

Desolate 1261

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Book 37: Flamewing God Chapter 9: Sixteen Realmverses Alliance

Ji Ning led Whitethaw into the dimensional tear, going through it and reaching a sealed pocket dimension. This pocket dimension merely covered an area of thirty thousand meters, and it had an enormous black altar within it. Ning and Whitethaw both descended upon the black altar.

“Master,” Whitethaw said. “The Sithe used this place to control the entire Jadedfire Realm. Every part of it was under their control.”

“Oh?” Ning swept the area with his gaze. The black altar was quite large, the size of a enormous plaza. Its surface was covered with incomparably complex and marvelous vein lines, all of which came together to form an absolutely enormous flower in full bloom which was surrounded by blazing flames. The pattern of the flames continuously changed at all times, never quite seeming to duplicate a previously used pattern.

“Eh?” Ning was instantly intrigued by it. “That’s the formation-diagram,” Ning murmured softly. “The flames surrounding the outermost layer are being used to represent the pathways that can be taken out of the Jadedfire Realm! The pathways are continuously changing and will never repeat... if you aren’t able to find the way out, you’ll be trapped inside forever! This is why it is so easy to enter but so hard to leave.”

“The petals... they represent the countless flaming passageways! They are filled with various traps and mechanisms that can probably be controlled through this formation diagram. As for the stamen... I can vaguely make out seven colors which must represent the countless cells of the seven prisons inside this place.” To try and rescue Ninedust, Ning had spent quite some time examining the prisons of this place in detail. Thus, as soon as he saw the formation-diagram he immediately understand what it represented.

“Master, is this of use to you?” Whitethaw immediately asked.

“Of some use, but this formation-diagram is far too complex. It seems to hold some of the mysteries of the Dao of Fire... but it also involves mysteries of the Dao of the Void. It merges the two together! But that’s just secondary. What really matters is that it represents an extremely high level of mastery of the Dao of Formations.” Ning shook his head. “The problem is, these are based off unique formations which only the Sithe know. They are completely different from the ones we cultivators use.”

It was extremely strange. Just looking at the formations, Ning could sense a dark, clammy aura sweep towards him and generate an aura of uncontrollable fear. This was a terrifying formation, a formation capable of unleashing a ‘Decimatus Wave’. In truth, even the Sithe had to rely on special techniques to assert control over this formation-diagram, and the controller didn’t understand it all that well.

The problem was, Ning didn’t know those special control techniques. That meant he would have to truly understand it and then unlock it, which would be as hard as anything.

“If I want to save Ninedust, I have to master this formation-diagram,” Ning said softly. Previously, Ning had already completely searched through the cells. He felt that the formations within the prison were

simply too complex; there was no way he could make any head or tail of them at all. Everything was shrouded in mist! Now, the formation-diagram controlling everything was before him, and he was able to inspect it in detail... but this only inspired even greater despair. "The prison region..." Ning stared at the 'stamen' part of the prison region, increasingly aware of how complex it was.

Ning shook his head, then stared at the flames which flickered at the outermost areas of the giant formation-diagram. These represented the exits from the Jedefire Realm.

"Eh?" Ning's eyes suddenly lit up. "These... these flames..." A light went off in Ning's head as he thought back to something he had seen before. In the first palace of the Azureflower Estate, Autarch Awakener had gathered together countless techniques from both the cultivator civilization as well as the Sithe. Ning had memorized all of those techniques, and one of the Sithe techniques which Autarch Awakener had retrofitted had included many different formations. Ning immediately recognized that these flames were a fairly simple variant of the recorded formation!

In truth, the Seven Flaming Hells' formation-diagram was one of the most secret and hidden formation-diagrams of the entire Sithe race. There was no way they would publicize its internal secrets. Not even Autarch Awakener had been able to acquire detailed information about such a thing. However... Autarch Awakener had acquired many other formations from the Sithe, including some that belonged to the same 'school'.

"Ah..." Ning began to grin openly, revealing his pearly white teeth. "Hahaha. A glimmer of hope when all hope seems lost." Ning quickly began to sort through the details of that technique he saw, as did his Primaltwin.

