

Desolate 1191

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Book 34: The Stone Hellephant Wall Chapter 21: The Sithe Disk

Time continued to flow on. Ji Ning kept the Shadowless evasion art active the entire time and patiently waited outside for more than fifty thousand years. When it came to acquiring a Sithe treasury, he had patience in abundance.

Within the Nonti clan.

Creaaak. A stone door swung open and a grim-faced Daolord of the Third Step walked out from within it.

“Daolord!” The armored soldier outside the door said respectfully, “The clan leader has send orders. All Daolords must immediately head to the ancestral grounds whenever they leave their secluded meditations.”

“Oh?” This Daolord of the Third Step, Daolord Joyquill, narrowed his eyes. “What’s with the urgency? Don’t you normally have to become a Daolord of the Fourth Step before being able to visit the ancestral grounds?”

“Daolord, the clan leader has now changed the rules. Even Daolords of the Second Step are allowed entry,” the armored soldier said hurriedly.

“Even Daolords of the Second Step are allowed in?” Daolord Joyquill was shocked. “How can this be? The ancestral grounds are incredibly dangerous. Success brings great rewards, but the weak will most likely perish. Although some Daolords of the Second Step have succeeded in the past, this is just too dangerous.”

“Daolord, you’ve been in secluded meditation for many years so you don’t know what has happened. Our three great clans have encountered a deadly opponent,” the armored soldier said. “Over fifty thousand years ago, a Daolord named Darknorth suddenly rose to power. His might was unmatched and he challenged our three clans all by himself. The Emperor-class golems we sent out were all defeated, with him capturing three of them. The three clan leaders then led a force of eight golems to attack him, but in the end they still weren’t able to subdue him.”

“What?!” Daolord Joyquill was astonished. “Impossible.”

“Daolord Darknorth then established the Darknorth Palace. By now, he is in control of quite a few clans. He has set himself up in opposition to our three clans!” The armored soldier continued, “The three clan leaders have already sent word that we are to charge deep into the ancestral grounds, regardless of the risk! We need to find as many treasures as we can from the ancestral lands, so that we can deal with Daolord Darknorth.”

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After gaining a more thorough understanding of what had happened recently, Daolord Joyquill felt even more stunned. He never would’ve imagined that the clan would’ve fallen into such dire straits during this session of secluded meditation.

Rumble... Daolord Joyquill stood there within a spacetime transfer array. He mumbled to himself with a frown as the array started to light up, "Where the hell did this Daolord Darknorth come from? How did he become this powerful?"

Whoosh. Space and time twisted around him. By the time everything was clear, he found himself within the ancestral lands.

"The ancestral lands." Daolord Joyquill stared at the area around him. Next to him was a great garrison, while outside was the vast emptiness of space. Beyond even that was the great forest in the real world outside.

"Brother Joyquill."

"Daolord Joyquill, you came as well?" The six Daolords stationed here walked out to welcome him.

"Yes." Daolord Joyquill nodded. "I received the order right after I left my meditations and so I immediately came here."

"Ugh. I wonder how Daolord Darknorth trained and how he became so powerful. All of the Daolords of the three great clans are now risking their lives inside." The six Daolords in charge of the garrison sighed.

"Most of them will probably end up dead soon."

"How could someone like Daolord Darknorth have suddenly emerged from those other lowly clans?"

They all shook their heads. They had grown accustomed to feeling superior to all others, and they didn't even hold the other six 'great clans' in any regard. As they saw it, all others who were not members of the three great clans were lowly figures. They were the absolute rulers of this world, and they had ruled it fearlessly since time immemorial. How could they not feel enraged at how Daolord Darknorth had suddenly shaken their positions?

However, they could do nothing but sigh and lament at his appearance. The difference in power between them was simply too great; they weren't capable of doing anything to him at all.

"I'll head on in," Daolord Joyquill said.

"Be careful, brother Joyquill."

"Hopefully, brother Joyquill will reap great rewards from this." The six Daolords all said a few words of encouragement.

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Swoosh! A silent figure moved close towards Daolord Joyquill.

"Finally, a new Daolord has arrived. And, from the looks of things, he's about to enter the inner regions." Ning watched as Daolord Joyquill moved towards the mountain cave. Ning quickly moved closer to Joyquill, with no one discovering his presence.

"Soulthral." By now, even the Kingfreak would be affected by his soul-mesmerizing abilities, to say nothing of a weak Daolord of the Third Step like this. Joyquill was instantly swept into a state of unconsciousness.

While doing this, Ning set up a thirty meter barrier around them which warped and distorted light. If anyone glanced towards them, they would see Daolord Joyquill continuing to walk normally.

“Get in here.” Ning instantly drew Daolord Joyquill into his estate-world. “And... here I go.” Ning appeared out of nowhere, but he now looked just like Daolord Joyquill. No... not just looked alike. Even his soul and truesoul were identical to Joyquill’s.

Ning immediately released the barrier around the surrounding area, then glanced around him before letting out a sigh of relief. The process of setting up the barrier, catching Daolord Joyquill, then replacing him had happened almost instantaneously, but if there was a Daolord specifically keeping a careful watch on this area then it would’ve still been possible for his actions to be noticed. Thankfully, he hadn’t been.

After having put away Daolord Joyquill, Ning immediately released a small amount of his energy into his estate-world to question the man. Alas, Daolord Joyquill had long ago sworn a lifeblood oath regarding this ‘secret place’; even though his soul had been mesmerized, he wasn’t able to say a thing.

Ning questioned Joyquill for quite some time but didn’t gain much from it. “There’s nothing for it.” He had no choice but to grit his teeth and walk forwards! Ning quickly reached the region covered by layers of barriers.

“Brother Joyquill, I’ve already taken control over the Sithe disk. You can come in,” a voice rang out from behind the layers of blue barriers of light.

The ‘Sithe disk’? Ning silently memorized this term. On the surface, he just nodded slightly as he continued forwards. Indeed, the layers of blue light were like curtains of water. Ning was able to easily walk in without the slightest disturbance at all. This barrier-filled region was tens of thousands of kilometers long, but Ning walked incredibly fast and was able to quickly bypass it.

“Daolord Joyquill has arrived.”

“It is Daolord Joyquill.”

The three Daolords in charge of the Sithe disk all laughed. They carefully inspected every person who came in, but they did so primarily through inspection of the truesoul aura. They weren’t worried about Daolord Joyquill secretly bringing anyone else inside, because every single Daolord of the three great clans had long ago sworn lengthy lifeblood oaths. The part of the oath pertaining to the ancestral lands were particularly severe and exacting.

For example, even though Ning had used a soul-mesmerizing technique on the man, he still wasn’t able to learn any secrets regarding this place!

“Daolord Joyquill.” The three seated Daolords looked at him. One of them, an old man with a large beard, called out in a loud voice, “Be careful after you go inside. This place is filled with danger, and many of the golems are filled with enmity towards our clans. All of them are Emperor-class golems; if they manage to ambush you, you’ll be doomed.”

“Thank you.” Ning nodded, many thoughts flashing through his mind. He absolutely had to acquire the Sithe treasury! However, it seemed as though there was only one way inside this mountain... and it had been protected by layers of barriers.

“If I wish to take the treasury for myself, I’ll probably end up revealing myself! They will be able to use these barriers to ensure that I’m unable to leave.” Ning stared at the three Daolords who were controlling the distant Sithe disk. “I won’t feel secure unless and until I get rid of them first.”

“Daolord Songfloat,” Ning said while walking towards the three. As the lord of Darknorth Palace, he held a very high status and thus knew almost all of the Daolords within this world.

“What is it?” The bearded elder smiled as Ning walked towards him, completely unafraid.

Whoosh. Ning cracked a smile as well, sending an invisible wave of power towards them. Instantly, the three seated Daolords felt a wave of pressure come crashing down towards them, causing them to go dizzy. Their bodies slumped to the ground, powerless. Ning instantly moved to stand next to them, grabbing the strange disk which had been rotating around the three. The round disk was a deep brown color and covered with many extremely complex runes.

The ripples emanating from the disk spread out to cover tens of thousands of kilometers. The surrounding formations and barriers all had this Sithe disk as their core.

“Arise.” Ning reached out to take a firm grip over the round disk, clasp his hands around it. Rumble... instantly, the layers of formations and barriers for tens of thousands of kilometers around them began to rumble.

The guards stationed at the garrison outside the cave couldn’t help but turn their heads to look backwards.

“What’s going on?” Some of the Daolords stationed inside the mountain were able to sense the ripple as well.

“Not good.”

“That was the Sithe disk!” The three silver men immediately transformed into streaks of light that shot out from the mountain and charged towards Ning.

Ning had grabbed at the Sithe disk twice without being able to pull it to him. He immediately waved his hand and produced the Northbow sword, executing his Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop. This was his most penetrating attack, and it was the best attack he had for disrupting formations. Slash! Slash! Slash! It was hard to defeat a formation from the outside, but breaking it through when you were already inside it was much easier.

One streak of mist-formed sword energy after another stabbed into the Sithe disk, causing some of the supportive formations to immediately break apart.

Rumble... Ning finally managed to dislodge the Sithe disk from its orbit, breaking it free from the many mysterious formation-runes that had been binding it. Ning then sent the Northbow sword in his hands to deliver furious chops towards the world around him, destroying all the formations one by one.

“Get in here.” When Ning saw the three silver men fly towards him, he immediately drew the Sithe disk into his estate-world.

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Book 34: The Stone Hellephant Wall Chapter 22: Ancestral Proscriptions

Only after putting away the Sithe disk did Ji Ning feel marginally at ease. Otherwise, the many barriers it served as the focal point for would've been very problematic for him. Even if he did acquire treasures from within the mountain, there would've been no way out for him.

"It's you!"

"Daolord Darknorth!"

"How were you able to disguise yourself as Joyquill? You even managed to emulate his truesoul's aura!"

The three silver men flew towards Ning. They had been shocked when they saw Daolord Joyquill seize the Sithe disk, but when they saw the Northbow sword appear in Ning's hand they immediately knew who he was. They certainly wouldn't believe that Daolord Joyquill had the power to seize a Northbow sword from Daolord Darknorth!

"Haha..." Ning laughed as he transformed back into his own appearance. "You found out too late," Ning said as he summoned his awe-inspiring heartworld projection to cover both this tunnel as well as the garrison outside. Even the inner depths of the mountain were completely covered by it... and as it descended, the other Daolords of the three great clans were stunned.

"What's going on?"

"W-w-what's happening?"

"Is this the legendary 'heartworld projection'? Could it be Daolord Darknorth?"

"This place is our ancestral grounds, a place hidden from all others and which is protected by the Sithe disk. How could the heartworld projection have invaded it?" They all began to panic.

Ning just frowned slightly. He could sense that although his heartworld projection covered an extremely large region, there was some sort of energy deep within the mountain which was able to resist and block his heartworld projection, making it unable to penetrate any deeper.

"Soulthral." A wave of heartforce swept outwards. This was Ning's soul-hypnosis technique, and it instantly struck all of the Daolords within the range of his heartworld projection. None of them were able to resist it at all! Even the Daolords of the Fourth Step were instantly drawn into a dazed state.

"What are you doing!" The three silver men were shocked and enraged.

"What does it look like I'm doing?" Ning looked back at the three silver men. "Don't worry, I'm not planning to kill them. If I wanted to do so, I would've been able to easily eradicate them through my heartworld projection alone. I wouldn't have gone to the trouble of putting them under my control instead..."

