

Desolate 1251

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Book 36: Daolord of the Fourth Step Chapter 29: One Chaos Cycle

Planning was easy. Actually carrying it out was extremely difficult.

Since Autarch Awakener, master of the Azureflower Estate, had decided that creating ten Archon-level techniques was the trial which Daolords needed to pass, there was no way that it would be easy for Ji Ning to accomplish it. Daolord Featherdress had been an incredibly dazzling Heartforce Cultivator and Daolord, but she had only created a single supreme technique, the [Featherdress Soulthral Melody]! Ning now needed to do the same, but this would require a sufficiently deep foundation in the art of illusions. If he hadn't build up enough experience, there would be no way he could possibly create such a technique.

"Illusions..." the white-robed Ning sat there on the stone dais, runes swirling over its surface as time moved a hundred times faster than in the outside world. His eyes were closed as he continued to meditate, with one technique after another flashing through his mind. These were all the various heartforce illusion techniques which the cultivator civilizations and the Sithe civilization had created.

Heartforce was a very mysterious type of energy! It was able to merge with other types of energy and allow one's power to increase by an explosive level. Ning was merely at the Archon level of enlightenment, but the twelfth stance of the [Heartsword] art allowed him to stand above virtually all other Archons. He was extremely close to the Hegemon level of power. This was what was so marvelous about heartforce! Heartforce illusions, in turn, were extremely common as well.

The cultivators and the Sithe had both created many different types of heartforce illusions.

"Illusions can be used like this?" Ning continuously analyzed and dissected one illusory technique after another. The weakest were at the Archon level, the stronger ones were at the Hegemon level, and a few were even more profound than that. Previously, Ning had merely read through them and memorized them; now, he was truly analyzing them. As his analyses grew deeper and deeper, Ning began to accumulate a steadily deepening foundation in the art of illusions, and his [Dreamstar] art naturally began to slowly improve as well.

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Every single illusory art had profound mysteries hidden within them. Even though the stone dais let him remain in a constant prajna-state, it still took Ning an extremely long period of time to fully analyze and dissect every single technique. The easier ones took as little as a million years, while the longest took over a hundred million! And this was with him only analyzing them up to the Archon level; for now, he was completely unable to analyze the more profound mysteries.

In total, it took Ning over fifty-six billion years to finish analyzing all of the illusory arts. If it hadn't been for the stone dais, it probably would've taken him ten thousand times as long!

Next, Ning began to sort out and arrange the various insights he had gained. He began to merge them together, seeking to create an illusory art that belonged to him and him alone! After gaining so many new insights, he immediately concluded that his [Dreamstar] art was far too simple and crude; in fact,

Ning felt that there were some fundamental problems with its most basic underpinnings. Thus, he chose to completely start from scratch and create his own illusions.

Another three billion years went by, at which point Ning finished sorting through and merging all of his many insights together into a new illusory art, which he named the [Unfettered Dreamlands].

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Within the second hall inside the palace. Atop the stone dais. Ning was still seated in the lotus position, but his demeanor and aura had both somewhat changed. In the past, this white-robed youth's aura had been stately and reserved, almost like a blade that had been hidden within a sheath; when drawn, his sharpness would be on full display! Now, however, Ning's aura had become a bit more ephemeral and ghostly. He was like a drifting cloud, a gust of wind, a fluttering leaf, a ray of warm sunlight that broke through the darkness.

Cultivators who saw him would feel a very comfortable feeling, and in their hearts they would naturally feel very well-disposed towards Ning. Even cultivators who had originally been nervous or depressed would feel much more relaxed just by looking at Ning.

"To be free and unfettered... for cultivators, this is far too rare. In my illusions, however, I can find perfect, unfettered freedom." Ning smiled.

The [Unfettered Dreamlands]... as the name suggested, the crucial parts to it lay in the words 'unfettered' and 'dreamlands'.

'Dreamlands' – Ning would set up an artificial world of dreams within the illusions, with Ning being the one to envisage and design the elements within this world! In fact, Ning could even set up a special region within his actual heartworld and use it to simulate the appearance of his 'dreamlands'. Ning's goal was to make the dreamlands as real-looking as possible, while also filled with fatal allure. He would then adjust it slightly in accordance with each target.

'Unfettered' – This referred to how the goal was to cause the opponent to unconsciously be seduced by the illusions. There were some things that simply couldn't be forced; only when you managed to lower the natural resistance generated within the depths of your foe's Dao-heart would you be able to make it more difficult for the foe to escape your illusions.

Think about it; why was it that even the more shallow illusions were often focused on the flaws in people's hearts? For example, Ning deeply desired to revive his wife, and so illusions targeted at Ning would often conjure up images of Yu Wei and allow Ning to 'reunite' with her! This was because Ning wanted to see this more than anything else, making his Dao-heart less resistant to it. If Ning's Dao-heart was weak, he might succumb to the illusions and be trapped in them for longer, increasing the chances of him dying.

In a battle between experts, a second of slumber could result in death. The words 'unfettered' and 'dreamlands' served as the nucleus of the [Unfettered Dreamlands], which then transformed into countless arcane and profound illusions.

"Senior," Ning said.

"Hm?" The distant seated white-robed elder opened his eyes to look at Ning.

“Here is the second technique.” Ning pulled out a jade scroll upon which was recorded the information regarding the heartforce illusion technique which Ning had created, the [Unfettered Dreamlands]. The jade scroll flew over to float in front of the white-robed elder.

The white-robed elder accepted it, inspected it carefully, then nodded. “You spent just over half a chaos cycle and have managed to create an Archon-level illusory art. Not bad, not bad. It seems you might have a chance to actually create the ten necessary techniques.”

Ning explained, “I’ve always been skilled in heartforce, which made analyzing those illusions fairly easy! As for the other Daos... there are some which I’m not skilled in at all. Creating techniques for them shall definitely be far more difficult.”

He was the most highly skilled in the Dao of the Sword. He had already created the fourth stage of the [Omega Sword Dao] before arriving at the Azureflower Estate.

He was just slightly less attuned to heartforce, but thanks to the effects of the stone dais he had been able to create the technique after nearly sixty billion years. However, if you factored in temporal acceleration, he had actually spent over half a chaos cycle! Finally, he had been able to develop the [Unfettered Dreamlands] technique.

When cultivators calculated their lifespans, they calculated based on the ‘real’ time they had spent, excluding the benefits of accelerated time. By now, Ning had spent more than half a chaos cycle in ‘real’ training.

Next, Ning needed to accumulate insights into the Dao of Water and the Dao of Lightning. After that would come the Dao of Fire, and then would be the Daos of Space, Time, Earth, and a few others.

In truth, cultivators generally focused on a single Dao and wouldn’t waste time on multiple other Daos. If you reached an extremely high level in a single Dao, you would gain access to movement techniques, invulnerable forms, defensive abilities, offensive abilities, and more. This was true for all Daos, and so there was no need to diversify. The Ninedust Sectlord, for example, focused exclusively on the Dao of Water.

However... from another perspective, it could be said that training in multiple Daos had its own benefits as well. The differences between the Daos could bring inspiration, as all Daos were linked together!

“With the stone dais helping you, you should be able to do it.” The white-haired elder looked at Ning. “Creating these ten techniques will be of help to you as well. The Daomerge for the Omega Daos is simply too difficult... creating multiple Archon-level techniques will only benefit you, not harm you.”

“Understood.” Ning nodded. He had to admit this was true.

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And so, Ning began to focus on analyzing the Dao of Water.

The Dao of Water was a vast Dao which many, many people trained in. Ning began to analyze one technique after another. There were many major powers who had become supreme Daolords thanks to the Dao of Water. Some had become Archons, while a few had become Hegemons! However, everyone had a different interpretation of the Dao of Water, even though the Dao itself was the same.

Alas, Ning felt tremendous regret that despite there being countless techniques pertaining to the Dao of Water, there was no 'Omega Water Dao'.

Obviously, Ning would need to spend much more time on the Dao of Water than he had on illusions. And so, time slowly flowed on.

In the blink of an eye, Ning had spent over an entire chaos cycle of 'actual time' training within the Azureflower Estate... and he was still absorbed in his studies.

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Everything was so peaceful and calm. No one in the Flamedragon Realmverse knew that during the past chaos cycle, an utterly terrifying Heartforce Cultivator had arisen.

Ever since the Flamedragon Realmverse had lost its Heartforce Hegemon, it had never given birth to another Eternal Emperor who was also a Heartforce Cultivator. And indeed, it was extremely rare for Eternal Emperors to be Heartforce Cultivators.

Although Ning's heartforce was quite strong upon him becoming a Daolord of the Fourth Step, allowing him to easily trap a large number of Emperors with illusions during the battle for Silksnow City, his actual skill in illusions was rather low. He had completely relied on his powerful heartforce to gain victory. Ning's illusions had been completely ineffective against Archon-level opponents.

Now, however... Ning's weakness in illusions had been addressed. He had truly skyrocketed to a brand new level, the Archon level.

The stability of the Omega Sword Dao ensured that Ning's heartworld was probably second only to that of a Heartforce Hegemon's! This made his heartforce indescribably powerful. Now that both his heartforce and his illusory arts had reached incredibly high levels, even a number of the Archons of the Sacred Cities would fall to his illusions. In a life-and-death battle, being trapped in an illusion for even a brief instant would make it so that you lost control over your invulnerable form... and Ning would take advantage of that moment to slay his foe with ease.

1. Finally, we have specific information on how long a chaos cycle is! Since we know temporal acceleration was at 100x, this means six trillion years is roughly 'half a chaos cycle', meaning a full chaos cycle is ten trillion years!

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Book 36: Daolord of the Fourth Step Chapter 30: Heading Off

It was difficult for the three mighty Hegemons to slay Archon-rank Emperors, precisely because the Emperors could use their invulnerable forms to flee. However... if they were trapped in illusions, they would be unable to escape or to maintain their invulnerable forms. Their minds would've been drawn into the illusions, allowing them to be killed.

Heartforce Emperors were the terrifying stuff of legends. The entire Flamedragon Realmverse didn't have a single Heartforce Emperor in it at present. For Heartforce Cultivators to succeed in the Daomerge was far more difficult than for those who trained in any other Dao; most likely, it was second only to those who walked the path of the Omega Dao. Heartforce Cultivators had to have extremely large and stable heartworlds if they wished to have a chance at the Daomerge.

Thus, Heartforce Cultivators would generally improve themselves to at least the supreme Daolord level. Only then would they have sufficiently large and stable heartworlds for them to even consider the Daomerge.

When Ning had visited the alternate universe, he had seen the corpse of a Heartforce Hegemon. He had also seen the Heartforce Hegemon who had died in combat against the Sithe. Both of those were Emperors!

It was virtually guaranteed that a Heartforce Cultivator who succeeded in the Daomerge would become a Hegemon-rank Emperor! Only a tiny, tiny fraction of them would end up as Archon-rank Emperors.