In just the time needed to boil a kettle of tea, Ning was able to completely comprehend and see through the outermost layer of flames which covered the entire vast formation.

"So that's how the exits work." Ning casually waved his finger at one part of the flames. The flames there continued to change and twist about, but now everything was under Ning's control.

"Freeze." Ning's will entered the formation-diagram, and with but a thought the flames that had been twisting and distorting freely began to move and change in accordance with Ning's will.

Rumble... a series of images began to appear in the empty space surrounding Ning. These were illusory projections from the countless flames which represented the outer layer of the entire Jedefire Realm, including its entrances! All of the countless flames in the outermost layer were now under Ning's complete control, including the various exits. The flames rumbled and thundered under Ning's control as he guided them to change formations and locations. Clearly, by thoroughly understanding the outermost layers of flames, it was possible to take control of the outermost formations even if the special control techniques had not been studied.

"Congratulations, Master! Felicitations!" Whitethaw said hurriedly.

"I'm not even close to where I need to be. I've only taken control over the outermost layer." Ning shook his head. "I have to control the entire thing if I want to be able to rescue Ninedust."

"This formation-diagram is divided up into three parts. The outermost layer are the flames, the central layer includes the flower petals, and the 'stamen' lies at the core." Ning stared intently at the formation-

diagram. “The closer to the core we go, the more difficult it will be. That tiny little flower stamen shall be the most difficult to master of all; once I master that, I’ll have the entire formation-diagram under my control.”

“Now, I’ve defeated the outermost layer of flames. What of the flower petals?” Ning looked at the flower petals, which corresponded to the countless flaming passageways. “This is clearly going to be much more difficult...” Ning frowned.

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Ning began to analyze the Sithe formation techniques he had available. Although his Primaltwin was assisted by the Autarch’s stone dais and was able to train incredibly quickly, the ‘flower petals’ formation was clearly thousands of times more complex and profound than the ‘writhing flames’ formation.’

Time passed on, one day after the other. Ning’s Primaltwin had temporarily brought a halt to its training in the Dao of Water as it focused completely on the Dao of Formations, specifically the branch of it pertaining to the formation-diagram of the Seven Flaming Hells.

“This ‘flower petal’ formation will take me a few hundred thousand years to comprehend.” After spending some time on it, Ning began to understand. Although Autarch Awakener had collected many Sithe formations which could be compared with each other, and although Ning was both talented and had the Autarch’s stone dais which allowed him to be in a constant prajna-like state, it would still take him hundreds of thousands of years to understand this thing.”

“Then what of the ‘flower stamen’ formation which represents the prison region? That’s the real core of the Seven Flaming Hells.” Ning stared at the ‘flower stamen’ at the very center of the enormous, beautiful blooming flower formation before him. Only by mastering that would he be able to take control over the prisons and rescue Ninedust.

The coiling flames were easy. The flower petal formation was hard. The flower stamen formation was the hardest, so much so that Ning couldn’t even estimate how long he would need to master it. One chaos cycle? Ten? Ning still wasn’t sure if that would be enough.

“Seven Flaming Hells, eh?” Ning closed his eyes and started to meditate. “One step at a time.”

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While Ning focused on training in the Sithe’s Dao of Formations, the Endless Territories remained in a state of tumult due to Archon Silksnow’s death.

Within a vasteverworld. This was a place where countless races lived and thrived, all of them winged. They soared through the skies, the undisputed lords of this everworld.

Whoosh. A figure descended from a dimensional rift. It was a blood-robed elder who emanated the foul odor of blood as he swept the vast everworld before him with his evil gaze.

“Goldisle, my old friend,” the blood-robed elder called out, sending a stream of godsense out to encompass this entire world.

“Eh?” A streak of golden light appeared, forming into a bald, gold-furred alien. This was one of the two supreme leaders of the Dao Alliance of the Endless Territories, Emperor Goldisle. Emperor Goldisle had established this everworld for the members of his race to live in, and his avatar was permanently stationed here. Given his power and how his avatar could link into the many formations protecting his home, most likely the only ones in the Endless Territory who would dare to cause trouble here would be the Hegemons.