"You...!" The three silver men were enraged and anxious. The vast majority of the Daolords of their three clans were all located here! There were one or two standing guard over their clan, and a few had ventured so deep into the mountain that they weren't covered by the heartworld projection. However, Ning had at least thirty-one Samsara Daolords under his control.

“Don’t worry. If you can agree to my requests, I’ll release all of them completely unharmed.” A cold light flashed through Ning’s eyes. “But if you refuse, then don’t blame me for what I’ll be forced to do.”

The three great clans viewed themselves as the absolute rulers of this world, believing all other living creatures to be beneath them. They viewed themselves as the ultimate arbiters of life and death for the others. This mentality was pervasive in the three great clans, shared by the clan leaders and clansmen alike. They had always believed this, and after becoming Samsara Daolords they had only become even more fearless and lawless. And in truth, they were indeed the rulers of this world. No one had ever been able to challenge or shake their authority! Only, the descent of Daolord Darknorth upon this world had shaken their status.

“Speak!” the muscular silver man commanded with a growl.

“Speak. Don’t ask for too much,” the silver-haired man said, teeth clenched.

“My conditions are simple,” Ning said. “First, you are not permitted to attack me... but of course, I won’t do anything further to you either. We shall coexist peacefully. Second, you must tell me all the secrets you know pertaining to the Sithe, including everything you know about this mountain. If you agree to both conditions... we still won’t be friends, but at least we won’t be enemies any longer.”

The world of cultivators was a world of slaughter and strife. The three great clans were protected by many formations and barriers; there was no way for Ning to wipe them out at all. Even if he did, the only result would be a different organization would rise to rule over this world.

As a result, Ning couldn’t even be bothered to get into a real war against these people. His ultimate goal was to obtain the Sithe treasury! Once he did, he would immediately leave this place. There really was no need for him to become enemies with these three clan leaders. They were far too strong, after all; he wasn’t able to defeat any of them. Right now, he knew nothing about the depths of this mountain whatsoever. The three great clans, however, had spent countless aeons searching and exploring the place. They definitely knew a great deal about it.

His enemies knew a great deal regarding this mountain, while he knew nothing at all. His enemies were also stronger than him; if they wanted to scheme against him here, he would probably be in a great deal of danger.

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The three clan leaders exchanged glances as they secretly conversed mentally. Soon, they clenched their teeth and came to a decision.

“That’s a nice little fantasy you you.” The muscular silver man, the clan leader of the Fumo clan, growled out: “Daolord Darknorth, we aren’t able to accept your conditions due to our ancestral proscriptions. Every single member of the clan was long ago forced to swear lifeblood oaths regarding this.”

Ning’s face tightened. Ancestral proscriptions?

“But we’ll make it up to you in other ways.” The Fumo clan leader suppressed his rage as he spoke: “First, as you’ve requested, we agree to live in peace with you. Second, you must leave our ancestral lands. We will never allow anyone who is not a member of our three clans to enter this place. Third,

we'll give you a gift of three Emperor-class golems in compensation. In return, we wish to regain our clansmen."

"How generous," Ning said dryly. "Three Emperor-class golems."

"Our three great clans have only acquired a few of these golems despite having spent countless eras scouring this place. To trade you three golems for the lives of our clansmen is a show of great sincerity," the skinny silver man, the Juwah clan leader, said in a sharp and shrill voice.

"I agree that you are being quite sincere... but unfortunately, my goal is the Sithe treasury." Ning shook his head. "Emperor-class golems? I really don't care too much about them."

His ultimate goal was a treasure that could intrigue even an Autarch; only then would he have a chance at reviving Yu Wei. He needed treasures on par with Crimsonwave Temple in value. Emperor-class golems weren't even close! It must be remembered that the two overseers who had stood guard over Crimsonwave Temple were Hegemon-class figures!

"There is no way we'll permit anyone outside of our three clans to enter the ancestral grounds," the silver-haired man said in a cold voice.

"Absolutely not." The muscular silver man's voice was ice-cold as well. "I strongly recommend that you accept our conditions..."

"So I should go ahead and kill them?" Ning asked.

"Kill them."

"Go ahead."

"They are just Daolords; even if all of them died, we'd be able to raise a new generation of them in time." The three silver men didn't hesitate at all.

The ancestral grounds served as the foundation for the entire clan. There was an enormous treasury here, and despite having spent countless years scouring the place they had only acquired a fraction of the treasures in the outermost layer. If Daolord Darknorth entered, he might find things that were even better than what they had acquired. He might've sworn an oath not to kill them, but his descendants might use those treasures to wipe out the three great clans.

Why were the three great clans so formidable? It was because of the three silver men, right? But the treasury held things that were even more terrifying and powerful than the silver men! If Ning acquired them, he would be able to establish a clan that was even more terrifyingly powerful than theirs.

"So I really should go ahead and kill them?" Ning's voice was cold as well. Swish! The Daolord who was located closest to the three clan leaders instantly had his truesoul snuffed out. His eyes turned completely blank and dead.

"You-!" The three clan leaders were instantly driven into a state of fury.

"The two of us will hold him back. You go and rescue as many of our clansmen as you can." The muscular silver man and the skinny silver man howled with rage as they charged towards Ning, while the silver-haired man turned to fly deep into the mountain, seeking to pull away the Daolords.

“Too late.” A flicker of something baleful flashed through Ning’s eyes. If their negotiations had fallen through... then so be it. Let them die. Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! One truesoul after another was extinguished by Ning’s [Heartforce Eradicator]. Not a single person was able to withstand this attack.

In the blink of an eye, every single one of the Daolords had perished.

“Daolord Darknorth, you are dead meat!”

“Die, Darknorth! Die!” The two clan leaders went berserk. In the past, they had always been the ones to hold the power of life and death over others. There had never been a situation where so many Daolords of their clans had been instantly annihilated by others.

“Even all three of you working together weren’t able to do anything to me. What’s the point of even trying with two?” Ning manifested three heads and six arms as he drew his six Northbow swords. With his heartworld projection and his nine novessence arts swirling around him, he was able to defend against the attacks of the two clan leaders while moving deeper and deeper into the mountain. Although the two clan leaders managed to slow him down greatly, he was still able to move deeper within.

“Hm. The Nonti clan leader flew out of the range of my heartworld projection?” Ning frowned. His heartworld projection merely covered part of the mountain; deep within the mountain, there was some sort of unknown energy which was able to resist his heartworld projection. The third silver man had flown deeper into the mountain and outside of the range of Ning’s scans.

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Book 34: The Stone Hellephant Wall Chapter 23: Another Onyx Humanoid

The silver-haired Nonti clan leader ventured deep into the mountain by himself. When he flew beyond the range of the heartworld projection, he roared angrily, “All of you, come back! Come to me and stay away from the heartworld projection!”

“Understood.”

“Coming.”

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Five figures flew straight towards him, moving quite fast as they retreated from the depths of the mountain.

The silver-haired man looked at the five Daolords in front of him, sighing secretly to himself. These five were the only Daolords left of the many who had entered the ancestral grounds... and that was counting all three clans! Even if they factored in the ones standing guard over their clans, each clan now had just two or three Daolords left.

“What happened, clan leader?”

“What’s going on with that heartworld projection?” They couldn’t help but query him.

“It’s Daolord Darknorth. He’s already wiped out all of the other Daolords in the ancestral grounds.” The silver-haired man’s voice was cold as ice. “Enough, there’s no time for questions. The other two clan leaders and I will join forces to kill him inside the ancestral grounds. Since he came here, he has only himself to blame for his death.”

“Understood.” The other five Daolords were shocked and enraged. They all ground their teeth and nodded, filled with hatred towards Daolord Darknorth and faith in their clan leader. This was because the ancestral grounds truly were terrifyingly dangerous.

The silver-haired man waved his hand, collecting all five of them. As of right now, the three great clans had almost no Daolords left; every single one of them was a precious resource.

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Ning continuously moved deeper and deeper into the mountain. Soon, the silver-haired man returned and joined forces with the other two clan leaders in attacking Ning. Alas, it was useless; they hadn't been able to do anything to Ning even when they had eight Emperor-class golems assisting them. Their chances were even slimmer now!

“They are more familiar with this place than me. I can't let them trick me.” Ning was secretly on maximum alert as he slowly delved deeper into the mountain. Palaces and other buildings gradually began to appear within the mountains, a mixture of black and gold elegance. However, the buildings were all completely shattered and destroyed, with giant claw marks occasionally seen. It was as though a single sharp set of claws had been used to tear through these buildings.

“We saw these claw marks in the outer layer of the Stone Hellephant Wall as well,” Ning mused. “It seems as though the same person fought his way all the way here. This should be the true core of the Stone Hellephant Wall.”

Those elegant palaces had some treasures floating in the air above them. Although the treasures and the palaces had both been wrecked, they still emanated auras of incredible power.

The three clan leaders had originally been launching attacks nonstop against Ning. They gradually began to slow their attacks, but they continued to circle around him with smirks on their faces as they looked at him.

“We have visited the ancestral grounds countless times over the course of countless generations. This Daolord Darknorth truly is courting death, for him to dare barge into this place.”

“We have to kill him as soon as we can. Once more time passes and he grows familiar with this place, it'll become much harder to scheme against him.”

“Yes, let us kill him quickly.” The three clan leaders secretly planned out their next stratagem, allowing Ning to advance as he pleased in the meantime. As for Ning, he remained vigilant; he wouldn't dare to be overconfident here in a Sithe relic site!

Boom! Boom! Ning used his nine novessence arts to attack the surrounding area with wild abandon. If there were any traps here, he wanted to use his nine novessence arts to activate them at a distance!

Boom! Whoosh! Some barriers did indeed flare with power, but Ning's nine novessence arts had activated them from ten million kilometers away and so they didn't harm Ning in the slightest.

“Daolord Darknorth is being quite careful. By relying on his secret arts, he's able to avoid many dangerous places.” The three clan leaders were so angry their teeth hurt.

“It’s fine. Once he goes deeper inside, his heartworld projection and his secret arts will be useless,” the skinny silver man said through clenched teeth.

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“What’s this?” Ning suddenly saw a corpse that had been split in half. The corpse was so large, it was like a pair of mountains lay there amidst the palatial rubble.

He saw a pitch-black humanoid figure whose midsection had been sliced in half. Judging from how the wound had been torn open, the person had clearly been torn in half by a pair of sharp claws. Ning could even see the many countless stone passageways located deep within the body itself. He could immediately recognize that this bisected onyx humanoid was the same as the onyx humanoid he had seen in the Terror Starsea, the one which had caused the deaths of two Hegemons of the Endless Territories in the Dawn War. Their auras were absolutely identical and gave Ning the same sense of pressure and might.

“He was a-actually torn in half?” Ning was stunned. “This creature was capable of bringing down Hegemons with it! Even the Ancient Hegemon was only able to just barely pierce a hole through that onyx humanoid’s chest... but this one was actually torn in half?”

Ning clearly remembered just how terrifyingly powerful the first one had been. The golden sand from the planet within its body had been enough to cause his Northbow swords to evolve and transform!

Whoosh. Ning reached out to grab at the upper half of the black humanoid’s corpse.

“Hmph.” The three clan leaders circling around him didn’t move to stop him. They just watched with cold smiles.

Ning felt like he was an ordinary mortal seeking to move a mountain; there was no way for him to budge the corpse in the slightest.