Ning, however, was already comparable to Archon-rank Heartforce Emperors in power! Although he wasn't able to threaten Hegemons, he was more than capable of threatening the other Archons.

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While Ning was training, other things were happening within the distant Terror Starsea.

Rumble... countless streams of fire formed a giant whirlpool that surrounded and filled this vast territory. The flames were incomparably beautiful, and they actually converged to form flowers.

A skinny white-haired, white-browed man simply stood there at the edge of the beautiful vortex of flames, staring into it. His white brows fluttered as his oily green eyes stared intently into the very center of the vortex.

"Hmph. Ninedust... no matter how crafty you are and how much you struggle, you've still fallen into my trap." Archon Silksnow smiled coldly. "It took me a hundred million years, but I've finally found you. Did you think I really want you dead? No... killing you is just a perk. The person I really want to kill is Daolord Darknorth?"

A frenzied, murderous look was in Archon Silksnow's oily green eyes. "You have chosen a path of death. You are actually helping me out tremendously by charging into the 'Jadefire Realm'! Haha... all I need to do is send word of your predicament, and I trust your dear friend Daolord Darknorth will come here to rescue you. I'm not able to kill him... but the Jadefire Realm is!"

"The two of you will both die here." Archon Silksnow's eyes burned with savage hate. In truth, when he had first entered the Terror Starsea, his plan had been to kill Ninedust and steal his treasures. He had carefully searched through many places within the Terror Starsea. He was much more powerful than Ninedust and had the assistance of his realmship, which meant that he was able to escape from some of the more dangerous places thanks to its help. Even though the Terror Starsea was a vast place, he was still able to find the Ninedust Sectlord.

Ninedust had felt that he was already quite deep within the vast Terror Starsea. Logically speaking, it wasn't very likely for Archon Silksnow to be able to locate him. This was why he had chosen to carry the realmship part alongside him in a rather casual manner... but who would've thought that thanks to luck and the realmship resonance, Archon Silksnow had really ended up finding him?

Ninedust had immediately fled in terror. He moved fairly slowly, and so he immediately used his escape-type treasures to flee! Archon Silksnow was forced to pursue him, and this pursuit lasted for quite some time.

No matter how he tried, Ninedust was unable to shake his pursuer. In the end, he had gritted his teeth and charged straight into the legendarily lethal 'Jadefire Realm'. "Hmph, I want to see if Archon Silksnow would dare to come in as well." All Daolords were possessed of a certain defiant and fearless madness.

"He thought I wouldn't dare to go in? Of course I would. I'd rather die than live such a miserable life... but it won't be me who dies. Not only will you die, Daolord Darknorth will die as well." Archon Silksnow was legendary for his savagery, even amongst Emperors. He was savage to others but even more savage to himself. He immediately road his realmship straight into the vast flaming vortex.

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Nightfall. Vastheaven Palace.

The golden-robed Ning was seated at the peak of a mountain. The mountain wind blew past him as he sipped some wine. Su Youji was next to him, seated upon a large boulder and sharing the wine.

Ning's true body was training within the Azureflower Estate with the help of the Autarch's stone dais. This allowed him to train at a terrifyingly fast speed. Whether or not Ning's avatar 'assisted' didn't really matter, as it was of little help in speeding up his cultivation further. As a result, he now had a chance to relax and enjoy life.

The two drank together, exchanging a few casual words in conversation from time to time.

"Master... can you tell me about your Dao-companion?" Wine gourd in hand, Su Youji suddenly asked this question.

Ning smiled. "She was my senior apprentice-sister. When I first joined our sect, she was more powerful than me."

"More powerful than you?" Su Youji was surprised. In her eyes, Ning had always been a dazzling figure. He was the most powerful Daolord in the history of the Flamedragon Realmverse!

"Yes. Back then, she held a very high status within our sect," Ning said. "The two of us actually took part in the Conclave of Immortals together. She really was quite talented. Unfortunately... she concealed a great secret within her heart which prevented her from fully and truly devoting herself to cultivation." Ning let out a sigh. "Come to think of it... she was a truly tragic figure in both her past life and in this life."

"Her happiest days were most likely when she was pregnant and living together with me in peace." Ning smiled. He would never forget those days, never forget how he trained in sword-arts while the pregnant Yu Wei watched him, a merry smile on her face as she gently stroked her protruding belly. Those days of peace and bliss, when the war had yet to truly erupt, were the most beautiful memories he had.

"Our daughter is all grown up, and the plotters are all dead. My homeland is at peace... but she is gone." Ning raised his head to gulp down the wine, then put down his gourd. "I've focused on the Dao my entire life. Part of it is because I wish to gain a grander understanding of the universe and see more of its sights... but the other part is because I wish to one day be able to resolve those regrets and have our family of three be reunited once more."

"You'll definitely succeed, Master," Su Youji said.

"In the past, it was just a wild dream... but now, I can feel that I'm closing in on success." Ning smiled. "This is proof that even the wildest of dreams can be made real."

"If the three of us can be reunited, everything will have been worth it, haha. So what if I pass the Daomerge? So what if I become a Hegemon or an Autarch? I'll still just be living a life of solitude." Ning raised his head up high to drink more wine.

The wind continued to blow, but the night was very calm. Su Youji just watched Ning silently. She could sense that Ning's innermost heart had already been filled. There was no way at all for another person to enter it.

"Darknorth! Darknorth!" A cry rang out from afar.

"Big brother?" Ning turned, only to see a figure fly towards him from afar. It was Emperor Solesky. "Come, come! You came at just the right time. Let's drink!"

"I have important news to report!" Emperor Solesky landed on the top of the mountain, a worried look on his face.

"Important news? Tell me about it," Ning said.

"The Ninedust Sectlord has been trapped within the 'Jadefire Realm' of the Terror Starsea! His life could end at any moment," Emperor Solesky said frantically.

"What?!" Ning turned pale as a solemn look appeared on his face. "The Jadefire Realm of the Terror Starsea?"

The Jadefire Realm was a deathtrap which the Sithe had set up during the Dawn War. Countless Emperors of the cultivator civilizations had died there during that great war! In the end, the Sithe had been defeated and the Jadefire Realm badly damaged... but it remained a place of great danger. Not even Hegemons dared to go too deep within it.

However, Ning wasn't afraid of it. He had his Shadowless form as well as his Sithe Protector golem, 'Whitethaw'. Hegemons were able to enter and scout the outer areas safely, which meant that he was strong enough to deal with the dangers as well.

"Yes, the Jadefire Realm." Emperor Solesky nodded. "This information is absolutely trustworthy. My good friend, Daolord Badlands, sent me the same information a while ago. He said that he engaged in some Numerancy to test it, and found it to be genuine. The Ninedust Sectlord is indeed in great peril. However... Badlands told me to warn you that you are the real target. He was unable to calculate if you will be in danger or not."

"I'm the real target?" Ning nodded slowly. "Help convey my thanks to brother Badlands."

"Ninedust didn't ask me for help. That means he is worried about implicating me in this affair... but somehow, news of it still spread. That means this is likely an enemy plot." Ning nodded. "If Badlands' Numerancy says that this is a plot targeting me... the person who holds the greatest grudge against me is Archon Silksnow and the Emperors under his command. Alternately, it could be the Aeonians."

"Darknorth, the Jadefire Realm is a legendary deathtrap of the Terror Starsea. Not even Hegemons dare to go too deep into it," Emperor Solesky said worriedly. "Don't let yourself fall for their schemes."

Ning nodded: "Don't worry, big brother."

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The Azureflower Estate. The second hall. Ning stood up on the stone dais.

"Hm?" The nearby white-bearded elder opened his eyes. He said with surprise, "You've developed the third technique already?"

"Not yet." Ning shook his head. "Not even close. Right, senior... I need to leave on some business. My Primaltwin can come here and train, right?"

"Of course! I told you, so long as you are still alive, you may come and train whenever you please," the white-haired elder said with a nod.

"Good."

A short while later, the black-robed Ning arrived at the estate. He entered it, sat down on the stone dais, then continued the training process. This was an Autarch's training chambers, after all; it was far more effective than the Stone Censer of Reunion, which Ning had already left in the Three Realms for his master Subhuti, his daughter, and his parents to use. In the future, it would be the supreme treasure of the Three Realms.

As for Ning's true body? He left the Azureflower Estate by himself, beginning to advance through the Flamedragon Realmverse towards the Terror Starsea.

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Book 37: Flamewing God Chapter 1: Avatar

As Ji Ning began to head towards the Jadedfire Realm of the Terror Starsea, his avatar sent word to Ninedust via the Palace of Ancient Truth.

"Ninedust, you are in the Jadedfire Realm? I'm on my way." This was the simple message which Ning sent.

The Palace of Ancient Truth had branches within all eight of the Sacred Cities of the Dao Alliance, and the mighty Ancients were the power behind it. Ning's words quickly made its way to the Ancients and thus to Ninedust's avatar.

"What?!" Ninedust was shocked. He never would've imagined that Darknorth would find out that he had entered the Jadedfire Realm. In his heart, he couldn't help but feel gratitude; everyone knew that the place was a deathtrap! Darknorth knew it as well, but he still rushed towards it without hesitating.

"Darknorth, I've been chased by Archon Silksnow into the Jadedfire Realm but I never made that information public. If you've found out... that means it must be Archon Silksnow who spread the news. This is his plot!" Ninedust sent word back to Ning as well. "No matter what, don't come here. Archon Silksnow is a madman. This is definitely a plot aimed at you."

His message made it back to Ning's avatar in Vastheaven Palace... but alas, it was of no use.

“Ugh, Darknorth is so...” Ninedust knew that he wouldn’t be able to dissuade Ning, and so his avatar within the Ancient stronghold immediately headed off to Vastheaven Palace.

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Outside Vastheaven Palace.

A man dressed in fluttering gray robes emerged from a tear in space, then stared at the distant Vastheaven Palace.

“Here I am.” The gray-robed man looked weatherworn, with anxiety written on his face. “I hope I made it in time.”

The gray-robed man waved his hand, causing countless drops of rain to appear in the air. The rain sprinkled down upon every inch of Vastheaven Palace, but the power within the rain was completely blocked by the barriers protecting the palace itself. The blocked power generated ripples which immediately attracted the interest of Emperor Solesky and Ji Ning’s avatar.

“Eh?” Both emerged from the barriers, standing shoulder-to-shoulder as they stared off into the distance.

“Ha.” Ning’s avatar grinned. “You can head on back, big brother Solesky. Let me have a chat with my old friend.” Ning’s avatar then strode into the skies towards the gray-robed man.

Emperor Solesky smiled as well. He was also able to recognize who it was, as the gray-robed man had discarded his disguise and revealed his true appearance. It was indeed the Ninedust Sectlord.

“Ninedust.” Ning’s avatar walked over to stand next to the gray-robed man.

“Darknorth.” Ninedust looked at Ning, his feelings rather mixed. Although he didn’t wish for Ning to know that he was in great danger, he also felt very grateful for the way in which Ning had reacted upon finding out. This was what true brothers were like!