“Bloodcloud.” Emperor Goldisle frowned as he looked at the man.

“Brother Goldisle.” Emperor Bloodcloud smiled, which just made him look even fiercer and savager than usual. “I’ve come because there’s something I need to ask you to help me out with, brother Goldisle.”

“Need my help?” Emperor Goldisle chuckled. “What, now that Silksnow is dead, you Emperors are leaderless and rudderless. Are you frightened and wish for my protection?” In truth, Emperor Goldisle had no desire to bother with these evil men.

“Afraid? You think I would feel afraid?” Red light shone in Emperor Bloodcloud’s eyes as he growled, “I, Bloodcloud, swear on my very life itself that what I’m going to report is complete true and without falsehood...”

Emperor Goldisle was startled.

“Do you know how Silksnow actually died and why?” Bloodcloud looked at Emperor Goldisle. “I’ll explain in detail...” And so, Emperor Bloodcloud explained the entire sequence of events from start to finish.

“...So the realmship is now in Daolord Darknorth’s hands?!” An astonished look appeared in Emperor Goldisle’s eyes. “I-i-is this for real?” But he immediately fell silent; the man had just sworn a lifeblood oath in front of him! “So that’s the real reason. Silksnow actually had a realmship, and now it has actually fallen into Daolord Darknorth’s possession.” The implications of this were simply far too stunning.

A realmship! Who wouldn’t be intrigued by it, driven mad with lust for it? The combined treasures of all three Hegemons of the Flamedragon Realmverse weren’t even close to the value of a realmship. Archon Silksnow had been unspeakably lucky to acquire it, and he had been extremely low-key, ensuring that no one found out. Now that he was dead, it had fallen into Ji Ning’s hands. In truth, the reason he fell was that he was unable to escape from within all of those barriers and traps. Knowing that his death was certain, he had chosen to tell Emperor Bloodcloud all about it.

“Emperor Goldisle, I wish for you to spread this information to the other realmverses the Dao Alliance is in,” Emperor Bloodcloud is. “Make it public.”

“You—!” Emperor Goldisle’s face tightened.

“All you need to do is to make it public. I trust those Hegemons and major powers will definitely travel towards us at maximum speed, sparing no expense.” Emperor Bloodcloud smiled, a look of madness in his eyes. “Brother Goldisle, we Emperors are also members of the Dao Alliance. It should be able to help us send this information out, yes?”

“Yes.” Emperor Goldisle nodded. As the leader of the Dao Alliance, he had to follow certain rules which the Dao Alliance had long ago laid out. All Emperors of the Dao Alliance could request for him to send out messages on their behalf.

“I’ll send word of this to all sixteen of the realmverses in our alliance,” Emperor Goldisle said. “However, Darknorth is also a member of the Dao Alliance. I’ll notify him as well.”

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Book 37: Flamewing God Chapter 10: Realmslord Windgrace

Extremely far away from the Flamedragon Realmverse was another realmverse known as the Hiddenfiend Realmverse. Countless cultivators lived here, and the cultivator civilizations flourished every bit as the ones in the Flamedragon Realmverse.

The Hiddenfiend Realmverse had on particularly special star within it known as the Blacksun.

The Blacksun was more than a billion kilometers in diameter and completely black in color. Although it was named ‘Blacksun’, it was actually a war machine which the Sithe had once paid an unspeakable price in blood and treasure to assemble. It was vastly more valuable than any realmship! When the Sithe had lost the Dawn War, this vast, mighty war machine had fallen into the hands of a major power who was known as Realmslord Windgrace.

Whoosh.

Every so often, a streak of light could be seen flying into our away from the surface of the Blacksun. Space for ten billion kilometers around the Blacksun was under invisible pressure and restrictions, forbidding anyone from using spacetime techniques to teleport through it. Flying was the only option!

Whoosh. A streak of light flew into the Blacksun, landing on the ground and coalescing into the form of a white-robed elder.

