

Desolate 1231

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Book 36: Daolord of the Fourth Step Chapter 9: Slain

Prior to accepting this mission, Archon Silksnow had gotten a clear understanding of Ji Ning's strength. An old, insidious fellow like him would naturally memorize everything. He had never dared to show the slightest bit of overconfidence; if he had, he wouldn't have been able to survive all these years! But no matter how careful he had been, he had never imagined that Daolord Darknorth's secret arts alone would have reached such a terrifying level of power.

He had never encountered such powerful secret arts or such a powerful heartworld projection before! In fact... he felt that it was highly likely that there were no Archons whose secret arts could match up to Daolord Darknorth, even if he factored in all of those old freaks who had gone into seclusion! Even if there were some who were a match, there were only three at most!

Whoosh. Faced with such a terrifying Sword Dao world, Emperor Nightwell was unable to maintain his divine body. He immediately transformed an inky-black mist that was filled with vileness and which immediately began to flee. This was Emperor Nightwell's invulnerable form, and the reason why he had been able to survive for so long.

"I need to escape." He immediately moved to tear through spacetime as he fled. "...What's going on?! Why can't I escape?" He could sense that spacetime around him had been completely locked down. What he didn't know was that Ning's Omega Sword Dao had allowed him to easily tear through spacetime, even at the third stage. Now that Ning had reached the fourth stage, his Omega Sword Dao – Yin-Yang gave him tremendously powerful control over spacetime, allowing him to completely suppress it. Only someone whose Dao surpassed Ning's in this regard would be able to tear through spacetime; no one else would.

To surpass Ning? Perhaps only a Hegemon could accomplish it.

"My treasures." Emperor Nightwell immediately sought to try and activate his treasures meant for fleeing... but it was too late.

"Exterminate." Ning transformed into a streak of light that charged straight towards Emperor Nightwell. At the same time, he executed his [Heartforce Eradicator] technique.

Whoosh. The soundless [Heartforce Eradicator] instantly sliced through the void and struck against the fleeing black mist.

"Ahhh!" Emperor Nightwell could sense the terrifying, eradicating will collide straight against his soul and truesoul. Ning's current heartforce was on a completely different level of power than before. There was likely no way that an ordinary supreme Daolord would be able to resist it. However, Emperor Nightwell was someone who had relied on vile techniques to become an Eternal Emperor and had been alive for an extremely long period of time. As a result, his Dao-heart was extremely powerful and he was able to completely endure Ning's strike.

Whoosh. The [Heartforce Eradicator] was immediately followed by the [Dreamstar] art! This time, Emperor Nightwell wasn't able to endure the attack and he was drawn into an illusory world.

The frantically fleeing black mist suddenly slowed down dramatically, and the mist even began to slowly condense. Clearly, Emperor Nightwell's mind had been swept into the illusions. Without his mind controlling his invulnerable form, it began to slowly disperse.

"Die." By now, Ning had already caught up, and he showed no mercy at all as he delivered a fatal strike with all six of his Northbow swords.

Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker.

Heartsword, stance twelve – Swordtide!

Each of Ning's swords truly did seem like a tidal wave of power, like a detonating volcano. The strikes rumbled through the black mist... and right at this lethally dangerous moment, Emperor Nightwell's strong Dao-heart finally allowed him to break free of the illusions.

"What's go-" In the exact instant that he broke free from the illusions and regained his clarity of mind, Emperor Nightwell saw the six terrifying sword-tsunamis sweep towards him.

Emperor Nightwell instantly felt despair, and his invulnerable form began to break apart under the terrifying attack. Before he regained consciousness, he had already lost a total of 30% of his invulnerable form! Now, he had regained consciousness, true... but though he strove to defend, he realized that he was completely unable to resist this killer attack.

"Emperor... you lied to me. You said he's slightly weaker than you? He's far more powerful than you are! Not even my invulnerable form can endure his strikes. He's definitely at the level of a supreme Archon. Most likely, only the two leaders of the Dao Alliance are on par with him." Emperor Nightwell felt despair. He was completely unable to defend against this type of sword-stance, and his invulnerable form was unable to ablate enough of the attack power. It was simply beyond what he could endure.

It was much like how Ninedust's invulnerable form would only be able to protect him against ten or so strikes from Archon Silksnow before Ninedust would perish. Emperor Nightwell's invulnerable form was a bit better than Ninedust's, but those six strikes Ning had just unleashed... they were simply terrifying. Emperor Nightwell wasn't able to resist them at all.

Whoosh.

This all took time to describe, but in reality Ning struck with incredible speed. The six sword-tsunamis swept through the black mist, completely annihilating it. Emperor Nightwell continued to struggle in the face of death, but it was to no avail. He was completely eradicated.

Emperor Nightwell, a legendary demon who had lived for countless years, died just like that by Ji Ning's hands! He became the first person to lose his life as Ning revealed his true brilliance to the universe.

"Hmph." The swords flew back into the sheath, completely clean and unstained. Everything was calm once more, and everything had vanished. The only one left behind was the white-robed Ning.

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"What's going on?"

“What in the world was that enormous world of sword-light?” The Daolords responsible for watching over the tunnel exit at Flydust Star had all raised their heads to watch the great battle in the skies. They had all seen Ning run into Emperor Nightwell in the void, followed by a battle beginning. As for exactly what had happened in the battle, they weren’t able to see any of it with clarity. They only saw the countless streaks of sword-light generated by the enormous Yin-Yang Chaosworld.

A short while later, the world of sword-light disappeared... and Emperor Nightwell had disappeared with it. Only the white-robed Ning was left.

“Time to go.” Ning tore through spacetime and departed.

“Where’s Emperor Nightwell?”

“I saw Emperor Nightwell just a few seconds ago. Why has he suddenly vanished?”

“Could Emperor Nightwell have been defeated?”

“Yes, that must be it. He was probably defeated and knew that he couldn’t beat Darknorth, and so he immediately fled.” This was what the Daolords of Flydust Star believed. None of them dared to believe that Emperor Nightwell had been slain. Emperor Nightwell had been alive for far, far too long after all. To slay an old fellow like him would be far too difficult. Most likely, only the few who truly stood at the peak of power in the Endless Territories had a chance to kill him.

However... in truth, Ning already stood at the true peak of power in the Endless Territories. He was already a match for the two leaders of the Dao Alliance.

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Within a palace inside the Sacred City of Silksnow. Four figures were seated around a table here. These were the avatars of Emperor Silksnow and the three Emperors he had sent off on this mission! Their avatars were gathered here so they could instantly communicate with each other.

“Brother Nightwell, all you need to do is tie him down for a time.” Archon Silksnow’s avatar was quite relaxed and at ease.

“Haha, easy.” Emperor Nightwell’s avatar laughed as well. A heartbeat later, Emperor Nightwell’s face turned pale.

“What’s wrong?” Archon Silksnow and the others were startled.

“He...” Emperor Nightwell’s avatar began to speak, but his eyes then turned cloudy and distant as he entered a dazed state. Clearly, he had just been trapped within Ning’s [Dreamdust] illusions. Moments later, Emperor Nightwell regained his clarity of mind. A look of terror and hatred appeared on his face as he cast Archon Silksnow a venomous glance and growled, “You lied-”

But before his words were finished, his aura completely vanished. The death of the true body resulted in the death of the avatar as well. Emperor Nightwell’s avatar slumped over to one side, falling from his chair onto the ground. This caused Archon Silksnow and the other two Emperors to turn pale.

“He DIED?!” Archon Silksnow was stunned.

“How is this possible? How could Emperor Nightwell have died?!” The other two Emperors had turned pale as well. Emperor Nightwell had been alive for far too long; he had already been an Emperor for many, many years back when Archon Silksnow had attempted his Daomerge. An old fellow like him certainly had many powerful life-preserving abilities... but he actually died, just like that? At the hands of a Daolord?

Archon Silksnow had an ugly look on his face. After a few moments of silence, he said, “Brother Nightwell was momentarily dazed. He probably fell to an illusion! Most likely, after he recovered he didn’t have enough time to activate his invulnerable form before Ji Ning slew him.”

“Agreed.” The other two Emperors nodded. Neither of them could believe that Emperor Nightwell would be slain while his invulnerable form was active. In addition, they saw for themselves that Emperor Nightwell had indeed fallen to an illusion.

“No matter what... the end result was that Emperor Nightwell died,” the red-robed, red-haired woman said softly. Utter silence met her words.

True... he had died. The exalted Emperor Nightwell had died, just like that. Died by the hands of a Daolord.

“His illusions are actually as strong as this?” Archon Silksnow murmured softly, “Last time, when we fought, he shouldn’t have been this strong... could he have come up with an even more profound illusion technique?” Daolord Featherdress’ [Featherdress Soulthral Melody], for example, would’ve been capable of affecting Emperor Nightwell. Ning’s illusions weren’t actually that profound, but his heartworld had reached a far higher level and so his illusions had become much more powerful than before.

“I’m going to head to the Flydust Star right away.” Archon Silksnow’s oily green eyes flashed with fierce light. “I won’t let him escape.”

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Whoosh.

Archon Silksnow was so enraged that he immediately used his battered realmship, using it to fly straight to the Flydust Star.

“Where? Where is he?!” The skinny, snowy-robed old man’s white eyebrows fluttered as he scanned the surrounding void with his oily green eyes. “Where is Daolord Darknorth? Why can’t I sense him?”

“Did he flee? You slew Emperor Nightwell. There’s no way I’ll let you escape!” Archon Silksnow was burning with rage... but he had no idea that after slaying Emperor Nightwell, Ning had immediately flown towards the Sacred City of Silksnow at maximum speed!

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Book 36: Daolord of the Fourth Step Chapter 10: Descending Upon Silksnow City

The Sacred City of Silksnow was an extremely beautiful place.

“How beautiful.” Two Daolords were flying side-by-side, staring at Silksnow City from afar. The entire Sacred City was composed of countless palaces and estates that were connected to each other, each built atop a cloud. It truly was surpassingly beautiful. In addition, Silksnow City was perpetually covered by countless drifting snowflakes, giving it a pristine and holy appearance.

“Big brother Ironshow, didn’t you say that Silksnow City is one of the eight Sacred Cities and is governed by the bloodthirsty Silksnow Fiend Palace? The disciples of Silksnow Fiend Palace are all incredibly evil and demonic in nature. All of them are tremendous sinners... is it really possible that these demons are in charge of this beautiful Sacred City?” the young violet-robed Daolord transmitted mentally.

“Haha, nothing can be judged by appearances!” The muscular and heavily armored Daolord Daolord Ironshow laughed as he responded mentally, “Silksnow Fiend Palace is indeed an extremely evil sect, but this is still their home, one of the eight Sacred Cities of the Dao Alliance. They naturally have to take good care of it! Look at the snow. It looks beautiful as it drifts through the air, right? But amongst cultivators, there is a legend that every single one of the snowflakes drifting through Silksnow City was formed from the blood of countless murdered victims...”

The violet-robed youth glanced at the beautiful snow drifting through the skies. When he thought of how they were formed by endless amounts of blood, his face couldn’t help but pale slightly.

“Violetoflame, you are a new Daolord. This is your first visit to a Sacred City.” Daolord Ironshow continued to fly forwards while pointing from afar: “I’ll explain some of the rules of the Sacred City to you. Look at those palaces over there. Whenever you are within an area covered by those barriers, all violence and combat is forbidden no matter how strong you are. If you do attack someone, that means you are challenging the authority of the Dao Alliance... and challenging the authority of Silksnow Fiend Palace! As the rulers of this Sacred City, they’ll send a large number of major powers to slay any who violate the laws.”

The violet-robed youth hurriedly nodded upon hearing this.

“Thus... the Sacred Cities are quite safe. Many Daolords have set up residence in them and engage in secluded meditation, because not even Eternal Emperors would dare to break the rules,” Daolord Ironshow said.

