through the Northbow sword towards Ning. Although Ning's marvelous sword-arts allowed him to divert a great deal of the power, the power remaining was still enough to cause his right arm to go numb. He couldn't help but stumble three steps backwards.

"How'd it go?" the Ninedust Sectlord asked, worried.

"It is too powerful. This thing is far stronger than me in close combat." Ning shook his head. If it hadn't been for the Hegemon armor, he probably would've been heavily injured just now. "It seems we'll be forced to use up one of our treasures."

As he spoke, Ning suddenly produced a golden medallion with his right hand. Daolord Kongsan had left behind a number of protective, life-preserving treasures when he died. Right now, Ning only had two remaining. This golden medallion had been crafted by an unknown Eternal Emperor. One crushed, it would form an enormous golden illusory mountain which would crash down upon the opponent. Ning felt certain that this should be enough to slow down the beast leader and ensure that they could flee.

“No need to waste a Dao-seal just yet,” the Ninedust Sectlord said hurriedly. “We only have so many of them. We need to save them up as best we can.”

“Do you have any better ideas?” Ning looked at him. It was indeed true that these Dao-seals were very rare and difficult to acquire. Daolord Kongsan had only gotten them over the course of countless years.

Right now, Ning had four life-preserving items left: Kongsan’s two items, the Sword Hegemon’s Dao-seal, and the spacetime disc the Brightshore Hegemon had given him. That was it.

“Yes. I think I have a decent shot at this.” The Ninedust Sectlord stared intently off into the distance. “Once it gets a bit closer, I’ll make my move.”

“Oh?” Ning nodded and watched off to the side.

.....

The black vessel was surrounded by the nine novessence arts, the Ripplewater secret art, and the heartworld projection. All three combined were able to just barely ablate the pressuring power of the azure light, allowing the vessel to continue to advance at a speed of sixty-two speeds of light. As for the beast leader, it continued to chase after them and draw closer and closer at a hundred times the speed of light.

“Damn.”

“All of you shall die,” the beast leader bellowed as it closed in. It truly was a terrifyingly strong creature with stunningly fearsome illusions. The Dreamdust Domain it had just summoned was a full level higher and more profound than Ning’s novessence arts, and it was incredibly strong in close combat. It wouldn’t be easy at all for them to rely on their own power to survive this trip through Dreamdust Way. Most would have to rely on Dao-seals or other such treasures.

Whoosh. Whoosh. The distance between the two continued to narrow.

“This is the right moment!” The Ninedust Sectlord’s eyes lit up as he stretched out his right hand, a strange formation-diagram appearing in his palm.

BOOM! The formation-diagram within his palm instantly flew out and expanded dramatically, sweeping out towards the beast leader like the nets of heaven. The beast leader bellowed furiously, but was still completely enveloped by this enormous formation-diagram. The enormous formation-diagram was round inside but square outside, and it was composed of thousands of layers of strange formations that continuously merged into each other.

The beast leader was trapped within the formation. It let out continuous bellows as it furiously assaulted the formation, causing the entire formation-diagram to tremble and layers of formations to break apart, but new layers were quickly born out.

“It can’t break free.” The Ninedust Sectlord revealed a smug look. “If it wants to break through with raw power, it has to be able to destroy 3500 layers of formations at one go! Otherwise, the formations will be continuously regrown. Only when the energy within the formation is used up will it be able to escape.”

“How long will the formation-diagram last?” Ning asked.

“Probably for a short while.” The Ninedust Sectlord hesitated slightly. “This is my first time using it as well.”

Upon hearing this, Ning immediately sent the black vessel fleeing at full speed.

.....

The beast leader trapped within the formation let out furious roars as the two cultivators fled. The distance between them quickly began to grow greater and greater.

“We should’ve shaken him off by now.” Ning relaxed just slightly after flying for more than two hours. They had been flying at a hundred times the speed of light this entire time; there should be no way their foe could catch up.

“Ninedust, you said this was your first time using that formation-diagram?” Ning asked, “What made you so confident in its power? You also told me not to use my Dao-seals; didn’t the power come from a Dao-seal?”

“No, it came from a very special formation-diagram treasure.” The Ninedust Sectlord smiled as he waved his hand, producing a medallion above his palm that looked like a circle within a square. The medallion was covered with countless dense clusters of formations. “This formation-diagram treasure was bestowed upon me by the ancestor. All I need to do to fully charge it is to fill it with the energy of ten million cubes of chaos jewels, which allows me to use it one time. When I activate it, even Eternal Emperors will be trapped for quite some time.”

Ning’s eyes immediately lit up when he heard this. “What a fine treasure! So you can activate it repeatedly?”

It could be used for the low cost of just ten million cubes of chaos jewels? Sure, that might sound like a lot, but the formation-diagrams it created could be used to trap Eternal Emperors!

“A Hegemon would be able to use it just relying on his own Immortal energy,” the Ninedust Sectlord said. “Mine isn’t pure enough, so I have to rely on chaos jewels to make up the difference. It’ll take three days in order for those ten million cubes of chaos jewels to recharge the treasure. During the Dawn War, this treasure was considered an average one.”

Ning was secretly speechless. The Dawn War truly had been a terrifying one, and all the treasures that came from that time were truly wondrous. Dreamdust Way had been nothing more than an unremarkable relic-site during the Dawn War, but the beasts that it produced, especially the three-eyed leader which manifested that strange script, truly stunned and bedazzled Ning. No wonder so many generations of Daolords had dared to venture into this place to seek their fortunes, with even Eternal Emperors delving deep within.

“That script...” Ning had long ago fully memorized the strange character that had manifested above the third eye of the beast leader. He began to turn his attention to analyzing its mysteries.

Whoosh. The black vessel continued to fly at high speed. Three days later, it finally emerged from Dreamdust Way.