“This thing is dead; perhaps its core regions are damaged as well. Last time I encountered one of these things, my Northbow swords were able to drink from the golden sand to evolve. This corpse might have a similar effect on my swords.” This was the thought that flashed through Ning’s mind... but a heartbeat later, he understood that with the three clan leaders present, there was simply no way he’d be able to slowly upgrade his Northbow swords and let them feed.

“When I have a better opportunity, I should come back and explore the insides of this corpse.” Ning continued his advance, leaving it behind.

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The vast, palatial ruins must have had many living creatures within it in the past, but all of that was gone now. Ning wasn’t sure as to how many corpses had been destroyed and how many had been carted off by the three great clans. Perhaps the only immovable one was this onyx humanoid corpse.

After spending half a day, Ning finally reached the core regions of this enormous palace complex.

Rumble... a surge of unknown power was flowing through this place. It completely blocked off Ning’s secret arts and heartworld projection, making it impossible for them to spread out.

“Eh?” Ning could vaguely see a few golems flickering around in front of him. Clearly, they had retreated into this place.

“The Emperor-class golems are all here?” Ning stared at the unknown power flowing through this area. He could sense, however, that the power was quite weak. He stared off into the distance, where a series of enormous pillars could be seen generating waves of power that fed this unknown energy. Many of the pillars had toppled or been destroyed, and many more were damaged as well. Only a tiny fraction were undamaged.

“They are of no threat to me. They shouldn’t be able to harm me.” After testing things out, Ning stepped straight into the region.

The three clan leaders exchanged a glance, then followed Ning in. They didn’t even attack Ning, just followed him from behind. As for Ning, he ignored them. There was no point in fighting them, as he was always on the defensive.

“This Daolord Darknorth is quite a cautious man.”

“All the caution in the world won’t do a damn thing for him.”

“He’ll be dying soon enough.” The three clan leaders continued to plot against Ning.

As for Ning himself, he carefully inspected the surrounding area. From the looks of it, this was once an enormous Sithe palace complex! The residences of the highest-ranking members should’ve been in the centermost area, and that was where the defenses should’ve been tightest. Only, everything along the way had been destroyed by that claw-attacking figure.

Soon, Ning reached the very center of this palace complex.

“What’s that?” Ning stared off into the distance, through a number of shattered walls. He was able to see a hill-sized onyx humanoid corpse lying slumped on the ground... in fact, Ning saw a total of three of them.

“Three more onyx humanoid corpses?” Ning was awestruck. This place was definitely an extremely important place for the Sithe!

Suddenly... swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!!! Four figures suddenly flew towards him at high speed from afar. Each of the four moved faster than a hundred times the speed of light, causing Ning to turn pale! It must be remembered that the three clan leaders themselves merely moved at a hundred times the speed of light. Ning himself had yet to breach this limit! Even amongst Eternal Emperors, moving faster than a hundred times the speed of light was incredibly difficult.

However, the four figures attacking Ning had each surpassed this limit. Ning immediately sensed his subconscious screaming at him about the danger he was in. He understood that these four figures were far more powerful than the three clan leaders.

“Any outsiders who barge into Sithe lands shall be slain without exception!”

“Kill!”

“The three of you, help us stop this intruder!” The four figures called out commands as they flew towards Ning at high speeds.

“Yes, milords!” the three silver men called back. They had become members of the Sithe race after undergoing the Ritual Sacrificium and thus had been acknowledged by the Sithe; this was why they weren’t attacked.

“Kill!” One of the figures was completely gray in color, and he wielded a short spear in his hands. Swirls of gray light manifested at the tip of the spear as he arched his entire body backwards, then threw it forwards furiously.

Swoosh! The short spear shot through the air, moving far faster than the four figures themselves and carrying a terrifying level of power within it as it shot straight towards Ning. Ning instantly understood that if he allowed himself to be surrounded by these foes, he would definitely die.

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Book 34: The Stone Hellephant Wall Chapter 24: Invitation

“Here’s our chance.” The three clan leaders had been following Ji Ning this entire time, never letting him get too far away from them. Now, they all excitedly charged straight towards him.

“Slow him down.”

“If we can tie him down for a short period of time, he’ll be doomed.” The three clan leaders were filled with confidence, because it was quite easy for them to tie down Daolord Darknorth.

Boom! The short spear had already arrived in front of Ning. Ning produced a golden gem in his hand. The golden gem had strands of golden silk within it. He instantly crushed it, causing a wave of awesome power to spread out and cover his entire body as it was surrounded by layers of silken gold light. This was one of Ning’s life-preserving treasures, and it was designed to allow one’s speed to skyrocket!

“Die!” The skinny silver man shot straight towards Ning with his sharp spike in hand.

Whoosh. Ning moved in a ghostly manner, instantly skyrocketing beyond a hundred times the speed of light and only leaving a golden streak of light behind him. He was simply too fast! With the treasure supporting him, he was able to move even faster than the Radiant King.

The short spear still arrived in front of Ning; it had actually been able to change direction mid-flight. Clang! Ning didn’t dare to take it lightly. He used all six Northbow swords to block simultaneously, only to sense a powerful surge of might transmit to him from the strike. Ning couldn’t help but stumble a few steps backwards as he hurriedly retreated, transforming into a streak of golden lightning that fled.

As for the short spear, the collision knocked it to one side. It went flying straight towards the Fumo clan leader, forcing the muscular silver man to hurriedly dodge to one side.

“Don’t let him escape!”

“Slow him down.”

“How can he be this fast?” Although the three clan leaders were extremely anxious, they could do nothing but watch as Ning transformed into an incomprehensibly fast speed of golden light that seemed to be even faster than the four figures chasing behind it.

Swoosh! Ning pulled farther and farther away as he flew off into the distance.

“He actually escaped.” The three clan leaders exchanged glances, feeling anxious, angry, and helpless. They knew that given their own speed, they stood no chance of catching Ning at all.

Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. The four figures flew towards them and came to a halt, watching with ugly looks on their faces as Ning fled off into the distance.

“You three useless pieces of trash.” One of the figures glanced disdainfully at the three clan leaders. “You couldn’t even handle such a simple task. If you were able to slow him down for just a few seconds, we would’ve been able to surround and kill him for sure! Hmph. Any of the Silver Daolords of the old, true Sithe were far more powerful than you. You are the weakest Silver Daolords we brothers have ever encountered.

Not just every Sithe was permitted to become a Silver Daolord. One had to first reach the supreme Daolord level. Given Sithe training methods, they proportionally had far more supreme Daolords than the cultivators. The three clan leaders’ weakness was their low level of understanding of the Dao. If they were at the supreme Daolord level, Ning would’ve been finished long ago.

The three clan leaders smiled ingratiatingly and didn’t argue, but in their hearts they secretly grumbled. These four were nothing more than golems. By what right did they act so arrogantly?

Indeed. These four figures were all Emperor-class golems, but they were noticeably much more powerful than the others. Every single one of them was on par with a lord of the Sacred Cities! Although Ning had just barely reached that level as well, he was still lacking in many respects; if he was to actually fight against a real lord of a Sacred City, he would be completely dominated. These four golems, however, were each capable of fighting a Sacred City lord to a standstill.

“Four seniors, Daolord Darknorth has barged into our forbidden grounds and should be killed,” the silver-haired man said. “We should hunt him down and kill him.”

“Our responsibility is to watch over and guard this forbidden region. Since he has already escaped and left this region, we naturally will not pursue him any further. If you wish to do so, that is your business.” The four figures glanced coldly at the three clan leaders, then turned and flew away. They truly did look down upon these three clan leaders. Although they were members of the Sithe thanks to having undergone the Ritual Sacrificium, they were really far too weak when compared to true Sithe experts!

“Those four idiots.” The three clan leaders ground their teeth in rage.

“They are nothing more than golems. They shall forever do nothing more than obey the orders of the Sithe race. This area has clearly been completely destroyed, but they continue to guard it and regard it as a restricted area. Why bother getting angry with golems?” The three clan leaders turned and left.

The Emperor-class golems they had caught in recent years were all fairly weak ones that were comparable to supreme Daolords. They wouldn’t dare to even fight against the four strongest golems, much less capture them and bind them by force.

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Thanks to the speed boost provided by the treasure, Ning quickly outstripped his pursuers.

“Oh, they actually didn’t chase?” After fleeing quite a distance, Ning turned to see the four figures chatting with the three clan leaders, followed by the four figures returning to the core areas.

“Judging from what I saw, those four figures should’ve been golems.” Ning nodded. “Golems actually managed to become this powerful... the Sithe’s mastery over golems far surpassed ours.” Based on the golems the six powers in the Endless Territories had acquired, it seemed as though there were different levels of power amongst Emperor-class golems. The ones he had fought had all been weak, while this time he had finally stumbled across strong ones.

“I’ve already found four of those onyx humanoid corpses here. These things held an advantage over Hegemons in single combat!” Ning sighed with amazement. “Even Crimsonwave Temple merely had two of these Hegemon overseers protecting it, but I count four dead ones here already!”

“That means this place is probably even more important than Crimsonwave Temple!” Ning was intrigued. Given how much combat power had been focused on this place by the Sithe, it probably held treasures which were far more valuable than the treasures inside Crimsonwave Temple!

“However... this place seems to have been wrecked by that claw-attacker. He butchered countless Sithe and probably took away the most valuable treasures,” Ning mused privately. “I hope he left a few things behind.” He didn’t even consider the possibility that the claw-attacker had died, as anyone capable of easily ripping those onyx humanoids in half had reached a level of power that was far beyond his imagination.

Hegemons definitely weren’t capable of thus. Then... Otherverse Lords, perhaps? Or even... the legendary Autarchs?

Whoooosh. The three clan leaders flew towards Ning from afar. “Those three fellows have come to cause trouble again.” Ning frowned, then began to dart forwards while maintaining as much distance from the three clan leaders as he could.

While flying, Ning continuously scanned through the towering palace ruins around him. He didn’t dare to fly about randomly, for fear of accidentally activating some traps or mechanisms the Sithe had left behind. Thus, the three clan leaders were able to quickly catch up to him.

Ning gave them a sidelong glance.

“Count yourself lucky for having escaped that,” the muscular silver man said with a cold laugh.

“You survived once, but you won’t survive every time. I urge you to leave our ancestral grounds immediately. Otherwise, you’ll probably die here. The Sithe left behind many terrifying barriers and guardians. Although the vast majority were ruined and only a few survived, any of them would be enough to claim your puny life. Leave the ancestral grounds and live for a bit longer,” the skinny silver man said.

Ning completely ignored them. He might not be able to beat them, but they weren’t able to do anything to him either. “I just need to stay careful at all times. Can’t give them any opportunities.” Ning carefully

scrutinized his surroundings, visualizing how the palace ruins must've looked in the past and thus predicting where certain treasures might lay.

"Judging from the layout, there should've been a secondary nexus over there." Ning continued his search, quickly discovering a bestial stone statue within a pile of rubble. This stone statue looked rather similar to a three-headed lion!

"Eh? The style of this statue seems rather different from that of the Sithe buildings." Ning was puzzled. He stared carefully and cautiously at the stone statue as he slowly moved towards it.

Whoosh. The central head of the three-headed lion statue suddenly opened its mouth. Its mouth seemed to be filled with an infinite universe in it, and an awe-inspiring amount of power suddenly swept out from the lion's mouth.

