

Desolate 1181

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Book 34: The Stone Hellephant Wall Chapter 11: Tianello

Ji Ning and Ninedust flew quickly towards the mist to the battlefield. Meanwhile, the battle between the World-level cultivators was reaching a fever pitch.

Slash! Saber-light chopped through a World God's body, slicing him in half. A heartbeat later, his body was ground into dust. The white-robed machete-wielding man then charged towards another World-level cultivator, a hate-filled look on his face. He was clearly the most powerful person on the battlefield. He was extremely fast and his saber-arts were exceptionally brutal.

"Maji!" The other World-level cultivator was clearly in dire straits.

"Maji, stop this!"

"Maji, you despicable lowlife. How dare you assault us members of the Tianello clan!" the other World-level cultivators bellowed furiously.

"You refused to give my clan a way out, so I'm not giving you a way out either! Kill them, my clansmen! Wipe them all out! If a single one of them escapes, we'll be in big trouble. If we can wipe them out, we can relocate our tribe and join one of the Tianello clan's enemies!" Maji had a savage look on his face as he bellowed.

"Kill!"

"Kill these Tianello clansmen!"

"Wipe'm out!"

Although the total combat power of the Tianello clansmen was higher overall, the one named Maji was simply too powerful as an individual. Thus far, he had already killed a total of twelve World-level cultivators by himself in this clash! He had been able to force the warriors of the Tianello clan to the brink of withdrawal, with only their fear of the strict laws of the clan holding them back from a complete retreat.

They had come on the orders of the Tianello clan to take away a treasure this minor clan had acquired, a certain bugbeast core component. They were so accustomed to behaving in a domineering fashion that they had been planning to massacre the minor clan and then offer the treasure to the high-level members of the clan. As for the other treasures the minor clan had owned? They were going to split them internally.

They had first set up a formation, planning to trap and massacre everyone. They never would've imagined that this weak clan's leader, Maji, was so incredibly powerful that he had been able to burst the formation apart, then lead his clan's World-level cultivators to fight their way out.

"Damnit."

“They actually dare to kill the members of the Tianello clan! Let’s leave and report this to the clan immediately! We’ll have the clan send out the entire army to wipe them out and leave none of them behind.” By now, the Tianello clansmen had been shaken by Maji’s assaults. In the end, they chose to retreat. Although they would be punished upon their return for failing in their mission, at least they wouldn’t lose their lives.

“Let’s go.”

“Flee.”

Instantly, the World-level cultivators all began to flee frantically. But just as they began to do so, a calm voice rang out. “Don’t be in a such to run.” The fleeing World-level cultivators all felt their bodies turn soft. Their movements began to dramatically slow down before coming to a complete halt... and then they began to slowly fly backwards.

Right at this moment, two figures descended from the skies. One was a silver-robed man, the other was a white-robed youth who bore a sword sheath on his back.

“Daolord!” The World-level cultivators led by Maji all turned pale. The difference in power between World-level cultivators and Daolords was insurmountable.

“The Tianello clan, eh? They seem to be pretty powerful.” Ning grinned.

“Then let’s start with them,” Ninedust offered.

“Agreed.” Ning’s heartforce had already completely pervaded the souls and truesouls of the Tianello clan’s World-level cultivators, allowing him to easily rifle through their souls. Ning’s heartforce was now so powerful that he was ranked number one amongst Daolords in the Endless Territories; manipulating World-level cultivators was simplicity itself for him. Soon, Ning had completely reviewed the memories of these cultivators.

“What did you find?” Ninedust asked.

“This planet is quite interesting.” Ning smirked. As he chatted with Ninedust he made sure to block out the sound of their voices, ensuring that no one aside from the two of them could hear anything.

“Interesting?” Ninedust was puzzled.

Ning said, “This planet is quite extraordinary. It’s far more powerful than that other planet we visited, Skywind’s homeland! The cultivators here are all divided up into clans, with blood lineages determining their statuses.”

“These clans are divided into the great clans, standard clans, and lesser clans. Lesser clans are the weakest, with standard clans generally having a Daolord and several golems standing guard. As for the great clans, they each have at least one ‘royal golem’ protecting them.”

“Supposedly, this planet has nine great clans, twenty-one standard clans, and countless lesser clans,” Ning explained. This was what he had learned through rifling the memories of the World-level cultivators. “Different clans can vary immensely in power. A great clan can easily wipe out one of the standard clans with a fraction of their full power, while standard clans can do the same to lesser clans. The lesser clans are viewed as of a lower caste, almost subhuman.”

Ninedust was startled. "So just how many Daolords live on this planet?"

"More than thirty at the very least," Ning said. "Possibly sixty, possibly eighty... these World-level cultivators have no clue."

"Wow." Ninedust was surprised. A single planet was capable of giving birth to dozens of Daolords in each given generation? This was a frightening concept.

"The Tianello clan is a standard clan and it has a single Daolord protecting it," Ning said. "So let us start from them."

"Alright." Ninedust nodded.

"You can die now." Ning swept his gaze towards the dull-eyed World-level cultivators. Instantly, their eyes turned completely lifeless as they fell to the ground. He left just a single World-level cultivator alive, allowing the man 'Tonkee' to regain his clarity of mind as well.

"What just happened? What's going on?" Tonkee stared at the surrounding area in panic. How did all of the others all suddenly die?

"Go back and tell Tianello," Ning barked, "That I, Darknorth, killed these World Gods! Now beat it!" When Ning had rifled through their memories, he had learned that they were all Tianello's lackeys and were so evil as to wipe out lesser clans for greed alone. Tonkee was slightly better, morally speaking, than the rest. Still, the only reason why Ning spared him was because he needed someone to send a message for him; otherwise, he would've killed Tonkee as well.

"Y-you killed them?" Tonkee stared at Ning in terror.

"I said... beat it." Ning released a hint of his killing intent.

Swoosh! The terrified Tonkee immediately fled far away.

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Maji and his clansmen stared in shock as they watched this happened, completely stunned by Ning and Ninedust's power. What stunned them even more was what Ning had just said: "Go back and tell Tianello that I, Darknorth, killed these World Gods! Now beat it!" This clearly was a direct challenge to Tianello!

Tianello was the name of the Tianello clan's leader, and he was on extremely good terms with the nine great clans. He was one of the high-level members of this world. He wasn't an easy person to deal with!

"Senior" Maji said, forcing down his fear and nervousness. Looks of panic were on the faces of all the World-level cultivators behind him.

"What, are you scared now?" A hint of a smile was on Ning's face.

Maji hurriedly said, "For us to fight back against them when they tried to kill us was a minor matter; the exalted Tianello would never deign to act against minor figures like us, giving us a chance to survive if we joined an enemy of the Tianello clan. But by doing this, seniors... you've just completely insulted him! He's not going to rest until he resolves this matter, and his rage will be directed towards us as well."

People lived for their reputations. There were only a few dozen Daolords on this planet, making them exalted figures. How could Tianello possibly just accept Ning brazenly slapping him in the face like this?

“Are you trying to say that we caused trouble for you?” Ninedust glared at them.

“N-no...” Maji began to sweat heavily.

“Ahahaha!” Ning started to laugh. “Ninedust, stop scaring these kids.” Indeed, Maji and the other World-level cultivators all felt rather uneasy now. “Just keep watching,” Ning instructed. “I’ll guarantee your safety.”

Maji and the others felt resigned. “I guess that’s that.” If they followed these two powerful Daolords, they might stand a chance at staying alive... but once they were on their own, it would be far too easy for Tianello to eradicate them.

Just one hour later, a giant vessel appeared in the skies. A white-haired old man stood at the prow of the vessel, staring towards their direction. He had a group of subordinates behind him.

“Tianello has arrived.”

“It’s Tianello.” Maji and the others felt nervous and cold.

Ning and Ninedust raised their heads to glance at the vessel. Ninedust grinned at Ning: “He’s a mere Daolord of the Third Step, but he seems pretty full of himself.”

The grand vessel slowly flew through the skies towards them. The white-robed elder stood at the prow of the ship, staring down at them. When he saw that Ning and Ninedust merely had auras of Daolords of the Second Step, he relaxed slightly. He barked out coldly, “You dared to wipe out Tianello clansmen and then insulted me? It seems that it has been far too long since I, Tianello, have displayed my pow-.”

“So shut up and do it already,” Ninedust said from below.

“Eh?” Tianello was further incensed by this interruption, and cold light flickered in his eyes. “If that is what you wish... then I will send you off to die!”

Whoosh. A giant bird that was at least three thousand meters long suddenly appeared in front of Tianello. This bird was covered in azure feathers and had a fiery red tail, as well as an awe-inspiring aura. It was actually just as powerful as Tianello, and it immediately swooped downwards.

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Book 34: The Stone Hellephant Wall Chapter 12: Sithe?

Maji and the other World-level cultivators behind Ji Ning and Ninedust had started to panic long ago. If you have to hit someone, you aren’t supposed to slap them in the face! Not even Daolords would brazenly provoke other Daolords for no good reason. Ning’s provocative actions were designed to force Tianello out. If he hid back despite all of this, he would probably become the laughingstock of this world.

“Now that’s rather interesting.” Ninedust waved his right hand, causing it to dramatically expand in size. It blocked out the skies and the sun as it clawed out towards the avian. The avian let out a furious screech as it tore at Ninedust’s hand with its claws.

Whoosh! As an Ancient cultivator, Ninedust had an incredibly powerful divine body. Given that he was now a supreme Daolord, even a casual swipe from him was far beyond the likes of a golem which was merely equivalent to a Daolord of the Third Step. His giant fingers closed in around the avian, which sought to struggle but was completely unable to break free.

“What?!” Tianello was shocked when he saw this from his position aboard his ship. His golem was equivalent to him in power, but it had been captured by a casual swipe?

“He’s absolutely terrifying. They’re definitely not people that I can fight back against. I need to run.” Tianello immediately fled, not worrying about anything else at all.

Ning was standing on the ground, head raised and watching this with a smile. “Come on down.” An invisible surge of power instantly swept out to cover the entire vessel.

All of the cultivators on the vessel, Tianello included, were instantly trapped within an illusory world. The entire vessel began to descend from the skies and landed on the ground. One figure after another began to walk out of the vessel, their eyes blank. The leader of the group was the white-haired elder Tianello, whose gaze was equally vacant. He wasn’t able to fight back at all.

“T-this...” Maji and the other World-level cultivators stared at this in astonishment. The mighty Tianello had been mentally dominated before even having a chance to fight in close combat? This was inconceivable!

“Tianello,” Ning called out. “I ask you this: who are the most powerful people within this world?”

“The top three clans of the nine great clans are the Fumo clan, the Juwah clan, and the Nonti clan. These three great clans are far more powerful than the other six great clans.” Tianello’s gaze was vacant as he continued, “The Fumo clan, the Juwah clan, and the Nonti clan are incredibly powerful. Any of them could wipe out the other six great clans with ease.”