“Got it.” The youth nodded again. Break the rules? Challenge Silksnow Fiend Palace? Provoke the Dao alliance? How would a new Daolord like himself even dare to imagine such a thing?

Outside of the barriers surrounding the palaces, everything is fair game,” Daolord Ironshow said. “That’s why we have to be careful.”

“I’ll just keep following you, big brother Ironshow,” the violet-robed Daolord said. He then asked curiously, “Have there ever been any major powers who have started a fight within a Sacred City and broken its rules?”

“The three legendary Hegemons would definitely dare to do such a thing,” Daolord Ironshow said, “And the Dao Alliance does have internal struggles! The Dao Alliance is simply far too vast, which is why there is quite a bit of combat amongst its most powerful member organizations. Archon Silksnow is legendary for how many he has massacred and slaughtered, and a large number of Emperors belonging to the Dao

Alliance have died by his hand. It was slaughter and murder which gave him his current position and the right to rule over this Sacred City. He even renamed it 'Silksnow City' after himself!"

The eight Sacred Cities all had extremely long histories. Every so often, their rulers would change. For example, prior to Archon Silksnow succeeding in his Daomerge, this city had been ruled by a different organization and had a different name. Archon Silksnow's rise to power resulted in many great sinners following him, giving him a powerful organization of his own. As a result, he was able to take control over this Sacred City.

"Big brother Ironshow, look! Quick!" The violet-robed youth's face turned pale as he pointed off into the distance. Puzzled, Daolord Ironshow followed his gaze.

They watched from afar as an inky-black tear in space appeared. A white-robed youth bearing a black sheath on his back emerged from the spatial tear. The youth stared off into the distance, scanning the area with his gaze. As he did so, a surge of terrifying power and presence descended upon the region. It was an enormous heartworld projection, and it instantly crashed down upon the entire Sacred City of Silksnow.

"B-but..." The violet-robed youth and Daolord Ironshow both turned ashen. When they looked at the heartworld projection around them, they felt a sense of terror that came from the innermost depths of their souls.

The power of the heartworld projection had yet to be truly unleashed, but even so it was enough to inspire terror in them. If it was unleashed... they knew that they would be instantly annihilated.

Their senses were correct! Given how strong Ji Ning's heartworld projection had become, even Eternal Emperors would turn pale before its might, to say nothing of Daolords.

"Who?!"

"Who dares to suppress the Sacred City!?"

"Who dares to challenge us, the Silksnow Fiend Palace?!" The Fiend Palace was located in one particular corner of Silksnow City, and auras of tremendous power instantly shot into the skies as various figures began to fly out. The leader was Archon Silksnow's avatar! Behind him were the other Emperors. Some of the Emperors were here in person, some had their avatars present. In total, an awe-inspiring process of over twenty Emperors had gathered together. This was a terrifying array.

"Silksnow!" the white-robed youth called out icily, his voice shaking the heavens and the earth.

"What's going on?"

"What is this?"

"Why have so many Emperors appeared?" The many Daolords who were in secluded meditation within their personal estate all emerged, as did the various attendants, Daolords, and weaker World-level cultivators who were within some of the public palaces. They all raised their heads, stunned and curious, to see what was happening afar. Most likely, this was something which they would never see again.

A white-robed youth was facing off against twenty-plus Eternal Emperors led by Archon Silksnow. The two sides gazed at each other from afar.

“Big brother Ironshow, didn’t you just say... that this place is very safe? That only the three Hegemons and the most elite organizations within the Dao Alliance would dare to challenge Silksnow Fiend Palace?” The violet-robed youth was rather dazed.

“There are very few who dare challenge them... but that doesn’t mean there are none.” Daolord Ironshow was rather shocked as well. He hurriedly pulled his brother away and hid within one of the nearby palaces that was within the area protected by the barriers. “Let’s hide for now. We’ll be finished if we get caught up in a battle between major powers like them.”

“Right, right.” The violet-robed youth nodded repeatedly, but a look of excitement was in his eyes.

“Hey... isn’t that white-robed youth Daolord Darknorth?” A voice rang out from nearby. It was one of the other watching Daolords.

“Oh, right!” Daolord Ironshow was stunned and puzzled as he stared from afar. “He looks identical to the figure I saw in the intelligence report I purchased. That white-robed youth is Daolord Darknorth! How is it that he dares to challenge the Silksnow Fiend Palace? No matter how powerful a Daolord is, he’s not even close to being a match for the Archons of the Sacred Cities. This makes no sense at all.”

“Big brother Ironshow, is that guy over there really Daolord Darknorth?” the violet-robed youth asked curiously.

“From his appearance, he should be... but it doesn’t make sense for Daolord Darknorth to challenge the entire Silksnow Fiend Palace.” Daolord Ironshow was puzzled. “I really can’t be sure if that is actually Daolord Darknorth at all.” But right at that moment...

“Darknorth, you really are suicidal.” The leader of that distant group of Eternal Emperors, Archon Silksnow, spoke out in a booming voice that echoed in the world. All of the countless puzzled cultivators within Silksnow City instantly realized that the white-robed youth was in fact the legendary ‘Daolord Darknorth’.

“He’s incredible! A Daolord actually dares to challenge all of Silksnow Fiend Palace in such a dominating manner? They are one of the eight organizations which rule over the Sacred Cities!”

“Daolord Darknorth?”

“He’s absolutely incredible.”

“What a bold man! Even if he ends up being defeated, I’ll still feel nothing but admiration for him.” Countless cultivators sighed in shock and awe, and many of them naturally sided with Ning. This was because no matter how much they trained, for them to become Eternal Emperors was an almost hopelessly impossible task. They would at most become Daolords of the fourth Step... and so they felt absolutely exhilarated that a Daolord like them would dare to challenge Silksnow Fiend Palace. Sheer pleasure coursed through their veins at the very thought.

Yes, we Daolords might be weak! But the strongest of us, the strongest Daolords, still dare to challenge even one of the eight rulers of the Sacred Cities!

The countless watching cultivators all mentally supported Ning. However... they all believed that Daolord Darknorth had no chance to actually win. Even his chances to survive this would be extremely slim.

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Ning had travelled here at maximum speed. Given his high level of insight into the Dao, he was able to tear through even greater distances through spacetime. Finally, he reached the Sacred City of Silksnow... and he had immediately unleashed his heartworld projection without hesitation. He wanted to immediately make a show of strength! Instantly, an entire host of Eternal Emperors had come flying out. He counted a total of twenty-six of them! However, Ning could sense that most were merely avatars. Even the leader, Archon Silksnow, was merely an avatar.

“Silksnow,” Ning called out.

In front of the awesome, distant group of Eternal Emperors standing in midair was their leader, Archon Silksnow. Silksnow, however, was in a rather dazed state of disbelief. He couldn't believe that Ning had come to his headquarters to attack him. Was the man suicidal? Moments later, the Archon let out a laugh: “Darknorth, you really are suicidal.”

“If you think you can kill me, come and try.” Ning swept his gaze across the group of Eternal Emperors, each of them flaring out their auras mightily. Ning smiled. “Do you plan to all come at once? That's fine as well. It'll be fun for me to beat all twenty-six of you Emperors at once.”

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Book 36: Daolord of the Fourth Step Chapter 11: Inexplicable

Ji Ning's heartworld projection covered the entire Sacred City, and so his voice naturally echoed throughout every part of it.

In truth, Silksnow Fiend Palace wanted to contain and minimize this disturbance as much as possible. Just the very fact that Daolord Darknorth dared to so flagrantly attack them was already a loss of face, even though they would kill him in the end. They naturally wanted fewer people to know about this matter! Alas, as soon as Ning's heartworld projection descended they knew that there was no way to keep this secret.

Ning, however, wanted to 'kill a chicken to scare the monkeys' in a display of force. He wanted to let everyone know just how powerful he had become. Naturally, there was no need to keep anything secret.

“Absolutely dominating.”

“This is exhilarating! Just listening to him talk makes me excited. Will I ever reach a level where I would dare to stand in front of over twenty Eternal Emperors and tell them that I'll fight them by myself? If I can ever have such a crowning moment of glory, even dying away the next instant would be worth it.”

“There's never been a Daolord this powerful before, right?”

The countless cultivators within the Sacred City all felt their blood begin to boil with excitement when they heard Ning's words. They all felt that for a Samsara Daolord to be able to act like Ning just did was simply incredible. Anything would be worth it.

"Daolord Darknorth has actually attacked the Sacred City of Silksnow. He's facing off against twenty-six Emperors from Silksnow Fiend Palace."

"The battle is about to start right away."

"This is probably the last fight Daolord Darknorth will ever be in. He's probably going to die here."

"Move, move, MOVE! If you don't get here in time, you won't be able to see this battle." Word quickly spread out. News of this incredible event almost instantly spread throughout the most elite organizations within the Endless Territories.

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"What?!" Hegemon Brightshore was shocked as well when he heard this. "He actually attacked Silksnow Fiend Palace? He's a Daolord! What gives him this sort of courage?"

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"He's actually attacked Silksnow Fiend Palace?" Emperor Anchen and the other Emperors of the Aeonians were shocked as well. They had been frantically searching for traces of Ning, wanting to kill him and take back that unique omnigeddon bloodfruit tree. "Daolord Darknorth... what the hell is wrong with him? Has he lost his mind? Or does he have some special item he's planning to rely on? But he's still just a Daolord, and he's facing off against one of the eight Sacred Cities!"

"Let's go, quick! We're going to go watch."

"I'm heading off right now." Emperor Islehide immediately prepared for departure.

"My avatar will accompany with you. I want to see with my own eyes what this Daolord Darknorth character is up to." Although Emperor Anchen had always stood guard over the Aeonian Kingdom, even he elected to send his avatar off to watch this fight.

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News quickly spread throughout the Endless Territories. The three mighty Hegemons, some of the more famous Emperors, and some of the reclusive, lesser-known Emperors all grew curious and began to hasten towards Silksnow City. No one had ever heard of any Daolord ever daring to challenge one of the eight Sacred Cities; this was something that had never happened in all of history! Curious, they all hurried to the scene of battle. Alas, the distance was quite great; to actually get there would take some time.

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"Quite bold, audaciously so. Do you really think that you merit all of us Emperors working together to kill you?" Instantly, a droopy-browed and ugly-looking Emperor began to shout at Ning.

"He doesn't know his own limits."

“He wants to die under our combined might? In his dreams.” These ancient Eternal Emperors all stared at the distant white-robed youth with disdain.

If they joined forces, even if they killed Ning they would have gained no face. For Emperors with eternal lifespans, face was of paramount importance.

“Even if you want to die, you still aren’t worthy of twenty-six Emperors doing the honors together,” Archon Silksnow laughed coldly. He glanced backwards at an Emperor who had a pair of black wings on his back and sent mentally, “Brother Blackrot, Emperor Nightwell died by the hands of Daolord Darknorth. Daolord Darknorth is extremely strong, just slightly weaker than myself. His illusions are particularly powerful; Emperor Nightwell died because he fell to Darknorth’s illusions. You were born with tremendous skill over illusions; you shouldn’t be susceptible to his heartforce illusions. You go first and test his power out.”

“Very well.” Emperor Blackrot narrowed his eyes as they gleamed with cold light.

“Brother Bloodcloud.” Archon Silksnow sent another mental message to the black-robed elder who stood virtually side-by-side with him. “Daolord Darknorth is probably just a bit weaker than me, but my true body is still on the way back from the outside world. My avatar doesn’t have any good weapons on it; it’s probably not a match for Darknorth. Of all the Emperors present, you are the only one capable of defeating him in a head-on fight. You shall be the one to decide how we are to deal with Darknorth.”

Emperor Bloodcloud was one of the old freaks who supported Archon Silksnow from the shadows. He was Silksnow’s equal in power.

“He doesn’t have an invulnerable form, does he?” Emperor Bloodcloud asked.