“I’m not too late, am I?” Ninedust asked. “Your true body hasn’t entered the Jafire Realm yet, has it?”

“Not even close. I need to be careful when traversing the Terror Starsea. I can’t just blink about willy-nilly like here in the Flamedragon Realmverse,” Ning said with a smile. “It’ll take me at least another thousand years or so before I make it there.”

Ninedust let out a sigh of relief. “Thank goodness... eh?” Ninedust peered at Ning intently, rather surprised. “Why do I feel as though your aura has changed a bit?”

Although both were merely avatars, their auras were generated by their truesouls and their Daos. An evil cultivator’s very aura would become evil and malicious! Since the true body and the avatar were linked together and analogous, the aura of Ning’s avatar had indeed changed and become more powerful since last they met.

In the past, Ning was reserved and stately, like a blade that would reveal its sharpness when unleashed. Now, however, he seemed as vast and ineffable as the starry sky, but also as gentle as a drop of water. One couldn’t help but like him upon seeing him. He possessed a certain deep magnetism.

"It was caused by an illusory art I created," Ning said.

"Illusory art?" Ninedust was surprised. "You've already reached such profound heights in the Dao of the Sword. How is it that an illusory art could have changed you this much?"

If one focused on illusions, one would generally gain tremendous charisma. Su Youji was a classic example of this. Ordinary cultivators who saw Su Youji would be uncontrollably intoxicated by her to the point of willingly following her as her servant. For those who had reached incredible heights in the art of illusions, their natural auras alone could seduce others without them even actively trying to do so.

Ning's [Unfettered Dreamlands] technique was an illusory art Ning had spent over half a chaos cycle working on. He had created it with the assistance of the Autarch's stone dais after he had delved into the many mysteries of the countless techniques he had studied. For it to have affected him was only normal.

"I was focusing on illusions recently and managed to make some progress." Ning smiled smugly.

"Alright. Enough about your illusions." Ninedust immediately said, "I came over here at full speed because I want you to avoid entering the Jadedfire Realm. You already know that this is Archon Silksnow's plot; why must you fall into it?"

Ning shook his head. "Plot? What sort of plot could he possibly have? Ninedust, why don't you tell me what you think he can be plotting?"

"Don't underestimate him. He's crazy." Ninedust revealed an anxious look. "I was chased by him through the Terror Starsea. I fled in panic and used up pretty much all of my treasures. When we moved past the Jadedfire Realm, I gritted my teeth and dove into it to save my own skin."

Ning nodded slowly. Faced with certain death, it only made sense that Ninedust had jumped into a deathtrap. At least that way, he had a chance, no matter how tiny. If he didn't, he would be doomed once Archon Silksnow caught up to him.

"I thought that once I dove into it, he would be afraid to follow me inside." Ninedust shook his head. "I was wrong. That madman actually charged in right behind me."

"Oh?" Ning narrowed his eyes. "He went in as well? Does he have a death-wish?"

"That's why I said he's crazy!" Ninedust said seriously, "The Jadedfire Realm is a deathtrap which the Sithe set up during the Dawn War. Even though we beat them in the end, many of our major powers died in it during the war! Even though I charged inside, if I'm careful and take my time, I should still have a chance to find an escape path and be able to leave it... but now that Archon Silksnow has charged inside as well, I'm forced to continue my headlong flight. I'm being forced to straight for the more dangerous-looking places inside the Jadedfire Realm... but he's still chasing me! In the end, I ended up being trapped in a place that looks like some sort of prison."

"Prison?" Ning frowned.

"I'm not too sure myself. All I know is that I'm trapped within a small area of just thirty or so meters." Ninedust sighed. "Thankfully, there's no danger inside the cell for now... and Archon Silksnow didn't dare to continue his pursuit."

"A prison-like place, eh?" Ning frowned pensively. He was a member of the Brightshore Kingdom, after all; he had immediately set off to acquire a map of the Terror Starsea from the Brightshore Hegemon. He was planning to use treasures to trade for it, but Hegemon Brightshore had just given it for free. He now had maps from both the Hegemon and Daoist Bluestone, and as a result, he knew a bit about the Jedefire Realm. The Jedefire Realm was a deathtrap the Sithe had set up... and at its very center lay the prisons!

Quite a few major powers of the cultivator civilizations had been trapped within the Jedefire Realm. Many of them were unable to escape! Once the Sithe had trapped enough major powers, they would unleash a single 'Decimatus Wave' and annihilate all of the prisoners! Hegemon Brightshore's records stated it thusly:

"The Jedefire Realm's prisons are primarily spread across seven regions, and there are differences in them based on importance. However, the Sithe are all dead. I once scanned them from afar and found no signs of life within them... but the place is still filled with countless dangers. Although the Jedefire Realm has been badly damaged, rendering its apocalypse wave unusable, there are still many formations and barriers that are strong enough to cause even Hegemons to die."

"The prisons?" Ning frowned. "Damn that Silksnow!" Even the ordinary prisons within the Jedefire Realm were incredibly dangerous places!

"Don't worry, I'm fine for now," Ninedust said hurriedly. "I'm merely restricted to a thirty-meter region. So long as I don't touch any of the barriers, I won't be in any danger."

"But you are still in one of the Jedefire Realm's prisons!" Ning was worried.

"That's why you need to stay away, Darknorth." Ninedust said hurriedly, "Archon Silksnow was crazy enough to charge in because he wants to use it to get rid of the two of us. He's cast all caution to the wind. He's already been inside for quite some time; by now, he probably knows quite a bit about that place. He has probably prepared traps for you! Once you go there, you'll be in a new and foreign place. It'll be easy for him to trick you."

"I'm no fool," Ning laughed.

"But he has the advantage!" Ninedust argued.

"Don't worry. I'm not completely ignorant of the Jedefire Realm." Ning shook his head. He had star maps from Daoist Bluestone and Hegemon Brightshore. As a result, he was quite familiar with the Jedefire Realm by now. "And... I've been wanting to get rid of him for some time now. If we just let that vile madman do as he pleases, he might end up causing some real trouble in the future. Best to get rid of him soon."

"You...!" Ninedust was extremely anxious. "How can you..."

"It's not like you don't know what sort of temper I have." Ning grinned.

"I knew I wouldn't be able to dissuade you, but I still had to try." Ninedust felt quite resigned. "Ugh. After all that talking, I still wasn't able to budge you in the slightest! No matter what, safety first!"

“I’m not a hot-headed kid anymore,” Ning said with a laugh. “The only way I’ll be able to save you is if I keep myself alive.”

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Book 37: Flamewing God Chapter 2: Unexpected Surprise

Ninedust had failed to dissuade Ji Ning, but he decided to temporarily reside within Vastheaven Palace. That way, he would be able to keep in constant contact with Ning and be able to report details regarding his situation. This would be helpful to Ning in Ning’s efforts to rescue him.

Within the Terror Starsea. Ning’s true body was hastening through the region, his Protector in tow. This place was far too dangerous; even Ning had to advance through it with great caution. After roughly eight hundred years, the two finally made it to the Jedefire Realm.

“We arrived.” Ning stared off into the front at the enormous, nigh-infinite vortex of fire which had appeared in the void. The flame vortex took up an enormous amount of territory. Each petal of fire was very beautiful, but filled with tremendous danger.

“Master.” Whitethaw’s eyes suddenly lit up and he spoke out.

“Yes?” Ning glanced at Whitethaw.

“I’ve been here before,” Whitethaw said.

“You’ve been here before?” Ning was delighted. He suddenly remembered that Daoist Bluestone had acquired this Sithe Protector in the Terror Starsea! Whitethaw had been charged with protecting an extremely high-status Sithe, which in turn meant it wasn’t that surprising for them to have visited the Jedefire Realm before.

“Yes.” Whitethaw nodded. “My original Sithe master was invited here before. This place which you cultivators call the ‘Jedefire Realm’ was known to the Sithe as the ‘Seven Flaming Hells’.”

“What else do you know?” Ning was overjoyed. This truly was an unexpected surprise. The more he learned about the Jedefire Realm, the easier his visit to it would be.

Whitethaw held nothing back from his new master: “This is a deathtrap which the Sithe laboriously built up. My master was merely invited here to view it, and so I only have a cursory knowledge of it! The heart of the Seven Flaming Hells are the seven core prisons within it. Those seven prisons are paramount, but there are a large number of ordinary cells as well! All of them, together, form the ‘Seven Flamehell Annihilation Formation’ which can generate a type of destructive black flames. Aside from Autarchs, virtually anyone touched by these destructive black flames will perish.”

Ning was in awe as he nodded slowly. “Those black flames... we cultivators referred to them as a wave of ‘Decimatus Flames’.”

“However, the Sithe ended up being defeated in the war. That means the Seven Flaming Hells were probably attacked and destroyed, along with its formation,” Whitethaw said. “Thus, Master, there’s no need for you to worry about the Decimatus Flames.”

Ning listened as Whitethaw continued: "Part of those prisons are damaged, but part are probably intact. If you wish to save your friend, Master, you must first find out where he is. If he's trapped in a damaged prison, you'll have a chance to rescue him! But if he is within an intact prison... rescuing him will be very, very difficult."

"In addition, your enemy 'Archon Silksnow' is also present. Based on what you said, Master, he's not inside the prisons. There are a large number of passageways outside the prisons," Whitethaw said. "These many passageways are filled with many traps and barriers. The Sithe once controlled them to ensure that cultivators were unable to escape. Many died in those passageways or were blasted into a prison during the battles. My guess is that Archon Silksnow is definitely planning to use those mechanisms to trap you, Master."

"Passageways? Prisons?" Ning nodded.

"When my original Sithe master was invited to come here, the receiving Sithe warned him never to fly within the passageways! He was only to walk on the ground. That way, even if he did run into some of the barriers, at least he wouldn't be sent into the prisons." Whitethaw smiled. "No matter how dangerous the situation on the ground might seem, he was not to fly at all."

"The ground is filled with many dangerous barriers and formations, but they aren't capable of killing Hegemons. It is precisely because of how dangerous the ground looks that many cultivators choose to fly instead, seeking to avoid those dangers." Whitethaw continued, "But while it is true that you will encounter much fewer dangers while flying... the ones that you will encounter are lethally dangerous ones! Even Hegemons might perish."

Ning nodded slowly. If it hadn't been for Whitethaw telling him this, Ning would never have been able to guess at all of these secrets.

"You have to be careful, Master. I've only been to this place once with my original Sithe master before," Whitethaw said, "And I'm only familiar with a few of the passageways which my Sithe master once took. As for the more important secrets of the prisons, I wasn't privy to those."

"You've told me enough. This is excellent." Ning smiled.

Even when the Jadedfire Realm was in perfect shape, so long as one walked without flying one wouldn't encounter any dangers which could threaten Hegemons! Now that the Jadedfire Realm was in bad shape, things would be even safer. Neither Archon Silksnow nor the Ninedust Sectlord had died in the passageways, after all.