“They call themselves members of the ‘Sithe’ race. All other clans have to submit to them, and they are the true rulers of this world,” Tianello said numbly.

Ning and Ninedust turned pale when they heard this. What?! The three most powerful clans in this planet actually referred to themselves as ‘Sithe’?

“They call themselves ‘Sithe’? Why?” Ning asked.

“Don’t know. They are the most ancient and most powerful clans on this planet. No one can resist them,” Tianello said. “Those who try to do so all died.”

Ning and Ninedust exchanged a glance.

“Darknorth... is it possible that a few scattered members of the Sithe actually survived?” Ninedust said. Both he and Darknorth suspected that the Stone Hellephant Wall had been created by the Sithe! It wasn’t impossible that some Sithe survived to live on this planet.

“Entirely possible.” Ning was much more somber now as well. “If it really is the Sithe... we’re in a great deal of danger.”

“Do the three great clans have any Eternal Emperors? Does this world hold any Eternal Emperors?” Ning asked.

“None.” Tianello replied robotically, “It has been a long, long time since any Emperors have appeared within this world. The annals of history do contain records of an Eternal Emperor who launched a grand war against the three great clans, but they joined forces and managed to kill him.”

“They killed an Eternal Emperor?” Ning frowned. “Was that Emperor an ordinary Daolord who broke through, or was he an incredibly powerful one?”

“He was an ordinary Daolord who broke through,” Tianello replied.

Both Ning and Ninedust let out sighs of relief.

“Should we hit’m?” Ninedust looked at Ning.

“Of course.” Ning nodded. “If they title themselves ‘Sithe’, then they are actual Sithe survivors or inheritors of the Sithe legacy. No matter what, they definitely know some of the secrets of the Sithe! If all three great clans had to work together to deal with an ordinary Daolord who broke through to become an Eternal Emperor, they shouldn’t be all that powerful.”

“At least they don’t have any Eternal Emperors at present.” Ninedust nodded as well. If they didn’t have any Eternal Emperors, it didn’t matter if they had access to Sithe technology and techniques. Ning and Ninedust were both supreme Daolords! They were both capable of slaying ordinary Eternal Emperors, especially Ning; Ning was now close to being on the same level as the eight lords of the Sacred Cities. Perhaps he was still rather lacking when compared to them, but he would be able to utterly dominate any Daolords.

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As Ning and Ninedust discussed this secretive matters, they didn’t let Maji or the others overheard them. Maji and his World-level companions only watched as Tianello stared blankly as he spoke words they couldn’t hear.

“Awaken,” Ning commanded softly. Tianello immediately came back to his senses, as did the subordinates behind him. When he did so, he instantly felt terrified. He could clearly remember what he had just told Ning.

“Y-y-you...” Tianello couldn’t believe it. There was actually a person in this world capable of controlling him and forcing him to reveal some of his secrets.

“Self-claimed Sithe... interesting.” Ning looked at Ninedust. “Let’s do it.”

“You first,” Ninedust grinned.

There was a limit to how strong the three great clans were. They didn’t even have a single Emperor! They did, however, claim themselves to be the ‘Sithe’, which meant they definitely were in command of certain Sithe mysteries. Given that it shouldn’t be all that dangerous, how could Ning and Ninedust just leave?

“Heartworld, descend!” Ning immediately unleashed his heartworld projection.

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The vast heartworld projection came crashing down, filling every single inch of this entire planet. The powerful sense of pressure brought terror to all of the countless living beings in the planet... but of course, Ning didn't use it to attack any of those weaklings.

"What's going on?"

"Why do I feel as though an illusory world just fell upon us?"

The countless living creatures all raised their heads to stare upwards.

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"This must be a Heartforce Cultivator's heartworld projection."

"It has been a long time since a Heartworld Cultivator has appeared in our planet. Has a new one arisen?"

"This heartworld projection is far too powerful. Even I feel a sense of fear! If it releases just a bit of its power, it could kill the two of us with ease." A male and female pair of Daolords raised their heads to stare into the skies, a look of shock on their faces.

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"Who is it?"

"Who dares to act with such arrogance, using a heartworld projection to suppress my Nonti clan!" A furious roar rang out from a beautiful golden palace.

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Everyone on this entire planet, from the three great clans to the countless ordinary living creatures, all raised their heads to watch as the awesome heartworld projection descended. A short while later, the image of a white-robed youth who had a sword on his back appeared within the heartworld projection. He was absolutely towering in size, and he stared down upon the great earth, his gaze seeming to fill every inch of it.

"I hear that the Fumo clan, the Juwah clan, and the Nonti clan are the three most powerful great clans of this world and have unified it under their rule! But... no matter how hard I try, I can't discern anything particularly impressive about these three great clans. I was planning to wipe them out, but their Daolords are so weak that I can't even be bothered to do so."

"Listen closely. I can't be bothered to wipe your three clans out, but from this day forth you should obediently listen to my commands. If you do so, I'll let you live. Otherwise... hmph!"

"Impudence!"

"He's courting death."

"Where did this fool even come from?" Three enraged roars rang out from the three great clans, shaking the entire planet. The leaders of the Fumo, Juwah, and Nonti clans had been thoroughly enraged. They

had ruled this planet for countless years. No one dared to challenge them... but this mysterious Heartforce Cultivator was being far too arrogant.

“Haha, you seem rather bold. I, Darknorth, shall be waiting for you at the Cranesoar Mountains. If you insist on coming to your deaths, feel free to come find me here.” The illusory white-robed youth within the heartworld projection peered downwards at the three great clans. “But I really suggest that you not come. You’d simply be throwing your lives away if you did... because all of you really are quite weak. Aha,ahaha, ahahahahaha!” Ning’s laughter echoed throughout every inch of this planet.

The wilderness at the base of the Cranesoar Mountains.

Maji and the other World-level cultivators stared at Ning and Ninedust, completely dazed. Tianello and the World-level cultivators behind him were dazed as well. All of them had seen that heartworld projection and had heard Ning’s provocations.

“He’s... actually challenging the three great clans?” Tianello’s voice was trembling.

“W-who in the world are they?” Maji and the others were petrified as well.

Ning and Ninedust, however, remained quite calm. “All done.” Ning nodded at Ninedust. “Given the status these three great clans hold, there’s no way they’d just take that lying down. They’ll definitely attack.”

“Agreed.” Ninedust concurred. “That way, this battle is at a time and place of our choosing. That’s of benefit to us.”

Given that these three great clans called themselves the Sithe, Ning and Ninedust were concerned that their headquarters probably wouldn’t be easily destroyed. Thus, they would choose a different place for the battle! Ning’s deliberate provocations were aimed at forcing his enemies to come to the Cranesoar Mountains, as there were no dangerous formations here to worry about.

Although Ning was talking tough, he wasn’t so foolish as to actually charge straight into the headquarters of the three great clans.

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Book 34: The Stone Hellephant Wall Chapter 13: Emperor Golems

The challenge having been issued, Ji Ning and Ninedust entered the Cranesoar Mountains and awaited the arrival of the three great clans. In truth, Ning was right to be cautious. This planet held many mysteries within it.

Deep within the planet’s core. There was a bubbling lake of lava here, and there were three figures seated next to it. These three figures all had silver skin, and the auras they emanated were different from the auras of normal cultivators. They were quite bizarre and inscrutable.

One of them, a particularly muscular silver man, let out a growl: “He actually dares to challenge all three of our clans simultaneously. My fellow clan leaders of the Juwah clan and Nonti clan, have either of you heard of this ‘Darknorth’ before?”

“Never heard of him.” “I have no idea where he came from.” the two other silver men responded.

“This ‘Darknorth’ is extremely arrogant, and his heartworld projection is incredibly powerful. In heartforce, at least, he’s reached the utter apex.” The muscular silver man said, “I find it very likely that he’s a supreme Daolord.”

“A supreme Daolord? Haha, after so many years, this planet of ours has finally given birth to yet another supreme Daolord,” the skinnier silver man said.

“The birth of every supreme Daolord is rather diverting to our three clans,” the long silver-haired man said. “To our three clans, there is nothing in this planet that can pose a threat to us. That makes life rather boring. The other six clans are only ‘great clans’ because they have some small portion of our bloodlines and lineage, and so we’ve bestowed the title of ‘great clan’ upon them. If it wasn’t for that... hmph.”

“How can those other lowly clans compare with us, the exalted Sithe?” The muscular silver man said coldly, “Since this supreme Daolord has chosen to challenge us and is an extremely strong Heartforce Cultivator... how do the two of you think we should response?”

“I’ll go personally kill him,” the skinny silver man said.

“Both of us have undergone the ‘Ritual Sacrificium’, making us the only true Sithe in this entire planet.” The silver-haired, silver-skinned man shook his head. “For noble Sithe like us to lower ourselves to fight against these lowly races is demeaning. Sending golems is enough.”

“I also feel that sending golems should suffice. My recommendation is that each of our three clans should send out two Emperor-class golems. What do you think?” the muscular silver man asked.

“Fine.”

“Sending two Emperor-class golems is more than enough.” The other two silver men agreed with this proposal. Their clans possessed exalted power. Even a tiny fraction of their full might was enough to completely dominate this entire world.

Over the course of countless years, their world had actually given birth to an Eternal Emperor. However, that Eternal Emperor had been extremely weak. In comparison, there had been far more supreme Daolords in the history of this world. There was usually at least one in every generation! Some of them dared to try and challenge the status of the three great clans... and all of them died!

Nobody could resist them! They were the true, indisputable, unshakeable rulers of this planet. They always had been and they always would be! In truth, the power they had revealed to wipe out those upstart challengers had always been nothing more than a fraction of their full power.

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Within a dark room in the Fumo clan. There were six pitch-black figures seated with their eyes shut, completely unmoving. Suddenly, two of the pitch-black figures opened their eyes. Their eyes gleamed with green, crystalline light.

“Master.” both golems called out respectfully.

“There’s a Heartforce Cultivator known as Darknorth. He seems to be a supreme Daolord, and he’s chosen to challenge the Sithe. The two of you shall head to the Cranesoar Mountains and kill him.” The muscular silver man’s voice boomed out, echoing throughout the room.

“Understood,” both figures said respectfully. The other four pitch-black figures opened their eyes as well.

“The two of us are going to go out and have some first, brothers. Hahaha...” The two golems laughed quite smugly.

“Hurry up and kill this Daolord Darknorth, then come back and tell us all about it.”

“Yeah, I’m bored senseless.”

“A pity that Master has only sent the two of you.” The other four golems spoke out as well. As golems, they possessed eternal lifespans. This world wasn’t all that large; they knew every inch of it by now! This was why they normally preferred to spend their time in slumber. Only when the clan encountered some fairly troublesome opponents like ‘supreme Daolords’ would they be sent out.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

The two Emperor-class golems immediately left the room and soared into the skies.

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The Cranesoar Mountains. Tianello, Maji, and the others all watched nervously. Ning and Ninedust, however, simply waited patiently.