“He does not,” Archon Silksnow responded with certainty. He had used a treasure to kill Ning, and back then Ning hadn’t revealed an invulnerable form. Archon Silksnow felt certain that Ning didn’t have an invulnerable form! In addition, he had never heard of anyone developing an invulnerable form based on the Dao of the Sword. Alas, he had no idea that while it was indeed extremely difficult for the Dao of the Sword to produce an invulnerable form... there was always an exception. After Ning’s Omega Sword Dao had reached the fourth stage, he had finally gained an invulnerable form for himself... the Shadowless form.

“If he doesn’t have an invulnerable form, I’m confident in being able to kill him.” Emperor Bloodcloud nodded.

“I’m sending Emperor Blackrot to go first and test him out. Watch carefully,” Archon Silksnow said.

“Very well.” Emperor Bloodcloud nodded.

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Just by standing there, the group of Emperors inspired terror in the countless cultivators who were watching... but Ning was completely unphased.

“Daolord Darknorth, was it you who killed brother Nightwell?” A cold voice rang out, followed by an ugly, black-winged alien Emperor flying out of the group, filled with murderous malice.

“It was.” Ning’s voice filled the entire region covered within his heartworld projection. “And you are Emperor Blackrot. Have you decided to throw your life away, just as Emperor Nightwell did before you?”

To use the terminology of the Three Realms, Emperor Blackrot belonged to the ‘Diremonster’ category. He had been born as a winged monster who was born with a fondness for eating rotten meat. He had an extremely strange and evil disposition, and his favorite hobby was massacring people, waiting for their bodies to rot, and then eat their rotting corpses. That was it – he murdered people to eat them. This fiend had long ago offended many other cultivators who wished to kill him, and so he joined the auspices of Silksnow Fiend Palace.

“Throw my life away? To you?” Emperor Blackrot was enraged. “Prepare to die.”

“Hmph.” Ning’s body flickered slightly as he manifested three heads and six arms, then brought his six Northbow swords to the ready.

Emperor Blackrot transformed into an enormous tornado of black mist which swept straight towards Ning. This wasn’t a simple invulnerable form; in truth, this was the attack which Emperor Blackform was most skilled in using. Anything touched by this black mist would immediately rot away until nothing was left. Even supreme Daolords would be unable to withstand this attack.

In addition, a terrifying illusion was hidden within the black mist. Anyone trapped within it would smile and seek out death without even trying to fight back.

“Daolord Darknorth has started to fight against Emperor Blackrot.”

“Emperor Blackrot is an extremely terrifying Eternal Emperor. Not even supreme Daolords dare to offend him.” The countless cultivators within the Sacred City all watched.

“Suppress!” Ning let out a cold shout. The formerly-restrained energy of the heartworld projection instantly flared in the area where the black mist was located! The terrifying heartworld projection was like a cage that completely trapped the black mist, causing its flying speed to lessen dramatically.

“You can die now.” The six swords struck out like tidal waves, carrying an aura of utterly destructive power with them. Countless tsunami-swords swept through the black mist which so many Daolords were terrified of. Although it contained extremely strong corrosive and poisonous properties and was filled with terrifying illusions, it wasn’t actually less effective than Emperor Nightwell’s invulnerable form in terms of ablating the power of enemy attacks.

“NO!!!” Emperor Blackrot instantly felt despair, and he let out a horrified scream. The last thing he felt before perishing was regret... and venomous hatred towards Archon Silksnow. It was Archon Silksnow who had warned him that Darknorth’s illusions were very powerful, but that Darknorth was slightly weaker than the Archon himself.

Blackrot had felt certain that even if he had to fight Archon Silksnow, he would still be able to block a few dozen attacks. Daolord Darknorth, however, had just annihilated him with just a single attack. Weaker than Archon Silksnow? He was clearly much, much more powerful!

Whooosh. His black mist form was completely extinguished by Ning’s sword-shadows... and Emperor Blackrot became the second Emperor to perish under Ning’s sword since Ning’s decision to reveal his brilliance.

The world returned to its normal calm. Ning called his swords back and sent them back into their sheaths. He stood tall and simply stared at the twenty-five completely awestruck Emperors. Archon Silksnow in particular had a look of utter disbelief on his face. He truly couldn't believe what had just happened. Just a 'short' while ago, he had completely dominated Daolord Darknorth... how had the man become this powerful? This was completely impossible!

"No. No. This makes no sense whatsoever." Archon Silksnow couldn't understand it. How could a Daolord be THIS powerful?

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Book 36: Daolord of the Fourth Step Chapter 12: All Together!

Archon Silksnow and all of his Eternal Emperors were dazed and in a state of disbelief. They had been accustomed to being exalted figures for countless years, and they were used to holding Daolords in disdain! There was a qualitative difference between Emperors and Daolords, and the chasm between the two was as great as the gap between Heaven and Earth. Ever since the most ancient of times, there had never been a Daolord who could stand at the very apex of power in the Endless Territories.

What did the apex of power mean? It didn't mean you were necessarily the strongest... but it meant that you did not need to fear anyone.

The Archons of the Sacred Cities were capable of making this claim. They might not be able to defeat the three Hegemons, but at least they were confident in staying alive in the face of a Hegemonic attack! Unless, of course, the three Hegemons were willing to pay the enormous price needed to kill an Archon. Otherwise, killing them would be extremely hard.

These people made up the very apex of power in the Flamedragon Realmverse... and Daolords had never, ever joined their ranks.

"H-he's a Daolord... how can he be this powerful? He slew Emperor Blackrot in just one strike?"

"He's so strong! He should be even stronger than Archon Silksnow."

"None of the eight Archons are necessarily a match for him."

"Can Daolords really become as powerful as this?"

"Can he have succeeded in his Daomerge and become an Emperor? Given how powerful he previously was... if he really did succeed in his Daomerge, he'd definitely become a Hegemon. He's extremely powerful, but he doesn't give me that sense of Hegemonic pressure... he probably isn't a Hegemon yet. He's still a Daolord. But how can a Daolord be this powerful?"

These Emperors were filled with many different things. This had completely overturned their worldview, overturned common sense itself. When Ning revealed his fierceness, he had completely overthrown the notion that Daolords weren't worthy of any consideration!

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“Eh?” Far away within the void outside Silksnow City was Hegemon Brightshore. He had secretly hurried here and was watching from afar.

“Darknorth is actually this powerful?” Hegemon Brightshore was surprised, delighted, but also puzzled. He was surprised at delighted by the fact that the Brightshore Kingdom had finally gained a new major power (aside from himself) that was capable of overawing the various organizations within the Endless Territories. His confusion, however, stemmed from the fact that not even he understood how Ning had reached such a level of power.

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Ning faced Archon Silksnow and his Emperors, not even bothering to disguise the murderous look in his eyes at all. His gaze focused on Archon Silksnow, and he growled: “What... Archon Silksnow, are you afraid now? Too afraid to fight me? Do you want to send all of your Emperors out to surround and attack me?”

Archon Silksnow had an ugly look on his face. His white brows fluttered, and his oily green eyes were filled with cold light.

“Why are you hesitating? What are you afraid of?” Ning stared at him. “Haven’t you been doing your best to track me down? I’ve come right to you, and we’re in front of your base... and NOW you are afraid?”

They were indeed afraid. Of the twenty-five Emperors, only Archon Silksnow and Emperor Bloodcloud were able to remain fairly calm. The others felt a sense of intense fear when they stared at the distant white-robed youth with a black sheath on his back. They did indeed fear him, because they understood that he could probably kill them with just one blow! He was even considerably more powerful than Archon Silksnow himself. How could they not be afraid of him?

“What should we do, Silksnow?” Emperor Bloodcloud sent frantically, “This Daolord Darknorth is much more powerful than you claimed. He’s stronger than both of us! You want ME to deal with HIM? How?!”

“Don’t panic. Don’t panic!” Archon Silksnow hurriedly sent a mental message to calm his old friend: “I didn’t expect him to be this strong either. Back when we fought, he really was weaker than me. In fact, he died once by my hands! I have no idea how he suddenly became as strong as this! But don’t worry, my true body is already returning at maximum speed and will soon arrive. We’ll work together to command the other Emperors to set up a formation together to deal with him.”

“Set up a formation to deal with him?” Emperor Bloodcloud hesitated. “Using that against a Daolord... we’re going to lose a lot of face once people hear about it.”

“Face doesn’t matter at a time like this! Daolord Darknorth is indeed powerful, and he’s qualified to force us to do this.” Archon Silksnow’s eyes glimmered with cold malice as he sent mentally, “Since he’s attacked our home and headquarters, the Silksnow Fiend Palace, then we should give him what he asks for. All of us shall join together into a formation to kill him. He walks the path of the Dao of the Sword; he shouldn’t have an invulnerable form! That means we have a chance to kill him.”

“He’s very powerful. Even if we do set up a formation, we won’t necessarily succeed.” Emperor Bloodcloud still wasn’t convinced by this plan.

“Let’s give it a shot. We still have a chance,” Emperor Silksnow sent. “All Daolords are madmen when they fail their Daomerge. If Daolord Darknorth fails his in the future, he’ll act even more berserk than he is today. If he doesn’t die? We’ll probably have to hide for the rest of our lives and avoid him. Are you willing to live a life like that?”

“Fine, we’ll give it a try.” Emperor Bloodcloud agreed.

“My true body has just arrived.” Archon Silksnow revealed a delighted look. His avatar was still significantly weaker than his true body, especially since it didn’t have any formidable lifeblood weapons on it.

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Although this all took time to describe, only a few seconds had passed since Ning had slain Emperor Blackrot and said a few words. Right at this moment, a dimensional ripple appeared off in the distance. Ning couldn’t help but turn his head, only to see a skinny, white-robed man fly towards the city at high speed, his white brows fluttering. It was Archon Silksnow.

“You came quite fast.” Ning chuckled softly. “Killing your avatar is meaningless. I’ve been waiting for your true body to come.”

“Quite audacious.” Archon Silksnow immediately flew forwards, joining together with Emperor Bloodcloud and the others as he roared angrily, “Fellow Emperors, Daolord Darknorth has actually dared to assault us, the Silksnow Fiend Palace. Let us send him to his death. Everyone, attack!”

“Attack!”

“Attack!” Archon Silksnow and Emperor Bloodcloud were both filled with the desire to do murder. As they were the leaders of the group, the other Emperors all joined together, following their lead to attack. Although some were here in person, most were mere avatars. However, Emperor-class avatars had incredibly strong Immortal energy, and when used to set up a formation they weren’t much weaker than their true bodies. All of a sudden, an enormous blood-colored wheel appeared and began to slowly turn as it surged towards Ning.

This killing formation was incredibly famous in the Endless Territories. It was known as the ‘Seven Killers of the Blood Disk’ formation. It had been created by a reclusive and ancient Emperor of the Dao Alliance, and the Silksnow Fiend Palace used it to guard themselves and fight against their opponents.

“What a terrifying killer formation.” The countless cultivators in the Sacred City all held their breaths. They could sense that this time, Daolord Darknorth was in real danger. Who could possibly resist such a grand formation when set up by Archon Silksnow and so many other Emperors?

Ning laughed. “A formation? Is that all you got?” An invisible surge of power swept out from Ning. [Heartforce Eradicator]!

Ning’s Omega Sword Dao had already reached the fourth stage, making his heartforce eradication art even more profound than before. Ning’s [Heartforce Eradicator] had always been based off the secrets of his Omega Sword Dao. Now, a terrifying will of annihilation swept out and struck against the souls and truesouls of all of the twenty-plus Emperors. Although the formation was formidable, it didn’t hinder Ning’s heartforce in the slightest.

Eradication!!!

The twenty-five Emperors all felt their souls and truesouls suffer a powerful strike, and they hurriedly relied on their Dao-hearts to resist the strike.