Boom! A terrifying sucking power was applied to Ning, who was shocked to find that he couldn't resist it at all. He felt like an ordinary mortal who had been trapped in an ocean whirlpool as he was drawn inexorably into the lion's mouth. Ning shrank in size as he was drawn in closer and closer before finally becoming ant-sized as he entered the lion's mouth.

"He went inside." The three clan leaders who had been following Ning were shocked, and they hurriedly went over to inspect the lion.

"Such incredible power. There has to be a major treasure inside."

"The Sithe left many hidden rooms with countless treasures. This place has to be one of them."

"Daolord Darknorth didn't seem to be attacked; it looks as though he's just flying deeper inside." They could clearly see from outside the lion's mouth how Ning was continuously flying deeper and deeper.

"We can't let Daolord Darknorth acquire those treasures. He's already incredibly powerful; if he acquires even better treasures, we're going to be doomed."

"We're the Sithe! Sithe treasures belong to us."

"Come, let us go inside." The three hesitated for a while outside before transforming into streaks of light that flew towards the lion. They did this partially because they naturally felt the need to prevent Ning from acquiring any more treasures, and partially because they didn't really worry about danger. They were Sithe! Even if they entered some incredibly important restricted areas, they would at most be unceremoniously kicked out. Over the course of all these years, not a single clan leader had perished within the ancestral grounds.

"Where am I?" Ning stared at the rainbow region around him. The aura emanating from this region was incredibly exalted, and the power flowed everywhere. Clearly, this truly was an exceptional place.

"Eh?" Ning's face suddenly tightened as he glanced backwards. "They came inside as well."

The three silver men flew over, excited looks on their faces. As soon as they sensed the aura and power held within this region, they understood that this was an extraordinary place.

"Daolord Darknorth, all thanks to you!"

“If it wasn’t for you, we never would’ve discovered this place.” The three clan leaders were quite smug.

Right at this moment, a humanoid figure suddenly coalesced in the center of this bright rainbow region. This figure was dressed in long black robes, was pale-faced, had blood-red eyes, and looked both handsome and evil. He stared at the three clan leaders, an icy look on his face as his voice boomed out, shaking the entire world: “I invited this cultivator to come in, but how dare you three Sithes barge in as well! Do you think you are worthy of entering an Autarch’s territory? Die.”

Boom! Suddenly, a ripple of spatial power swept across the three silver men. They instantly turned pale, but before they could so much as say a word their bodies were split in half at the waist. A heartbeat later, their eyes turned dull as they perished.

The six parts of the three silver men’s corpses just hung there in midair.

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Book 34: The Stone Hellephant Wall Chapter 25: Autarch Bolin

Ji Ning was rather stunned when he saw this. Those three silver men had been incredibly strong... how had they been so easily slain?

Still, when he thought of the three words ‘an Autarch’s territory’ he began to understand. Anything that had even the most tenuous of connections to an Autarch was guaranteed to be extraordinary. Autarchs were the most supreme leaders of the entire cultivator civilization! They were even able to create those alternate universes which Eternal Emperors fought over like rabid dogs, seeking to take control over them and become Otherverse Lords!

Those otherverses were nothing more than constructs devised by the Autarchs. This was a testament to how mighty the Autarchs were.

“Senior.” Ning stared at the wicked black-robed figure. He couldn’t help but ask, “This place is an Autarch’s territory? Are you saying that one of the legendary Autarchs set this place up?”

“Correct.” The black-robed man revealed a hint of a smile as a flicker of pride appeared in his eyes. “My master was named Bolin. The countless cultivators of the Chaosverse reverentially refer to him as Autarch Bolin. Aside from the few other Autarchs who stand shoulder-to-shoulder with him, there is no one in all the Chaosverse who is his equal. Young fellow, you are currently just a Daolord; you can’t even imagine just how powerful an Autarch is.”

Ning could sense the benevolent intentions radiating from this man. In truth, when he heard the words ‘I invited this cultivator to come in’ Ning immediately realized that this person was a friend, not a foe. Given how he was able to annihilate the three clan leaders with ease, there was no need for him to deceive Ning.

Ning couldn’t help but ask, “Senior, are Autarchs capable of reversing the flows of spacetime within a chaosworld to revive a Celestial Immortal whose truesoul was destroyed?”

“Of course! Forget about Celestial Immortals, even World-level cultivators can be rescued if the Autarch was willing.” The black-robed man shook his head. “However, being ‘able’ to do so is one thing; being ‘willing’ to do so is another. Reversing spacetime to revive someone will cause the Autarch to endure a backlash from the prime essences of the entire Chaosverse. Not even an Autarch would suffer

something like this lightly. You would have to pay a high price, a price which would sway even an Autarch.”

Ning nodded slowly.

“Come with me,” the black-robed man instructed. He glanced sideways at the corpses of the three silver men. “Right, go ahead and collect those corpses. They probably have a few treasures on them.”

“Alright.” Ning waved his hand, collecting all three corpses.

“Instead of being actual cultivators, they chose to undergo the Ritual Sacrificium and serve as the pawns of the Sithe.” The black-robed man shook his head. “And the most unsightly Sithe pawns I’ve ever seen.”

“The most unsightly?” Ning was surprised.

The black-robed man nodded. “True Sithe are extremely powerful! Generally speaking, the stronger a Sithe is, the more unwilling he is to undergo the Ritual Sacrificium. Although the ritual will allow them to rapidly increase in strength within a short period of time, they lose all hope of making any further breakthroughs. This is why strong Sithe disdain such an act.”

“As for these three fools? They can’t even compare to real Silver Daolords in power, while Silver Daolords represented the most common footsoldiers in the Sithe army. During that great war, Hegemons served as the mainstays in each army! Long ago, our five Autarchs united the forces of all cultivators in the entire Chaosverse to fight that great war. The Autarchs served as the vanguard, the edge of the blade that tore through all of the important Sithe locations,” the black-robed man said. “For example, this entire thing was once a Sithe warship.”

“Warship?” Ning had never imagined that the ‘Stone Hellephant Wall’ was actually a warship!

“Well, I suppose it would be more appropriate to describe it as a terrifying war-fortress! It was capable of easily tearing through spacetime and going from realmverse to realmverse. This warship was so powerful that it was able to slay Hegemons in the blink of an eye,” the black-robed man said.

“Not even a squad of ten Hegemons working together were able to fight this thing to a standstill. Thus, when my master discovered this thing he continued to pursue it without pause. It fled at high speed, tearing through spacetime repeatedly as it tried to escape, but my master was able to enter it and then slaughter a path through it. He ruined this entire warship, slaying more than thirty thousand Sithe and destroying all of the golems. He destroyed everything, leaving nothing behind!”

Ning was breathless upon hearing this. So this was how powerful an Autarch was?! “All the golems were destroyed?” Ning was puzzled. “But I still saw plenty of Emperor-class golems outside.”

“To my master, those golems posed no conceivable threat at all. He let out a casual strike, destroying all the golems and then immediately departing this place. He had to hurry off to a different battlefield and continue the war against the Sithe,” the black-robed man said. “In truth, however, these Sithe golems all possessed self-repair mechanisms.”

“They looked like they had been destroyed, but some were able to regenerate. As more time passed, some slowly were able to rebuild themselves. Some actually scavenged for parts from other golems that had been destroyed. Thus, a fraction of the golems are still alive, but they pose no real danger at all.”

Ning was speechless. 'No real danger at all'? He had been forced to flee in pathetic fashion by those four Emperor-class golems which were comparable to the eight lords of the Sacred Cities. Still, it made sense; to Autarch Bolin, those creatures were nothing more than ants. Any Hegemon would've been able to destroy them with ease. They really didn't pose any danger to the cultivator civilization in general.

"Follow me," the black-robed man instructed as he flew forwards.

"Yes." Ning followed from behind.

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By now, the three great clans were in a state of utter panic. Although they had been extremely stunned by the deaths of so many Daolords, they still felt fairly calm because they knew that the Silver Daolords were the true foundation of power for them! Every single clan leader was able to inherit the legacy of a Silver Daolord.

But now...

"How is this possible?"

"The clan leaders died?"

"How could they have died? How could the clan leaders have died?"

"Impossible. No clan leader has ever been killed since the establishment of the three great clans."

They were all completely dumbfounded. The three great clans didn't even know what they should do next, because they had never encountered a situation like this since they had been created. Clan leaders always died when their lifespans came to an end! None had ever been killed. Now that they had been killed, the 'Silver Daolord' legacy had clearly been lost as well. How would they be able to protect themselves without any Silver Daolords?

"What should we do? The entire Fumo clan only has a single Daolord left!" They were all utterly terrified.

"Go to the ancestral grounds! Go now and seize back the Silver Daolord legacy!"

"You idiot! Seize it? Seize it how?! All three clan leaders were slain; if I went, I would be instantly annihilated by Daolord Darknorth!"

"We can't afford any further losses at all."

"Everyone... the three great clans have been defeated. Defeated! The only thing we can do is protect our clan as best we can, using the Sithe disks and the many barriers left behind by our ancestors! So long as Daolord Darknorth can't breach our barriers, he won't be able to enter. All we can do is delay as long as we can. Once Daolord Darknorth lifespan comes to an end and he dies, we'll use our Emperor-class golems to rise to power once more."

"Yes, delaying is all we can do."

The three great clans simultaneously came to this same decision. Right now, they each only had one or two Daolords left. It must be remembered that only Daolords were capable of syncing with the Sithe

disks that maintained the clan barriers. Once the clans lost their Daolords, they would be completely doomed!

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The black-robed man flew into the sky, leading Ning behind him.

“During that great war, the Autarchs made contingency plans in the event of defeat,” the black-robed man said. “If they were defeated, we would need to be able to raise a new ‘crop’ of experts who would continue the struggle against the Sithe. Thus, my master Autarch Bolin set up many beastworlds. He put estate-worlds in every single beast statue, and the Daos he put into them were Daos which could lead to Autarchy!”

“Lead towards Autarchy?” Ning’s heart trembled.

“Don’t get too excited. It only ‘leads’ towards Autarchy, but actually reaching the Autarch level is far too difficult.” The black-robed man laughed. “Although the Sithe were extremely powerful as a group, they didn’t have any individuals who could match our Autarchs in power, which was why they were defeated in the end. Autarchs are just too powerful. Just look at this warship! It was incredibly powerful, but it was viewed as nothing more but a plaything by the Autarchs.”

“Generally speaking, only Eternal Emperors are qualified to enter these beastworlds. I generally have no interest in Daolords at all, and they aren’t qualified to enter.” The black-robed man smiled. “But just now, I noticed that you were actually able to battle those three pathetic Silver Daolords to a standstill. I was quite surprised by this. You were just a Daolord, after all, and I can tell that you aren’t wielding a Universe treasure. For you to be able to unleash such might is quite rare indeed, which was why I permitted you to enter. I hope you will not disappoint me.”

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Book 34: The Stone Hellephant Wall Chapter 26: Daobirth

“Here we are.” The black-robed man pointed off into the distance. Ji Ning followed his gaze, only to see a Daoist altar hanging in the air with nine pillars above it.

“How odd. This region is enormous, but it is completely empty. This Daoist altar is the only thing here.” Ning was rather puzzled, but he still followed the black-robed man as they flew towards the altar.

Whoosh. As soon as they landed atop the altar, Ning immediately smelled a certain fragrance pervade his nostrils. His mind grew sharper, and even his thinking speed began to quickly skyrocket. This was a marvelous effect that seemed quite similar to the Stone Censer of Reunion.