“Eh?” Ning’s face tightened slightly as he stared off into the distance.

“What’s wrong?” Ninedust was puzzled.

“The three clans have sent their troops out towards the Cranesoar Mountains.” Puzzled, Ning continued, “But... they each only sent a pair of golems. All combined, there are six of them.”

“Six golems against the two of us?” Ninedust was puzzled as well. “Darknorth, the heartworld projection you revealed should’ve alerted them that you are probably at the supreme Daolord level. Why have they only sent six golems? Based on what I know, most golems are merely comparable to fourth-step Daolords at best.”

“There ARE some golems that are stronger than the Daolord level,” Ning said.

“True.” Ninedust nodded. The major powers of the Endless Territories were only able to create golems comparable to Daolords of the Fourth Step at best. However... some particularly dangerous regions sometimes held golems that had been left behind since the Dawn War which surpassed this level. Ning had personally seen those two mighty golems which stood guard over the palace of the Brightshore Imperials. One looked like a humanoid statue while the other was a bestial statue, but both were actually golems which held the power of Eternal Emperors. No one knew where the Brightshore Hegemon had found them.

“You are talking about Emperor-class golems,” Ninedust said. “We Ancient cultivators have some, but they were passed down to us from many, many years ago. The Endless Territories have very few Emperor-class golems, and the number we Ancient cultivators have can be counted on one hand. Are you telling me that all six golems attacking us are Emperor-class? Since when did they become as common as the grass?”

“I find it hard to believe as well,” Ning said with a sigh. Emperor-class golems... they could only be found in truly dangerous zones such as the battlefield of the Dawn War. They were incredibly rare... but now, six had appeared at the same time?

“But if they aren’t Emperor-class, how would the three great clans dare to send just six of them against us?” Ning shook his head. “They should know that I have the power of a supreme Daolord; sending Daolord-class golems against me is tantamount to just gifting me with treasures. Thus... although I still find it hard to believe, it does seem as though these should be Emperor-class golems.”

“Six Emperor-class golems.” Ninedust revealed a wary look. “Can we handle them?”

“There should be differences in power amongst Emperor-class golems; some are strong, some are weak. We should be able to handle them,” Ning said.

The creation of every Emperor-class golem was extremely difficult. The Endless Territories weren’t even able to make them, with only fourth-step Daolord golems being forgeable! Thus, every single Emperor-class golem had their own unique traits. They all had invulnerable bodies, and in accordance with the wishes of their makers they often knew certain ultimate attacks as well! Even Ning felt nervous at the thought of fighting six at once.

If he was still ‘merely’ at the supreme Daolord level, he would probably be even more nervous. However, the Northbow swords and the [Heartsword] art put Ning close to the level of the lords of the eight Sacred Cities. Thus, he still felt fairly good in his chances.

“What’s going on with them?”

“Those two... something seems off with them.” Tianello, Maji, and the others all noticed the somber looks appear on the faces of Ning and Ninedust, who had appeared quite relaxed just a short while ago.

Tianello shook his head and sighed, “None of the three great clans are easy to deal with. Ever since the earliest annals of recorded history, the three great clans have always jointly ruled over our planet together. No one has ever been able to threaten them. Ugh. These two Daolords might be very powerful, but they were too over-confident. They are courting death.”

Ning and Ninedust couldn’t even be bothered to talk to the cultivators behind them. They simply stared into the skies, somber looks on their faces.

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

The six distant golems soared through the skies, emanating auras of incredible power as they flew towards Ning and Ninedust.

“This level of power...” Ninedust murmured softly, “The aura emanating from them as they are flying is already far beyond what Daolords of the Fourth Step are capable of. They are definitely Emperor-class.

Darknorth, this is going to be seriously troublesome. I didn't expect the three great clans to be this strong."

Emperor-class golems were far more difficult to deal with than ordinary Eternal Emperors. They were virtually indestructible! Ning had only trained his body to make it comparable to a middle-grade Eternal treasure, but Emperor-class golems were all top-grade Eternal treasures. The techniques they used were based on the designs of their makers.

"Since the three great clans are connected to the Sithe and even call themselves the Sithe, it's not that surprising that they have a few tricks up their sleeves." Ning's eyes radiated an eagerness to do battle.

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Book 34: The Stone Hellephant Wall Chapter 14: Surrounded And Attacked

"Move a bit farther away," Ji Ning suddenly said, his voice ringing out by the ears of Tinello, Maji, and the other cultivators.

"Huh?" The cultivators were all stunned.

"He's telling you to run the hell away." Ninedust turned to stare at them. "Once the battle starts, even the smallest of shockwaves will be enough to claim your lives. We certainly won't be able to pay attention to you and keep you safe."

"Let's go."

"Quickly." Tianello, Maji, and the others immediately reacted, transforming into streaks of light that flew far away.

Ning raised his head, watching as the six figures flew towards them at high speeds. He manifested three heads and six arms, then drew all six Northbow swords. "Here they come. Good."

"I'm also curious as to just how tough Emperor-class golems are." Ninedust had his longstaff at the ready and was also watching.

The six golems in midair all came to a halt. They hung in the air, staring downwards as if they were looking at ants. As Emperor-class golems who had been working for the three great clans since the clans had been established, they had killed many supreme Daolords over the course of countless years. Thus, they were completely confident in their chances.

"Which one of you is Daolord Darknorth?" The swordsman golem stared downwards. Of the six golems, this one was the only one wielding a sword.

"Me," Ning said.

"You actually dared to challenge the three great clans. Poor kid... do you have any clue as to how powerful they truly are? You really didn't know your own limits." The swordsman golem stared at Ning in a rather sympathetic way, then glanced at Ninedust. "And this Daolord next to you. Is he with you? If he leaves immediately, we can spare him. Otherwise, we'll have to wipe him out as well."

Back on the ground, Ninedust and Ning exchanged a glance, then smiled. Ninedust said with a cold laugh, "You want to kill me? Give me your best shot and show me what you have."

"I wanted to give you a way out of this. Oh well. If this is what you choose..." The swordsman golem sighed and shook his head, then said in a cold voice, "Let's kill them, brothers!"

"Attack!"

"Let me go first!" The six golems moved in unison.

Ning, however, let out a cold snort. Boom! The heartworld projection that had been covering this entire planet instantly shrank down to merely cover an area of a million kilometers, causing its power to skyrocket! It pressed down upon the six golems, causing all of them to feel their bodies stiffen. At the same time, Ning allowed nine energy dragons to fly out of his body, forming into the Yin-Yang Sword Domain and sending the pressure of the domain out towards the golems as well.

"What a powerful binding spell."

"Why do I feel this heavy?" Upon being suppressed by the heartworld projection and the Yin-Yang Sword Domain at the same time, the six golems were just barely able to stay afloat. They felt as though trillions of mountains had just come crashing down upon them, weighing them down immensely.

These Emperor-class golems had been around for an extremely long period of time and had encountered both supreme Daolords and Heartforce Cultivators. However, the local 'supreme Daolords' had always been limited to this fairly small region; there was simply no way for them to find the materials necessary to create truly powerful secret arts! Thus, Ning's combination of his nine novessence arts and his heartworld projection constituted the most powerful bindings which the Emperor-class golems had ever encountered.

"Heavy." The six golems exchanged glances.

"Kill him!" one of the golems bellowed, leading the way with a charge.

Crack! A streak of golden lightning lashed out through the skies, instantly appearing before Ning. Ning was quite surprised as well; this attack was incredibly fast! The speed of this golden lightning had completely surpassed the 'normal' limit of a hundred times the speed of light, almost instantly appearing right in front of Ning. Within the streak of golden lightning, a sharp saber could be seen chopping straight towards Ning with incomparable speed and savagery.

"Beat it." Ning didn't back off in the slightest. A streak of mist-formed sword energy clashed against the saber. Boom! The golden lightning was knocked flying backwards, reforming into a humanoid shape off in the distance. The creature was dressed in golden armor and had jade green eyes; it was the 'lightning golem' of the six golems.

Ning glanced sideways at the lightning golem. Judging from the clash, the lightning golem was roughly on par with ordinary supreme Daolords; its main strength came from its speed. Ning's own sword-arts were also incredibly fast, allowing him to crush this golem.

"Move!"

"Attack!"

"Join forces to kill him!" The other golems began to strike as well.

Boom! An awesome flood of flames manifested, then condensed into a flaming serpent that slithered towards Ning. It suddenly opened its mouth as if about to hiss, sending a black whip coiling straight towards Ning.

“A flame golem?” Ning used his Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop yet again. His sword was fast enough that defeating enemy techniques was fairly easy, unless the attacks contained a ridiculous amount of power. It was clear that the whip-strike from the flame golem was merely on par with that of a supreme Daolord, and so Ning’s mist-formed sword energy was able to easily disperse it.

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Aside from the lightning golem and the flame golem, there was also a strange mist golem that was able to block detection via heartforce or godsense. Fortunately, Ning’s heartworld projection and nine novessence arts were not affected. The supreme Daolords of this world rarely had powerful secret arts or heartworld projections, and so once the mist surrounded them they wouldn’t be able to see what was happening around them. As a result, they would be easily defeated and slain.

There was also an extremely deadly eight-armed knife golem. The knife golem had eight arms, and each of its arms was like a deadly knife. It was fast and furious in battle, and each knife-arm struck in an extremely unpredictable manner. When all eight knives struck together, even Ninedust wasn’t able to overcome the attacks in a head-on fight. However, Ning was a sword cultivator who was incredibly skilled in close combat, allowing him to easily defeat the eight-armed knife golem.

There was also a barbarous and dominating golem whose skin was like stone. This stone golem was massive in size and had six arms, with each arm sculpted like a statue. It possessed incredible strength and powerful defenses and was able to take on Ning’s Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop without being forced back. Its six arms smashed out like giant maces, and it was the physically strongest golem.

Still, Ning was able to use the Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker. Now that his Northbow swords had absorbed so much of that deepfire blackstone, the power of this stance had skyrocketed to a shocking new level, allowing him to defeat the stone golem head-on as well.

The final golem was the leader of the group, the swordsman golem. The swordsman golem transformed into part of an enormous sword when using its sword-arts. The sword pierced through the skies with absolutely terrifying power, and it was the most dangerous attack Ning had to face. Despite all that, it was still staved off by Ning’s Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop.

The difference in power between the two sides was quite apparent. The six golems each had their own special abilities and were all comparable to supreme Daolords; if they were to work together against the likes of the Radiant King or Daolord Dreamlore, they would’ve won with ease. But against Ning? Clearly, they weren’t enough.

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Although the above battle took time to describe, the attacks from the six golems and Ning’s counters all happened almost instantaneously. Ning matched each of them blow for blow and defeated them all.

“Daolord Darknorth is much stronger than any other supreme Daolord we have ever encountered. Brothers, attack simultaneously to defeat him!” the swordsman golem shouted mentally to the others.

“Join forces.”