“Ahhhh!” A series of screams rang out. Of the twenty-plus Emperors, five of them perished on the spot, their souls exterminated.

Ning was rather surprised. His [Heartforce Eradicator] was now far more powerful than it had been in the past, giving him a chance to slay even supreme Daolords. However, he knew that these Eternal Emperors had all been alive for extremely long periods of time, and their Dao-hearts had been tempered to be incredibly strong. To use the [Heartforce Eradicator] to slay them should’ve been quite difficult. How did he just kill five at one blow?

“It makes sense. The ones which died were all avatars; avatars only have part of the true body’s godsense within it, after all.” Ning suddenly understood.

Avatars contained part of their owner’s godsense within them. Their souls were much weaker than the souls within true bodies, and so they were much weaker when resisting heartforce attacks. Thus, five of them instantly perished to Ning’s [Heartforce Eradicator].

“Not good.”

“Our formation’s been broken!”

“Quick, assemble into a different formation.” Archon Silksnow and Emperor Bloodcloud immediately realized that they were in trouble. Now that five Emperors’ avatars had been exterminated, their formation had been blown apart. They immediately changed into a different variation of the formation to make up for their losses. The ‘Seven Killers of the Blood Disk’ formation had to have at least seven people within it in order to set up the formation, but it could scale up indefinitely. All they had to do was to change the formation slightly, and they’d be able to make up for the breaches. However... things wouldn’t develop as smoothly as they had hoped.

“Dreamstar art.” After unleashing the [Heartforce Eradicator], Ning immediately executed his [Dreamstar] illusions.”

The [Dreamstar] art was even more insidious than the [Heartforce Eradicator]. It was harder to defend against and completely undetectable, capable of causing Emperors to be drawn into illusions before they even knew what was happening. It must be remembered that Emperor Nightwell had an extremely strong Dao-heart, but he was still caught by the illusions. One could imagine how powerful Ning’s [Dreamstar] art had become! The Archons who were at the same level as him might be able to resist it, but those who were a level lower than him would find it quite hard to defend against.

Of the surviving Emperors, a total of sixteen were instantly trapped within the Dreamstar illusions. Five had died, while sixteen had been trapped within within the illusions. The entire ‘Seven Killers of the Blood Disk’ formation crumbled apart before a single blow was struck.

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Book 36: Daolord of the Fourth Step Chapter 13: Absolute Massacre

“Our formation! Our formation!” Archon Silksnow and Emperor Bloodcloud were both flabbergasted. Right now, only five Emperors were still able to maintain their clarity of mind, the two of them included. There was no way they could continue to form the ‘Seven Killers of the Blood Disk’ formation.

“Attack!” After executing the [Heartforce Eradicator] and the [Dreamdust] illusions in succession, Ji Ning made his move.

Rumble... countless arcs of light appeared in the area around Ning. At the same time, a dazzlingly beautiful pair of golden wings appeared above Ning as well. Under the direction of the golden wings, the countless arcs of sword-light began to form into a chaosworld generated by the Dao of the Sword. The golden wings then howled through the air, instantly flying over towards the Emperors.

The golden wings simply flew far, far too fast. They had to be at least ten times faster than Ning’s flying speed!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Omega Sword Dao – Yin-Yang! This domain had been created via a pair of partially-mastered Hegemonic secret arts, and its power was so great as to be inconceivable.

The golden wings howled through the air as they sliced at the divine bodies of the Emperors who were present in person. The avatars all had bodies comparable to peak Eternal treasures, making them impossible to kill... but the ‘real’ Emperors had fairly frail bodies in comparison. Even though Ning had a precious Hegemonic legacy, he had to use up an absolutely enormous amount of treasures in order to train his body to the high-grade Eternal treasure level.

Most of these Emperors had bodies comparable to low-grade Eternal treasures. A few had reached the middle-grade Eternal treasure level, and extremely few had reached the high-grade Eternal treasure level. If they were able to focus their efforts on defending, they would be able to do so... but they were trapped in illusions and completely incapable of fighting back. Ning was able to attack them with impunity; how could they possibly endure in a situation like this?

It was much like what had happened when Ning was still very weak and paid a visit to the Azureflower Estate. Although his body had been comparable to a low-grade Eternal treasure at the time, he had nearly been beaten to death by one of the two overseers. Thankfully, he had a suit of Hegemon armor on him! These Emperors, however, certainly didn’t have Hegemonic armor on them.

Slash! Slash! Slash! In the blink of an eye, the sharp feathers of the golden wings sliced through six of the Eternal Emperors. They were chopped apart, then ground into dust by the countless arcs of light. They died on the spot. Two Eternal Emperors, had sufficiently strong protective divine abilities that they managed to survive.

“Six more down.” Ning showed no mercy at all; he felt nothing save the desire to kill the Emperors under the banner of Silksnow Fiend Palace. All of them had gone beyond the bounds of mere dispassionate selfishness and into the level of being true ‘demons’. That was why so many Emperors hated them and wished to kill them. However, these demons had joined forces to form a powerful organization, making it so that the other Emperors didn’t dare to offend them.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Sword-light continuously clashed against the avatars, creating clanking sounds. The avatars, however, managed to endure the strikes.

As for the three Emperors who were able to maintain their mental clarity, they were completely stunned by this. Six of them had died almost instantly? Only now did they understand that Daolord Darknorth had the power to kill them with ease.

“Archon, we can’t fight him head-on.”

“Archon, we’re going to leave now.”

“Ah?!” “B-b-but...” The two who had been trapped by the illusions but who had sufficiently strong protective divine abilities and thus survived Ning’s attacks now finally came back to their senses. They were terrified by what they saw, and they immediately began to flee. There was no time for them to show sympathy to others; they immediately used their best escape-type treasures to flee. The twin suppressive effects of the Sword Dao chaosworld and the heartworld projection caused their flying speed to be dramatically lowered, and they didn’t want to spend a minute longer than was necessary.

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Just a few moments ago, Archon Silksnow and Emperor Bloodcloud had been leading the Emperors in surrounding and attacking Ning... but in the blink of an eye, six of the Emperors had perished, five of the avatars had been destroyed, and the remaining avatars had all been trapped by illusions.

The surviving Emperors all began to flee. Only Archon Silksnow and Emperor Bloodcloud remained safe and sound... for now.

“This secret art...?” Emperor Bloodcloud had an ugly look on his face as he stared at the countless arcs of sword-light and the golden pair of wings. “Silksnow, you actually tried to tell me that he’s slightly weaker than you? These secret arts alone are already vastly beyond our level of power.”

“How the hell could I have known that he’s this powerful?!” Archon Silksnow was feeling frustrated and frantic as well. “Eh?” Archon Silksnow’s face tightened. “Where’s Darknorth? He suddenly vanished.”

“An assassination art. I’ve heard of his assassination arts.” Emperor Bloodcloud’s face tightened as well. He also realized that Ning had vanished, and this was something which shocked both of them.

“Let an endless sea of blood come forth,” Emperor Bloodcloud growled, immediately unleashing his invulnerable form and transforming into a vast sea of blood that filled the surrounding area and protected Archon Silksnow.

Slash! A streak of sword-light tore through the bloody waves. “It’s Darknorth!” Emperor Bloodcloud and Archon Silksnow both turned pale as the three-headed, six-armed, white-robed Ning suddenly appeared.

Ning used his six Northbow swords to tear through the waves of blood as he shot straight towards Archon Silksnow. He snapped coldly, “Silksnow, prepare to die.”

Ning’s Godwings were truly ridiculously fast. Ning himself was a bit slower, but he was still faster than Archon Silksnow, especially now that the Archon was being suppressed by the heartworld projection.

However, Archon Silksnow refused to admit defeat. He also manifested six arms, holding a warblade in each as he charged towards Ning.

Whoosh. Ning's swords flowed like water, bringing a tsunami of sword-light with them. They possessed the explosive power of tidal waves but were also incredibly gentle, almost like the caress of a lover.

"Eh?" Archon Silksnow's face changed. He strove to use his six warblades to block the soft and nearly invisible sword-arts Ning was using, but Ning's upgraded [Heartsword] made his sword-arts even more ghostly than before. His attacks were also noticeably faster, giving Archon Silksnow no chance to block them at all.

Two of the streaks of sword-light coiled around his body like fingers, beginning to tie him up in knots. Whoosh! Archon Silksnow immediately transformed into countless snowflakes that fled and then reformed off in the distance.

"Running?" Ning felt a bit unsettled as well. He wasn't sure if he would be able to kill Archon Silksnow, as his opponent had an invulnerable form. Good invulnerable forms were just too hard to deal with.

"How can he be this strong? His sword-arts are simply too fast. He beat me in just one exchange!" Archon Silksnow was running around while panicking. It must be remembered that he previously had been able to dominate Ning with ease; if it hadn't been for the Hegemon armor, he probably would've killed Ning already. Now, however, the difference in power between him and the current Ning was just as great as the difference between him and the past Ning... except reversed.

In fact... Ning's advantage was actually a bit greater.

"Be destroyed!!!" Ning put away five of his Northbow swords, then gripped the sixth with all six of his hands. He unleashed his most powerful attack with all the power he had available to him... the Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker.

BOOM!! The entire region of empty space above the Sacred City seemed to have completely shattered apart. A savage tidal wave seemed to have appeared in the pitch-black space, a tidal wave which had the power to destroy all in its path. This was a tsunami of sword-light, and it caused those who viewed it to feel a sense of powerlessness. Even Hegemon Brightshore, who was watching from afar, was stunned: "What powerful sword-arts."

In this instant, even karma was suppress. Spacetime froze, with all dimensional and temporal bubbles freezing in place. Even Emperor Bloodcloud, still in the form of a sea of blood, felt a sense of terror. This was absolute power, and it inspired more terror than anything else.

"Impossible." Archon Silksnow could hardly believe it. He strove to use his six warblades to defend.

BOOM! He was like a praying mantis trying to use its arms to block a chariot. Archon Silksnow was instantly dominated and crushed by the terrifying tidal wave of sword-light, and his divine power was instantly crushed apart into countless snowflakes. The snow fluttered away, reforming far away into an ashen-faced Archon Silksnow. He wasn't injured, but the psychological blow he had just suffered had an enormous impact on him.

"Silksnow, Darknorth is far too powerful. There's no way for us to fight him. Let's leave!" Emperor Bloodcloud began to move to flee.

“Leave? And go where? His strike just now was so powerful that it compressed even spacetime. There’s no way for us to even tear through spacetime to flee.” Archon Silksnow seemed to have gone mad. He roared mentally, “We have to use our most important treasures if we want to escape. Since we are already going to use at least one of them... let’s use them up and try to kill him! Each of us will use one of them. We might be able to kill him.”

Emperor Bloodcloud was stunned.

“If we can’t kill him, we’ll have to hide for as long as he is alive,” Archon Silksnow said. “Let’s give it a shot! He doesn’t have an invulnerable form; we might be able to kill him.”

“Fine.” Emperor Bloodcloud also felt that this type of life would be far too craven. If the two were so frightened as to immediately flee... then so long as Ning was alive, they would have to remain hidden.

Better to go all-out and give it a shot. Perhaps they’d actually succeed in killing this terrifying Daolord.

“Go.” Archon Silksnow produced a broken gray longsword, sending it flying through the air. It looked quite ordinary and didn’t have any special aura to it, but the countless cultivators within the Sacred City who saw it felt a sense of absolute horror when they saw it. They all knew that just the tiniest portion of the power hidden within the sword would probably be enough to kill them all.

“Kill!” Emperor Bloodcloud produced a curved, glowing object. It was hard to see the object’s true appearance. Emperor Bloodcloud gritted his teeth, then sent it flying outwards.

Whoosh! A dazzling crescent moon immediately appeared in the skies, its light blurry and gentle. This absolutely beautiful crescent moon flew towards Ning in a seemingly slow manner, but it actually moved a bit faster than even the gray longsword.