"Hmph. Silksnow, so long as you stay outside the prisons, you won't be able to threaten me no matter how you plot." Ning felt much more relaxed, and a cold light flashed through his eyes. "I'm not going to die here, but you are."

"Let's go inside, Whitethaw," Ning said. Whoosh. The two of them immediately flew into that enormous vortex of fire.

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The enormous vortex of fire was pitch-black inside. After Ning and Whitethaw entered, they felt as though they had entered a completely different world.

“Eh?” Ning saw clusters of fiery passageways up ahead. The countless fiery passageways were all interlinked, almost like an enormous beehive.

During the Dawn War, this had been a Sithe base. The Sithe would be able to retreat here and recuperate in safety... but the cultivators who dared barge inside would all perish.

“I can sense them.” Ning stared towards a certain direction, then reached out with his right hand and pointed. “Silksnow is right over there.”

“Master, these passageways are all interlinked. You’ll be able to reach any prison from any passage,” Whitethaw said.

“If that’s the case, then we’ll choose that passageway.” Ning began to fly towards the passageway up ahead, the one which he felt would lead him towards Archon Silksnow.

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“He’s here?” A skinny, white-haired, white-browed man was seated in the lotus position within an empty space that was merely three hundred meters in size. Archon Silksnow was able to sense that his realmship was resonating with a realmship part. A look of excitement flashed through his oily green eyes: “Daolord Darknorth actually came. Heh heh... they really are good friends.”

Although he felt that Ning would probably come, this place was still the Jedefire Realm. Not everyone would be willing to brave such great danger for the sake of a friend.

“Good. Daolord Darknorth... I might not be able to beat you, but the Sithe can.” Archon Silksnow stared towards the flames, a smile playing on his lips. “I’ll wait for you right here. Let’s see what you can do. I’m completely surrounded by lethal traps. So long as you come towards me, you’ll definitely activate them. Once you do, you are dead.”

The destruction of the Sithe had resulted in many of the barriers and mechanisms being revealed. There was no longer anyone in charge of them, which was why they could no longer remain hidden!

Archon Silksnow had chosen this region because there was a terrifyingly strong formation here. It was so mighty that just staring at it would cause one to shudder. Archon Silksnow knew that if he touched it, he would instantly perish! Thus, he carefully skirted the formation and then hid himself within the void besides it. He then set up a few formations of his own to help mask and disguise the truly dangerous one.

“I’ve already disguised the trap. There’s no way you’ll notice it at all.” Archon Silksnow revealed a smile. “You’ll definitely touch it... and even if you don’t, I’ll arrange for you to do so.”

He knew that someone like Ning would definitely be quite crafty. It wouldn’t be easy to trick him, and so he had made many plans to ensure that Ning would fall into at least one of them.

His advantage lay in the fact that he had been the first to enter the Jedefire Realm!

“Heh. You want to save your friend, eh? Heh heh heh... you are dead. Dead!” Archon Silksnow eagerly awaited Ning’s arrival. It had been a long, long time since he had felt this excited! The most dazzling Daolord in all of history was coming, someone who had destroyed the Silksnow Fiend Palace... and today, Archon Silksnow was finally going to get rid of him.

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Whoosh. Ning flew into the passageway, then stepped onto the ground.

“Be careful, Master. As you follow the passageway, you’ll run into a fairly high number of barriers and traps.” Whitethaw was by Ning’s side, protecting him at all times.

“Alright.” Ning nodded. Ning began to carefully advance through the twisting, flaming passageways. The passageways were a thousand meters in diameter, and a number of mechanisms were clearly visible within them. Ning and Whitethaw were able to easily avoid touching them.

After walking for the time needed to boil a kettle of tea, Ning suddenly blinked. He then glanced at the nearby Whitethaw. “Whitethaw, didn’t you say there were plenty of dangers and mechanisms here?” They hadn’t encountered anything dangerous at all.

“Uh...” Whitethaw felt rather awkward. “I guess... maybe the Sithe are all dead and no one is in control... which is why there are no dangers?”

“Heh.” Ning laughed when he saw the awkward look on Whitethaw’s face. “Alright, let’s go.”

The two of them continued to traverse the passageways with ease, moving closer and closer towards Archon Silksnow.

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Book 37: Flamewing God Chapter 3: Ji Ning and Silksnow

The winding, flaming corridors stretched off for countless kilometers. They had been nightmares for cultivators during the Dawn War, but now that they were damaged and were no longer actively controlled, the barriers within had been dramatically lessened in number.

The flames beneath the feet of Ji Ning and Whitethaw suddenly transformed to form a giant flaming head that was three hundred meters long. The flaming head opened its great mouth, preparing to swallow Ning and Whitethaw whole.

“Break!” Whitethaw stomped down angrily towards the ground with his white, fur-covered feet.

Boom! The furry stomp delivered a strike of inconceivable power, instantly crushing the flames below and shattering the flaming head.

Ning chuckled when he saw this: “We finally encountered a trap. This was the first one for us.”

“Don’t worry, Master. Leave these mechanisms to me,” Whitethaw boomed sonorously.

“Haha, I’m not worried at all.” Ning laughed, but he couldn’t help but sigh secretly in amazement as well. No wonder the highest-ranking Sithe had all wanted Sithe Protectors like this. Whitethaw was definitely comparable to supreme Archons in power! Even when Ning fought against it with all his might, Ning was still unable to gain any advantage at all.

And this wasn’t the most impressive thing about it. What was really impressive was the fact that the golem was meant to protect and defend. In raw power alone, it was comparable to Hegemons in might!

This was the reason why Ning wasn't able to gain any advantage even when using his Heavenbreaker stance with all his power.

Aside from possessing overwhelming power, it was also capable of soft and flexible attacks. It was capable of tying down any foe, even Hegemon-level ones. It could also stand in front of its master, helping its master face any dangers.

It must be understood that not even an actual Hegemon would necessarily be as effective as a Sithe Protector when it came to actually guarding someone.

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Ning and Whitethaw continued to follow the passageway. Whitethaw used his absolute, overwhelming power to block and crush any of the traps they activated. In truth, these mechanisms weren't all that powerful; they weren't even able to force Whitethaw to enter his 'flexible' mode.

Whoosh. Countless flames suddenly sprang up beneath Ning's feet, surrounding him from every direction and from above him as well. Flames were spinning everywhere, almost as though they had just been trapped in a cage of flames. The spinning flames came together to form a strange script which was clearly accumulating a surge of terrifying power.

Ning's face tightened slightly. This was the first time since entering this place that he felt a bit of danger. Clang! Ning pulled a pair of Northbow swords from the sheath on his back, bringing them to the ready.

"Master, leave it to me!" Whitethaw let out a low roar, slamming his giant furry palms in every direction in a series of furious strikes.

Boom! Boom! Boom! It was like a wave of palm-strikes striking out everywhere. Each palm was actually slightly stronger than even Ning's full-force Heavenbreaker stance! More than ten palm-strikes were unleashed in the blink of an eye, causing the cage of flames to start to crack and crumble. Moments later, the cage exploded violently and then completely collapsed.

The Protector lowered his hands, a stolid and straightforward look on his face as always.

"Pretty impressive." Ning was beginning to like the golem more and more. When Daoist Bluestone had traded this golem to him as part of the deal for the Omega Sword Dao, Bluestone had said that these Sithe Protector golems were extremely rare and of slight interest to even Autarchs.

"I'll probably have to rely on Whitethaw if I want to rescue Ninedust," Ning mused to himself. "It is much better at facing danger than I am, after all."

As they continued to advance from one fiery passageway into another, Ning could sense that he was gradually growing closer to Archon Silksnow.

Six days passed in the blink of an eye.

"Almost there." Ning turned solemn. Although he had the absolute advantage in power, Archon Silksnow had proven his determination when he had chosen to risk his life and enter the Jedefire Realm. Ning wouldn't be the slightest bit over-confident against such a crazy foe.

Ning watched carefully as he continued to walk forwards. "Over there!" Ning's eyes narrowed as he saw the man. A few hundred million kilometers away, a skinny white-robed, white-browed man was seated in the lotus position in a tiny empty space that was surrounded by flames. His oily-green eyes were fixed upon Ning as well.

Although flames and other things were between them, to experts like them mere matter was unable to block their line of sight. Previously, they were unable to see each other because they were too far away and too many mechanisms were present. Now that they were less than a billion kilometers away from each other, they were able to see each other clearly.

"Silksnow," Ning said as he walked forwards.

"I really do admire you." A gravelly voice rang out in the area around Ning: "You threw yourself into the Terror Starsea and then into the Jadedfire Realm, all for the sake of just a single friend! Daolord Darknorth, I already admired you for your strength. Now, I admire you for your courage as well."

"I admire you greatly as well. You are an Eternal Emperor, but you were willing to risk it all in diving into this deathtrap. If I chose not to come, it is possible that the end result would be that you and Ninedust would both die in here," Ning said. "For an Eternal Emperor to be willing to enter into a suicide pact with a Daolord... I'm truly awed by your madness."

Entering the Jadedfire Realm was easy. Leaving was difficult! In the past the Sithe had allowed countless cultivators to enter without impeding them, then killed them once they were inside! Thus, although Archon Silksnow had been able to survive his entrance, actually leaving alive would be a thousand times more difficult. It wouldn't be possible to simply take the original route back, after all.

"Suicide pact? You underestimate me too much," Archon Silksnow said with a cold smile. He had a realmship, meaning that he was much better at staying alive than other Archons.

"You drew me here for the sake of trapping me, yes?" Ning continued to walk forwards, a smile on his lips. "You aren't strong enough to do it yourself. Your plan is probably to use some of the terrifying mechanisms within the Jadedfire Realm to do it yourself. If my guess is correct, you should be surrounded by incredibly terrifying traps."

"Indeed. I'm surrounded by terrifying traps. Tens of them. Hundreds of them!" Archon Silksnow laughed wildly, "And that's why you should stay far, far away from me. The closer you get to me, the sooner your death will come."

The two continued to speak from a great distance, while Archon Silksnow concealed his true thoughts and his true plan against Ning. *Closer, closer... just a little bit closer...* Archon Silksnow eagerly awaited Ning's arrival. He knew that given how proud Daolord Darknorth was, there was no way he would flee without even seeing the traps.

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Archon Silksnow had his schemes, but Ning had plans of his own. If Whitethaw hadn't told him some of the secrets of this place, Ning would be proceeding with much greater caution. Now, however, Ning knew that so long as he didn't fly into the air he wouldn't be attacked by any of the truly deadly mechanisms of this place.

“Silksnow, in the end your schemes will all amount to nothing,” Ning mused. However, he still instructed Whitethaw cautiously, “Whitethaw, stay ahead of me.”

“Acknowledged.” Whitethaw led the way, while Ning followed Whitethaw from behind. He was being cautious for the added security it would provide, but also for the sake of lulling Archon Silksnow into a sense of complacency.