“This altar has the effect of helping you focus your mind and meditate on the Dao,” the black-robed man said. “An Autarch’s Dao is unfathomably profound and mysterious, after all. It would be extremely difficult for Eternal Emperors to even memorize it without help.”

“Sit here in the lotus position within the center of that circle.” The black-robed man pointed towards a circle that was roughly nine meters in diameter. “Sit in the lotus position there and view the surrounding area. There you shall find the Autarch’s Dao.”

“Yes, senior.” Ning felt his heartrate speed up. There were very, very few things which could make him feel so nervous and so eager. He walked into the circle, sat down in the lotus position, then stared at his surroundings.

“Eh?” Ning turned pale. The vast region around him, which had formerly been empty and devoid of all things, suddenly began to manifest traces and vestiges of a Dao.

Boom! A fiery red bird suddenly appeared in the empty void in front of him, spreading its wings and soaring towards the skies. Its Dao was vast and awe-inspiring, burning through all things and reducing them to ash. Nothing could withstand such a thing! This was a physical manifestation of a Dao.

In the past, Ning had once seen something similar when he had seen Daolord Windsourc’s ‘Hundred Streams of the Windsourc’. Compared to this firebird manifestation of the Dao, however, it was unfathomably punier. If the visualization of the ‘Hundred Streams of the Windsourc’ was like a stream, then the fiery bird was like an endlessly vast sea!

“What’s that?” Ning turned his head slightly to glance towards a different direction. There he saw a pitch-black long saber that was extremely thin and sharp. The blade was aimed towards the heavens, and the saber was so vast that it was on par with that giant fiery bird. Its power was stately and reserved, but the edge of the blade seemed to be brimming with explosive power. This was a Saber Dao which inspired utter terror in Ning, a Dao that was just as capable of annihilating all in its path.

“The Sword Dao?” Next to the ‘Saber Dao’ hanging in the air, Ning also saw a similarly massive sword. This was a strange rapier-like sword that had had no blade at all, just an incredibly sharp tip. This rapier was massive and also pointed straight towards the heavens. This was a Sword Dao that focused on one aspect of the sword to the extreme. Given Ning’s mastery of the Dao of the Sword, he was immediately able to recognize that this ‘Rapier Dao’ was a path that represented the fusion of his Blood Drop stance and his Soleheart stance, and in both the wielder had completely eclipsed Ning’s current level of mastery. It represented an absolutely incomparable level of might.

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A giant flaming bird, a long black saber, a rapier, a black mist, a feather, a blood-colored stream, a golden sun, a vast gray sky, a dazzling rainbow... these were the nine manifestations of the Daos that appeared in the vast void. All of these Daos were on par with each other.

“This is...” Ning raised his head to stare towards the skies above him.

In the heavens above him, he saw an incomparably massive hand. The fingers on this hand were extremely slender, while the fingernails were extremely sharp. The hand was formed into a claw-stance! This great claw was filled with an incomparably exalted and absolutely tyrannical aura that filled the heavens themselves. Ning could feel his very truesoul shuddering when he simply looked at the thing. Compared to that single massive hand, the other nine Daos were unfathomably weaker.

If those nine great Daos were like vast oceans, then that great hand was like the countless stars of the cosmos themselves. It truly was incomprehensibly more powerful.

“Do you understand now?” The black-robed man spoke out when he saw Ning raise his head upwards.

"I do not." Ning suppressed the excitement he felt and halted his viewings. These Dao manifestations were of tremendous benefit to him. "However, this junior can tell that Autarch Bolin's claw-arts were so powerful as to be completely unfathomable."

"Ehehe." The black-robed man laughed, "Long ago, my master Autarch Bolin relied on his claw-arts to become a Hegemon! However, he remained trapped at the Hegemon level for many years, unable to make a breakthrough, and so he began to meditate on other Daos as well. The Dao of Space, the Dao of Time, the Dao of the Sword, the Dao of the Saber, the Dao of Darkness... he mastered nine Daos in total on his own, reaching the Hegemon level in all of them."

Ning was awestruck upon hearing this. To be able to reach the Hegemon level in a single Dao was already terrifyingly impressive. Autarch Bolin had done that for nine other Daos as well?!

"All Daos are linked; the more Daos he mastered, the deeper Master's insights into the Dao of the Claw grew. Finally, all of those insights burst forth like water crashing through a shattered dam, and my master reached the Daobirth level, the level where 'one Dao births many Daos'. He became an Autarch," the black-robed man explained.

"One Dao births many Daos?" Ning was puzzled.

"Eternal Emperors must gain eternal Daos for themselves. As for Autarchs, they must reach the level where 'one Dao births many Daos', what we call the 'Daobirth' level," the black-robed man explained. "At the apex, all Daos are linked together, which is why once you reach the Autarch level you will naturally gain insight into many Daos you had never even trained in before."

"My master, for example, managed to reach the 'Daobirth' level through his Dao of the Claw. He established an alternate universe with the Dao of the Claw as its original prime essence, which then unfolded through the form of countless other Daos," the black-robed man explained.

Ning now understood. How incredible. Did this mean that once he reached the apex of his Omega Sword Dao, it would be able to give birth to many other Daos, such as the Daos of metal, wood, water, fire, earth, spacetime, darkness, and light? The mere thought of it stunned him. How strong would his Omega Sword Dao have to become, for it to naturally give birth to countless other Daos?

"To go from the Hegemon level to the Autarch level is far, far too difficult," the black-robed figure said. "Enough. I've already told you everything you need to know. Calm your mind and go back to your viewings. Memorize all of this as quickly as you can. That way, even after you leave this place you can still meditate on what you have seen."

"Alright." Ning nodded. He did indeed have to memorize all of this, but doing so would be extremely difficult. The Dao of an Autarch was truly inconceivable; just memorizing its appearance was as difficult as asking an ordinary mortal to memorize a language with hundreds of millions of characters. Still, Ning understood that he had to memorize it despite its difficulty, because he couldn't stay here for the rest of his life. Only by memorizing it would he be able to train in it whenever he wished.

"Senior," Ning couldn't help but add, "This junior does have a request."

"A request?" The black-robed man was puzzled. "Go ahead."

“This junior has an extremely good friend who is also a supreme Daolord. Can he come out and view this Dao and be guided by it as well?” Ning asked.

This Dao might not be of tremendous use to him in meditating on the Dao, but there was another aspect to it. The path of a cultivation was an extremely long one, and there were many hidden pitfalls and problems which cultivators could fall into. This Dao would serve as a lamp post which would illuminate the path to Autarchy, resolving the questions cultivators would have. Ning and Ninedust were lifelong friends; he naturally wanted to help Ninedust out.

“A supreme Daolord?” The black-robed man chuckled. “Listen, kid... I already told you that I really don’t have any interest in Daolords at all. I’m generally only interested in particularly powerful Eternal Emperors! You, however, are far stronger than other supreme Daolords despite not even having a Universe treasure. This is why I’ve given you a special chance. As for ‘ordinary’ supreme Daolords, they can forget about it.”

“Forget about it?” Ning was rather anxious but he didn’t know what to say to persuade the man.

“It’s not that I’m stingy.” The black-robed man shook his head. “The greatest barrier any and all cultivators shall face is the Daomerge!”

“To advance from Hegemony to Autarchy is perhaps just as difficult as the Daomerge, but at least there isn’t a danger of dying,” the black-robed man said. “But the Daomerge is not only difficult, it is also fatal when failed. If you fail, you are destined to die and your Dao shall vanish.”

“Thus... the cultivator civilization as a whole doesn’t care that much about Daolords. New crops of Daolords arise in every generation, with the previous crop of Daolords having perished. Far, far too few supreme Daolords are able to skyrocket to the Hegemon level of power,” the black-robed man said. “Thus, it really isn’t worth us wasting too much time or energy on supreme Daolords.”

Ning was speechless. He had to admit that the man made sense. To this very day, the Endless Territories only had three Hegemons! One could already imagine how this current crop of supreme Daolords, including Winesage, Dawnstar, the Radiant King, and even Ning himself would eventually perish. For even one Hegemon to emerge from their ranks would be a stroke of incredible luck. The most likely outcome was that all of them would fail and all of them would die.”

“You, however, are a bit special. If you really do succeed in the Daomerge, you will definitely be more powerful than most Hegemons,” the black-robed man said. “That’s the only reason why I’m giving you a chance. There’s no need for me to waste my time on other ‘supreme’ Daolords.”

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Book 34: The Stone Hellephant Wall Chapter 27: 120 Million Years

“All things and all beings are given a chance,” Ji Ning couldn’t help but rebut.

The black-robed man paused slightly. These words had indeed moved him, as they were a bedrock of faith which all cultivators believed in. There were no absolutes in the world; there was always a chance, no matter how slim.

“Hah! What you say makes sense.” Intrigued, the black-robed man turned to grin at Ning. “Then I’ll give that friend of yours a chance.”

“Truly?” Ning was delighted.

“All he has to do is capture an Emperor-class golem without relying on any outside sources of help or a Universe treasure. If he can do that, I’ll let him meditate here,” the black-robed man said.

Ning was stunned upon hearing this. Capture an Emperor-class golem? All of the golems within these Sithe ruins were at least at the supreme Daolord level. It would be incredibly hard for the Ninedust Sectlord to capture one of them.

“There lies his chance and his opportunity,” the black-robed man said. “I’ve given him the chance. If he can seize it, I’ll give him the opportunity to train here. If he cannot... then there’s nothing for it. I really have no interest in ordinary, unremarkable Daolords at all.”

“Understood. Thank you, senior.” Ning didn’t dare to press his luck. He immediately said, “My friend is within my personal estate-treasure. Should I...?”

“I’ll send you out. Make some arrangements for your friend, then re-enter,” the black-robed man said.

“Acknowledged,” Ning assented.

The black-robed man waved his sleeves. Whoosh. Ning immediately was sent flying backwards as space twisted around him.

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The ant-sized Ning came flying out from the mouth of that stone lion statue, regaining his normal size once he exited. The lion’s mouth, however, remained open. He would be able to re-enter whenever he chosen.

Whoosh. Ning waved his hand, allowing Ninedust to come out.

“How did it go, Darknorth?” Ninedust immediately queried Ning upon exiting, scanning the surrounding area as he did so. He was instantly stunned by what he saw. “What is this place? What’s with the rubble? Wait, I see a few statues over there; they seem absolutely incredible! Is this the secret place you were talking about? Why isn’t there anyone around here? Where are the three clan leaders?”

“Calm down and relax,” Ning said. “One question at a time. Listen to me explain.” Ning started to narrate the situation from the beginning, even telling Ninedust everything about the Autarch’s territory.

“The senior has said that if you can capture an Emperor-class golem by yourself without needing to resort to a Universe treasure or outside sources of power, he’ll let you train as well.” Ning said helplessly, “That’s the only way he’ll let you in.”

“Autarch? One Dao births many Daos? Just thinking about it is inconceivable.” Ninedust said excitedly, “Haha, I was wondering who would be incredible enough to cause this sort of damage. So it was an Autarch who ruined this place! Thank you so much, Darknorth; helping me get this slim chance was already a blessing. I’ll do my absolute best. Given my current level of power, I should still have a chance to capture one of those Emperor-class golems.”

“Right.” Ning nodded. Still, he knew that Ninedust was significantly weaker than any of the three clan leaders had been! The three clan leaders were generally able to capture Emperor-class golems in solo fights. Still, Ninedust did have advantages of his own. His Dao was far more profound than theirs had been; their attacks were extremely clumsy and straightforward. Ning was merely on par with the three clan leaders, but he had been able to easily capture three Emperor-class golems when surrounded by six. This was precisely because Ning vastly outstripped those golems in both power and insight into the Dao.