“Same as always.” These Emperor-class golems were quite familiar with each other, and they had a joint attack they used. They almost instantly began to move in unison.

Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. A dazzling streak of golden light, a flaming serpent, and a ribbon of mist coiled around each other, forming a tri-colored rope that then swirled towards Ning. As for Ninedust, he transformed into a vast sea of water which the golems were completely unable to do anything to.

The three great clans did have some techniques they were able to use against supreme Daolords who had invulnerable forms, but these six Emperor-class golems didn't view Ninedust as being that much of a threat. The real threat was Darknorth, and he was their principal opponent in this fight.

“Damn.” Ning immediately could sense how troublesome this tri-colored rope was. He used his sword-arts to cut through the rope, but the flames, lightning, and mist joined together once more to reform the rope. Ning's strikes didn't have any effect on the terrifying binding power of the tri-colored rope at all. Ning had no choice but to amplify the effects of his novessence arts and his heartworld projection upon the tri-colored rope, but he was still only able to partially weaken their power.

“This thing really is quite difficult to deal with.” Ning had been completely surrounded by the lightning, mist, and flame-forged rope. Because these things were noncorporeal, Ning was still able to move about and fight, but his combat power had clearly been affected.

If the rope had been corporeal, this would've been much easier. Ning's sword-arts would've sent the rope flying long ago.

“Catch him, Stone!”

“Give'm a big hug.”

“Make it so that he can't fight back!” the other golems called out as the six-armed stone golem came bounding straight towards Ning. Its six arms grew incredibly thick and long as it reached out, seeking to grab Ning! Ning knew just how strong this stone golem was; it had been able to endure Ning's Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop without even having to stagger backwards at all. If it really did manage to grapple Ning, Ning wouldn't be able to break free at all.

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Book 34: The Stone Hellephant Wall Chapter 15: Captured

The tri-colored ropes coiled around Ji Ning, affecting and encumbering all of his movements.

“I did this in the past to others. Now, the same is happening to me. I can at most unleash 70% of my full power.” Ning was secretly stunned. This was despite the fact that the fire, lightning, and mist were being weakened by his heartworld projection and nine novessence arts. If it hadn't been for the latter two, he would probably be weakened even more.

“Beat it!” When Ning saw the stone golem bound towards him and seek to grapple him, he immediately used his Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker. BOOM! The stone golem was sent flying backwards.

“What? Even when we bind him, he’s still able to send Stone flying?”

“How can he be this powerful?” The other Emperor-class golems were all stunned.

“Stone, try again. You have to be able to grab him. We’ll help you!”

“If you can grapple him, he’ll be dead for sure.”

“Alright. I will try again.” The stone golem once more bounded forwards. This time, the swordsman golem also transformed into a single sword that hovered above the eight-armed knife golem. The eight-armed knife golem charged towards Ning as well, with the sword ready to strike at any moment. As for the stone golem, it also charged forwards at the same time.

“Need my help, Darknorth?” The Ninedust Sectlord was still in his oceanic form, but he wasn’t in a hurry to intervene just yet.

“No need,” Ning sent back. “I’ll feign weakness for now. Wait for a critical moment before intervening.”

“Alright,” Ninedust replied.

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The tri-colored rope coiled towards Ning as the swordsman golem, the eight-armed golem, and the stone golem attacked simultaneously.

A fierce light flashed through Ning’s eyes. “This is the right moment.” Swoosh! Ning flew straight towards the eight-armed knife golem and the swordsman golem. The two golems naturally struck out at him, sending streaks of mysterious knife-light and sharp sword-light slicing towards him.

Boom! Boom! Ning responded with just two streaks of mist-formed sword energy; this was his Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker.

This stance seemed clumsy and straightforward, but it contained the profundity of his Omega Sword Dao and his other stances, allowing him to easily strike his foes head-on.

These two strikes from his two Northbow swords contained power that was comparable to that of the eight lords of the Sacred Cities. The eight-armed golem and the swordsman golem were both sent flying backwards. It must be remembered that even the strongest golem, the stone golem, was unable to withstand this stance. How could these two possibly do so?

“Now come here.” Ning’s lips split open into a grin as he faced the stone golem that was charging towards him, arms spread wide. The swordsman golem and the eight-armed golem had already been knocked flying backwards; for the next few moments, they wouldn’t be able to assist the stone golem.

Whooooosh. Ning’s sword-light drifted out in an ephemeral, mysterious fashion. This was his Shadowless stance!

Although the tri-colored ropes were slowing him down, preventing his sword-light from being truly traceless and shadow less, it was still incredibly unpredictable. Although the stone golem was extremely strong and ferocious, it had major flaws as well; namely, its speed and agility! When Ning executed this

Shadowless stance and infused the [Heartsword] arts into it, the stone golem was only able to block a single one of Ning's swords with its six arms. It was unable to withstand the others.

Swish! The Northbow swords furiously and rapidly began to coil around the stone golem like a soft rope, tying dozens of knots around it.

"No!" the stone golem let out a furious bellow. It had wanted to grapple Ning, but instead it had been captured.

"Get in here." Completely bound, the stone golem was unable to fight back at all as Ning sent out his will, forcefully drawing the golem into his estate-world.

"Ninedust, move to block the swordsman golem." Ning turned, focusing his gaze on the nearby eight-armed golem which was once more seeking to charge at him.

"Alright." Ninedust was excited as well. The other five Emperor-class golems, however, began to panic!

Ning's initial clashes against them had been nothing more than probes designed to help him understand what the golems were skilled in, so as to prepare a proper battle plan! The initial clashes had let him understand that the flame golem, lightning golem, and mist golem all had abilities that were similar to 'invulnerable forms'; there was nothing he could do to them at all. Thus, Ning turned his attention to the other three golems.

The stone golem had seemed to be the strongest and most ferocious, but its flaws were also the most obvious. In the end, it was the easiest one to deal with.

"Not good."

"Stone's been captured."

"This Daolord is too powerful."

"Master commands us to retreat immediately!"

"Master has commanded a retreat."

"Withdraw!"

The three clan leaders had immediately received word that even though their six Emperor-class golems had assaulted Daolord Darknorth in unison, one of them had ended up being captured. They immediately issued an order to withdraw! The loss of every single Emperor-class golem, to the three great clans, was quite painful.

Swoosh! Swoosh! The eight-armed golem and the swordsman golem immediately began to flee.

"You aren't going anywhere." Ning's heartworld projection and nine novessence arts were completely focused on suppressing the eight-armed golem and swordsman golem.

Ning's first target was the eight-armed golem, and he charged towards it by himself. Both sides were being slowed and restricted, but Ning was faster than the eight-armed golem to begin with! The difference between them in power was apparent.

“Run! Run!” The eight-armed golem was panicking.

“You aren’t running anywhere.” Ning caught up, then used his Omega Sword Dao – Shadowless to once more launch an unpredictable sword-art attack against the golem.

The eight-armed golem was clearly quite agile, and its eight arms set up a mysterious defensive pattern to defend. As for Ning, he alternated between the Shadowless stance and the Heavenbreaker stance, sometimes also switching to the incredibly fast Blood Drop stance! Just three breaths of time later, the eight-armed golem’s defenses had been penetrated. One of Ning’s swords wrapped directly around the eight-armed golem’s waist, the Northbow sword having transformed to become long and soft as it wrapped itself around the golem like a ball.

“Come here.” Ning drew the eight-armed golem into his estate-world as well.

“How can this be happening?”

“How can this Daolord be so powerful?”

“Daolord Darknorth, you really are courting death!” The three golems which made up the tri-colored ropes were howling furiously, but they were even weaker than the eight-armed golem in close combat. When used to bind and slow Ning, they were quite effective, but once they stopped doing so and Ning was able to unleash his full power... their defeat would be swift and sure.

“Ahahaha! None of you are escaping!” Ninedust transformed into a sea of water as he furiously battled against the swordsman golem. The water coiled around the golem, with Ninedust’s upper body visible as he used his longstaff to batter the swordsman golem at will. Given that the swordsman golem was being affected by both the heartworld projection and the nine novessence arts, Ninedust was able to completely dominate it. It had no chance to flee at all.

“No, no, NO! Get the hell away from me!” The swordsman golem was furiously struggling but unable to shake off Ninedust. Finally, Ning arrived. With Ning and Ninedust fighting together the swordsman golem was caught in literally a single second, then drawn into the estate-world.

The three elemental golems realized that there was nothing they could do. They had no choice but to quickly flee and retreat.

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Tianello, Maji, and the others hadn’t moved too far away. They were able to watch this fight from afar. Truth be told, their situation was quite grim; they were terrified that the three great clans would view them as being a party to this and blame them, and thus they didn’t dare to move too far away.

“How terrifying.” They stared at the battlefield, the Cranesoar Mountains having been reduced to rubble long ago. The few mountains that remained were covered with the vicious scars of battle. All of this had been caused by the shockwaves generated from the earlier clashes. It must be remembered that this was a planet the Sithe had created and placed within the Stone Hellephant Wall. This planet was extremely stable and sturdy, but the shockwaves from this battle alone had been enough to annihilate most of the nearby mountains. This was more than enough to terrify Tianello and the others.

“Those two Daolords actually won. They actually won. They beat the three great clans.” Tianello, Maji, and the others could hardly believe it.

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“Ahaha, we actually acquired three Emperor-class golems.” Ninedust said delightedly, “How absolutely wonderful. I hope they send a few more over for us to capture.”

“Don’t get cocky.” Ning had a serious look on his face. “Even though I had my heartworld projection and my nine novessence arts active, the restrictive effected generated by just three of those golems was enough to drop me to 70% of my maximum power. I doubt the three great clans sent their full forces against us. If they were able to drop me to 40% of my full power, things will get dangerous.”

“Agreed.” Startled, Ninedust immediately nodded. “How strong are these three great clans, exactly?”

“I’m not sure.” Ning shook his head, then grinned. “But those three golems should know.”

“The three golems?” Ninedust’s eyes lit up.

“We need to bind them immediately and have them spill the secrets they know regarding the three great clans,” Ning said. “Only when you understand both yourself and your enemy shall you be the victor in all your battles! Based on what I can see thus far, the three great clans are much more powerful than we had predicted.”

“Agreed.” And so, Ning and Ninedust immediately began to bind the three captured golems to themselves.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 34: The Stone Hellephant Wall Chapter 16: The Three Great Clans

Deep within the subterranean underground of this world. The three silver men were once again standing by the bubbling lake of lava, but they were no longer as calm as they were before this.

“This Daolord Darknorth not only managed to defeat six Emperor-class golems by himself, he actually captured three of them.” The muscular silver man said seriously, “This level of power has completely surpassed that of any ‘supreme Daolord’ we have ever heard of. Something like this has never happened since our three great clans have started our joint rule over this planet.”

“Yes. Even though a few supreme Daolords arise from time to time, all of them were completely crushed when facing six Emperor-class golems.” The silver-haired man’s eyes were filled with murder. “This Daolord Darknorth is definitely the most powerful Daolord our three clans have ever encountered.”