“He has to die.” Archon Silksnow and Emperor Bloodcloud both watched eagerly. This was their last hope.

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Book 36: Daolord of the Fourth Step Chapter 14: Spread Far and Wide

The light of the crescent moon seemed very slow, but it was actually ridiculous fast. In addition, the light it released completely covered Ji Ning, making it so that he couldn’t even evade it via his ‘Shadowless’ evasion art.

“So this is a Hegemon’s power? Perfect for me to test myself out.” Ning was brimming with the desire to do battle, and his three-headed, six-armed form wielded all six Northbow swords with defensive sword-arts.

Whoosh. The crescent moon instantly slashed towards Ning, an object of supreme beauty that was filled with terrifying danger.

Ning’s sword-light flared up as well, transforming into gentle tsunami that swirled around him, forming a whirlpool that then transformed into a black hole. However, at the borders of the black hole a few ripples of tsunami sword-light could be seen.

Slash! The crescent moon 'gently' flew into the black hole. BOOM!!!! The skies above the Sacred City suddenly exploded as spacetime itself split apart, generating multiple laterals of cracked and distorted dimensional continuums. Even Ning was knocked backwards uncontrollably by the force of the shockwave.

Ning could sense how the attack burned through his layers of defenses, then slammed against him. Ning revealed a smile. His entire body was feeling a bit numb, but it actually felt nice. All the training he had undergone and all of the many legacies he had acquired had finally let him reach a level where he could easily block a Hegemonic strike. Although the attack still dominated him, his body was quite stable. He hadn't even spat out any blood! This meant that the difference in power wasn't all that great.

"Now, I stand at the very apex of power amongst the Archons. I'm very close to the Hegemons, while my sword-arts are highly defensive... the treasures which Archon Silksnow and Emperor Bloodcloud are launching at me aren't of much threat to me any longer." Ning smiled.

Whoosh. Right at this moment, that plain-looking gray longsword flew towards him. The longsword's tip was filled with an extremely terrifying destructive force.

"Judging from how it looks... it should've been a relic left behind by the Sithes." Ning watched as the sword flew towards him, feeling quite relaxed as he evaluated its power. "I wonder what technique the Sithes used to infuse a sword-tip with such terrifying power." The sword-tsunami once more appeared around him, then transformed into a black hole that began to defend against the attacking gray sword.

Crack! Spacetime began to shatter around him, revealing a jagged wound in the fabric of reality as a surge of gray power tore straight through it. Ning was once more knocked flying backwards by the strike.

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Although this took time to describe, the consecutive attacks by the crescent moon and the plain longsword were actually nearly instantaneous. Ning was knocked flying backwards and clearly at a disadvantage, but he didn't even vomit any blood, much less suffer serious injuries!

"What? B-but... how is this possible?!" Archon Silksnow and Emperor Bloodcloud were now completely stunned.

"He was actually able to face a Hegemonic strike head-on! And he wasn't even injured?!" Archon Silksnow felt a sense of a rage and disbelief... but he also understood that the difference in power between himself and Daolord Darknorth was now simply enormous. Not only did Daolord Darknorth have formidable attacks, he had even more terrifying defenses. He had defended against a Hegemonic strike, just like that!

"Silksnow, we've lost. We were defeated. We can't beat him! We have no chance at all!" Emperor Bloodcloud was filled with pain, but he tore open a spacetime tunnel and fled into it like a giant wave of blood.

Right now, Archon Silksnow's mind was filled with many thoughts. Just a short while ago, he was one of the most elite figures of the Flaemdragon Realmverse, one of the eight Archons of the Sacred Cities.

Today... a mere Daolord had beaten him into a sorry state where he was forced to retreat. Archon Silksnow understood that his power was not even close to being enough to battle Ning.

"I lost. I lost. However... this doesn't end here. I'm definitely not going to just give up." Archon Silksnow cast Ning a deep look. The Daolord he had once held in contempt had now become the most terrifying foe he had ever made. Archon Silksnow then cast all other thoughts aside, tearing open a spacetime tear and fleeing into it. Ning had been blasted back by the Hegemonic strikes, resulting in his Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker losing its suppressive effect upon local spacetime. This was why Archon Silksnow and Emperor Bloodcloud were able to easily tear through spacetime and flee.

Archon Silksnow and Emperor Bloodcloud both understood the difference in power between them and their foe. They wisely chose to retreat.

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Ji Ning once more stood up within the empty void of space. There were no longer any cultivators around him; Silksnow and Bloodcloud had already torn through spacetime to flee, while the surviving avatars of the Emperors had taken advantage of the moment when Ning was being assaulted by the crescent moon and the plain longspear to flee in every direction. Creating a powerful avatar wasn't easy or cheap, after all; they weren't willing to give themselves up.

And so... the only person in the air above the Sacred City was the white-robed youth.

The countless cultivators within the Sacred City, including tens of thousands of Daolords, all stared at Ning. They were completely stunned. None of them had imagined that this would be the final result.

"Archon Silksnow fled. The other Emperors either died or fled as well."

"Death or flight... the only one left is now Daolord Darknorth."

"He's too powerful."

"Daolord Darknorth... he beat over twenty Emperors into utter submission."

"Not even the eight Archons are a match for Daolord Darknorth."

The countless cultivators were so excited, they were about to go crazy. They all hurried to send word of this result to their friends. This sort of unprecedented, unheard of result spread throughout the Endless Territories like mad. Every single Daolord who received word was completely stunned, as were the reclusive Emperors.

What? A Daolord had actually defeated Silksnow Fiend Palace, the rulers of one of the eight Sacred Cities?

"What? H-he's actually this strong?" Emperor Islehide and Emperor Anchen's avatars were still in the process of hurrying over from the Aeonian stronghold, but they were completely stunned by what they heard.

"Let's move there immediately."

"Quickly!" Both moved at their maximum speed.

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“A Daolord actually beat Silksnow and Bloodcloud into flight? He actually blocked Hegemonic attack-treasures head-on?” A white-haired, black-winged elder walked out of the highest tower within a palace that was located inside a beautiful world of boundless light. A stunned look was on his face. “I’ve been in seclusion, hoping to train to the Hegemon level... I never would’ve imagined that the Flamedragon Realmverse would give birth to such a powerful Daolord. How could a Daolord become this powerful? Perhaps I’ll learn something from him that can give me a better chance at reaching Hegemony.”

The black-winged, white-haired elder took a single step forwards, transforming into a streak of light that shot through spacetime and disappeared without a trace.

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“Impossible. Did you perhaps mishear things? How could a Daolord be that powerful? But... even the Emperors of the Dao Alliance are telling me the same thing. How can a Daolord be this powerful!?” A wrinkly-faced old granny walked out of a wooden house. A number of ordinary mortals were living in the area as well. The old granny’s appearance quickly changed to become noble and regal, while her robes became beautiful to behold.

The graceful old lady waved her hand, tearing a hole in spacetime and then stepping into that hole.

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Many ancient Emperors who had been in seclusion for many years and who were thought to be dead were coming out of hiding. They normally preferred not to get involved with the outside world and at most kept in touch with some of their oldest friends... but once they heard the news from those friends and they learned of what had happened in Silksnow City, they began to grow restless.

The reason why they had gone into seclusion was because they didn’t want to be bothered by mundane affairs. They wanted to quietly train in peace and live the type of life they wanted. They all sought to one day reach Hegemony. There had been some Emperors, after all, who had slowly trained until they had one day reached the Hegemon level!

Now that they heard how powerful a Daolord had become, they naturally all grew quite curious.

Hegemon Brightshore had been the first to arrive, and he had watched everything personally from hiding. Although surprised, he was still fairly calm at first... but when he saw how Ning managed to defend against the crescent moon and the plain long spear in a head-long clash, Hegemon Brightshore was truly stunned.

“Those were treasures left behind by the Sithe which were comparable in might to a Hegemon’s full-power strike.” Hegemon Brightshore was rather shocked. “Although they were a bit weaker than a full-power hit from me, it had reached Windrain and Netherlily’s levels. Darknorth actually managed to rely on mere sword-arts to block two consecutive attacks from incredible Sithe treasures.”

“He was overpowered, true... but he still managed to endure the strike head-on. He is now at a level of power where he is on par with the most supreme of Archons. Most likely, he’s on par with the two leaders of the Dao Alliance.” Hegemon Brightshore was stunned. “Unbelievable, simply unbelievable. His only flaw is that he probably doesn’t have an invulnerable form. Those who train in the Dao of the

Sword generally do not have invulnerable forms... and without one, his life-preserving abilities will be slightly lacking.”

What he didn't know, obviously, was that Ning DID have an invulnerable form... the Shadowless form. However, a 'mere' Hegemonic strike wasn't enough to force him to use it.

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Book 36: Daolord of the Fourth Step Chapter 15: The Most Powerful Daolord

“His defensive sword-arts are far too powerful. He can probably rely on his sword-arts to defend against attacks from Netherlily and Windrain. As for me? He's a member of the Brightshore Kingdom; there's no way I'd act against him.” Hegemon Brightshore suddenly laughed. “I really never would've imagined that this kid Darknorth would reach a level where he needs fear no one at all within the Flamedragon Realmverse.”

“He's a Daolord. How did he reach this level of power? I have never, ever heard of a Daolord as powerful as him, not even in the legends. He must have some secret about him.” Hegemon Brightshore looked at Ji Ning, an inquisitive look in his eyes. Even he was deeply intrigued and wanted to learn Ning's secrets, as they might be of use to him in growing stronger as well.

Hegemon Brightshore was the number one Hegemon of the Flamedragon Realmverse, yes, but there were other realmverses and otherverses to worry about. There were still many who were stronger than him.

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The white-robed Ji Ning was the only person left within the skies above the Sacred City. Ning swept the area with his gaze, then glanced in a certain direction. He could vaguely sense that it was most likely Hegemon Brightshore who was hiding over there, and that there were a number of other major powers watching from the shadows.

“Silksnow Fiend Palace.” Ning's gaze finally turned to the towering palace which was the seat of Silksnow Fiend Palace.

Boom! Ning suddenly transformed to become a three million meter titan. He reached out with his two hands to claw at Silksnow Fiend Palace, trying to tear it upwards. This instantly caused many runes to light up as the barriers around the palace sought to protect it. When the runes lit up, Ning began to analyze them carefully. The reason why he was using brute force at first was so that he would have a chance to better analyze all of the mysteries contained within the barriers. That would make it easier for him to defeat the barriers and then annihilate the entire Silksnow Fiend Palace.

“Wow.”

“Daolord Darknorth is trying to uproot Silksnow Fiend Palace.”

“Is he really going to tear out the entire palace?” The countless cultivators of the Sacred City only grew even more excited. Low-level cultivators like them naturally delighted in chaos; to them, the more Emperors died, the more interesting topics of conversation they would have.

Rumble... as Ning tugged at Silksnow Fiend Palace, he manifested three heads and six arms. Four of those arms wielded Northbow swords as he prepared to breach the barriers through raw power.

“Daolord Darknorth.” A voice rang out. The titanic three-headed, six-armed Ning raised his three heads to stare into the skies. A furry gold alien had appeared in the skies. The alien’s entire body was covered with glowing golden fur, and his aura was so mighty as to be on par with Ning’s.

“Emperor Goldisle,” Ning said.

“Daolord Darknorth, you killed many Emperors and sent Silksnow and Bloodcloud fleeing... that’s enough,” Emperor Goldisle said. “There’s no need for you to annihilate Silksnow Fiend Palace. It is, after all, one of the eight organizations which rule over the eight Sacred Cities in accordance with the pact they made with the Dao Alliance. Even though you have defeated them, if you fail your Daomerge then 108,000 chaos cycles from now they will once again rise to power.

Ning frowned. He wasn’t certain of his Daomerge chances. If he failed his Daomerge, he would eventually die... and indeed, Archon Silksnow and the others would once more reappear.