“Go ahead. Don’t worry about me. Haha, now that the three clan leaders have died, there’s no one capable of threatening me,” Ninedust said.

“Remember, don’t get too close to the core regions,” Ning said.

“Don’t worry. You have escape-type treasures, so do I.” Ninedust smirked. “And I won’t go too far; I only need to find one of the ordinary Emperor-class golems, after all.”

“Alright. You have to be careful.” After speaking, Ning walked towards the mouth of that stone lion. As he did, his body shrank in size before being drawn into the lion’s mouth.

“Alright, kid. Your friend won you a chance to earn yourself a shot at entering this place. The rest is up to you. Let’s see if you are able to capture an Emperor-class golem. The most talented of supreme Daolords are generally capable of this.” A rumbling voice rang out from the lion’s mouth. Moments later, the lion’s mouth shut.

Ninedust immediately said respectfully, “Yes, senior.” His eyes gleamed with light. He knew that this person’s words were correct; extremely talented first-tier Daolords all were capable of succeeding in this task.

The Radiant King, for example, would be able to rely on his overwhelming superiority in speed to capture an Emperor-class golem, while Palace Lord Dawnstar would be able to use his raw power. “I’ll be able to do it as well.” Ninedust immediately began to search for those Emperor-class golems who were in hiding.

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Ninedust remained outside, beginning his hunt for an Emperor-class golem. As for Ning, after entering the beastworld he began to once more view the Autarch’s Daos. Ning only had a shot at memorizing these Daos because of the incredible effects of the altar, and so he had to remain inside of it. If he was anywhere else, these Daos would completely eclipse the bounds of Ning’s memorization abilities. Thus, Ning didn’t use any temporal acceleration treasure; if he entered his cottage, he would be unable to make full use of the effects of the altar.

“How absolutely incredible. Nine incredible Daos and that awesome Dao of the Claw. As a Hegemon, Autarch Bolin was able to master a total of ten Daos to the Hegemon level. No wonder he was able to become an Autarch in the end.” The more Ning learned and memorized, the more awe he felt.

The ‘impressions’ of the ten Daos began to grow clearer and clearer within his memories. What he needed to do was to perfectly engrave all of them into his mind.

Time flowed on. During the very first year, Ning was able to fully memorize the Dao of the Sword. In fact, because the Sword Dao which Autarch Bolin had devised felt similar to a fusion of the Blood Drop stance and the Soleheart stance, the memorization process caused Ning to accidentally break through to the fourth stage with his Blood Drop stance!

This was primarily because his Blood Drop stance had already made incredible gains in Crimsonwave Temple, more gains than any of the rest of the five stances of his Omega Sword Dao. In this place, the influence of the Autarch's Daos and Sword Dao resulted in Ning shooting to the fourth stage almost immediately.

After another thirty years, Ning finished memorizing the other eight Daos as well. With that, all nine of the Hegemon-level Daos had been memorized.

Ning raised his head to look upwards, finally beginning to stare at the vast claw-stanced hand which hung in the heavens above him. This hand seemed to blot out the skies themselves and were as vast and endless as the cosmos. It was supremely exalted, a Dao which birthed many other Daos. Just staring at the palm and the Dao of the Claw, Ning was able to vaguely make out a quietly gurgling stream of water, a roaring blaze of fire, saber-light and sword-shadows, as well as the threads of karma...

Daobirth.

The core of it remained the Dao of the Claw... but actually memorizing it was incredibly difficult for Ning.

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When meditating on the Dao, one would not notice the passage of time. Ning was completely absorbed in silently meditating on the enormous claw-hand which hung in the skies above him. He continuously memorized everything he saw, not stopping for a single instant as he borrowed from the power of the altar. Not just him; even his Primaltwin and his avatar were completely focused on the memorization process. The Primaltwin used the Stone Censer of Reunion and thus was able to memorize at 30% the speed of his true body.

Clearly, this altar was purpose-designed and thus was incredibly effective in helping one memorize things.

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The white-robed youth sat there within the levitating altar, those nine stone pillars slowly revolving around him. The passage of years hadn't left the slightest of marks behind on him.

"I've finished memorizing it." Ning opened his eyes. Within his mind appeared perfectly clear images of the nine Hegemon-level Daos and the awesome Autarch-level Dao of the Claw. Their forms had been fully engraved into his mind... but of course, this was just their form alone. Thus, they could only serve as guideposts!

In truth, this was already enough. Ning knew that every cultivator had a different path to follow; to have guideposts was sufficient. If he tried to force himself to master the Autarch's Dao, it would probably actually hinder his own path.

Ning rose to his feet.

“Hahaha... just 120 million years. Your comprehension abilities aren’t bad. You managed to memorize it quite quickly.” The black-robed man suddenly appeared next to Ning.

“Ninedust...?” Ning glanced around, only to find that he was still alone.

“Your friend? He’s still outside battling against those Emperor-class golems. He looks as though he’s improved quite a bit; a few more breakthroughs and he might actually be able to capture one of them.” The black-robed man smiled. “Darknorth, per my master’s instructions, every single person who came in here to meditate will be given a treasure based on how well they performed.”

“Bestowed a treasure?” Ning’s eyes lit up.

“My master, Autarch Bolin, did this because he was worried about being defeated. As a result, he spared no expense in arranging for later generations of cultivators to rise to power,” the black-robed man said. “Go ahead into the outside world and battle against those golems the Sithe left behind. Let me see how strong you have grown. The better your performance is, the better a treasure I will give you.”

Ning began to feel rather excited.

“Go. Show me just how powerful a ‘mere’ Daolord can become,” the black-robed man said quite eagerly. After a person forcibly memorized the physical manifestation of an Autarch’s Dao, he would be able to rapidly make actual use of those insights in combat. After 120 million years of memorization, it was time for an explosive period of growth in power.

Still... as the black-robed man saw it, given how strong Daolord Darknorth was, the man was most likely extremely close to his lifespan limit. He probably wouldn’t have grown all that much.

“I’ll definitely do my absolute best,” Ning said.

Whoosh. The black-robed man waved his arm, causing a spatial ripple to surround Ning and deliver him out of this beastworld and into the Sithe ruins outside.

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Book 34: The Stone Hellephant Wall Chapter 28: The Emperor Golems

The palace ruins stretched far off into the horizon. There seemed to be no end to them.

“More than thirty thousand true Sithe once lived here.” Ji Ning stared at the ruins, rather moved. “I really wonder how different the Sithe civilization was from our cultivator civilization.”

“Darknorth.” A delight cry rang out from far away as a streak of light quickly shot towards Ning and descended. It was Ninedust.

“You finally came out. I’ve been fighting like an idiot for millions of years, all by myself,” Ninedust said with an overjoyed look on his face.

“You really disappoint me. All this time, and you haven’t caught a single Emperor-class golem?” Ning said.

“Hey, don’t blame me for that. I managed to make some improvements after inspecting those claw-marks left behind in the palace ruins, but...” Ninedust said anxiously, “But there are more than a

hundred of those Emperor-class golems, and they all hide behind the remaining barriers set up by the Sithe. There's no way for me to force them out at all. My only choice is to wait for a chance. One time, I damn near caught one of those things, but the other golems jumped into help the first one out."

Ning now understood. The golems weren't so foolish as to fight in solo combat! When the situation turned grim for one of them, the others would step in to help out! This was why the three great clans had labored for so long to capture Emperor-class golems, and yet only had a few in each clan.

"I have an idea." Ning mentally transmitted his suggestion to Ninedust.

Ninedust's eyes lit up when he heard this. "Haha..."

"That's the only real thing I can do. If you STILL cannot capture an Emperor-class golem, there's nothing else I can do," Ning sent mentally.

"Don't worry." Ninedust suddenly thought of something. He said hurriedly, "Oh, right. I almost forgot! I've been battling in these ruins for countless years and have discovered quite a few dangerous regions within it. Fortunately, I have an invulnerable aquaform; otherwise, I would've died long ago. Here's a map of all the danger zones I've discovered thus far. I prepared it for you long ago; I was just waiting for you to come out." As Ninedust spoke, he tossed a rolled map to Ning.

Ning accepted it and gave it a glance. There was a detailed map of the palace ruins here, with markings for the various danger zones. Ning revealed a delighted smile. Without this map, he would have to carefully explore for a very long period of time if he wanted to get a sense of what dangers lay here.

"Come, let's go catch us some golems," Ning said.

"Let's go." Ninedust was filled with eagerness as well.

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After a full month, Ninedust found another chance to engage an Emperor-class golem in a battle.

Whoosh. A vast wave swept out to encompass an area of over a million kilometers. The Ninedust Sectlord's upper body was visible and utterly massive. He wielded that longstaff in his hands, smashing it outwards like a stream of water that completely embodied the essence of the word 'entangle'.

No matter how the golem struggled, Ninedust's longstaff continued to circle around it, preventing it from fleeing no matter how it tried.

"In the past, Ninestaff's staff-arts were more explosive and dominating; now, they are much softer." Ning was hiding off in the distance using his Shadowless evasion-art, and he nodded at what he saw. If one was capable of both hard and soft techniques, one would be able to unleash still-greater power in combat.

"Although he's not able to completely defeat that golem, he can at least ensure the golem won't be able to flee. After enough time passes, the golem's energy reserves will run low. That's when it will be defeated." Ning could already guess what was about to happen.

A short while later... "Help!" The Emperor-class golem finally let out a furious call for aid.

Swoosh. Swoosh. The battle had long ago attracted the attention of quite a few golems. Upon hearing their comrade plea for aid, two Emperor-class golems immediately charged over towards Ninedust.

Ning cracked a smile. "Here they come." Ning transformed into a streak of light, clearly moving faster than a hundred times the speed of light as he flew towards the two golems. Prior to receiving the guidance of the Autarch's Dao, Ning had already been at the limit of a hundred times of speed of light. Ever since his Blood Drop stance broke through to the fourth level, the power of his Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop had doubled. This upgrading of his Dao resulted in Ning understanding many new things, and so his flying speed was also able to break past the bottleneck of a hundred times the speed of light.

"Who is that?"

"Where did he suddenly come from?" The two Emperor-class golem reinforcements were shocked. Ning had been maintaining the Shadowless evasion art the entire time and thus they hadn't noticed him.

"Fight!" "Attack!"

"Friends, come and help out." Although the two Emperor-class golems were shocked at first, they quickly calmed down. It was hard for even the three clan leaders to catch them when all three were working together; what did they have to fear? Instantly, all of the other watching golems charged towards them as well.

Whoosh. Ning had already reached the two Emperor-class golems, [Three Heads, Six Arms] active and six Northbow swords at the ready.

Swish! Swish! Swish!

Streaks of mist-formed sword energy struck out with terrifying speed. Now that the Blood Drop stance's power had doubled yet again, the attack was even faster than it had been before! The two Emperor-class golems frantically tried to defend, but they weren't even able to touch Ning's sword before it gently coiled around them and bound them in multiple layers.

"In you go, and you too." These two Emperor-class golems didn't have invulnerable aquaforms, and so they were easily taken away forcibly by Ning.

"What?!" "How is this possible?!" The other five Emperor-class golems who had been charging over to reinforce their comrades were all terrified, as was the golem which was battling against Ninedust.