The white-robed elder raised his head to look at a distant mountain peak, where a few courtyards could vaguely be seen. He took a single step forwards, his body flickering as he instantly arrived at the base of the mountain. He then called out towards a strange stone statue of an animal, “Second apprentice-brother, please send word! I wish to meet Master!”

“Seventh apprentice-brother, you are back?” The stone statue’s eyelids twitched, voice coming out of its lips: “I’m with Master right now. We’re drinking together. Uh, Master just said for you to come over as well.”

The white-robed elder smiled. Only then did he climb onto the mountain and advance at high speeds towards the top. Courtyards were sprinkled across the peak of this mountain, making it look rather like an ordinary mountain village of mortals. He soon reached the courtyard at the very top, at which point a voice rang out from inside: “Come on inside, Skylight.”

“Yes.” The white-robed elder pushed the door open and stepped inside. There was a table within this quiet, secluded courtyard, as well as two people next to the table. One was old, the other was young. The old man had tousled hair and a messy beard, and even his eyebrows looked rather unkempt and scruffy. As for the youth, he was a chubby-looking fellow who was shoving meat into his mouth with one hand and pouring wine into his mouth with the other. His face was covered with oil.

“Master. Second apprentice-brother,” the white-robed elder called out respectfully. These two unassuming figures, the sloppy old man and the fat kid, were actually the most supreme figures in all the Hiddenfiend Realmverse.

The sloppy old man was a famous and awe-inspiring man who was acknowledged by all the major powers of the Sixteen Realmworlds Alliance as their supreme leader... Realmslord Windgrace, master of the Blacksun!

Realmslord Windgrace was an incredibly powerful Otherverse Lord. During the Dawn War, he had accomplished great deeds during a critical battle, reversing the entire flow of events. He had managed to survive the Dawn War and had won for himself the terrifyingly destructive Sithe war machine known as the Blacksun. Given his power as well as the Sithe treasures he now had, no one dared to take him lightly, and so he was given the paramount position within the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance.

In terms of overall strength, he was also the undisputed number one figure in all sixteen realmverses! Most likely, only Autarchs could truly eclipse him in might.

As for the chubby kid? He was the only disciple under Realmslord Windgrace who had managed to become a Hegemon as well! His Daoist title was ‘Wuye’.

Realmslord Windgrace was an exalted figure with many disciples, but the only one to succeed in becoming a Hegemon had been the unremarkable ‘Daolord Wuye’, who had spent all of his time studying constructs. Hegemon Wuye... he had no interest in fighting for supremacy, and so he continued to accompany his master here, living a simple and plain life while spending his time analyzing the strange, bizarre Sithe artifacts and constructs that he found. Thankfully, Realmslord Windgrace had many treasures for him to pore over; after they had won the war, Windgrace had acquired quite a few Sithe golems, and he let his disciple obsess over them.

Hegemon Wuye was completely obsessed with golems... but in reality, he had actually become a Hegemon through the Dao of Fire. This was something which truly rendered countless cultivators completely speechless. In fact, he didn’t even really do much in preparation for the Daomerge! One day, when he was in secluded meditation while working on some golem parts, he simply succeeded in it.

As Hegemon Wuye had put it, “I suddenly had the feeling that I’d definitely succeed in the Daomerge, so I went ahead and tried it out... and it really worked.”

These words caused countless cultivators to feel both jealousy and despair.

“Seventh apprentice-brother, what is it?” Hegemon Wuye asked casually while drinking.

“Why does it have to be something, second apprentice-brother? Can’t I just be missing you and master?” the white-robed elder said helplessly.

“You? Pshaw. You only ever come when there’s business,” Hegemon Wuye snickered.

Realmslord Windgrace chortled, “Come, Skylight. Sit, sit. Sit and we’ll talk.”

“Yes, Master.” Only then did the white-robed elder sit down and pick up a glass of wine, accompanying his master and his senior brother for a few cups before continuing. “Master, I am indeed here on business. You asked me to watch over the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance, yes?”

Both of the other two men looked at him. Both of them were extremely high-level figures who were unwilling to get involved in mundane management affairs, and so they let those with steadier dispositions such as Emperor Skylight to manage many things in their stead.