“One on six, he managed to capture three Emperor-class golems...” The skinny silver man shook his head as well.

This man was powerful, more powerful than any ‘Daolord’ should be. Still... this was what they believed because their horizons were limited. In the Endless Territories, a vast horde of Daolords would arise every era of 108,000 chaos cycles, and there were occasionally one or two who were able to completely eclipse all other Daolords. In this era, those two were Winesage and Ji Ning.

“It seems we have to personally intervene if we wish to defeat Daolord Darknorth.” The skinny silver man’s eyes were filled with the desire to do battle. “How about this? I’ll spar against this Daolord Darknorth first. If I’m able to kill him by myself, I will. If I’m not, you two can join in.”

“We can’t be the slightest bit overconfident against a foe like this. Let’s use our full power immediately,” the silver-haired man said.

“Agreed. We need to go to maximum power immediately. This Daolord Darknorth was actually able to defeat six Emperor-class golems... that means he is already on our level,” the muscular silver man said.

“We have to completely overwhelm and crush him in order to kill him. Not only should all three of us work together, all of the Emperor-class golems in our three clans which possess invulnerable forms should be activated as well.”

“What?”

“We’re going to activate all our golems with invulnerable forms?” The other two silver men were shocked by this. Any of the three were capable of fighting Darknorth; for all three to work together was already an incredible show of power. Were they really going to send an group of Emperor-class golems as well?”

“If we’re going to go at him full-force, then let’s make sure he has no chance at all,” the muscular silver man said. “Daolord Darknorth is the most powerful enemy our three great clans have ever encountered in our history. Thus... let’s give him the respect he deserves. All three clan leaders and all invulnerable Emperor-class golems are going to attack simultaneously. Hmph. He should be proud, even in death.”

“Agreed.”

“To die to such a force is indeed prideworthy.” The other two both laughed.

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“On my orders, activate all 156 clan-guarding formations and activate the Sithe disc. Be on maximum alert.”

“On my orders, activate all 180 formations and activate the Sithe disc.”

“Everyone is to be on maximum alert. Activate all formations and activate the Sithe disc.” The three clan leaders send orders to their clans. Their first goal was to protect and ensure the safety of their clans. If their clans were doomed, their own survival wouldn’t matter. After having undergone the Ritual Sacrificium they were no longer real ‘cultivators’ and were unable to have any progeny of their own. Thus, if the other members of the clan all perished it would represent the true and final destruction of their lineage... and once they reached their lifespan limits they would die as well.

Thus, the protection of the clan superseded everything.

“What’s going on?”

“All clan-protecting formations have been activated? Even the Sithe disc is being activated? I’ve never heard of the clan entering such a state of readiness.”

“Is the Daolord Darknorth who just challenged our three great clans truly that powerful?”

All three clans were thrown into a state of confusion, with the elites and high-level members of the clans feeling rather stunned. This was definitely the highest possible level of vigilance the three clans had ever activated!

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Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!!! A total of eleven figures shot through the skies, with the three silver men at the head. Behind them were a series of Emperor-class golems that all looked different, including the mist golem, fire golem, and lightning golem which had attacked Ning earlier. These eight Emperor-class golems were all of the invulnerable golems which the three great clans possessed.

“Daolord Darknorth’s sword-arts are inscrutable and mysterious, and he’s skilled at capturing golems. However, this time we’ve only brought golems with invulnerable forms with us; he won’t have a chance to capture them at all,” the skinny silver man said with a cold smile. “Eight Emperor-class golems and the three of us... hmph!”

“He’s going to be absolutely demolished.”

“After undergoing the Ritual Sacrificium, the three of us have become true members of the Sithe race and gained incredible power. Even though we are the lowliest, most ordinary members of the Sithe race, we’re still far beyond these Emperor-class golems in power. Any of us three can fight Daolord Darknorth on equal footing and perhaps even kill him.”

The three silver men were extremely confident in their chances. They had no equals in this world and so they only sparred against each other and the Emperor-class golems. As a result, they knew that any of them would be capable of easily defeating six Emperor-class golems.

They represented the true apex of combat power in this world.

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The Cranesoar Mountains had long ago been reduced to rubble. The battle between Ning, Ninedust, and the six original Emperor-class golems had completely annihilated the area.

Atop the rubble was a temporal acceleration cabin. Within the cabin, Ning and Ninedust were busy binding the golems while accelerating the flow of time. Binding Emperor-class golems was no easy task, and they had no time to waste. Ning and Ninedust both knew that the next attack from the three great clans would come quite soon, and so they had to immediately work to learn more about the three great clans and thus prepare accordingly.

The three Emperor-class golems were all comparable to supreme Daolords. Fortunately, Ning and Ninedust were both strong enough to bind them by force.

“Success.” Ning was the first to take command over an Emperor-class golem. A look of respect instantly appeared in the green eyes of the six-armed stone golem. “Master.”

“You successfully bound one?” Ninedust turned to glance at Ning. He himself was still busy using all his power to try and bind his.

“Hah! I was faster than you,” Ning grinned, then began to work on the swordsman golem. “I have some questions for you.” Although Ning’s full energy was focused on binding the swordsman golem, this wasn’t too mentally taxing and so he began to question the stone golem. “How strong are the three great clans, exactly? How much hidden power do they have?”

“Master,” the stone golem said respectfully, “All Emperor-class golems had their memories of life prior to joining the three great clans completely wiped! Or to be precise... the previous golem-spirits were eradicated while our souls were slowly nurtured and strengthened by the three great clans. Thus, we don’t know much about their most important secrets. Over the course of countless years, however, we have learned a few things based on our observations.”

“Speak,” Ning urged. These Emperor-class golems had simply been living with the three great clans for far too long; no one in the clans themselves had been alive for as long as they had! Although some of the most important clan secrets would never be divulged, a few traces would inevitably spill out over the course of many years.

“Long, long ago, this world was in a state of chaos before the three great clans had risen,” the stone golem began, “But then three people who referred to themselves as ‘Sithe’ established three mighty clans. They managed to capture one or two Emperor-class golems from a secret place, then wiped out the original golem-spirits...”

“In each generation, the strongest members of the three great clans have always been those three clan leaders. Each time, they start off as normal cultivators, but once they become clan leaders they will be transformed into silver men who will gain inconceivable power,” the stone golem said. “And every so often, the three great clans are able to capture another Emperor-class golem or two from that secret place.”

“Thus... over the course of countless years, every single one of the three great clans has gained a total of at least five Emperor-class golems. Emperor-class golems are what the three great clans usually use to tame their foes! But their greatest power lies in the clan leaders themselves. The clan leaders are all incredibly powerful, and each one of them is on par with you, Master,” the stone golem said.

Ning turned pale when he heard this. “All three of the clan leaders are able to defeat six Emperor-class golems by themselves?”

“Yes!” The stone golem replied, “They often spar against us and so we know how powerful the clan leaders are.”

Ning felt a sense of shock upon hearing this. Judging from the sound of things, the three clan leaders were what truly gave the three clans power! The successive generations of clan leaders would occasionally enter that mysterious place to capture a few Emperor-class golems, allowing them to build up quite a stockpile over the course of many years.

Since this mysterious place held Emperor-class golems within it, Ning suspected that it probably held the secrets of the Sithe within it.

“And where is this secret place?” Ning asked.

"I don't know. Although we were all captured from that place, our original golem-spirits were all wiped out," the stone golem said.

Ning nodded slowly. They really were being quite careful, wanting to ensure that no information leaked out.

Time continued to pass, one minute at a time. Ninedust managed to bind the eight-armed golem as well, while Ning completed the binding of the swordsman golem. The information they gained from these two golems was essentially the same.

Whoosh. Ning put away the temporal acceleration cabin. He stood next to Ninedust, the three Emperor-class golems behind them.

"Here they come." Ning stared towards the distant skies, where eleven streaks of light were flying towards them. Leading the group was indeed a trio of silver men.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 34: The Stone Hellephant Wall Chapter 17: The Silver Men

The three silver men all had very distinct auras. They weren't like actual living beings; rather, they seemed almost like golems. Their entire bodies were composed of silver, and Ji Ning couldn't help but feel as though he was looking at that onyx humanoid creature he had encountered in that cave within the Terror Starsea! That onyx humanoid had been 540,000 meters tall and pitch-black in color, and it had a giant hole in its chest which Ning and Ninedust had flown out of.

"These three silver men make me think of that onyx humanoid we encountered previously," Ning mused. "However, there's an enormous difference in the aura of power. The onyx humanoid had been able to slay a Hegemon on the spot and critically injure a second one, causing the second one to die later on. It was far, far more powerful than these silver men."

"Darknorth." The nearby Ninedust had a solemn look on his face as well as he sent mentally, "Those three silver men remind me of that black creature we found in the cave."

"Yes, they are quite similar," Ning sent back. "It seems these three clans truly do have a deep connection to the Sithe."

"They should be significantly more powerful than us. What should we do?" Ninedust asked.

"Let's follow the first plan for now," Ning said.

Boom! His awesome heartforce projection came crashing down, bringing with it its illusory mountains, rivers, and the dazzling sword mountain in the center! The giant heartworld projection pressed down furiously against the three silver men and the eight Emperor-class golems, causing the eight golems to instantly slow down. The three silver men, however, were still able to move at a hundred times the speed of light.

"The three of them weren't slowed down at all by the pressure of my heartworld projection?" Ning was secretly shocked. "Then take this as well!" Ning willed nine energy dragons to come thundering out of his body, coiling around each other.

In truth, Ninedust's Ripplewater art was incredibly powerful as well, especially now that Ninedust had reached an even higher level of expertise. Given his mastery of the Dao of Water, his Ripplewater art was on the same level as Ning's nine novessence arts. However, there was no way for him to 'fold' it over Ning's arts; if they tried, they would interfere with each other.

Boom! The nine energy dragons swept outwards. The three silver men could feel the pressure, but they were still able to maintain a speed of a hundred times the speed of light. The eight Emperor-class golems behind them, however, slowed down dramatically. They were now able to move at less than fifty times the speed of light; just flying through the skies was quite difficult for them.

"The eight of you should join forces," the silver man who was the leader of the Fumo clan said.

"Acknowledged."

"Acknowledged."

"Acknowledged." The eight Emperor-class golems were looking rather bedraggled, but they immediately transformed into streaks of energy that formed a five-colored rope and a tri-colored rope! For five Emperor-class golems to work together perfectly was the apex of coordination possible for them. The five-colored rope was extremely powerful in particular. Still, with the heartworld projection and the nine novessence arts weighing down on the two ropes, they still flew quite slowly. They held back the entire squad as a result.

"Are the three of you sure that you wish to take on such a dangerous task? I don't want you to be taken away right after I spent all that effort binding you," Ning sent mentally to the three Emperor-class golems behind him.

"Don't worry, Master. We can hold on," the swordsman golem said.