The distance between the two began to shrink. Eighty million kilometers. Sixty million kilometers. Fifty million kilometers. Thirty million kilometers...

“The closer, the better. That way, Daolord Darknorth will suffer even greater repercussions from the shockwave.” Archon Silksnow felt his formerly-calm heartrate begin to pick up, hammering against his chest like meteors. “Closer...”

Ten million kilometers. Eight million kilometers. Five million kilometers...

“Eh? Why isn’t he attacking me yet? Hurry up and attack!” Archon Silksnow waited eagerly. “Once he attacks, he’ll definitely hit the barrier in front of me.” If Ning didn’t attack, he would have to come up with a way to trick him into touching the barrier.

The distance between the two had shrunken down to merely a million kilometers.

Whoosh. Suddenly a wave of invisible heartforce swept out, instantly passing the distance between them and falling upon the white-browed Archon Silksnow. This was the [Unfettered Dreamlands], and a beautiful dream-world appeared before his eyes.

“I’m finally invincible! Hahaha... I’m the ruler of this realmverse! Hahahah!” Archon Silksnow was seated upon a throne. Below him were Hegemon Brightshore, Hegemon Windrain, Hegemon Netherlily, and the other major powers. They were all waiting on him subserviently, causing him to laugh with delight.

However, a moment later a look of terror appeared in his eyes. He realized that he had been trapped inside an illusion!

“Break! Break! Break!” He furiously struggled mentally, but he could sense the world around him clinging onto his mind like mud, making it hard for him to escape. He continued to struggle, and finally with a ‘pop’ he managed to break through.

He had shaken free from the [Unfettered Dreamlands], regaining his mental clarity and control over his body.

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Book 37: Flamewing God Chapter 4: Eruption

“Capture him.” As soon as Ji Ning had unleashed his heartforce illusions, he had ordered the Sithe Protector to advance.

“On it.” Whitethaw transformed into a streak of light, running through the flaming passageway at high speed. They were less than a million kilometers away, an extremely short distance to the likes of them. Whitethaw had almost instantly charged over to Archon Silksnow, his feet still firmly planted on the

ground. He hadn't flown a single time! He reached out with his great furry right hand, clawing towards Archon Silksnow. But right as he did so...

Swoosh. The blurry-eyed Archon Silksnow suddenly vanished into thin air, a strange vessel appearing in his place. This was an ancient and unadorned vessel, covered with specks of rust and decay that spoke to its great age as well as the tremendous damage it had suffered. Despite that, it was still able to move at incredible speeds. It instantly retreated at high speeds, avoiding Whitethaw's strike with ease.

"Eh?" Ning's face tightened. He could sense that when Whitethaw had reached out, Archon Silksnow had still been trapped by the illusions. "Is there someone else here besides Silksnow?"

Inside the fleeing realmship were two figures. The two figures looked absolutely identical; both were white-haired, white-browed copies of Archon Silksnow. One of them had a lost look on his eyes, while the other was quite clear-headed.

"Erupt!" the clear-minded Archon Silksnow commanded.

Boom! Archon Silksnow had long ago set up a masking formation to hide the terrifying trap present, as well as a few other simple formations that would be able to activate the trap. Now that Archon Silksnow actively chose to detonate his formations, they instantly erupted with their full fury! The powerful detonations instantly smashed against the truly deadly trap, causing an absolutely enormous eruption of power.

Rumble... a terrifying burst of destructive power instantly sprayed out in every direction like a dark-red wave of flames. Everything it touched was evaporated, including even spacetime and karma itself.

Although Archon Silksnow had first fled in his realmship before detonating the attack, the dark-red flames almost instantly crossed the ten million kilometers of distance and smashed against the realmship.

BOOM! Not even the realmship was able to continue to fly steadily, with the force of the blast sending it tumbling. As a vessel meant for flying between realmverses, it was extremely valuable and generally only owned by extremely high-ranking Sithe. When Autarch Bolin had assaulted the Stone Hellephant Wall, only two of the many Sithe there had been in possession of realmships.

Autarch Bolin had taken one away, while the other had been destroyed in the fighting. However, only Autarchs were capable of destroying realmships with ease. They were built to be extremely sturdy. Thus, even though the realmship was hit with a terrifying amount of power and was sent careening through the air, it remained undamaged.

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"Not good." Ning sensed that terrifying wave of destructive power wash out towards him from hundreds of thousands of kilometers away. The dark-red wave of flames instantly swept through the area with such power that even Ning shuddered.

This wave of power was enough to cause even Hegemons to perish.

"Master!" Whitethaw immediately began to run towards Ning.

Just as Ning was about to defend against it, he noticed something odd. He immediately sent mentally to the Protector, "Don't panic. It can't hurt me."

The massive, dark-red wave of fiery power blasted out in every direction... but it maintained a distance of roughly thirty meters from the ground. Although it blew straight past Ning, it merely swept past him and the ground of the passageway. This region of thirty meters above the ground was completely safe.

Northbow swords at the ready, Ning raised his head to stare at the dark-red wave of flames as it swept through the skies above him.

"So it's true. As long as I continue to simply walk on the ground, I'll be perfectly safe." Ning grinned. "The Sithe were probably worried about misfires, as these traps don't differentiate between friend or foe."

"Master!" Whitehaw arrived next to Ning.

"Come, let's go find Archon Silksnow. Don't let him escape," Ning barked. Swoosh! Swoosh! The two continued to run forwards across the surface of ground. Soon, they were able to see the distant realmship bathed in those dark-red flames.

"What!? That vessel remains undamaged despite suffering an attack of that magnitude?" Ning revealed a puzzled look. He carefully inspected the vessel, examining what it was made out of. It seemed to be quite similar to his own realmship part, and the resonance was coming from that direction as well.

Could it be an actual realmship? Did Archon Silksnow have an undamaged realmship!? Ning was rather stunned by the implications. Both he and Ninedust knew that Archon Silksnow probably had realmship parts of his own, as that was the only explanation for the resonance, but neither of them had even dared to imagine that the Archon might have an actual realmship part! The thing looked damaged, but it was at least serviceable. The price of the realmship was truly incalculable!

"Master, that's a realmship! I've seen them before. My master wanted one, but he couldn't afford it," Whitethaw sent mentally. "One realmship is worth twenty of me."

This was no joke. Whitethaw didn't have to explain why realmships were so valuable! It must be remembered that it was extremely difficult and time-consuming for even Hegemons to travel between realmverses. Realmships, however, made the passage extremely easy and simple. Any Hegemon would be willing to pay almost any price to acquire a realmship. In fact, four or five Hegemons would be willing to join together into a consortium to buy a realmship! In reality, however, they were never for sale.

Emperor Waveshift was willing to be generous enough to offer the Crimsonwave Temple to his homeland, but he would never have been willing to hand over a realmship. Only Autarchs were wealthy enough to give those things away!

"Silksnow actually has a realmship!" Ning's eyes turned bloodshot with excitement. "I have to get it! I have to!" Ning had originally simply been wanting to get rid of a potential future threat, but now he felt great desire for the realmship as well.

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The realmship was sent spinning through the air by the dark-red flames, but it quickly managed to stabilize. The two bodies Archon Silksnow were both on their feet.

“I didn’t expect that Daolord Darknorth’s illusions would’ve reached such a level of power. Not even my avatar was able to resist it. It took a full second before it woke up. Even my true body was trapped for an instant!” Archon Silksnow glanced at his avatar. “How terrifying. Daolord Darknorth is improving at a terrifying pace.” His oily green eyes flashed with cold light. “I have to kill him right away.”

“Unfortunately... things went to hell. My plans were completely wrecked.” Archon Silksnow shook his head. His plan had been to let his avatar wait there by itself, while his true body was aboard the realmship and hiding within an estate-treasure carried by the avatar. He wanted to use his avatar to lure Ning in, while his true body lay in wait.

He didn’t expect that Ning would immediately use illusions to attack. When the illusions struck, both his avatar and his true body were simultaneously trapped by it! Generally speaking, if a true body was trapped by an illusion the avatar would be trapped as well. This was because avatars were weaker to illusions than true bodies were! However, the reverse wasn’t necessarily the case.

In this situation, the avatar had taken a full second before regaining consciousness. Archon Silksnow’s true body, however, had almost instantly woken up after briefly falling for the illusions. By the time Whitethaw had reached out to grab the avatar, Archon Silksnow’s true body immediately made his move.

Only one thought had been in Archon Silksnow’s mind at that time: “I absolutely cannot fight Darknorth in close combat. If I do and he traps me in his illusions, even for a heartbeat, I’ll suffer a heavy wound or even die.”

“Screw it. I’ll set the blast off now.” Archon Silksnow no longer dared to try any other tricks. He was terrified of Ning’s illusions, and so he immediately detonated the nearby trap. Given how powerful that trap was and the fact that Ning was just a few hundred thousand kilometers away, he felt that it was very likely it would be able to kill Ning!

“He’s dead, right? He has to be dead.” Archon Silksnow put away his avatar and then took control over the realmship as he turned to carefully scrutinize the area he had just fled.

Suddenly, two figures appeared. One was a youth carrying a sheath on his back, the other was a furry white creature. These two were moving in pursuit of the realmship at terrifying speeds on the ground, the flames just overhead above them.

“Daolord Darknorth?!” Archon Silksnow was shocked. “He didn’t die?!” The Archon didn’t understand it. He managed to survive the blast because of his realmship, but how did Daolord Darknorth survive? Even top-grade Eternal treasures would’ve been instantly shattered by such a blast. Even Hegemons would’ve perished!

“Flee.” This was the only thought in Archon Silksnow’s mind. He immediately controlled his realmship and sent it into a headlong flight.

“Silksnow, don’t run!” Ning let out a furious shout when he saw the realmship begin to accelerate.

By now, Silksnow didn't dare to let Ning get close to him. The illusory art Ning had used had truly frightened him, and he was completely focused on using the realmship to throw Ning off his track.

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Book 37: Flamewing God Chapter 5: Foreordained Results

"Chase him down!" Ji Ning and his Whitethaw both transformed into streaks of light, chasing at high speed while staying on the ground-level of the flaming tunnels. However, the escaping realmship was moving farther and farther away from them.

"It's too fast. The realmship is able to fly much faster than we can." Ning stared off into the distance, his face tense as he continued the pursuit.

"Don't worry, Master. The passageways are filled with traps and mechanisms. If he moves slowly and carefully he can avoid some of them, but he's flying like a madman! He covers a hundred million kilometers in an instant without even looking at what's up ahead. He'll definitely run into some of them. Once they activate, they'll slow him down if not kill him outright," Whitethaw said.

Ning nodded. They were supposed to travel through a dangerous place like this with caution. The only reason why Ning dared to run forward at full speed was because Whitethaw was blocking for him up ahead.

"Archon Silksnow is protected by the realmship. That's why he dares to fly about like a madman," Ning mused.