“Word has spread from the Flamedragon Realmverse that someone known as Daolord Darknorth has managed to acquire a realmship,” the white-robed elder said.

“A realmship?” Both Realmslord Windgrace and Hegemon Wuye were surprised.

“I don’t even have a realmship! How does a Daolord have one?” Hegemon Wuye stared wide-eyed. “Is this for real? Are the three Hegemons and the many ancient Emperors in the Flamedragon Realmverse just going to watch without taking it for themselves?”

“The news is definitely real. It was passed on by an extremely powerful Emperor who swore a lifeblood oath that this information is true,” the white-robed elder said. “Daolord Darknorth isn’t easy to deal with; he may be a Daolord, but he is incredibly strong. Most likely, he stands at the very apex in the Flamedragon Realmverse’s Dao Alliance. Over there, only Daoist Bluestone might stand above him. Supposedly even ‘Archon Silksnow’, one of their ‘eight lords of the Sacred Cities’, was forced by Daolord Darknorth to commit suicide. Even Hegemons would find it very difficult to slay him.”

“He was able to kill one of the lords of the Sacred Cities?” Hegemon Wuye was rather surprised.

“A Daolord?” Realmslord Windgrace murmured, “Can it be an Omega Dao?”

“Omega Dao?”

“What’s an Omega Dao?” The two disciples looked at their master, puzzled.

“I’ve never mentioned this before, because not even I have personally encountered a Daolord who has developed an Omega Dao,” Realmslord Windgrace said. “However, when I was chatting with an Autarch, he once mentioned the ‘Omega Daos’ to me.” Realmslord Windgrace gave a brief explanation of how formidable Omega Daos were, causing both Hegemon Wuye and Emperor Skylight to feel rather stunned.

“For Daolord Darknorth to become second only to Daoist Bluestone in power means that not only has he developed an Omega Dao, he also has other things he is relying upon.” Realmslord Windgrace laughed. “I didn’t imagine that our Sixteen Realmverses Alliance would produce such a genius.”

“Has this information already been spread out?” Realmslord Windgrace asked.

“Master, you already approved of the rules by which the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance were established. Since word was sent from the Flamedragon Realmverse, all fifteen of the other realmverses have found out about it. Even the alternate universe you are in control of is probably aware of this,” the white-robed elder said. “I came to speak to you about this because I wanted to ask if we should intervene as well? That’s a realmship, after all.”

“Wuye, any interest in it?” Realmslord Windgrace asked.

Wuye shook his head. “My focus is on researching golems. What am I going to do with a realmship? And besides... you already have one, Master. If I wanted to use one, I’d just borrow yours, right?”

“You lazy pig.” Reamlord Windgrace laughed. This was what he actually liked the most about this disciple, his obsessive nature. Windgrace had met many major powers in the past, and the ones who managed to amount to anything were often obsessive by nature. The fact that this disciple constantly stayed by his side meant that Windgrace couldn’t help but view his second disciple almost as an actual child. If Wuye wanted to borrow his realmship, he wouldn’t decline.

“Master, what should we do?” the white-robed elder asked.

“There’s no need for us to get involved into this. All things in the Chaosverse come and go in a cycle; if he’s strong enough to keep it, then it will be his. If he is not, then he has no one to blame but himself,” Reamlord Windgrace laughed.

“Master, is it possible that other Hegemons or Emperors will come and ask you to activate the Blacksun to send them over to the Flamedragon Realmverse?” Hegemon Wuye suddenly said.

To travel from one realmverse to another was extremely arduous and time-consuming. The normal method of travel was to slowly teleport through the Great Dark, which would generally take an extremely long period of time.

A better option would be to travel via a realmship, but even faster would be to have an Otherverse Lord blaze a path relying on the otherverse’s prime essences. This would be even faster than using a realmship, but it was extremely taxing. Generally speaking, Otherverse Lords would not be willing to do such a thing. Yes, the Otherverse Lords could slow down a bit and use up less energy, but that would mean travelling slower than a realmship.