"Ninedust, if the situation looks grim you should immediately take the three away. Emperor-class golems aren't easily acquired, after all," Ning said.

"Leave it to me." Ninedust nodded.

Ning immediately manifested three heads and six arms. Six Northbow swords in hand, he immediately disappeared without a trace.

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The three silver men flying through the skies were shocked by this.

"He suddenly vanished?"

"Daolord Darknorth just vanished." The three of them discovered, to their amazement, that they couldn't find any trace of Ning at all.

Ning was able to use his Shadowless evasion art to its full potential within the domain of his heartworld projection and his nine novessence arts.

"Careful. This Daolord Darknorth is even more powerful than we expected. He didn't use this strange evasion art earlier," the muscular silver man sent mentally in a serious voice. The other two clan leaders

grew cautious as well. Although they remained extremely confident in their abilities, the fact that they couldn't find any trace of Ning caused them to feel a headache oncoming.

"Hurry over here. Let's force him to reveal himself," the silver-haired man sent mentally to the eight Emperor-class golems.

"Acknowledged." Whoosh! Instantly, the five-colored rope began to expand dramatically in size. Much like how Ninedust was able to transform into a sea-sized wave, the five-colored rope was able to transform into a five-colored ocean. With expanded size came lessened power, but only by covering enough of the surrounding area would they be able to force Daolord Darknorth to reveal himself.

Rumble... the five-colored sea furiously spread outwards to cover a million, ten million, a hundred million kilometers. It continuously expanded, quickly covering the area around the three silver men.

"Hmph." A cold snort rang out as a white-robed youth showed himself. He had three heads, six arms, and wielded six Northbow swords in his hands. His figure looked like a sword as he used the Blood Drop evasion art, tearing through the five-colored ocean as he shot towards the nearest silver man, the skinny one.

"Right on cue." The silver man revealed an excited look as he readied the silver spikes in his two hands.

Swish! Swish! The spikes released ear-piercing screeches as they stabbed towards Ning in an almost dreamlike manner.

"Sithe, eh?" Ning was filled with the intent to do battle. His six Northbow swords transformed into six streaks of mist-formed sword energy as he began to launch a furious assault against the silver men.

Clank! The mist-formed sword clashed directly against the sharp spike, the terrifying collision generating rippling shockwaves that could be seen with the naked eye and which spread out in every direction. A giant crater was blasted into the land beneath it, while the few remaining parts of the Cranesoar Mountains were smashed into dust by the shockwave.

As for the distant Tianello and Maji, they and the other cultivators who were watching were completely stunned.

"Utterly terrifying."

"This is t-t-terrif... is this the true power of the three great clans? So they had forces even more powerful than those Emperor-class golems!"

"Is this the power of the one named Daolord Darknorth?"

All of them felt stunned. They had already been amazed by how Ning had been able to defeat the six Emperor-class golems by himself, but that extended battle had only resulted in the partial destruction of the Cranesoar Mountains. In this battle between Ning and the three clan leaders, however, the very first exchange of blows had already completely destroyed what remained of the mountains. Even the ground around the mountain had begun to crack into a spiderweb of crevices!

This show of force was enough to terrify anyone. Even Daolords of the Fourth Step who dared to move in closer would be instantly annihilated.

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In truth, others on this world aside from Tianello and Maji were paying attention to this battle! Ning's direct challenge to the three great clans had drawn quite a bit of attention, especially after he had defeated the first six Emperor-class golems that had been sent against him. This had stunned every clan in the world, causing all of them to hasten to the mountains and watch what would happen next.

"So this is the true power of the three great clans!" The other six 'great clans' and the weaker clans were all stunned as they watched from afar. They felt completely breathless. There was no way at all for them to fight back against the overwhelming power of the three great clans.

In their heart of hearts, many of them had dreamed of one day defeating the three great clans and becoming the rulers of this world... but now, they felt a sense of complete powerlessness. The difference in power was simply too vast!

"That Daolord Darknorth is ridiculously strong as well." They were amazed by the power of the three great clans, but they were also stunned by the strength of Daolord Darknorth. Daolord Darknorth was so strong that he was able to easily annihilate any of the clans in this world, aside from the three principal clans.

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Ning and the skinny silver man began to furiously battle against each other, and the terrifying shockwaves generated by their blows blasted out in every direction.

"What incredible power... but what a low level of insight!" Ning and the skinny silver man exchanged over a hundred blows in that brief instant but only fought to a standstill.

In strength alone, Ning's opponent was actually quite a bit stronger than him; Ning was only able to match him through usage of the Heavenbreaker stance. In terms of speed, the silver man moved at a hundred times the speed of light! Even with Ning's nine novessence arts and heartworld projection active, the silver man was still able to maintain this speed. This was because the man was simply too powerful; he was completely capable of resisting the pressure and maintaining this level of speed.

However... the silver man's level of insight into the Dao was just too low! Ning felt that it was perhaps weaker than that of many second-tier Daolords. It was perhaps just barely on par with the likes of Patriarch Clearwind!

It must be understood that for cultivators who made it into the higher ranks, their power generally stemmed from their mastery of the Dao. Ning had an incredibly high level of insight into the Dao, the [Heartsword] art, and the Northbow swords... that was why he possessed such power! The silver men had a much lower level of insight into the Dao, but they were much like golems; their speed and strength were incredible, allowing them to fight Ning to a standstill.

"He has an overwhelming amount of power but is only able to put a fraction of it to good use. If I had such speed and strength, I'd be able to take down ten of them." Ning couldn't help but sigh. "No wonder those three Emperor-class golems we just bound said that so long as Ninedust helps them out while they are working together, they won't be captured."

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Book 34: The Stone Hellephant Wall Chapter 18: All Abilities Unleashed

Ji Ning had been able to easily capture the Emperor-class golems because he had a high level of insight into the Dao. His Shadowless stance was completely unpredictable, while his Blood Drop stance was incredibly fast, making it hard for the golems to defend against them.

As for the silver men? Although they were strong and fast, their strikes were too direct and clumsy! Although these clumsy strikes were very forceful, it wasn't too hard to block them; at most, you would be knocked flying from the power. In a one-on-one fight, they might be able to capture an Emperor-class golem, but all three of them were working together and were being assisted by Ninedust and Ning. It was highly unlikely that any of them would be recaptured.

"I'm clearly stronger than him, but I'm unable to dominate him." The skinny silver man sent mentally, "Hurry over here. Surround him and kill him."

"Coming."

"Let's go." The other two silver men charged forwards as well.

Surrounded by the five-colored sea of energy, Ning was weakened and only able to unleash 80% of his full power! Despite that, his high level of insight into the Dao allowed him to fight the skinny silver man to a standstill.

"Attack!" The muscular silver man wielded two silver warhammers while the silver-haired man wielded a pair of long silver sabers. All three of the silver men began to surround and furiously attack Ning.

"Die."

"Die!"

"He's dead meat." The three silver men were brimming with killing intent. At the same time, the tri-colored rope snaked over towards Ning as well. However, the three Emperor-class golems and Ninedust immediately transformed into streaks of light that shot towards the tri-colored ropes.

"Your opponent is us!" Ninedust transformed into a vast wave that wrapped itself around the tri-colored rope, while the three Emperor-class golems launched repeated attacks that caused the tri-colored rope to break apart, reform, and break apart again repeatedly.

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The tri-colored rope had been tied down by Ninedust and the three Emperor-class golems.

The five-colored rope had transformed into a five-color sea that was weakening Ning.

The three silver men were attacking Ning at the same time.

This was an utterly apocalyptic battle! Massive shockwaves blasted the surrounding area repeatedly. The nearby mountains had long ago been annihilated, while the earth itself had caved in. The other six great clans and the standard clans who were watching from afar were in a state of shock. This was a

battle that engendered both admiration and despair in their hearts. They weren't even close to being able to fight against foes like this.

"Aha! You are too weak. You clearly possess tremendous power, but you are only able to put a fraction of it to good use." Ning was in his three-headed, six-armed form as he fought against the three by himself, but he wasn't at any disadvantage at all.

"How can this be?"

"How is this possible? Why can't we even suppress or dominate him?"

"How can he be this strong?" The three silver men were all stunned. Just one of them was enough to fight Ning to a standstill... so why was it that all three of them working together were only achieving the same effect?!

This was because when Ning was fighting against the six Emperor-class golems and the skinny silver man, his strategy was to fight them head-on and meet them attack for attack! Now that three silver men were fighting him at the same time, Ning primarily relied on his defensive sword-arts and only launched the occasional attack. His Soleheart stance and his Yin-Yang stance were simply too powerful, especially after the Northbow swords had absorbed all of that frozen ninesong pith. His defensive sword-arts had reached an incredible level of prowess.

Ning's defensive sword-arts were so perfect that he would be able to hold out against anything save for an utterly overwhelmingly superior level of power. Given how clumsy these silver men's attacks were and how low a level of insight into the Dao they had, Ning found it very easy to defend against them.

"Forget about three; I'd probably be able to defend against six of these silver men," Ning mused.

"Take rope form and bind him!" the muscular silver Fumo clan leader sent mentally to the five-colored sea. Instantly, the five-colored sea began to rapidly shrink in size. It once more transformed into the five-colored rope and coiled towards Ning.

"Rope?" Ning immediately moved. Whoosh! The five-colored rope was only able to move at less than fifty times the speed of light due to the heartworld projection and the nine novessence arts, while Ning was able to move much faster. He was able to effortlessly dodge the five-colored rope and immediately used his Shadowless evasion art to disappear without a trace.

"Damn."

"Once our golems take rope form and shrink in size, Daolord Darknorth is able to easily avoid it." The three silver men were beginning to grow anxious. Ning was no fool; he wasn't just going to stand there like an idiot and allow the five-colored rope to bind him. The reason why he had done so against the tri-colored rope in his first battle against the six golems was because he was so completely sure in his chances that he didn't even want to bother with dodging, instead choosing to exchange attacks. Now, however, Ning didn't dare to act with such arrogance.

"Golems, maintain a size of ten million kilometers," the silver-haired man was forced to order.

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At a size of ten million kilometers, the combined attacks of the three silver men ensured that there was nowhere for Ning to run. This size was enough to keep Ning at just 70% of his maximum power.

“There’s just nothing we can do to him.” The three silver men furiously assaulted Ning, but even at 70% power Ning’s defenses were airtight, even though he was now forced to completely focus on defense and was only able to launch the occasional attack.

Even if another silver man came, Ning would still be able to hold on.

“Nonti clan leader and Juwah clan leader, the three of us have done everything we can. This Daolord Darknorth’s defensive sword-arts are even more formidable than his offensive sword-arts. There is nothing we can do to him,” the muscular silver man sent mentally. “The three of us and these golems are completely unable to kill him. There’s nothing else we can do.”

“Yes, we’re out of other options.”

“I really didn’t want to do this... but we’ll have to use it.”