Boom! Suddenly, a blast of power burst out from up ahead. Ning saw that a region of ten thousand kilometers up ahead had been trapped within a spatial vortex. The rippling spatial vortex manifested circles of light that howled through the area and chopped through everything within it. Each circle of light was like an incredibly sharp buzzsaw.

The howling buzzsaws of light turned that entire region of ten thousand kilometers into a deathtrap.

"Good." The distant Archon Silksnow noticed what had happened behind him. He instantly felt a great sense of delight: "Die! Die! The only reason why I dare to move so fast is because I'm in a realmship. How dare the two of them chase that quickly? They tripped a trap, eh? A pity that only the golem fell into that trap. It'd be perfect if Daolord Darknorth fell in as well."

"GWAAAAR!" Faced with all those buzzsaws of light, Whitethaw raised his head and let out a furious bellow. He then lifted his fists up high, then brought them smashing down towards the ground with his full power.

BOOM! The rippling region of space began to shudder after receiving this titanic strike. As the space began to crumble, even the buzzsaws of light began to vanish.

"What?!" The fleeing Archon Silksnow was unable to accept this. "Even his golem is that powerful?!"

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Whitethaw led the way and Ning followed from behind. Whitethaw was able to attack with both dominating power as well as supreme flexibility. Even Hegemons would envy his physical gifts! He was simply incredibly good at staying alive. This was why he had survived even though his original Sithe

master had perished. Although he was perhaps inferior in terms of power and attacking techniques when compared to Black Emperors, he was even tougher and more resilient than them. This was why the Sithe named these types of golems 'Protector' golems.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Whitethaw barreled through one barrier after another, and none of the eight he rammed through were able to do anything to him.

BANG! Suddenly, a loud explosion rang out from afar as a jade-green burst of light erupted. It was like dazzling jade moonlight, filled with satin-like gentleness. When the fleeing realmship rammed into the jade-green light, the power of the jade moonlight was fully released. The jadeship was instantly smashed backwards and sent tumbling through the air.

"That's more like it. We already ran into eight of those things. How could you run into none while flying through the air?" Ning was delighted upon seeing this. "The most dangerous traps the Sithe created were all placed in the skies."

The realmship continued to careen backwards through the air. The traps in the air truly were incredibly powerful. "W-what the hell was..." As the realmship was smashed backwards, Archon Silksnow was briefly dizzied by the force of the collision as well. After recovering, he hurriedly took control of the realmship once more to continue his flight.

"He's catching up." Archon Silksnow couldn't help but frown when he saw the two figures chasing after him from behind. "I was able to pull away from them, but they just closed the distance in an instant. Ugh... Daolord Darknorth's golem is incredibly strong. Its able to rip through all of those formations with raw force, while my realmship has no offensive capabilities and can only endure those attacks passively."

Whitethaw actively attacked and destroyed the traps and barriers he encountered while continuing his advance. The realmship, however, could do nothing but passively endure the attacks it encountered. Each time, it would be sent flying backwards. This had a dramatic affect on its speed. Was Archon Silksnow supposed to charge out and attack the traps like how the golem had? He didn't have that level of courage.

"I refuse to believe it. The Jadenfire Realm is filled with many dangers. The Sithe filled this place with mechanisms and traps! There's no way that a single golem will be able to burst through all of them. Once his golem is destroyed, he'll have to rely on himself to take on those dangers." Archon Silksnow still felt that success was within his grasp. In truth, this was part of his plan as well.

He had prepared multiple plans to deal with Ning. The first was for him to wait for Ning to launch the attack! Alas, Ning's sudden usage of the illusory [Unfettered Dreamlands] had completely ruined that play, forcing him to actively set off the trap in advance. Unfortunately, he still hadn't been able to kill Ning.

His second plan was to rely on the realmship to flee. The realmship was incredibly sturdy and good at keeping its occupants alive. If Ning dared to chase, if he wasn't careful he would hit one of the traps and would end up dying. Archon Silksnow's realmship, however, would be able to endure the hits.

And of course, he had a third 'desperation' plan...

"I hope I never have to use the third plan." Archon Silksnow looked at the two streaks of light chasing after him, a mixed look in his oily green eyes. "Daolord Darknorth has always outperformed my expectations. I made so many preparations to set up the stage for his death, but he actually reached an incredibly terrifying level in illusions! He's also gained an insanely strong golem. Judging from how it has burst through those traps with such ease, this golem is definitely far more powerful than me. Where in the world did Daolord Darknorth find such a golem?"

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The realmship continued to flee. Ning and Whitethaw continued to chase.

Given how both sides were moving at maximum speed without carefully examining the dangers up ahead, they naturally ran into one trap after another. Ning and Whitethaw ran into more of them, and the realmship ran into fewer. Ning, however, wasn't slowed down by the traps he found. The realmship, in contrast, was. As a result, the realmship hadn't been able to shake Ning off, and the two remained fairly close to each other.

This pursuit lasted for two full days.

Whoosh. As the speeding realmship passed through the flaming passageways, it suddenly encountered some sort of invisible power that was extremely sticky in nature. It instantly wrapped itself around the realmship, causing it to dramatically slow in speed before finally coming to a complete halt... and then be pulled backwards and then forwards as if it was oscillating.

After just two oscillations, it came to a complete halt and was stuck there in midair.

"What's going on?" Archon Silksnow stared in shock from within the realmship. "Move! Move! Hurry up and move!" He tried to will the realmship into moving, but he felt as though the entire ship had been trapped by some sort of invisible force that prevented it from moving at all.

"Have I been trapped?" Archon Silksnow grew anxious. "Break through!" With but a thought, he summoned a saber to manifest outside the realmship. He didn't dare to go outside the realmship himself, as the realmship had clearly been trapped; if he exited it, he might very well die. He used the saber to try and tear through the invisible force binding him from outside, but as soon as the saber appeared it also became bound by the invisible power, rendering it completely immobile.

"B-but..." Archon Silksnow was stupefied when he saw this. "The realmship isn't moving, and my treasures won't move either." Archon Silksnow turned to look behind himself. He had previously pulled away slightly from Ning and Whitethaw, but both were drawing near yet again.

"If they catch up... given how terrifying Daolord Darknorth's illusions are, I'll probably die. If so... then it's time to go all out." Archon Silksnow narrowed his eyes, immediately manifesting six arms with six sabers in them. With but a thought, he appeared outside the realmship as he struck out with all six sabers.

The invisible power once more swept over him. "Break!" Archon Silksnow struck out with all six sabers, but they were only to strike out to a distance of thirty meters before they brought to a halt by that invisible power, which had continuously pulled at them.

That invisible power wrapped itself around Archon Silksnow as well. He tried to struggle, only to find that he couldn't move at all.

"W-what the hell type of trap is this?!" Archon Silksnow was furious and frantic.

"Silksnow." Ning's voice was calm now. "This time, there's no escaping."

Ning and Whitethaw both walked over, raising their heads to stare at the airborne realmship and Archon Silksnow. Both of them had been 'stuck' in midair and were unable to move.

Ning wasn't surprised. They had remained on the ground and so there was no way they would encounter any excessively powerful barriers, but Archon Silksnow had been flying through the air this entire time. Sooner or later, he would fall victim to a powerful trap! As soon as the two sides had begun this chase, the result had been foreordained.

"Come over, if you have the courage to do so." Archon Silksnow was completely unable to move, but he was still able to circulate his Immortal energy and cause his voice to echo in the air.

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Book 37: Flamewing God Chapter 6: Archon's Fall

"I'll wait for you right here. Come over and kill me," Archon Silksnow said with a cold laugh.

"I wouldn't dare follow you inside." Ji Ning stood off in the distance, staring at him. "It'd be pretty miserable to be trapped there for all of time."

"Hmph. If you don't come in... I might be trapped here, but I'll continue to live. I'll be able to live a very, very long time. After 108,000 chaos cycles, you'll probably have failed your Daomerge and perished. I, however, will still be alive! My friends will probably come here and figure out a way to rescue me. Sooner or later, I'll break free!" Archon Silksnow stared downwards at Ning, his white brows fluttering and a look of madness flashing in his eyes. "So why don't you come over. Come over and kill me!"

"I'm not going to... but you are still going to die today." Ning shook his head.

"Eh?" Archon Silksnow's face tightened, his gaze turning colder. "Oh? I'm quite curious as to just how you think you are going to kill me."

Ning stood there within the flaming passageway, head raised. He waved his right hand, causing a Northbow sword to appear.

"Break!" Ning stabbed out with his sword, causing sword-light flow like a wave of water. The sword-light came together in overlapping layers which stabbed straight towards the distant midair Archon Silksnow. In the instant that the Northbow sword stabbed it, it transformed to become a million kilometers long! It seemed to pierce through the skies themselves as Ning struck out with his Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop. This was his most penetrative attack, and the attack which Ning decided was best-suited for dealing with this sort of invisible binding power.

Slash! When the sword struck out, it pierced straight through the binding area and was immediately impeded by that invisible force. Ning's sword began to move slower and slower; after stabbing in a mere hundred kilometers, it came to a complete halt and was unable to advance any further.

"Eh?" Ning frowned. What an odd trap that was. His sword was only able to stab partially into the field, with Archon Silksnow still tens of thousands of kilometers away from it. Although the trap had bound Archon Silksnow, it also made it very hard for Ning to kill him.

"Haha, you aren't even close. You can't even touch me!" Archon Silksnow laughed coldly.

"You're trapped inside and wrapped up so tightly in the air that you can't even move... but you can still laugh? I really do admire you," Ning said as he began to consider his options.

"Hmph." Archon Silksnow let out a cold snort. In truth, he did feel quite miserable. He was completely bound in midair and wasn't even able to move a finger. It was as though he had been paralyzed into a statue. He couldn't even move his mouth to speak aloud and was forced to rely on using Immortal energy. How miserable a life would this be?!

And so the skinny, white-haired, white-browed Archon Silksnow just stood there frozen in the air, that tattered and ancient realmship next to him while Ning considered how to defeat the formation.

"Come out!" Ning tried to physically push the Northbow sword deeper, but the sword didn't budge at all. Raw force was of no use! Archon Silksnow wasn't even able to move. If Ning used some of his sword-stances to unleash his most powerful attacks, he might be able to make a bit of progress, but with his sword stuck like that he wasn't even able to use any stances.

"Get back here." Ning willed for the Northbow sword to shrink, and it quickly began to grow smaller in size. "Grow!" Ning tested out expanding the Northbow sword in size, but within the trapped region the sword was constantly being impeded by that invisible force. He could shrink it, but he couldn't expand it.

Ning shook his head. He had no choice but to shrink his sword and to put it away.

"Master, this trap is meant to bind foes. After the foes are trapped inside, the Sithe would come to either capture them or kill them with ease," Whitethaw said. "However, we're unable to assert control over the trap and so we have no choice but to burst through it forcefully."

"Do you have a way to do that?" Ning said.

"Let me try brute force first," Whitethaw said.

"Brute force?" Ning's eyes lit up as he glanced at the golem with surprise. "Right. Give it a try."