The fastest option of all was to rely on the power of the Blacksun, which could allow one to instantly teleport from one realmverse to another. Once the Blacksun was activated, it would be able to connect to extremely distant places and, for an exceedingly brief period of time, form a spacetime conduit would allow instantaneous teleportation! However, the energy needed to activate the Blacksun was unspeakably vast. The cost of such a thing was more than enough to beggar or bankrupt an ordinary Hegemon.

The Blacksun had other capabilities as well. Aside from being able to connect two distant realmverses together via a transversal conduit, it could be used to launch terrifying attacks as well. It was truly one of the most deadly Sithe war machines available.

“Over just the chance to win a realmship? There’ll be many competitors, and they won’t necessarily be the victors in the end... I don’t think there are many who are determined enough to ask me to activate the Blacksun,” Reamlord Windgrace said with a laugh. Even he himself rarely activated the Blacksun. It had remained sealed ever since the end of the Dawn War, and it now rarely revealed its true power.

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This information from the Flamedragon Realmverse quickly spread throughout the other fifteen realmverses as well as the otherverse. All of the major powers were stunned to hear that a Daolord could be this powerful... and they were all covetuous of that realmship!

“How strong can a Daolord be, really?”

“I became a Hegemon countless years ago. How could I be unable to kill a Daolord?”

This information quickly drew many Hegemons and a few Emperors out of seclusion. A realmship was simply far too enticing an object... and Daolords were simply viewed as being of no threat at all.

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Book 37: Flamewing God Chapter 11: Heading Off Soon

Vastheaven Territory. Vastheaven Palace.

Emperor Goldisle had come to visit this place once more, and both Ji Ning's avatar and Emperor Solesky had come out to welcome him in person.

"Darknorth," Emperor Goldisle immediately began, "I'm embarrassed to have to tell you about this."

"Brother Goldisle, come inside and sit. We can discuss things slowly." Ning was rather surprised; why was Emperor Goldisle professing to be 'embarrassed' as soon as they met?

Emperor Goldisle nodded, holding back for now. Ning and Solesky led the way for him as the three entered a secluded side-hall within Vastheaven Palace.

The three then sat down, some fine wine placed in front of each of their tables. The aroma of the wine wafted through the entire hall, but Emperor Goldisle was in no mood to relax. He shook his head and sighed, "I'm embarrassed to be telling you this, but... just today, Emperor Bloodcloud went and sought me out."

"Bloodcloud?" Ning frowned. Emperor Bloodcloud was definitely the main pillar of the evil forces left behind by Archon Silksnow! "What, does he want to beg for mercy?" Ning asked.

"That's where you are wrong, Darknorth." Emperor Goldisle shook his head. "He didn't ask for mercy. Instead, he sought to send word through the Dao Alliance to the other realmverses about something he had discovered... and by now, it's probably made its way to all the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance."

"Sixteen Realmverses Alliance? What's that?" Ning was puzzled.

"A great alliance that was originally established and led by Realmslord Windgrace. It consists of the Dao Alliances of the sixteen nearest realmverses which have joined together to ensure stability, peace, and allies in the event of outside invaders. We can notify each other of various dangers or important information we discover. In times of crisis, the sixteen realmverses will be in absolute lockstep and will not fear any outside forces. Realmslord Windgrace was chosen as the paramount leader by all sixteen realmverses, and is acclaimed as the most powerful expert of the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance."

"Realmslord Windgrace?" Ning sighed in amazement.

"The strongest in sixteen realmverses?" The nearby Emperor Solesky sighed in amazement as well. That meant he had to be far stronger than even Hegemon Brightshore.

"He's in control of an alternate universe and is incredibly strong. During the Dawn War, he rendered incredible merits in battle and ended up in control of the terrifying Sithe war machine known as the Blacksun..." Emperor Goldisle continued, "But that's enough about him. I'm here because of what Emperor Bloodcloud instructed our Dao Alliance to send to everyone else. This is something that will be of deep concern to you, Darknorth."

Ning and Solesky exchanged a glance.

“What did he say?” Ning had a bad feeling already.