The three silver men exchanged a glance. This Daolord Darknorth was the most dangerous disaster to ever befall their three great clans! All three of them were on par with him, but even working together with the assistance of the five-colored rope they were still unable to do anything to him. Their failure to kill him was already shaking their control over this world. They absolutely could not permit this to continue.

“Die.” The muscular silver man produced a deep-blue oval treasure that was covered with layers of wriggling runes.

“Daolord Darknorth, you should feel proud to die to this Sithe treasure.” The skinny silver man produced an ancient banner that was blood-red and covered with a strange, evil-looking beast diagram.

“Die.” The silver-haired man took out a black bottle.

Ning immediately felt a sense of danger. “Not good. Come forth!” Ning produced a snow-white lotus flower in his hands. The lotus instantly bloomed, with Ning standing at the very center. The layers of lotus leaves which appeared around Ning began to swivel, while Ning was within the bud at the very center which was completely covered by the first layer of petals. Ning was able to see through the semi-translucent petals and sense what was happening outside.

It must be remembered that Ning and Ninedust had acquired Winesage’s vast hoard of treasures as well as the treasures owned by Timedream, Kingfreak, and numerous second-tier Daolords. Some of the weaker ones that weren’t very useful, he had left behind for the Three Realms or to Su Youji and the others, but the useful ones he had kept on him. This one was one of the three most supreme defensive treasures in Ning’s possession.

Screeeech! The layers of wriggly runes on the deep blue oval disc in the hands of the muscular silver man suddenly began to light up, emanating an ear-piercing screech as they did so. At the same time, a light blue sonic wave burst forth from the treasure and shot towards Ning.

The light blue sonic wave easily pierced straight through the snow-white lotus; the lotus wasn't able to defend against it at all. Ning struck out with his sword, but it didn't make any contact with the sonic wave at all.

Rumble...

The sound dove into his body, smashing straight against Ning's soul and truesoul. Ning's truesoul and soul were protected by the azureflower mist energy; although both trembled slightly, they didn't suffer any harm at all and managed to endure the hit head-on.

"What a strange attack. It struck at the soul and truesoul?" Ning was secretly stunned. He stared intently at his foes.

Whoosh. The attacks from the other two silver men arrived as well. The black bottle had already shattered, a black flame erupting from it which quickly 'glued' itself over the snow-white lotus flower. Hissing crackles could be heard as the snow-white flower immediately began to tremble, but then the lotus began to swivel once more. Although the black fire which had been 'pasted' on the petals were enough to cause them to tremble, the other petals helped spread the pressure and thus the flower withstood the attack.

Finally, the power of the black flames was completely used up. The snow-white lotus flower had dimmed considerably as well and was rather wobbly.

The strange beast depicted on the ancient blood banner suddenly let out a furious bellow. Boom! A blood-red beast came flying out from the banner, which evaporated in its wake. The blood-red beast's eyes gleamed with brutal, murderous red light. It seemed to represent the incarnation of slaughter itself as it charged straight towards the snow-white lotus.

Boom! The snow-white lotus continued to swivel as it strove to hold on, but in the end it was still broken apart. After shattering the lotus, the blood-red beast charged straight towards Ning.

"Hmph." Ning no longer sensed much danger, and so he struck out with his sword to defend. Boom! A terrifying explosion rang out.

The blood-red beast repeatedly struck out with its sharp claws while Ning used his swords to defend. In the end, Ning was able to survive thanks to his powerful defensive sword-arts, with the Hegemon armor also having helped him endure the many blows.

"AWOOO!" The blood-red beast grew dimmer and dimmer, first turning an ordinary red, then turning pink. Finally, it unhappily raised its head to let out a resentful howl before completely vanishing.

Ning landed on the ground, a hint of blood on the corner of his lips. He glanced at the three silver men in the distance, looks of shock on their faces.

"Come, let's do that again," Ning growled. "Let's see if you have more treasures or if I have more treasures." As Ning spoke he waved his hand and caused one treasure after another to appear in front of him, not suppressing their auras in the slightest.

"B-but..." The three silver men exchanged glances. They weren't able to beat Darknorth in a straight fight. Now, it seemed as though Daolord Darknorth had quite a few treasures of his own. Every single

treasure they possessed had been laboriously acquired from that secret place and had been left behind by the Sithe. There were very few of them, and each one they used up represented a permanent loss.

“What should we do?” The three silver men felt rather lost. They suddenly realized that there was nothing at all they could do to this Daolord Darknorth.

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Book 34: The Stone Hellephant Wall Chapter 19: Darknorth Palace

“Haha, treasures? We brothers have plenty of ’em!” Ninedust had transformed into a vast wave, but he now manifested his upper body and sent out one powerful treasure after another to appear in front of him. The Daolords of this world didn’t have that many treasures, but Ninedust and Ji Ning came from the Endless Territories. As a result, they had quite a few.

“What?!” The three silver men saw the many treasures hovering in front of the distant Ninedust and could sense the terrifying ripples of power emanating from them.

“Even the weaker Daolord has that many treasures on him?”

“Where the hell did they find so many treasures? Isn’t the secret location accessible to our three clans alone? We’ve completely searched through every corner of this entire world; the only place with many treasures secreted within it is that secret place. The other places shouldn’t have that many treasures. Where did these two Daolords find so many?”

The three silver men were extremely anxious. They exchanged glances at each other. “Fall back for now,” the muscular silver man commanded. Whoosh. Whoosh. The five-colored rope and the tri-colored rope began to retreat, moving towards the three silver men.

Ninedust and the three golems flew towards Ning. The two sides stared at each other from afar.

“If you want to fight, let’s fight,” Ninedust called out loudly. “What’s the point of just standing there blankly? It’s gonna be a war of attrition via treasures, right? Come on! You use one, I use one... let’s see who has more. I want to see if you end up dead or if we end up dead!”

“Damn.” The three silver men were absolutely enraged. They were exalted figures who were the absolute rulers over this world. They have never been challenged and mocked like this before! They were enraged, but after this battle they realized that there was nothing they could do in battle to this Daolord Darknorth. His defenses were incredibly tough and airtight, giving them no chance to win at all; if they wanted to win, they would have to use the treasures the Sithe had left behind. Unfortunately, they had extremely few of those treasures! Their treasures possessed great power... but it seemed as though these two Daolords also had quite a few treasures of similar power.

“If we really do compete against them in treasures, once we clean out their stockpile we might be able to kill... but what if we’re the ones who are cleaned out instead? What should we do?” the skinny silver man sent mentally.

“If we use up all the treasures, we won’t be able to pose any threat to Daolord Darknorth at all.” The silver-haired man sent back mentally, “By then, he’ll have nothing to fear at all and will become even more of a problem.”

“Agreed.”

The many treasures they had accumulated were the final cards they had to play. They weren't willing to use them all up. If they did, they might win... but they might also lose! They weren't willing to accept what losing would entail.

“Daolord Darknorth... let's just wait and see who has the last laugh.” The muscular silver man let out a cold snort. “Let's go.”

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! The three silver men led the eight Emperor-class golems soaring through the skies as they departed.

Ning watched from afar as they left, a hint of a smile playing around his lips.

“Darknorth, what should we do next?” Ninedust began to worry. “They are more powerful than us, after all. Your sword-arts are defensively strong enough to ensure they can't do anything to us, but we can't do anything to them either. If this stalemate continues, there's no way we'll be able to find the treasures hidden within this Stone Hellephant Wall.”

Ning nodded. The reason why they were fighting and risking their lives was to gain the treasures of the Sithe! Just from the Emperor-class golems and the three silver men alone, both Ning and Ninedust felt absolutely certain that there was definitely a Sithe treasure trove here!

“Let's establish ourselves in this world first,” Ning said. “Then we'll search for that secret place.”

“That's our only choice.” Ninedust nodded.

“Arise.” Ning turned to glance at the land behind him. The Cranesoar Mountains had been leveled long ago, but with but a thought Ning caused his heartworld projection to descend, using it to take control over the local earth and stones to establish a new, towering mountain that was ten thousand kilometers tall. At the very peak of the mountain, a top-grade Eternal estate descended in the form of an Immortal's palace. At the very top of the palace gates, two characters could be seen: ‘DARK’ ‘NORTH’!

“I, Daolord Darknorth, on this day do establish the Darknorth Palace here. I do not seek hegemony; I only seek to cultivate the Dao. Those who stand in the way of my Dao shall end up like the mountains and rivers around the three great clans... destroyed!” Ning flew towards the entrance of the Darknorth Palace, sending his voice out to fill every single inch of this entire world. At the same time, he enveloped the entire planet with his heartworld projection, sending it smashing downwards towards the three great clans.

The three great clans were protected by layers of formations and barriers, but the surrounding mountains and rivers were instantly annihilated by the tremendous force of Ning's heartworld projection, strong enough to slay even Daolords of the Fourth Step with ease. The area around the three great clans was instantly obliterated and rendered incredibly unsightly.

Everyone in the world from ordinary mortals to the three great clans all heard his voice.

“H-he actually dares to trample over our...” the silver-haired silver man's face was ugly to behold.

“Damn him. Damn him!” The skinny silver man was enraged as well.

Ning was trampling over the three great clan's dignity, so as to establish his own power. This was a way for him to show that the Darknorth Palace didn't give a damn about the three great clans at all!

"He claims that he doesn't seek hegemony and only seeks to cultivate the Dao?" The muscular silver man sent puzzledly to the others, "If he only seeks to cultivate the Dao, why has he chosen to challenge our clans?"

"I think his true goal lies with that secret place of ours," the skinny silver man said with a cold smile.

"Yes, that has to be it." The silver-haired man's voice was equally cold. The secret place was what the three great clans relied upon and was for their use only. There was no way any other cultivators would be permitted to so much as find it. As they saw it, given how Daolord Darknorth already stood at the very apex of power in this world and had nothing to fear, he definitely was coveting their secret place.

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Ning's voice echoed throughout this entire world, with even mortal children able to hear it clearly. Everyone knew that this 'Daolord Darknorth' was incredibly powerful and had established a place known as the Darknorth Palace. He didn't even hold the three great clans in any regard at all.

"I can't believe this was the end result of it all."

"The three great clans are transcendent, supreme entities that have governed this world since time immemorial. The three clan leaders in particular are unfathomably powerful; supposedly, they are far more terrifying than even Emperor-class golems. They can cause hurricanes with a flick of their fingers that can annihilate even Daolords of the Fourth Step... but they actually weren't able to do anything to this Daolord Darknorth."

"He established Darknorth Palace... that means our world is no longer completely under the control of the three great clans."

"The heavens themselves are changing before our very eyes!"

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The many clans in this world all understood exactly what was happening... and just as they expected, the rise of Darknorth Palace really did symbolize that there were now two supreme powers within this world! This was now a bipolar world. On one side were the three great clans; on the other, Darknorth Palace.

The advantage of the three great clans lay in the fact that they had extremely deep resources and tremendous power. Darknorth Palace, however, had an advantage in that Ning's heartworld projection was able to instantly encompass this entire planet... in other words, if he wanted to attack, he had the power to annihilate everything outside the headquarters of the three great clans!