“Whether Silksnow Fiend Palace rises or falls 108,000 chaos cycles from now... is something for them to worry about 108,000 chaos cycles in the future.” Ning’s voice was sonorous, shaking both Heaven and Earth: “So long as I, Darknorth, am alive I shall be working to destroy Silksnow Fiend Palace! If I hear word that anyone dares to proclaim himself as a disciple of Silksnow Fiend Palace, I’ll definitely kill him and show no mercy.”

“So long as I, Darknorth, am alive I shall be working to destroy Silksnow Fiend Palace!” These words echoed throughout the world around them. Ning was openly proclaiming the decision he had just made. He was now someone who stood at the very apex of power in the Flamedragon Realmverse. Not even Hegemons would be able to do anything to him! Few would be willing to challenge his decisions, and that only after careful consideration.

“Alas.” The midair Emperor Goldisle shook his head slowly upon seeing this. “If you’ve already made up your mind, then I won’t try to dissuade you. Let me remind you, however, that Silksnow Fiend Palace still has a large number of Eternal Emperors within its ranks. You might be able to kill a few, but many are scattered throughout the territories. They can avoid you while you are in your prime, but once you die your children will probably be in danger...”

A cold light flashed through Ning’s eyes. Archon Silksnow and his Emperors were all devils! If Ning was to die, they would come for revenge... and they would most likely take their vengeance upon the Three Realms and Vastheaven Palace.

Still, the reason why Ning dared to do this was because he didn’t fear these devils. First of all, the Three Realms were hidden quite securely. Its location had never been made public, and no one knew that his Three Realms was his homeland.

Second, he was planning to make another visit to the Stone Hellephant Wall and take away those four Archon-class golems as well as some of the Sithe discs. He was going to place them all in the Three Realms.

No matter what... if he truly did fail in his Daomerge and perish, he would ensure that things were taken care of. As for Vastheaven Palace? There was no need for him to worry about it. Emperor Solesky's greatest forte was his invulnerable aquaform; not even Archons would be able to do anything to him.

"Take revenge upon me?" Ning looked at Emperor Goldisle. "If they want to take revenge... they need to stay alive until the day I die."

Emperor Goldisle's eyebrows raised slightly. He couldn't help but sigh in amazement: "Daolords! Most of them really don't care about life and death, and they are absolutely crazy. I pity Silksnow Fiend Palace for having offended Daolord Darknorth, the poor bastards."

Ning's eyes were filled with coldness. He had certain options available to him. He had only trained for a brief period of time and had already reached his current level of power. It wouldn't necessarily be impossible for him to succeed in the Daomerge! Besides, his [Heartsword] art had more room for improvement, as did his heartforce secret arts. It must be remembered that his heartforce illusions were actually still weaker than the Daolord Featherdress'; the reason his heartforce attacks had already become this powerful was purely due to how strong his heartforce was.

Once he upgraded his heartforce and secret arts further... Ning's heartforce abilities would definitely inspire terror in countless Eternal Emperors. If they were attacked by Hegemons, they might be able to flee... but once they were trapped in Ning's illusions, they would have no chance to escape. This was what made Eternal Emperors who were Heartforce Cultivators so terrifying.

"I'll take things one step at a time." Ning was quite relaxed, continuing to try and uproot Silksnow Fiend Palace with two of his arms as countless runes flickered over its surface. As for his other four arms, they wielded the Northbow swords, executing sword-arts as Ning started to break the formations and barriers apart.

By now, not a single Emperor remained within Silksnow Fiend Palace; all of them had fled. If an Emperor was left, it probably would've been a bit more difficult for Ning to break these barriers apart... but since no one was actively managing them, Ning was able to forcibly tear through them with his overwhelming power.

Whoosh! Boom! A large number of formations began to be torn apart by force.

Rumble... the servants and retainers throughout Silksnow Fiend Palace began to flee in terror as Ning began to rip the palace out from its foundation. After just ten or so breaths of time, Ning's Northbow swords managed to tear apart all of the formations.

Whoosh. Ning managed to uproot the entire Silksnow Fiend Palace just like a giant carrot.

The three-headed, six-armed Ning was over three million meters tall, and the sight of him uprooting Silksnow Fiend Palace caused all of the countless cultivators in the Sacred City to sigh in amazement. They would probably never be able to forget this sight... and they would forever celebrate the fact that they had witnessed this with their own eyes. This was, without question, the most freakishly powerful and talented Daolord who had ever existed in the annals of history.

“Come here.” With but a thought, Ning drew Silksnow Fiend Palace into his estate-world. The Sacred City of Silksnow looked just as peaceful and calm as before... but the place where Silksnow Fiend Palace had once been was now completely empty.

“Silksnow Fiend Palace is finished.”

“They’re doomed.”

“No one will dare to claim membership in Silksnow Fiend Palace for at least 108,000 chaos cycles.” The cultivators all sighed with emotion. Most of the members of Silksnow Fiend Palace were ordinary cultivators, after all; there were only thirty or so Emperors to begin with! Eight had died today, leaving only twenty-plus Emperors. The rest were all Daolords or World-level cultivators, but there was no way they would be able to live past 108,000 chaos cycles.

Thus... for the vast majority of cultivators, the formerly awe-inspiring Silksnow Fiend Palace was truly and completely finished, its foundation destroyed. Only the Emperors were left, but all of them had gone into hiding in fear of Ning discovering them.

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The skies above the Sacred City. Ning, who had just uprooted Silksnow Fiend Palace, was standing face-to-face with Emperor Goldisle. “Daolord Darknorth, please follow me,” Emperor Goldisle said.

Ning turned to glance at him. He saw a gold-colored world rapidly expanding within the void, and within it Ning was able to vaguely make out the forms of Hegemon Brightshore, Hegemon Nightlily, Hegemon Windrain, and a number of other figures who emanated auras of incredible power.

“The three Hegemons and quite a few of the more reclusive Emperors have all shown up. They wish to meet with you, Darknorth.” Emperor Goldisle smiled. “You truly are the most powerful Daolord to ever exist since the ancient days. All of these old fellows wish to meet you.”

“I do indeed need to meet them.” Ning nodded.

“Come on over, Darknorth. There’s nothing for you to worry about,” the distant Hegemon Brightshore sent mentally from within that golden world. No matter what, Ning was a member of the Brightshore Kingdom; as the Brightshore Hegemon, he was definitely going to stand on Ning’s side.

“Coming.” Swoosh. Swoosh. Ning and Emperor Goldisle immediately flew towards the golden world. As the two flew inside, the golden world became completely sealed off. The world had been established just a few billion kilometers outside the Sacred City of Silksnow, but ordinary Eternal Emperors would never be able to discover it.

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Book 36: Daolord of the Fourth Step Chapter 16: The Great Flamedragon Conference

Ji Ning swept the golden world with his gaze after entering it. In front of him were nine clouds, and each cloud had upon it a table covered with precious Immortal wine and fruit.

Seven of the clouds were occupied by seven major powers who were seated in the lotus position. They included the white-robed, white-bearded Hegemon Brightshore, the green-haired Hegemon Windrain, the dazzlingly beautiful Hegemon Netherlily, and the black-robed, black-haired Emperor Blackcloud of the Dao Alliance. As for the other three, Ning had never met them before. Their auras, however, were quite extraordinary.

“Incredible.” Ning’s heart clenched. “The reclusive old experts of the Flamedragon Realmverse have probably all come out.”

“Darknorth, sit.” Emperor Goldisle pointed at the two clouds which were still empty.

“After you, Emperor Goldisle,” Ning said modestly. Emperor Goldisle was one of the two leaders of the Dao Alliance, after all. The two flew forwards together, then parted to sit down atop each of their respective clouds. Now, all nine major powers were present.

“Haha... it’s rare to have such a lively gathering.” Emperor Goldisle swept the others with his gaze after sitting down, then let out a ringing laugh: “It has been a long time since I’ve seen my old friends here... and now, I’ve seen you all.”

“It has indeed been quite some time.” A gold-haired, gold-robed man seated off in the distance smiled. “It is all thanks to fellow Daoist Darknorth that all of us have a chance to meet today. Haha... I suppose we can consider this a new Great Flamedragon Conference.”

“Of course it is. All of the major powers who usually take part in the conference have all gathered here today.” Emperor Blackcloud nodded and smiled. “All of you normally spend your time in seclusion; it isn’t easy to meet you! Today, however, all of you have come on your own volition.”

“Given how impressive fellow Daoist Darknorth is, how could we not come out to meet him?” The graceful, noble-looking woman smiled as she spoke.

“Of course we came for the sake of fellow Daoist Darknorth. I’ve seen your tired old faces plenty of times already,” a silver-haired, black-robed youth said.

Emperor Goldisle turned to look at Ning, then smiled. “Darknorth, let me make the introductions. I’m sure you already know the three Hegemons over here: Hegemon Brightshore, Hegemon Windrain, and Hegemon Netherlily. I don’t need to introduce Emperor Blackcloud either...”

Ning nodded, continuing to listen.

“This gentleman,” Emperor Goldisle pointed towards the gold-robed, gold-haired man, “is pretty much the longest living Emperor of the Dao Alliance. His name is Emperor Goldface, and long ago he was once an Archon of a Sacred City! However, he later gave it up and retreated into seclusion. He now rarely shows himself, and very few people even know about him.”

“Emperor Goldface!” Ning immediately said, “So you are Emperor Goldface. Although Darknorth has heard of you before, I knew very little about you. Today, I finally have the chance to meet with you.”

Emperor Goldface was definitely an awesomely famous Emperor. He was the most dazzling figure of an era, the most illustrious Emperor of his time. Later on, for some unknown reason, he had become a very

low-key figure and had disappeared without a trace. He was so ancient and long-lived that he was already quite famous when the Dawn War first began.

“Not worth mentioning, not worth mentioning.” Emperor Goldface felt quite smug, but he spoke in an artificially humble manner.

“Let me make another introduction...” Emperor Goldisle pointed at the graceful and noble-looking woman. “This is Empress Jade Phoenix. She is actually the youngest member of our little group.”

“Greetings, Empress Jade Phoenix,” Ning said.

“No need to be courteous, fellow Daoist Darknorth.” Empress Jade Phoenix nodded and smiled at him.

Finally, Emperor Goldisle looked at the silver-haired, black-robed youth. “This is Daoist Bluestone. He is, without a question, the number one expert of our Dao Alliance.”

“You praise me too much,” the silver-haired, black-robed youth said.

Ning was briefly startled. Bluestone? He couldn’t help but think back to Spring Grass and her little brother, but in the next instant he focused on what Emperor Goldisle had just said. The number one expert of the Dao Alliance? If he was making that claim in front of all these people... it was probably true.

Ning suddenly heard the voice of Hegemon Brightshore ring out in his mind: “Darknorth, all of these ancient members of the Dao Alliance have gathered here today because of you. That’s why you need to be careful. Emperor Goldface and Empress Jade Phoenix are nothing to worry about, but you have to be wary of Daoist Bluestone. He is incredibly strong. Although he’s not a Hegemon, he’s strong enough to stand as equals to the three of us.”

Ning was rather shocked upon hearing this. “Then why have I never heard of Daoist Bluestone before?” Ning sent back.

“Because of the five Emperors of the Dao Alliance before you, Daoist Bluestone has the best temperament and is the most low-key. He doesn’t care about empty titles and reputation; his focus is purely on the Dao. Although he is the undisputed number one figure within the Dao Alliance, there are very few who even know about him. That’s why, although you need to be careful with you, you don’t need to worry too much. He’s an extremely even-tempered and amiable man,” Hegemon Brightshore sent.

“He’s not a Hegemon. Why is he able to stand alongside Hegemons in power?” Ning sent back.