This newcomer had instantly captured two Emperor-class golems? How could he be so terrifyingly strong?

What they didn't understand was that although the three clan leaders were extremely powerful, their attacks were clumsy and limited in speed to a hundred times the speed of light. Blocking their attacks was naturally quite easy! Ning, however, was different; his sword-arts were so incredibly fast that he far outstripped the Emperor-class golems in speed. Given how unpredictable his attacks were, he naturally was able to defeat and capture the golems in just a single clash.

Forget about two; even if five or six golems were attacking him, he would be able to easily defeat and capture at least half of them in a twinkling, then in the next twinkling catch the rest. This was what made Ning so dangerous!

Swoosh. After putting away the two golems, Ning turned to charge straight towards the reinforcement golems.

“Not good!”

“Hide.”

“Don’t fight him head-on!” The golems were all terrified. These golems were all roughly on the same level of power; if two of them had been captured in just a single clash, how could the others possibly dare to engage? They naturally were terrified into a hasty retreat.

“This Daolord is too powerful. He’s absolutely terrifying! Even worse than the three clan leaders.”

“What should we do?”

“Even if there were ten of us working together, we still wouldn’t be a match for him. He’d just capture us all, one after the other! I think we need at least thirty working together if we want to kill him.”

The golems quickly retreated behind some of the few remaining barriers. Neither Ning nor Ninedust dared to touch them, but since the golems belonged to the Sithe side they wouldn’t be attacked.

“Everyone, we have to hurry up and join forces against him,” the golems discussed internally.

The main problem was that the palace ruins were simply far, far too vast. The golems were all scattered across it by a distance of tens or even hundreds of millions of kilometers. To gather them all together would take time. If they tried to hastily gather together in smaller numbers, the end result would just be that Ning would defeat them one-by-one.

And so... the sixteen Emperor-class golems that were close to Ninedust’s battlefield were all so terrified that they didn’t dare to come and reinforce their ‘comrade’. After spending the time needed to boil a kettle of tea, Ninedust finally managed to deplete the Emperor-class golem’s energy reserves and caught it.

Actually, this was the exact same method the three great clans had used to capture those Emperor-class golems with invulnerable forms. This was why they had quite a few of them. All combat consumed energy, and golems didn’t have spirit-pills. Their regenerative speed was also far lower than that of cultivators! A short battle was fine, but a long battle they couldn’t escape from would result in capture once their energy stores were depleted.

“I finally caught one!” Ninedust was ecstatic.

“Congratulations.” Ning flew over.

“I only managed to catch one because you blocked the others. Does this even count?” Ninedust was still a bit worried.

Ning said with a laugh, “That senior only said that you aren’t allowed to use Universe treasures or outside sources of help; you had to capture an Emperor-class golem on your own. And... that’s exactly what you did! Me fighting a few others is a separate issue entirely. It should be fine. Let’s go and ask.”

“Alright.” Ninedust rather nervously flew towards the lion statue. Thankfully, the treasure-spirit within that beastworld didn’t stop him. Instead, it granted Ninedust entry.

“Haha...” Ning started to laugh. “With this bit of luck under his belt, brother Ninedust’s chances at the Daomerge shall be a bit better now.”

The Daomerge was far too difficult. If one wished to succeed in it, one needed to fight for every scrap of karmic fortune available. Ning wasn’t confident in his own Daomerge chances, but he wished for his best friends to succeed in theirs.

“Emperor-class golems, eh? C’mere.” Eager to do battle, Ning once more charged towards the golems. Wanting to capture them was part of his eagerness, but he also had the feeling that he was gaining new insights into the five stances of his Omega Sword Dao through combat. His Soleheart stance in particular felt as though it was just one step away from the fourth stage. Clearly, the 120 million years he had spent memorizing the Autarch’s Dao had given Ning a wealth of experience to draw upon.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 34: The Stone Hellephant Wall Chapter 29: The Plan

Within the beastworld. Ninedust was seated in the lotus position within the altar, staring at the giant claw-hand hanging in the heavens that surpassed and transcended everything else that was here.

“Whew.” Ninedust let out a long breath, then closed his eyes and revealed a smile. “Success. Finally, I see a glimmer of hope for myself regarding the Daomerge.”

When Ninedust had used up the Voidsea Jadeseal, he had been able to simulate a Daomerge. Although the simulation was partial and incomplete, he had still benefited from it enormously... but alas, he still didn’t feel good about his chances at the Daomerge. Now, however, he felt as though he had a shot.

“Autarchs... they truly are incredible.” Ninedust couldn’t help but let out a sigh of praise as he rose to his feet.

“Eh? You’ve memorized everything already? It’s only been five hundred million years. Not bad at all.” The black-robed figure materialized right next to him.

“Yes.” Ninedust smiled. “Not too shabby, but I wasn’t as fast as Darknorth.” He was an Ancient cultivator; when he was a Daolord of the First Step, his divine body and soul were already comparable to those of most Daolords of the Third Step. Now that he had reached the fourth step, his body and soul were unimaginably powerful. This was why he had managed to memorize it all in just five hundred million years.

“Ah, right. Master once instructed that every single cultivator who was able to memorize these Daos would be given a treasure based on their performance; the better they perform, the better a treasure they receive. Darknorth, for example, has improved significantly! Once he comes back here, I’ll definitely give him a superb treasure. Ninedust, go out and pick a few fights. Show me how much you’ve improved.”

“Treasure?” Ninedust grew excited.

“Yes, treasures the Autarch gave me to hand out.” The black-robed man had an enigmatic smile on his face. “An Autarch’s treasures are naturally extraordinary.”

“Alright, then let me leave right away.” Ninedust was eager to do battle. The black-robed man waved his hand, causing a spatial bubble to encompass Ninedust and teleport him outside the beastworld.

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As soon as Ninedust emerged, he saw the white-robed youth seated in the lotus position next to a shattered wall that was within the ruined palaces.

“Darknorth!” Ninedust called out.

The distant Ji Ning opened his eyes and smiled. “You finally came out. I’ve been waiting forever for you.”

“You call that ‘forever’? Verge-level Daolords have all spent tens of thousands of chaos cycles training before they go attempt their Daomerge. In comparison, the amount of time I just spent was absolutely nothing.” Ninedust transformed into a streak of light that flew over towards Ning, landing right before the shattered wall. He asked, “You must’ve improved quite a bit in recent years, eh?”

“Not bad.” Ning grinned. His improvements weren’t exactly minor, but neither were they extravagant. More than five hundred million years had just gone past! During this period of time, Ning had slowly absorbed the insights he had gained from memorizing the teachings of the Autarch. He had broken through to the fourth stage with the Blood Drop stance early on, but now he had done the same with the Soleheart, Yin-Yang, and Shadowless stances. However, the Heavenbreaker stance had yet to make the breakthrough.

Going from being a Daolord of the Third Step to being a Daolord of the Fourth Step was incredibly difficult to begin with. Ninedust and Badlands had both spent many chaos cycles doing just that, with Ninedust only succeeding thanks to the legacy he had gained from that ancestral Hegemon of the Ancient cultivators. As for Badlands, he still had yet to reach the fourth step. As for Ning? His path was that of the Omega Sword Dao; it was far more difficult than Ninedust’s.

To be able to make so many breakthroughs in just a few hundred million years was already terrifyingly fast, much faster than Ning had originally anticipated. It was all thanks to the Stone Censer of Reunion as well as the Autarch’s guidance.

“Based on this level of speed... if I’m lucky, I might be able to become a Daolord of the Fourth Step after a chaos cycle.” Ning felt quite eager. “If I’m not lucky, though, I could well be bottlenecked for a ten or a hundred chaos cycles.”

Once he did take that final step and became a Daolord of the Fourth Step, the last great barrier awaiting Ning would be the Daomerge. That would be the true test, the deadly trial which he felt he had less than a 0.01% chance of passing.

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“Darknorth,” Ninedust said excitedly, “That senior said that he would give each of us a treasure based on how well we perform. He also said that you’ve improved quite a bit. You’ll definitely get one extraordinary treasure!”

“He praised my improvements as being significant?” Ning revealed an excited look.

“Yes, that’s exactly what he said.” Ninedust nodded.

Ning grew excited. He himself didn’t know if his improvements counted as ‘major’ or ‘minor’ in the eyes of the treasure-spirit! Prior to memorizing the Autarch’s guidance, he had yet to break through in any of the five stances of his Omega Sword Dao. Now, however, he had reached the fourth stage in four of those five stances. Was this ‘major’? He wasn’t sure, but upon hearing Ninedust’s words Ning felt greatly relieved. He now eagerly awaited what would be coming next.

In truth, the spirit of the beastworld had believed that Ning had long ago reached the apex of power as a Daolord and that Ning thus had very little room for improvement. Given how much stronger Ning had become, of course he viewed Ning’s improvements as being incredible!

“Haha, good! Ninedust, you need to make your breakthroughs as soon as possible as well,” Ning said hurriedly. “The Autarch’s guidance truly is of incredible help in cultivation.”

“Yes, after seeing the Autarch’s Dao, I finally understood what petty, irrelevant figures we are,” Ninedust said. “I’ve already gained many new insights, and I trust I should be able to make a breakthrough soon. Haha, I’ve fully memorized the Autarch’s Dao-guidance! If I still can’t beat the likes of Dawnstar, the Radiant King, or Dreamlore, even I would feel ashamed of myself.”

“Haha, that’s the spirit!” Ning laughed as well.

“My improvements are nothing. I imagine even Eternal Emperors and Hegemons would love to have a chance to gaze into the Dao-teachings of an Autarch.” Ninedust shook his head. “Alas, blessings like this can only be hoped for, not counted on. I’ve always felt that I’m incredibly talented... if even this blessing isn’t enough to propel me past the Radiant King and the others, I would view myself as nothing more than a joke.”

“Hurry up and train,” Ning urged. “Improve as much as you can. After we pick up our treasures, we’re going to leave this world and return to the Endless Territories.”

“Alright.” Ninedust nodded. “I’m gonna go find those Emperor-class golems and fight them again.”

“You should probably stay away from me. Otherwise, those golems will refuse to engage with you,” Ning said with a laugh.

“What? Why?” Ninedust was surprised. “Did you beat them up that badly?”

“Kind of,” Ning said.

“Darknorth... how many golems have you caught, exactly?” Ninedust asked rather excitedly. Emperor-class golems were definitely quite valuable; only the Sithe had them in fairly large numbers.

Ning shook his head. “I caught a few early on, but all of them are quite clever; once they saw they couldn’t beat me, they refused to battle me any further.”

“So how many have you captured, exactly?” Ninedust asked again.

“When you first entered the beastworld, the Emperor-class golems began to assemble. A total of thirty-two of them joined forces against me.” Ning shook his head. “They really were quite cautious. Even I was put in rather dire straits by their combined powers! However, I intentionally held back some of my power, using them to temper my sword-arts. After I managed to make a new breakthrough, I suddenly struck out with full power and caught them offguard, capturing eight of them in a row. The others were frightened off at that point... and ever since then, they haven’t dared to approach me.”

“Eight?! If we factor in the two you caught when helping me out, then add in the two you took when we captured three from the three great clans... that means you have a total of twelve Emperor-class golems?!” Ninedust had a state of disbelief on his face. “I only have two!”

“Getting envious?” Ning smirked.

“No wonder they don’t dare to approach you any further.” Ninedust shook his head. “Fine, I’ll go hunt them down and fight with them. When I feel I’ve improved as much as I can, I’ll come find you.”