Whitethaw was a golem and had brute force in spades; in strength alone, he was at the Hegemon level. Neither Ning nor Archon Silksnow had a chance to break through with raw power. They were cultivators, after all; they primarily relied upon their insights into the Dao, not raw strength! Golems, however, generally had ridiculous amounts of power, as they primarily relied on the overwhelming physical might of their golem-bodies. To them, the Dao was secondary.

"Break!" Whitethaw reached out with his furry right hand. His hand expanded dramatically as he reached into the trapped region and began to be impeded by that invisible force.

Ning watched closely, as did the distant and immobilized Archon Silksnow.

Boom! The hairy white hand slowly forced its way in, tearing past the impeding power.

“What?!” Archon Silksnow was shocked.

“Good!” Ning was delighted.

A smile appeared on Whitethaw’s stolid face. He then reached out with his other hand as well, appearing quite confident. His two large furry hands travelled nearly a hundred kilometers in an instant.

“How is this possible? How?!” Archon Silksnow was beginning to panic.

Ten thousand kilometers... the two giant furry hands moved closer and closer towards Archon Silksnow and the realmship, with the Archon’s face becoming grimmer and grimmer.

“I’m... actually going to die here.” Archon Silksnow’s facial expressions twisted. He knew that once he was drawn into the estate-world, he would definitely perish.

Time flowed on. Finally, one of the giant furry hands reached the realmship and latched onto it. The hand was so large that it was able to completely cover the vessel, separating it from that invisible binding power.

“Come here.” After getting a firm grip over the realmship, Whitethaw forcibly drew it into his own estate-world treasure.

“Now it is your turn.” Whitethaw turned to look at Archon Silksnow, reaching towards him as well.

“Brother Silksnow, I’d like to invite you into my estate-world. Let’s have a little chat.” Ning sent out his heartforce which easily pierced through the invisible power of the trap, surging forward to completely surround Archon Silksnow. Ning was worried that Archon Silksnow would transform into his invulnerable snowform when Whitethaw moved to grab him, making it impossible for Whitethaw to get a hold on him.

“I lost.” A forlorn look appeared on Archon Silksnow’s face as he sensed Ning’s heartforce take effect on him and watched that giant furry hand stretch out to him. He was still bound by that invisible power and completely unable to escape. His voice echoed throughout the empty area, “Daolord Darknorth, I lost. I have roamed the Flamedragon Realmverse for countless years, and I never thought that I would’ve died by your hands. However... you are the most powerful Daolord in all of history. To die by your hands is nothing to be ashamed of.”

“Darknorth, today I shall die... but soon, you shall die as well. Without question, you will die.” Archon Silksnow’s oily green eyes stared at the distant Ning, a crazed smile on his face. A moment later, his gaze grew dull and flat as all signs of life fled his body. Clearly, he had committed suicide by collapsing his own soul and truesoul.

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Within Archon Silksnow’s estate-world. Two figures were seated there in the lotus position. One was Archon Silksnow’s avatar, the other was Emperor Bloodcloud’s avatar.

The aura of life began to vanish from Archon Silksnow's avatar. The death of the true body meant that the avatar would perish as well. "Brother Bloodcloud, I lost. You know what to do." This was the final thing Archon Silksnow's avatar said before dying.

"Silksnow..." Emperor Bloodcloud's avatar watched him die, then nodded slowly. "Yes, I know what to do."

Emperor Silksnow's avatar suddenly exploded into countless tiny pieces, the godsense contained within it being completely extinguished as well.

His avatar had committed suicide by self-detonation to ensure that there was no way Ning would know who he had been. Once an avatar broke apart, it was nothing more than a compilation of treasure fragments; there was no way to tell what they had originally belonged to.

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An ordinary-looking chaosworld at the very margins of the Flamedragon Realmverse. Black clouds rolled about this world. Many Emperors were present here. This was where the Emperors of Silksnow Fiend Palace had chosen to hide. This place was filled with many barriers, ensuring that even if Ning did attack they would have ample time to flee.

"He died." Emperor Bloodcloud sat at the peak of a mountain, a look of grief in his eyes. "Brother Silksnow died."

Archon Silksnow had simply been far too crazy. Emperor Bloodcloud wasn't willing to accompany Silksnow in his madness, but had been willing to help Silksnow out. Thus, Emperor Bloodcloud had sent an avatar alongside Silksnow in the latter's scheme to kill Ji Ning.

The end result, however, was that Silksnow failed.

"Daolord Darknorth... do you think you've reaped a great fortune now that the realmship is in your hands?" Emperor Bloodcloud smiled coldly. "Soon, the realmverses and otherverses closest to the Flamedragon Realmverse shall all learn that you, Daolord Darknorth, are in possession of a realmship as well as many other treasures."

"Hmph... sometimes, owning too much treasure can be fatal." Emperor Bloodcloud's voice was cold. He was absolutely certain that the Hegemons and other major powers of the various realmverses would go crazy over the chance to acquire a realmship.

"This is the last gift which Silksnow prepared for you... a fatal gift." Emperor Bloodcloud had an eager look in his eyes. He eagerly awaited the day where Darknorth would be killed.

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Book 37: Flamewing God Chapter 7: Realmship

Ji Ning stared at Archon Silksnow's corpse as it lay there in the air above the flaming passageway. Ning would never have been able to feel at ease, knowing that some a crazed demon was still around and alive... but after actually killing him, Ning didn't feel much joy, only a sense of relief.

At least one potential future source of trouble had been gotten rid of.

“One of the eight lords of the Sacred Cities,” Ning murmured softly, “Just died in this place.” The eight Archons of the Sacred Cities... they were figures of legend. The first time Ning had visited a Sacred City, he had felt a sense of awe, admiration, and veneration. And yet, one of the awe-inspiring Archons had died, just like that. True, he had technically committed suicide, but in reality he had been forced to do it.

“Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” Ning waved his palm gently. It looked like a casual strike, but it actually encompassed the power of his Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker. The power of the strike was like a wave of water that swept across the entire corpse. With no treasures protecting it, it was easily crushed into dust by the power of Ning’s palms.

Ning waved his hand again, collecting all of the treasures which Archon Silksnow had left behind. Ning revealed a smile. He wasn’t particularly happy about killing Archon Silksnow, but he was excited and delighted by the fact that he had just acquired a realmship.

“An unexpected benefit. This has now become the most valuable treasure I own.” Ning waved his hand, causing the realmship to be pulled into it. After acquiring the realmship, Whitethaw had naturally handed it over to his master immediately.

The realmship was now within Ning’s hand, and it was merely the size of a palm. It looked quite shabby and ordinary, and it was covered with marks and scars. In fact, someone who merely looked at it would probably doubt if it could even fly! However, Ning had chased after Archon Silksnow for quite some time, and he knew that it could indeed fly.

“Time to bind it.” Ning sent a strand of godsense into the realmship. It was now ownerless and thus he was able to bind it with ease.

“Master! Master!” The vessel-spirit immediately sought to ingratiate itself with Ning, for fear that Ning would kill it. This was the sad fate which awaited some treasure-spirits and golem-spirits and made them rather pitiable.

“Given the amount of damage this realmship has taken, is it capable of teleporting through spacetime?” Ning asked. The damage really did look quite severe, causing him concern.

“It can!” The vessel-spirit said hurriedly, “It’s completely capable of teleporting through spacetime, but it can’t go too far. It’ll take many blinks to move within a single realmverse, primarily because it has suffered quite some damage. Although the core components are in good shape, many of the other parts have suffered varying amounts of damage. Some parts are completely missing, which is why the ship can only unleash a low level of power.”

Ning nodded. He didn’t feel disappointed. If the realmship had been completely undamaged, Archon Silksnow would’ve escaped long ago. There’s no way Ning would’ve been able to tie him down, resulting in him eventually falling into a trap and being unable to escape.

“Master, I can sense you have a component on you which I desperately need,” the vessel-spirit said quickly.

“Oh?” Ning laughed and waved his hand, causing a part which was more than sixty meters long to appear next to him. This part was a strange component made up of multiple layers of metal that had

many divine runes carved within it. It was vastly more complicated than any Hegemon-class golem, and as someone who didn't understand the Dao of Artificing, Ning didn't understand it at all.

"Wow, this piece is huge!" The vessel-spirit grew excited. "Master, can I swallow it?"

"Go ahead." Ning nodded.

Whoosh. A wave of invisible power instantly swept across the sixty-meter component, which rapidly began to shrink until it was just thumb-sized. While it shrank, it flew towards one of the damaged areas of the realmship. The part was pulled into the realmship, followed by the realmship's surface instantly beginning to glow. The surface of the realmship began to spread out, with some of the damage being automatically healed.

"Realmships possess regenerative powers, but there are certain important core materials they need. With this fairly complete part added into me, some of the other formerly-missing components can be used to regenerate and repair some of other parts." The vessel-spirit was extremely excited. "Master, now that I've been able to repair a critical component, many of the minor damages are being healed as well. I can now move nearly a hundred times farther than in the past. Now, I can teleport through more than half a realmverse with just one blink!"

Ning stared at the realmship in his hand. It now looked much better than it had in the past. Although it still was covered with scars and wounds, it didn't look as ragged as it had.

A single blink to teleport through more than half a realmverse? This was simply shocking.

"How far are you from perfect status?" Ning asked.

"Extremely far." The vessel-spirit instantly appeared to be rather deflated. "Although I'm at 90% condition, some of the minor parts which I'm missing are having a major impact on me as a whole. That's why I'm still not able to teleport nearly as great a distance as I would if I was at 100%."

Ning couldn't help but nod in agreement. When he had been a Daolord of the Third Step, he was comparable to supreme Daolords as well as fairly powerful Emperors. Back then, it would take him roughly a million chaos cycles to move via teleportation from one realmverse to another realmverse! Even Hegemons needed to spend extremely long periods of time. Realmships, however, merely needed a few myriads of years.

A few tens of thousands of years... to travel a distance which Ning normally needed to spend a million chaos cycles to traverse? Its teleporting powers were unfathomably superior to Hegemon Brightshore's.

"However, Master... I can sense that not too far away from me is another important component which I need desperately. If I can absorb it, I should be able to repair a great deal," the vessel-spirit said immediately.

"That's a part which my friend has." Ning nodded, then waved his hand and put the realmship away for now.

Whoosh. Ning bound and scanned all of the treasures which Archon Silksnow had left behind. Although there were a few valuable things, none of them were of much interest to the current Ning.

Despite that, Ning still felt quite excited. A single realmship was more than enough! "This realmship has to be far more valuable than even Crimsonwave Temple. It's enough to ask an Autarch to help out." Ning was extremely excited. "Autarchs possess incredible power and can create even alternate universes with ease. They are more than capable of reversing spacetime to rescue Yu Wei."

"With this realmship, I can bring her back to life. Hahaha... finally, finally, finally! I've finally done it!" Ning stood there within the twisting flaming passageway, so excited that his blood was boiling. The excitement he felt was simply indescribable.