“Daoist Bluestone rose to power as a mortal cultivator, and so he has both a true body and a Primaltwin. After succeeding in his Daomerge to become an Emperor, he focused all of his efforts on secluded meditation and training, resulting in him becoming one of the most elite members of the Dao Alliance. He sent his true body roving through the outside world... and roughly three hundred thousand chaos cycles ago, he found a Sithe relic site. He allowed his Primaltwin to undergo the Ritual Sacrificium, converting it into one of the Black Emperors of the Sithe race while his true body remained ‘normal’.”

“Now, his true body continues to train in seclusion while his Black Emperor Primaltwin goes out exploring. He has more treasures than anyone else in the entire Dao Alliance. You absolutely cannot

make an enemy out of him. He might be an extremely amiable person, but if you really do manage to somehow piss him off, the consequences would be absolutely unimaginable.”

Ning was speechless. Black Emperor? That referred to those onyx humanoid figures, right? Those things definitely had Hegemonic levels of power! During the Dawn War, a single one of the onyx humanoids had been enough to drag two Hegemons to their deaths. Daoist Bluestone had converted his Primaltwin into one of them? No wonder he was able to sit alongside the three mighty Hegemons as peers!

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The two communicated in secret quite quickly, and now Ning had a better understanding of those who were before him.

Emperor Goldface looked at Ning, a smile on his face: “Fellow Daoist Darknorth, you truly are impressive. You were able to defeat over twenty Emperors as a Daolord! Even when Silksnow and Bloodcloud joined forces, they still weren’t able to withstand so much as a single blow from you. I’ve never even heard of a Daolord like you. I rarely admire others, but I have to say that I truly do admire you, fellow Daoist Darknorth.”

“You praise me too much,” Ning said.

“No need to be humble, Darknorth.” Hegemon Netherlily spoke out in praise as well. “You are indeed the most powerful Daolord I have seen or even heard of. My horizons have truly been broadened. I now know that even Daolords can reach such an incredible level of power.”

“Yes, all of our horizons have been broadened,” Daoist Bluestone said with a sigh. “For a Daolord to reach this level of power... if you can succeed in your Daomerge, you’ll probably be far stronger than other Hegemons. You might even become comparable to an Otherverse Lord.”

Otherverse Lords were generally Hegemons who managed to seize control over an alternate universe and who were able to control the prime essences of that universe, borrowing from it to dramatically strengthen themselves.

“But I’m quite puzzled.” Hegemon Windrain spoke out as well. “Darknorth, my young friend... why is it that despite being a Daolord, you have reached such an incredible level of power?”

“I’m puzzled as well.” Emperor Goldface looked at Ning. “Would you be willing to relieve us of our confusion, fellow Daoist Darknorth?”

All of the Emperors, including Daoist Bluestone and the three mighty Hegemons, were all staring straight at Ning. Even though Hegemon Brightshore stood on Ning’s side, he was still curious about Ning’s Dao. Every single cultivator hoped to be able to walk as far along the path of the Dao as they could, and so they were naturally interested in Ning’s Dao.

How could a Daolord be this powerful? What was the reason behind it? If they knew the reason, perhaps they would be inspired by it. Perhaps it would be of help to them. Naturally, every single one of the major powers were extremely intrigued in it.

Ning wasn’t surprised by this. Everything was as he had expected. He himself was a cultivator; he knew just how much cultivators cared about the Dao. It was precisely because he knew that his sudden

explosion in power would attract quite a bit of trouble and that many other major powers might appear to cause trouble for him. Although he wasn't afraid of them, if he ended up fighting and offending a large group of people then things would become troublesome for him the future.

That was why he had decided to just 'kill a chicken to scare the monkeys', stunning and warning everyone, especially the weaker ones, that he was not to be trifled with. In the end, only the most elite major powers of the entire Flamedragon Realmverse were qualified to come speak with him about it... but even then, they had to behave with courtesy and treat him as an honored guest! This was indeed the best possible outcome which Ning had hoped for.

A nice, peaceful discussion; how wonderful would that be? He would be able to resolve his potential future troubles at one go. Even if a few ended up becoming his enemies, it would be within the realm of what he could handle.

This group could indeed be described as the most powerful force within the entire Flamedragon Realmverse. The only ones here aside from the leaders of the Dao Alliance were the three Hegemons! Figures like Emperor Anchen, the supreme leader of the Aeonians, were individually comparable to the likes of Emperor Goldface... but the Aeonians as a race were far too weak. They were also mortal enemies of the Dao Alliance. As a result, they were naturally excluded from this event.

Thus... the only ones invited to take part were the five supreme Emperors of the Dao Alliance and the three Hegemons.

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Book 36: Daolord of the Fourth Step Chapter 17: Omega Sword Dao

Ji Ning swept his gaze across the eight supreme experts of the Flamedragon Realmverse, then smiled: "Since you are all curious, I'll chat a bit about it. However, this involves some of my personal secrets. I hope that you will not casually spread it to others; the fewer who know about it, the better."

"That goes without saying," Emperor Goldface said hurriedly. Was the kid joking? The fewer who knew a secret, the more precious the secret would be. If everyone knew it, the eight of them wouldn't have any advantage at all.

The other major powers were all delighted as well. None of them had expected Ning to be this easy-going about it.

"The path of cultivation is a stratified one; there are greater Daos and there are lesser Daos," Ning said. "World-level cultivators must develop their own Daos and use them to become Samsara Daolords. Some gain insight into ordinary Daos, some gain insights into formidable ones, and a few will gain insight into Supreme Daos. At the very apex are those who fuse multiple Supreme Daos together into a perfect whole."

The three Hegemons and the five Emperors of the Dao Alliance all nodded slightly. Ning continued, "So fusing multiple Supreme Daos is the apex, the highest level of power possible, right? This is what almost all cultivators believe... but I did not believe this."

"Are you telling me this isn't the case?" Hegemon Windrain rumbled.

“Fusing multiple Supreme Daos has to be the apex, right?” Daoist Bluestone said, puzzled. Normally, they would state with absolute certainty that it was the apex, but facing them was Ji Ning! All of them spoke rather hesitantly; clearly, they weren’t as confident as they had been in the past.

Ning smiled. “It is not the apex!”

“What?!”

“There are even stronger Daos than that?”

“But...” The three Hegemons and the five Dao Alliance Emperors were all stunned when they heard the certainty in Ning’s response. The fact that fusing multiple Supreme Daos together was the apex of cultivation was considered common knowledge and believed unquestioningly by countless cultivators. This was the most difficult path possible... and once one succeeded in the Daomerge, one would become a Hegemon! However, Ji Ning was now telling them that there was something above that, an even more difficult and even more exalted path.

“Above fused Supreme Daos is an even superior Dao... and it is this type of Sword Dao that I used to become a Samsara Daolord,” Ning said.

“So that’s the reason.” Hegemon Netherlily nodded slowly. “As a Daolord, I did realize that my Dao was able to slowly grow and improve in strength as it drew upon the mysteries of the other Daos I trained in, allowing me to develop increasingly powerful ultimate attacks. Even back then, I was slightly puzzled by this... why was it that my fused Supreme Daos could benefit from other mysteries and continue to grow even more powerful? Was it possible that there was something above them? Now that I see Darknorth... I finally understand.”

Ning smiled. Right. Daolords who walked other paths were able to use the mysteries of other Daos to perfect their own while training, allowing them to develop stronger techniques. For example, even someone who had fused three Supreme Daos of Water would not have a Dao that fully encompassed everything pertaining to the essence of water. Naturally, he would be able to draw more from other Daos to slowly perfect his own understanding of water.

Ning, however, was different. His path was that of the Omega Sword Dao; it represented the true apex! At each individual stage, there was literally nothing further he could learn regarding the sword. This was why, once he made a breakthrough, he gained immediate access to the most perfect versions of the five stances of his Omega Sword Dao and was unable to create better techniques. He was different from other Daolords.

“I have named my Dao the Omega Sword Dao,” Ning said, then laughed. “But of course, I’m just assuming that it is the true apex. Perhaps, after countless years pass, yet another dazzling genius will appear and will tell me that there’s something that’s even superior to my Dao. Haha...”

“If your Omega Sword Dao surpasses even fused Supreme Daos... it really should be the apex.” Hegemon Brightshore nodded slowly.

“Yes, it’d be ridiculous if there was anything more powerful,” the others agreed.

Ning smiled. When he had developed his Omega Sword Dao, a resonance had been generated with the prime essence of the Dao of the Sword. In that instant, Ning had immediately understood that he had

developed the most perfect and complete Sword Dao possible. He was a true master of the Dao of the Sword.

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Above fused Supreme Daos was an even more profound type of Dao! Ning had long ago prepared to divulge this secret. If he said nothing at all, he would only attract even more suspicion from the various major powers. It was better to explain things clearly.

And... just telling them about it wouldn't impact him personally. So what if they learned that a stronger Dao existed? It must be remembered that there were plenty of World-level geniuses who had fused multiple Supreme Daos together, and quite a few even had Hegemonic legacies. In each era, however, only a tiny number of them managed to become supreme Daolords.

Emperor Heartsword had made his [Hear sword] art available for public dissemination, and many had studied this set of sword-arts... but to this very day, the only person to truly master it remained Emperor Heartsword himself! None of those who had come later had been able to truly master it.

Ning's 'Omega Sword Dao' was even tougher to master than the [Hear sword] art! It was on a much higher level than fused Supreme Daos!

Such a difficult Dao... even if Ning actually made it completely public as the [Omega Sword Dao] manual for others to study, who knew how long it would be before another peerless genius would be able to reach Ning's level in it? And of course... Ning wasn't planning to make it public!

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"The Omega Sword Dao." This name caused the major powers to all sigh in amazement. It was too late for them to learn of Omega Daos... they had all become Emperors thanks to fused Daos. Once a Dao had been chosen, there was no way to go back on it!

"Fellow Daoist Darknorth." Emperor Goldface smiled. "Now that I've heard of these incredible Omega Daos, I truly feel admiration and awe. I wonder... would you be willing to let me inspect your [Omega Sword Dao] technique and broaden my horizons? Although there's no way for me to start over on my path of cultivation, it would at least allow me to learn a few things."

Ning frowned. Let him take a look at it? Broaden his horizons? How could he casually allow others to inspect his Dao? Although there weren't many who would be able to learn the [Omega Sword Dao], Ning didn't want to just hand it out to people!

"My Omega Sword Dao shall be transmitted to my disciples in the future. I cannot casually show it to others," Ning said.

"We can share our Daos and exchange our insights," Emperor Goldface said. "I'd naturally be willing to share my Dao with you, as well as show you all of the other legacies I have accumulated in exchange, fellow Daoist Darknorth."

"Goldface, you go too far. How can you compare your Daos with fellow Daoist Darknorth's? His Dao is that of the Omega Sword Dao; it is completely unique and is superior to even fused Supreme Daos! Not

even Hegemonic Daos are comparable to it.” Empress Jade Phoenix frowned and said coldly, “If you want to view his [Omega Sword Dao], you should at least show a bit of sincerity.”

Empress Jade Phoenix then looked at Ning. “Fellow Daoist Darknorth, to tell you the truth, I’m stuck at a bottleneck myself. I wish to break through it and become a Hegemon! Alas, breaking through is far too difficult. That’s why I truly wish for a chance to see your [Omega Sword Dao]. Perhaps it would give me new insights that would allow me to break through. I wouldn’t presume to ask to view it for free; I can swear an oath to you that after viewing it, I won’t transmit it to any others... and will accede to any request you make!”

“As far as treasures go, I have plenty as well,” Emperor Goldface said.

“As far as treasures go... I probably have the most,” Daoist Bluestone suddenly said.

Everyone fell silent. Not even the three Hegemons could argue against this statement. They all knew that Daoist Bluestone had once discovered a complete, undamaged Sithe relic site, and had thus let his Primaltwin undergo the Ritual Sacrificium to become a Black Emperor. The other treasures within the relic site had all fallen into Daoist Bluestone’s hands as well. No one knew just how many treasures he had.