This power of absolute, instantly annihilation caused quite a few clans to fear Darknorth Palace even more. Some particularly ambitious clans chose to make a rather risky bet... they chose to submit to the rule of Darknorth Palace. Ning didn't refuse any comers.

“Haha, leave these matters to me. I used to command the Ninedust Sect; organizing and commanding these minor clans is simplicity itself.” Ninedust was quite eager to take on this task. “If we can’t find the secret place ourselves, we might be able to learn some information about it from these clans.”

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Under Ninedust’s leadership and with more and more clans joining their ranks, Darknorth Palace began to grow in power at an exponential rate. This was quite a troubling matter for the three great clans.

“We have no choice but to bear it for now. Those weaker clans are nothing; if and when we choose to attack, we can wipe them out with ease. Our greatest foe remains Daolord Darknorth.” The three clan leaders forebore from taking action.

“From this day forth, once our clans enter the secret place we need to spare no expense in finding a treasure that can be used against Daolord Darknorth.”

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Time flowed on. In the blink of an eye, two thousand years passed after Ning had established Darknorth Palace in this world. He had continuously searched for the secret place this entire time, while Ninedust had coordinated the many clans under the banner of Darknorth Palace to do the same.

Nightfall. A cold wind was howling through the skies. Ning was seated atop a dais within Darknorth Palace, staring at the vast world before him as he trained in the [Heartsword] art.

“Palace Lord, the Hallmaster of the First Southern Hall has something important to report,” an attendant said respectfully.

“Something important?” Ning opened his eyes.

In recent years, Ninedust had divided Darknorth Palace up into many different branches, with the First Southern Hall being one of them.

“Have him come see me,” Ning instructed.

“Yes, Palace Lord.” The attendant immediately left.

A short while later, a black-armored man walked in, then fell to his knees and said respectfully, “Your subordinate greets you, Palace Lord.”

“You may rise. Speak. What is it?” Ning asked.

The black-armored man rose to his feet, a hint of eagerness in his eyes as he looked at Ning. It was Palace Lord Darknorth who was able to ensure that the three great clans were helpless against them, after all.

“Your subordinate has come into possession of certain information... and I think there is at least an 80% chance that it has to do with that secret place,” the black-armored man said respectfully.

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Book 34: The Stone Hellephant Wall Chapter 20: The Secret Place

“An 80% chance?” Ji Ning stared at the black-armored man. For a subordinate to dare claim an 80% chance of being correct meant that he was almost virtually certain; he had to factor in a bit of modesty, after all. “Go ahead and tell me.”

“Palace Lord, please take a look.” The black-armored man produced a scroll in his hands which he offered respectfully to Ning. Ning waved his hand, causing the scroll to fly over towards him.

Ning unfurled the scroll, which was covered with dense clusters of tiny characters. These were the last words of a free-spirited Daolord whose lifespan was coming to an end. It included some of his supreme legacies as well as the secrets he knew about.

“Eh?” Ning’s face tightened. “This Daolord actually entered the borders of a mysterious place by accident. He was almost discovered but thankfully was lucky enough to escape detection... and that place had an incredibly powerful garrison stationed there?” Ning nodded. This information the deceased Daolord had written down almost certainly referred to the secret place Ning was searching for! Aside from the three great clans, there were no other forces capable of stationing such a tremendously powerful garrison.

“So it is in a standalone dimension. No wonder my heartworld projection filled every inch of this planet but still was unable to find it.” Ning revealed a trace of a smile. He had finally found it. After two thousand years here on this planet, he had finally found information regarding the secret location.

It made sense. No matter how careful the three great clans were, a few traces would eventually slip through over the course of countless years.

“Excellent.” Ning looked at the black-armored man, then smiled. “You’ve done quite well, and I certainly need to reward you for your great accomplishment.” As Ning spoke, he waved a finger, sending a stream of light into the black-armored man’s body. The black-armored man instantly felt his sea of consciousness tremble as an enormous amount of information began to flood into him.

Ning had taken many precious items away from Sectlord Timedream and the other Daolords, including good cultivation techniques. He casually chose a decent one which would guide this man to becoming a Daolord of the Fourth Step.

Once the black-armored man came back to his senses, he was so excited he immediately fell to his knees. “Thank you, Palace Lord.”

The three great clans were so exalted precisely because they maintained an extremely strict level of control over their cultivation techniques. Lesser clans would never have access to the knowledge of the ancestors, and so they were forced to train blindly. This made becoming a Daolord extremely difficult, much less one capable of reaching the fourth step.

Now that he had this technique from Ning, not only would he become a Daolord, even his other clansmen would stand a good chance at it.

“Go,” Ning instructed. When searching for information regarding the secret place, these subordinates had sworn lifeblood oaths in advance that they were only able to divulge this information to their superiors and not to any outsiders at all.

“Ninedust.” Ning sat there atop the dais, staring into the dark night sky as he sent a mental message to Ninedust.

Whoosh. A figure manifested next to him. It was the Ninedust Sectlord. Ninedust said with some surprise, “It’s past midnight. Why did you suddenly call for me? Want to grab a drink?”

“Take a look at this.” Ning tossed the scroll to him.

Ninedust accepted it and gave it a read. A look of delight instantly appeared on his face. “Haha, we brothers have finally found this so-called ‘secret place’! But from the looks of it, the three great clans guard it very tightly.”

“The Daolord who wrote down this scroll only entered the outermost border regions by accident,” Ning said. “I believe that the three great clans must have set up layers of protective mechanisms and defenses; there’s no way an outsider would be able to easily penetrate it.”

“Agreed.” Ninedust nodded. The secret place was most likely what allowed the three great clans to rise to prominence!

“I’m planning to head out tonight to inspect this location,” Ning said. “I’ll use the Shadowless evasion art and avoid discovery as best as I can! As for you, if you wish to join me you’ll have to enter my estate-world treasure for now.”

“Of course I’m going with you. The entire reason why I’m in this world is because I’m interested in the Sithe’s local treasury,” Ninedust said hurriedly. “Those three clan leaders are at a lower level of insight than me, but they are incredibly strong in battle and have all those Emperor-class golems... how could I give up a chance to acquire such a fortune?”

“Haha, I knew you’d come. Let’s go.” As Ning spoke, he sent mental messages to his four highest-ranking subordinates to temporarily take control over Darknorth Palace.

Swoosh. Swoosh. Ning and Ninedust quietly slipped away from Darknorth Palace that very night.

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Ning had scanned this world many times with his heartworld projection, and so he knew its geography very well! Now that he had that scroll, Ning was able to guess as to approximately where this place was located.

In the end, this planet was still a few billion kilometers in diameter. If Ning had been forced to search through every inch of it, ten million years wouldn’t have been enough. This place was something which even a heartworld projection was unable to discover... even if he was just a meter away from it, he probably wouldn’t be able to recognize it for what it was.

“There’s a tree roughly nine meters thick. Once you touch it, you’ll immediately be able to enter that secret place.” After pulling Ninedust into his estate-world, Ning immediately activated the Shadowless evasion art.

Whoosh. Ning silently and soundless arrived in the rough location mentioned by the Daolord. He quickly eliminated the more slender trees from consideration. He was looking for something at least nine meters thick... as Ning saw it, this so called tree which held the secret location within it probably wasn't an actual tree, just something disguised as one. It probably would never change in appearance.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Ning silently reached out to tap one tree after the other. His fingers were very gentle, ensuring that he generated no sound at all. He ended up spending two full days within the general region.

Tap. Ning casually tepped on the trunk of yet another large and leafy green tree in front of him... but his finger went straight through it. A sucking power was suddenly applied to his entire body as well. Ning was overjoyed and didn't seek to resist, allowing himself to be drawn inside of the great tree.

Space twisted and turned around him. He was surrounded by emptiness, with only a giant towering mountain in front of him. Ning had appeared at the base of the mountain.

"Eh?" Ning kept the Shadowless evasion art active as he carefully scanned his surroundings. "This massive mountain is actually hanging in empty space... was this done by the Sithe?" He was able to vaguely gaze through the void around him and see the forest outside. Clearly, outsiders weren't able to discover this place but those inside were able to see who was outside at any time. In fact, just a single step was needed to leave this place and return to the forest in the outside world.

"Hmph. The garrison stationed here really is powerful." Ning immediately saw an garrison stationed roughly a thousand kilometers away from him. This garrison had two Emperor-class golems, six Samsara Daolords, and a very large number of World-level cultivators. There was also a giant cave entrance halfway up the mountain which led deep into its heart.

The mountain cave was dark and unfathomably deep, and it was covered by layers of ancient formations that glowed with hazy light. When Ning saw the barriers, he felt a vague sense of danger from them.

"These barriers are meant to prevent people from going inside the mountain," Ning mused "Most likely, the Sithe treasury is located within it."

"The barriers protecting the three great clans were already quite strong. There's no way this place isn't just as well protected. I probably won't be able to force my way through the barriers." Ning knew this to be true; logically speaking, he shouldn't be able to breach the barriers. The vague sense of danger he sensed from the barriers had already testified to that.

Forcing his way through wouldn't work. It seemed that the only option was to play a few tricks.

"Eh?" Ning turned, his gaze falling upon an enormous tower-shaped formation next to the garrison. At his current level power, he was able to recognize it right away. "A spacetime transfer array? It seems so intricate and marvelous."

"No wonder I kept watch over the three great clans for so many years without discovering how the three great clans entered this place. So this spacetime transfer array is directly linked to the headquarters of the three great clans." Ning couldn't help but shake his head. This world was a vast one; the chances of one stumbling upon this particular tree were incredibly low. Even if someone did enter,

the garrison stationed here would be able to easily slaughter that person. In the event of failure, the barriers surrounding the mountain cave would prevent any entry.

However... time grinds away at all things. Eventually, there will be a leak. The Daolord who had left that scroll behind had been able to enter through a lucky streak of fortune, and he had immediately left carefully. He had only survived because his luck really was incredible.

“What should we do? How are we supposed to go inside? Going inside by force isn’t an option. It seems we will have no choice but to wait.” Ning stared at the spacetime transfer array, then secretly shook his head. “Yes, just wait.”

Waiting was a clumsy method, but sometimes the simplest methods were quite effective!

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“Darknorth, did you go inside yet?” Ninedust asked from within the estate-world. A white-robed incarnation of Ning appeared next to him.

“Don’t be impatient. I’ve already entered the secret area, but I’m in the outer regions of it. The entrance leading into the heart of this region has been blocked off by a barrier. It should’ve been the three great clans who set this barrier up; I really doubt I can breach it by force.” Ning shook his head. “Our only choice for now is to wait. Once the Daolords enter the heart of the region, I might be able to come up with a way to sneak through as well.

“They really are quite carefully. They actually set up a formation of barriers inside the secret area’s passageways as well?” Ninedust was speechless.