Trading away the realmship to revive Yu Wei... Ning wouldn't even hesitate to make this choice!

Although a realmship would allow him to travel from one realmverse to another with ease, doing so by himself would be far too boring. This was something which Emperors who had lost all their loved ones and who were curious about the outside world would choose! Ning had been training for a much shorter period of time. There were many, many places just within the Flamedragon Realmverse which he had never visited. And, as a Daolord, his lifespan was limited to just 108,000 chaos cycles. There was simply no need for him to wander about other realmverse and enjoy the sites there.

If he could revive her... if he could speak with her once more... that would be the happiest moment of his life. He had no interest in wandering the outside world by himself. The realmship was meaningless to Ning; the only thing it was good for was in trade for asking an Autarch to help him out.

"I'll have to ask Emperor Goldisle and Emperor Blackcloud to help out and invite an Autarch over," Ning mused. The Dao Alliance had certain links to the other realmverses. Through the Dao Alliance, he would be able to send word to an Autarch.

"I'll go visit Ninedust first." Ning suppressed his excitement and led Whitethaw to continue the advance. Thanks to the realmship resonance, Ning knew the rough area Ninedust was in and thus was able to find him fairly quickly.

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Things were quite calm on Ning's side... but a storm was about to erupt within the Endless Territories. All the major powers, reclusive Emperors, and countless Daolords had just received word of something absolutely shocking... one of the eight lords of the Sacred Cities, Archon Silksnow, had perished!

Archon Silksnow had been one of the eight lords of the Sacred Cities, which meant he had a lifeblood tower within the Palace of Immortals of the Dao Alliance. In the exact instant that Ning had forced him to commit suicide, his lifeblood tower had crumbled! This news quickly stunned the entire Palace of Immortals, and word quickly spread out.

There was no need for this news to be suppressed or hidden. All the Emperors found out, as did the countless Daolords.

Archon Silksnow had died? An exalted Archon of the Sacred Cities... it was possible to beat them, but to kill them was far, far too difficult. Even Hegemons found it extremely hard to kill one of them.

Who killed him? How did he die? The entire Endless Territories was in a state of turmoil.

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Ning didn't care about any of this. He continued to advance through the Jadfire Realm, following the realmship resonance. Finally, he passed through the flaming tunnels and reached the prison region, arriving directly at Ninedust's prison.

"Ninedust." Ning immediately saw a silver-robed man seated in the lotus position within a cage of flames. It was the Ninedust Sectlord. Ning couldn't help but to laugh loudly and call out to him.

"Darknorth." When Ninedust opened his eyes and saw Ning, he immediately revealed a look of delight.

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Book 37: Flamewing God Chapter 8: Prison Region

"Just look at yourself," Ji Ning grinned. "Trapped in a cage and unable to escape." As he spoke he carefully inspected the flaming cage, hoping to find a way to break it open.

"And just what was I supposed to do? I had nowhere to go and nowhere to run. I had no choice but to hide inside here!" Ninedust laughed helplessly. "I might be trapped, but at least I avoided death. It's kind of funny, actually... I didn't die, but Archon Silksnow did! Darknorth, you are simply incredible. You actually forced him into committing suicide!"

Ninedust's avatar was at Vastheaven Palace. Thus, as soon as Archon Silksnow had died Ninedust's avatar had asked Ning's avatar what had happened, resulting in him gaining a general idea of what had happened.

Ning chuckled. "Don't praise me. It was mainly thanks to my golem over here."

"To be able to command a golem of such strength is a testament to your power as well. Why don't I have a golem like that? Archon Silksnow was alive for all those years, but he never acquired a golem like that. Why? Why did you have one instead of him? Because you are strong!" Ninedust said, seated in the lotus position inside the flame cage.

Ning had acquired this golem in a trade from Daoist Bluestone. It was precisely because Ning walked the path of the Omega Sword Dao that Daoist Bluestone had been willing to hand over such an incredibly powerful golem to trade for it. Yes, it was indeed due to Ning's strength.

Strength was needed to acquire any and all treasures. Even if you were lucky enough to stumble across a treasure of incredible power, if you yourself weren't strong enough you would quickly lose it to someone stronger than you.

"Everyone in the Endless Territories is talking about how Archon Silksnow is dead. It has been a long, long time since any of the lords of the Sacred Cities have perished," Ninedust said excitedly. "I rather want to tell everyone in the Endless Territories that you forced him to commit suicide! Haha..."

"Don't do that. What really matters right now is getting you out of there before something unexpected happens." Ning continued to carefully examine Ninedust's cage.

"Any ideas?" Ninedust was rather eager.

“Don’t be so impatient.” Ning scrutinized the cage while analyzing it. It looked quite ordinary, and it was easily entered... but there was no way out! Not even Hegemons would be able to escape this cage. The Ninedust Sectlord had charged into it because he didn’t know anything about it. Archon Silksnow had been alive for very long and knew that the most dangerous parts of the Jadedfire Realm were its prisons, and so he didn’t dare to follow Ninedust inside.

“This cage is part of an extremely large formation,” Ning said slowly. “I can sense some of its ripples in the air. Wait a moment, I’m going to go take a look at some of the other parts.”

Swoosh. Ning flew off into the distance while following the spatial ripples, with Whitethaw immediately following behind him.

“Be careful. I’m in no rush; I have plenty of time. Don’t let yourself get trapped as well!” Ninedust called out loudly. He knew how dangerous the Jadedfire Realm was and was worried about Ning’s safety.

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Ning followed the ripples and soon reached another flaming cage in the air. This one was completely empty.

Swoosh. Swoosh. Ning continued to advance while following the ripples. Soon, he encountered yet another cage...

The cages were all formed of flames, and they scattered throughout the area in a disorderly and irregular manner. However, they seemed to be connected to each other by invisible threads.

“Eh?” Ning’s eyes narrowed. The flaming midair cage up ahead was devoid of all life, but there were some magic treasures inside of it. There was a greataxe, a suit of armor, an estate-world, and other treasures. The greataxe was double-bladed, and a lightning-shaped scar was on its edges. It emanated an aura of power that was simply shocking; it had to be a Universe treasure.

“A Universe treasure? Generally, only Emperors can take possession of Universe treasures. Even if the Emperor was trapped here during the Dawn Wars, he should still be able to stay alive...” Ning pondered. “Perhaps some of the cultivators were trapped here during the Dawn Wars were killed by the ‘Decimatus Wave’, but the Sithe didn’t have a chance to collect their treasures.”

Ning’s guess was spot-on. After enough cultivators were trapped within the many flaming cages within the Jadedfire Realm, the Sithe would activate a single ‘Decimatus Wave’ to wipe them all out in one go! They would similarly sweep through the cages and collect all the treasures at one go as well.

However, what happened was that when the Jadedfire Realm had been attacked and breached, the despairing Sithe had chosen to unleash one final ‘Decimatus Wave’ before dying. The treasures of the dead cultivators were naturally left within the cages.

The one who had breached the Jadedfire Realm had been an exalted Autarch! There was no way someone like an Autarch would slowly pick through one prison cell after another to loot the various treasures inside. To Autarchs, such treasures were of minimal interest, and this one in particular was in a hurry to hasten off to another battlefield.

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After spending a full day, Ning finished inspecting the entire prison region. The prison region consisted of many flame cages which were clustered together like the stars in the night sky. The cages were all linked together as part of one massive and incredibly profound formation which was divided into seven primary regions! Each of the seven regions had extremely large cells at their center, with three of them having been completely destroyed. As a result, the prison as a whole was no longer able to unleash the 'Decimatus Wave'.

"How does it look?" Ninedust immediately asked as Ning flew back to him.

"Some of the cages in the prison area have been damaged, and three of the seven primary cages have been destroyed." Ning looked at Ninedust. "However, the cage you are in is completely undamaged. I don't think even a Hegemon could burst through it with raw power! As for finding its flaws... I haven't been able to find anything yet. This prison formation is simply far too complicated."

Ninedust couldn't help but feel both startled and despondent.

"Ninedust, let me think on this. There'll definitely be a way to bring you out." Ning thought furiously. Even his Primaltwin, seated atop the Autarch's stone dais in the second hall of the Azureflower Estate, was focusing its efforts on finding a solution.

"Darknorth, don't try to force things. This is nothing." Ninedust smiled. He didn't know much about the Jadedfire Realm at first, but after his avatar had met with Ning's avatar he had learned quite a bit of detailed information regarding the Jadedfire Realm from Ning. Only now did he understand how terrifying the prison region was and how dangerous his situation was.

"As you yourself said, even if Hegemon Brightshore and the others came they wouldn't necessarily be able to breach the prison region. This was a place used to imprison cultivators during the Dawn War!" Ninedust said. "Don't force yourself. I don't mind be trapped here. If push comes to shove, I'll just slowly train here and then initiate my Daomerge within this cell!"

If I succeed, I'll be a Hegemon with an infinite lifespan. I'll have plenty of time to slowly work away at this cell. Sooner or later, I'll succeed," Ninedust consoled Ning.

"The central components of the prison region have been destroyed. This cell might be undamaged, but there's still a chance to break it open." Ning gritted his teeth. He certainly didn't wish for Ninedust to stay here until the time came for his Daomerge.

Time passed, one day after another. Ning spent a total of nine days in silent meditation, but still was unable to come up with any ideas.

"Master," Whitethaw suddenly said.

"Hm?" Ning glanced towards him.

"There's another place in the Jadedfire Realm which might be of use to you in unlocking this cell," Whitethaw said.

"What place?" Ning was delighted. "Lead the way immediately."

"Follow me, Master." Whitethaw immediately led the way.

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The many cells within the prison region were scattered haphazardly, and the seven core cages were arranged in a strange pattern in seven different places. Three of them had been completely destroyed, of course.

Whitethaw led Ning in flying towards the most central region of the prison cells.

“Master.” Whitethaw pointed towards the empty area up ahead. “I was once invited over there along with my Sith master. We entered a special space over there from where the Sith controlled the entire Jedefire Realm.”

“Controlled the entire Jedefire Realm?” Ning revealed a look of delight. “Right! I should’ve thought of this long ago. Given how vast it is and how many flaming passageways and cells it contains, there has to be a central control mechanism. Whitespace, where is that region?”

“I’m not sure either.” Whitethaw pointed towards the front. “It should be within a three hundred meter radius up ahead. I followed my master inside, and when we entered that region I felt space twist around me. We immediately appeared inside it.”

“Oh?” Ning nodded slowly, then walked through the air towards that region while keenly scanning it.

Whoosh. His body suddenly broke apart into countless pieces as he assumed his Shadowless form, closely attuning himself to the dimensional ripples nearby.

“Ah, there are some flaws after all.” Ning quickly found the traces of the dimensional ripples and their strange cadence. His Shadowless form was able to merge into them and attune to them.

“Arise.” Ning waved a finger, causing a streak of sword-light to tear through that region by force. A dimensional tear appeared before him.