“Fellow Daoist Darknorth.” Daoist Bluestone looked at Ning. “I only wish to view your [Omega Sword Dao] once, and I’ll swear an oath to never show it off to any others! As for any requests you might have... just name them! I know that a grudge exists between you and Archon Silksnow. Just give me a nod, and I’ll throw the full force of my power against the Emperors of Silksnow Fiend Palace. I’ll wipe all of them out, including Silksnow and Bloodcloud, no matter what the cost is.”

It would be very hard for Daoist Bluestone to kill Silksnow and Bloodcloud, but if he was truly willing to pay the price he still had a chance to accomplish it. Daoist Bluestone looked at Ning, his eyes blazing with eagerness.

He was a man who cared about nothing save the Dao. For the sake of the Dao, he was willing to sacrifice a great deal.

“As for my treasures... aside from a few treasures that are extremely important to me, I’ll hand all of them over to you. In other words, over 99% of my treasures shall be yours,” Daoist Bluestone said. “I only ask that you let me view your [Omega Sword Dao].”

Ning was startled. To tell the truth, his original plan had merely been to divulge the existence of Daos that were superior to fused Supreme Daos. He hadn’t been planning to say anything else. Ning was only planning to leave his [Omega Sword Dao] behind for the Three Realms to study, along with a few select disciples of his. He hadn’t planned to make it public. That way, if he encountered a serious problem in the future, he would perhaps be able to use the [Omega Sword Dao] as a bargaining chip to negotiate with Hegemons.

For example, he could ask a Hegemon to swear an oath to forever help him protect the Three Realms, and so on and so forth. However... all of those things would only happen if he was unable to do something himself. It was a last-resort option! So long as Ning could handle things by himself, he wouldn’t be willing to transmit the [Omega Sword Dao] to others.

But today, Ning began to waver when faced with Daoist Bluestone's offer. The man truly was sincere! Emperor Goldface had engaged in beautiful sophistry about 'sharing Daos' and 'exchanging insights', but Ning couldn't be bothered to negotiate with him. He had over three hundred Hegemonic legacies; why would he care about Emperor Goldface's?

Daoist Bluestone, in contrast, had been extremely sincere. He was willing to hand out over 90% of his treasures, and he didn't try to give Ning any pressure at all. In addition... in his heart, Ning deeply desired to find someone to reverse the flows of spacetime and revive his wife. Perhaps Daoist Bluestone's treasures would be enough to invite an Autarch to intercede.

Ning was going to choose a good number of disciples in the future and transmit the [Omega Sword Dao] to them. Letting Daoist Bluestone view it as well wasn't out of the realm of possibility.

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Book 36: Daolord of the Fourth Step Chapter 18: Naked Extortion

"Daoist Bluestone has far more treasures than the rest of us." Emperor Goldface smiled when he saw the offer Daoist Bluestone had made. "But... the [Omega Sword Dao] technique is just a technique; showing it off to a few more people won't cause you to incur any losses, Daolord Darknorth. We naturally will make sure you are properly compensated for it, and you can always use a few more treasures, right? As a Daolord, you haven't trained for all that long. You probably don't have many treasures yet, eh?"

Ji Ning frowned. Why was this Emperor Goldface so irritating? "It's not for you to lecture me on who I should teach my [Omega Sword Dao] to, Emperor Goldface!" Ning's voice was ice-cold, devoid of his earlier humility.

Emperor Goldface's face tightened "You..."

"I imagine that the three Hegemons, Emperor Goldface, and Emperor Blackcloud all know what I want the most." Ning didn't even look at Emperor Goldface, instead turning to glance at the other major powers. "The greatest desire I have had ever since my earliest days of cultivating has been reviving my Dao-companion! However... only an Autarch can do it. Thus, if someone can give me enough treasure to ask an Autarch to intervene on my behalf, I'm willing to fully record every aspect of my Omega Sword Dao for him to view."

"Ask an Autarch to intervene?" The three Hegemons traded a glance while the five Emperors fell silent. Ning watched carefully, only to see that all of the major powers were completely silent.

A while later, the distant Daoist Bluestone finally spoke out: "Fellow Daoist Darknorth, asking an Autarch to help out is no easy task. If all three Hegemons pooled all of their treasures together... they might have just barely enough to get an Autarch to intervene. Although I was fortunate enough to acquire some Sithe treasures, it probably isn't enough to get an Autarch to intervene. The materials to create a Black Emperor, I already used up. The remaining treasures won't be enough. Brightshore, Windrain, Netherlily... would you three Hegemons be willing to work with me to come up with the sum needed to approach an Autarch? Darknorth, would that work for you?"

"That's fine." Ning pondered for a moment and nodded. "I'm fine with allowing Daoist Bluestone and the three Hegemons to view it together." For the sake of reviving Yu Wei, anything would be worth it.

“I can probably provide thirty to forty percent of the value needed to ask an Autarch to intervene.” Daoist Bluestone looked towards the other three Hegemons. “Can you three jointly come up with the sixty or so percent needed?”

“That’s too much.” Hegemon Netherlily shook her head.

“That’s a lot to ask. Invite an Autarch to help out? I’ve never even seen an Autarch!” Hegemon Windrain shook his head as well. “The price is too high. I think we’ll pass.”

“Yes, we’ll pass.” Hegemon Brightshore shook his head as well.

Daoist Bluestone was startled for a moment, then nodded his head in understanding. “I’m so embarrassed. I forgot that although this [Omega Sword Dao] is extremely enticing to me, due to my efforts to step into the Hegemon level, it is of much more limited use to the three of you.”

Ning understood what was going on. Daoist Bluestone, Emperor Goldface, Empress Jade Phoenix, Emperor Blackcloud, and Emperor Goldisle all deeply desired to train to the Hegemon level. But the three Hegemons?

Their Daos would need to advance by an absolutely huge amount before they could reach the inconceivably powerful level of Autarchy. This ‘step’ was as vast as the gap between heaven and earth. Although the [Omega Sword Dao] was an extremely profound Dao, Ning had thus far only developed it to the fourth-step Daolord level. A mere Daolord-level [Omega Sword Dao] would be of limited assistance to Hegemons. It was virtually impossible for them to use Ning’s insights to reach Autarchy.

It must be remembered that not even the combined treasures of all three Hegemons would necessarily be enough to invite an Autarch to help out. To have the three of them jointly come up with sixty percent of the necessary funds represented them essentially bankrupting themselves. For them to sacrifice the majority of their treasures simply to view the [Omega Sword Dao]... the three Hegemons weren’t willing to do such a thing.

“How embarrassing.” Daoist Bluestone looked towards Ning. “Fellow Daoist Darknorth, I’ve already offered as much as I can! To ask an Autarch to help out is just far too difficult. Perhaps the only person belonging to the Flamedragon Realmverse qualified to do such a thing is Emperor Waveshift, but he’s always been roaming the outside world. There’s no way to even locate him... and even if you somehow found him, he probably wouldn’t be willing to give you that much treasure. He might be weaker than Hegemons in actual combat, but he has definitely reached the Hegemon level in the Dao of Numerancy. Your [Omega Sword Dao] would be of limited use to him.”

Ning understood. His [Omega Sword Dao] was of limited interest to the Hegemons; it was of far more interest to the Emperors who were trapped at a bottleneck and who sought to break through it to reach Hegemony.

“Well, you know my offer. I’m willing to give you the vast majority of my treasures, and I’ll even be willing to do anything you ask me to do.” Daoist Bluestone smiled. “If you decide to accept, you can come seek me out whenever you wish.”

The Dao which Daoist Bluestone had chosen was the Dao of Black and White. Black and white... they encompassed all things, including both evil and good, darkness and light. They were all-embracing. His mindset was quite calm and even – acquire what he could, but not to force what he could not.

As a cultivator, his behavior had to match up to his Dao.

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Ning could sense Daoist Bluestone's sincerity. In fact, Daoist Bluestone hadn't tried to threaten him or give him the slightest bit of pressure. He was someone who even the three Hegemons were wary of, but he didn't try to threaten Ning at all. Ning couldn't help but admire him for this... causing him to change his mind! Reviving Yu Wei via reversing the flows of spacetime would be incredibly expensive, and it would be very hard to accumulate all the treasures needed at once.

Since that wasn't possible... he would slowly accumulate the amount needed. Given that he already had the verdant azuresoul and the mutated omnigeddon bloodfruit tree, if he added in Daoist Bluestone's treasures... some more time and adventuring would give him a chance at acquiring what he needed.

"Brother Bluestone," Ning suddenly sent mentally to Daoist Bluestone. Daoist Bluestone's heart trembled, but he kept his face expressionless to ensure that no one could tell.

"After this conference concludes... let us discuss the Omega Sword Dao in private," Ning sent mentally.

"Very well. I, Bluestone, won't forget the kindness you have shown me," Daoist Bluestone sent back. He was extremely excited. Daoist Bluestone had already reached the maximum level he could reach in secret arts, divine abilities, or treasures. Although he had many treasures, none of them were really useful in increasing his level of power. To further refine and perfect his Dao was just far too difficult, which was why this inconceivable 'Omega Sword Dao' had truly stirred his interest.

Ji Ning was merely a Daolord of the Fourth Step, but the power of his Dao was already comparable to that of Daoist Bluestone's. Daoist Bluestone felt certain that this inconceivably profound Sword Dao would help open up a new path and new horizons for him.

The two spoke mentally in private, agreeing to chat after the conference but not revealing any hint of the decision outwardly. There were far too many who were interested in the [Omega Sword Dao], after all; even if Ning was to agree, he wouldn't agree publicly.

"Hmph." Emperor Goldface let out an angry snort as he rose to his feet. He pointed at Ning and yelled, "Fellow Daoist Bluestone has shown you great sincerity, but still you refuse? Where does a mere Daolord like yourself get the gall to act so arrogantly before the three Hegemons and we five Emperors? Hmph. Everyone says that you are powerful, but I haven't had the chance to witness it myself. I really don't believe it. Why don't you show me if you really have the power to back up your arrogance."

Right after speaking, Emperor Goldface flew off his throne. His entire body began to glow with golden light that swept towards Ning like a crushing wave.

"What, you want to try and take it from me by force?" Ning smiled coldly.

"And what if I do? Let's see if you are strong enough to keep it for yourself!" Emperor Goldface had always been an extremely overbearing Emperor, far more so than Bluestone or Jade Phoenix. This was

why even Ning had heard of him, despite so many aeons having gone past since those early days; he had caused quite a stir!

Jade Phoenix and the strongest of the three, Daoist Bluestone, were both very low-key to the point where Ning had never heard of them.

“Brother Darknorth?” Daoist Bluestone sent mentally to Ning.

“No need to intervene,” Ning sent back. “This Goldface character was already starting to piss me off. I’m going to teach him a lesson.”

“Haha, good! I quite dislike Goldface as well. Help me teach him a good lesson,” Daoist Bluestone sent mentally.

Although Ning had defeated Bloodcloud and Silksnow, the battle had concluded far too quickly. He had defeated all the enemies in an extremely short period of time, and so the only ones to witness it in person had been Hegemon Brightshore and Emperor Goldisle. Even Hegemon Netherlily and Hegemon Windrain had been just a step too slow, much less the other Emperors. None of them had personally witnessed how Ning had defeated Silksnow’s group, they had only watched as he had uprooted Silksnow Fiend Palace.

“Puny Daolord, I’ll teach you a lesson and let you know that there’s a time for arrogance and a time for humility.” Emperor Goldface’s entire body glowed with golden light, but his gaze was as cold as ice.

“When I’m around, you’d best show some humility.”

He was Emperor Goldface. Only the three Hegemons and Daoist Bluestone were truly superior to him. He held others in no regard at all.

“Soon, you’ll learn what humility actually means.” Ning rose to his feet as well. His body blurred as he activated [Three Heads, Six Arms] and all six Northbow swords flew into his hands.