“Alright.” Ning nodded. Swoosh! Ninedust quickly soared into the distance, flying hundreds of kilometers away into an ruin-filled region. The golems knew exactly how strong Ninedust was; as a result, they feared Ning but not Ninedust! Three of the Emperor-class golems immediately appeared and surrounded the Ninedust Sectlord.

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Ning watched this all happen from before. A few seconds later, he leapt forwards and transformed into a streak of light that shot towards the core Sithe residential zone.

“This is the place.” Ning immediately came to a halt when he reached the borders of the core region.

“You again?”

“You actually dare to invade the Sithe grounds yet again?” Four figures appeared in the distance, roaring furiously at Ning as they transformed into streaks of light and moved towards him faster than a hundred times the limits of the Heavenly Daos.

Ning just stood there, watching from afar. Ever since the weaker Emperor-class golems had refused to battle against him, Ning began to harbor designs upon these four stronger golems, each of which was on par with the eight lords of the Sacred Cities. Over the course of five hundred million years, Ning had already battled against them countless times.

Each time he would go to the very margins of the core residences. Once the battle started to go against him, he would quickly retreat. So long as he left the core residential region, these four golems would cease their pursuit. They were golems, after all; now that their original masters were dead, they would forever carry out the final tasks their masters had ordered them to do without any deviations. Only if they were forcibly bound would they follow a new master.

“The Sithe must’ve hidden quite a few treasures in the core regions, but these four won’t let me get even close to them. I can see some of them but I can’t acquire them,” Ning mused to himself. “I’ll see if I can get Ninedust to come up with a way to capture a few more of those Emperor-class golems. He can lead them and assist me in assaulting the core regions.”

The Sithe truly had left quite a few treasures here. Almost all of them had been shattered, but over the course of time they had slowly healed and recovered. All of them were under guard.

Ning was quite intrigued by them, but he just wasn't strong enough to take them; he needed help! Alas, the Emperor-class golems refused to even go near him, giving him no chance at all. The rest was up to Ninedust. Ninedust was viewed much less dangerous, which meant he actually had a shot as he was able to lure the Emperor-class golems out of hiding. He might actually be able to capture a few more.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 34: The Stone Hellephant Wall Chapter 30: Attack

Within the Sithe ruins.

"That 'Ninedust' fellow is much weaker than Darknorth. Its been a few million years, but he hasn't been able to catch any of us."

"That's normal! Did you think that every Daolord was as much of a freak as Daolord Darknorth is?"

The Emperor-class golems were excited to battle against Ninedust. Ninedust had indeed improved, and quite a bit at that! But with the Emperor-class golems all helping each other out, Ninedust had not been able to catch any of them during the past few million years.

"Endless." Ninedust spun the longstaff in his hands, his staff surrounded by thousands of whirlpools as it furiously swept towards the four Emperor-class golems attacking him. Two of them had assumed invisible forms which tied Ninedust down, while the other two fought Ninedust head-on.

"Traceless!" Ninedust let out a furious shot, his longstaff dramatically expanding in length as he lashed downwards at the warhammer-wielding golem in front of them. The golem hurriedly lifted its warhammer up above its head, seeking to block the attack.

Boom! The longstaff twisted slightly in an almost whip-like fashion as it smashed towards the warhammer. An invisible ripple of power was transmitted from the longstaff to the warhammer, slamming directly into the golem's body. Instantly, the golem's entire body trembled as it was sent stumbling backwards, then fell into a seated position on the ground.

"Careful, Warsky!" Another one of the Emperor-class golems hurriedly ran over to help.

It was one against four, but Ninedust wasn't at any disadvantage at all! The two sides had battled evenly for quite some time, with Ninedust clearly being much more powerful than before.

"Haha..." Ninedust suddenly began to laugh loudly as a formation-diagram suddenly appeared with his palm. The formation-diagram quickly flew out and expanded in size to cover an area of ten million kilometers!

"What?!"

"We've been trapped."

"A formation?"

The four Emperor-class golems were all shocked. As for the distant golems who were just watching, they were stunned as well. Ninedust had battled against them for many years, but he had never used such an insidious technique like this before! It was rare for them to encounter a worthy opponent, and so they quite enjoyed the chance to battle against Ninedust... but who would've thought that they'd suddenly fall into a trap?

"Daolord Ninedust, I didn't realize you were such a despicable person."

"Damnit." The four golems were incomparably enraged. In the past, they had heard Ning address the Ninedust Sectlord as 'Ninedust', and so they naturally believed that Daolord Ninedust was his proper title. Ninedust himself naturally didn't bother to explain or correct the misunderstanding.

"Despicable? Hah! How am I despicable? Because of the orders the Sithe gave you, you've been stuck here guarding this rubble for countless aeons. Aren't you bored out of your minds yet? When the three clan leaders caught your comrades, they would wipe out your golem-spirits and instill new ones. I, however, can guarantee that I won't wipe your spirits out when I take you out of here," Ninedust said loudly. "You'll be able to see a much more colorful world. It'll be a helluva lot better than guarding this place for sure!"

"Don't waste time talking to him."

"Come on then."

"Get ready to die!" The golems were blindly loyal and devoted; although they were curious about the outside world, as golems they would never think to disobey the orders of their masters. This was the tragedy of golem lifeforms... and if their new masters chose to wipe out their souls, their end would only become even more tragic. It was a form of death, with the new golem-spirit representing a completely different and new sentience.

"Darknorth!" Ninedust called out loudly. Swoosh! The distant Ning had already transformed into a streak of light that was flying towards this place at high speed. Although he was hundreds of millions of kilometers away, he moved faster than a hundred times the speed of light and thus was quickly able to reach and move into the formation area, passing through the barriers with ease.

"You finally made your move," Ning said with a laugh.

"Hurry up and help me catch them!" Ninedust urged.

The two would naturally be able to capture these four Emperor-class golems much more quickly if they worked together. Two of the golems had invulnerable forms and would be a bit tougher to deal with, but Ning's attacks were now so powerful that he was able to deplete their energy stores quite quickly. Before the formation even had a chance to dissipate, they had already been exhausted and captured 'alive.'

After putting away the golems, Ninedust willed the formation around them to dissipate.

"Look at those golems over there." Ning pointed off into the distance, where a number of golems were hiding behind a barrier. The golems were staring towards the two of them with mixed looks in their eyes; their gazes were filled with eagerness, anger, and indifference.

“In their heart of hearts, they would love to leave this place with us.” Ninedust nodded as well. “But they are not only afraid of having their spirits wiped out, they are also bound by their original orders to stay at this place. Alas...”

“If they continue to hide inside, there’s certainly no way for us to take them out of here.” Ning shook his head. As Ning and Ninedust saw it, they were helping these golems out by taking them away from this place! Eventually, Ning and Ninedust would die after they most likely failed their Daomerges, but the golems possessed perpetual life; they would be given to new masters and would continue to live exciting lives. To be trapped here within the Sithe ruins was far too meaningless an existence.

“We aren’t strong enough yet.” Ning shook his head. “We can’t help them.” Ning had tested himself against the barriers long ago, but even though only a few fragmented barriers remained, the likes of him remained unable to damage them in the slightest.

“Right. I haven’t had a chance to congratulate you on finally mastering those ultimate attacks of yours,” Ning said. The plan he and Ninedust had settled upon was for Ninedust to first use these golems to temper his staff-arts. Only after truly mastering his new ultimate attack would Ninedust actually move to capture them.

“I came up with a few killer attacks back in Crimsonwave Temple, but each had their own flaws. After having a chance to view the Autarch’s Daos, I was able to perfect those killer attacks and then come up with my three ultimate attacks: ‘Boundless’, ‘Endless’, and ‘Traceless’. These three ultimate attacks of mine are just as strong as the three ultimate attacks used by the Radiant King... and perhaps they are stronger!” Ninedust said confidently, “Who knows? I might be able to defeat Daolord Dreamlore and be ranked as the third Daolord in all the Endless Territories.”

Ning nodded. He agreed with this assessment. Ninedust definitely was on the same level as Dawnstar and Dreamlore by now. As for who would win in an actual fight? That could only be determined on the field of battle.

“Rest for a bit. After your formation-treasure has regenerated its power, we’re going to go attack the core regions of the ruins,” Ning said.

“Agreed.” Ninedust turned solemn. Attacking the core region would be extremely dangerous, the entire reason they had come here was in search of a Sithe fortune to claim. They had gained quite a bit from the Autarch’s Dao, but that wasn’t the reason they had come here.

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Another three days went past. Finally, Ning and Ninedust simultaneously arrived at the outer borders to the region which held the core Sithe residential ruins.

“No one is permitted to trespass within Sithe territory! Daolord Darknorth, you’ve already trespassed repeatedly... and now, you are bringing another Daolord with you?” The four figures flew over, eyes filled with murder. These were the four golems comparable to the lords of the Sacred Cities. These were the four most powerful golems in all the Sithe ruins.

However, this wasn’t always the case. Long ago, these four golems were nothing more than ordinary guard-golems stationed to the core regions. Those onyx humanoids had Hegemon levels of power and

were the mainstays in battle! Alas, the strongest had been either completely destroyed or taken away by the Autarch. In the end, only four of the ordinary guard-golems were able to slowly repair themselves and recover. These four 'ordinary' golems, however, posed an enormous degree of danger to Ning and Ninedust. They were on the level of the lords of the Sacred Cities, after all!

"Daolord Darknorth, you've always been quite careful."

"You've never dared to truly risk it all."

"How about this? Only two of us four will participate in this battle. You can fight us in a two-on-one fight, but we're going to fight over there, rather than here in the border areas," the four golems said. By now, they knew Ning far too well.

Ning just shouted back, "The four of you are extraordinarily strong. I really need to act with more caution instead." The four golems were truly strong; even when Ning was focusing on defensive sword-arts, he could easily die from their blows. Thus, he only challenged them in the outer regions where he could immediately retreat once things started to go south.

"Attack!"

"Kill Darknorth's companion first."

"Darknorth's been here countless times. Let's remind him of just how fearsome we can be." The four figures had been thoroughly pissed off by Ning quite some time ago.

Ning and Ninedust stood shoulder-to-shoulder. "You ready?" Ning sent mentally.

"No worries," Ninedust replied. "I'm more than ready." In truth, Ninedust was feeling quite nervous as well.

"We'll succeed," Ning said. He was a bit anxious as well.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! The four golems howled through the air, moving at different speeds but all surpassing a hundred times the speed of light.

"This is the perfect moment. Attack!" Ning shouted mentally. A black rune-diagram suddenly appeared within Ning and Ninedust's palms. This was a single-use formation treasure! An enormous black whirlpool appeared and rapidly expanded, with over a thousand layers of energy swirling around it. Every single layer of energy was filled with countless complicated formations, and the entire black whirlpool quickly covered the two golems who were the fastest and had charged closest to them.

Ning and Ninedust both used one of the black formation-diagrams, which meant two of the black whirlpools had appeared. One was aimed inwards while the other was aimed outwards, simultaneously trapping and repelling their foes.

"Go!" Ninedust then took out normal formation-diagram treasure, the single-use one he had acquired from the ancestral Hegemon of the Ancients which could only be used after charging.

Boom! An enormous formation that was round within and square without suddenly appeared, filled with countless layers of dense barriers. This formation immediately surrounded the outermost black whirlpool barrier.

A total of three formations were being used to trap these two Emperor-class golems!