“Emperor Blackcloud said that it was you who hunted down Archon Silksnow, forcing him to commit suicide in the end... and that his realmship is now in your hands.” Emperor Goldisle continued, “Emperor Bloodcloud asked me to send this information outwards. As you know, the Dao Alliance is a very loose structure and has just a few basic rules. There were no grounds for me to reject this proposal... and even if he didn’t go through me, he would’ve been able to go through the numerous other Emperors who are connected to the other realmverses.”

“No need to say anything more, brother Goldisle. I understand.” Ning’s face was tight. “Give me a moment to think.”

“Yes, you do need to think this over,” Emperor Goldisle agreed, a heavy look on his face. “Now that word has been sent to all sixteen realmverses as well as the otherverse which is under Realmlord Windgrace... I’m worried that quite a few Hegemons and powerful Emperors will hasten to our Flamedragon Realmverse and try to take that realmship from you.”

Ning was lost in thought. Nasty. A truly nasty shot. Archon Silksnow was just as hard-hearted towards himself as he was towards his foes. He had never dared to reveal the secrets of the realmship prior to his passing, so why was it that Emperor Bloodcloud had found out immediately after he had died? Why was it that Emperor Bloodcloud also knew that Archon Silksnow had been hunted down by Ning and forced to commit suicide?

Who would know all these little details? Aside from Ning himself, only the deceased Archon Silksnow knew.

“Nasty move, Silksnow... so this is the final card up your sleeve to kill me?” Ning slowly shook his head. “You risked your life to delve into the Jedefire Realm, all for the purpose of trying to draw me inside and kill me... and you even came up with a final backup plan to use the realmship to kill me if you yourself could not.”

Emperor Solesky and Emperor Goldisle both looked at Ning, waiting for him to make a decision.

“Darknorth, why don’t you give the realmship up?” Emperor Solesky couldn’t help but suggest.

“Give it up?” Ning shook his head. “If I trade the realmship to others, I’ll still be in possession of a vast amount of treasure. That treasure will continue to attract greedy eyes from some other major powers...”

“Then don’t ask for any treasures at all. Just hand it over as a gift,” Emperor Solesky said.

“And why do I have to give away my treasures?” Ning shook his head, a cold smile on his lips and a chilling gleam in his eyes. He then looked at Emperor Goldisle. “Brother Goldisle, there’s something I’ll have to trouble you with.”

“Just go ahead and say the word.” Emperor Goldisle felt a bit embarrassed himself, but there had been nothing he could do; the Dao Alliance’s rules were binding! In addition, quite a few Emperors were

connected to the outside world. Many of them spent their days wandering and adventuring but kept their avatars back home! Thus, it was extremely simple to ask these Emperors to help spread the word.

There was no way to stop it at all, and so Emperor Goldisle wasn't willing to disobey the laws of the Dao Alliance.

"As you know, I've always wished to reverse spacetime to revive my Dao-companion." Ning smiled.

"Now that I have this realmship, I wish to use it to ask an Autarch to do just that."

"Ask an Autarch?" Emperor Goldisle and Emperor Solesky were both stunned. They had both heard of Autarchs, but not even the majority of Hegemons were ever able to actually meet one.

"Fine." Emperor Goldisle nodded repeatedly. "That's a good solution. If your treasures ends up in the hands of an Autarch, nobody would be able to do anything about it! But Darknorth, I have to warn you... the Dao Alliance can only help you send the word to the Autarch as soon as possible. As for how long the Autarch will take, we can't be sure. To Autarchs, realmships might be nice little toys, but they still won't care enough to drop everything for one. They'd only accept your offer to ensure that the most basic laws of fairness in the universe are maintained."

"I understand." Ning nodded. Autarchs were at the apex of power amongst cultivators, capable of creating even otherverses with ease. When the Sithe had been defeated, the Autarchs must've acquired countless spoils of war. Even if that wasn't the case, at their level these treasures really held almost no meaning for them at all.

They weren't truly completely uncaring towards the weaker cultivators... but they couldn't just help everyone who asked willy-nilly either! That wouldn't be appropriate. Thus, Autarchs operated off a simple principle... if you wanted one of them to help you out, you had to pay a corresponding price, even though they themselves didn't care about treasure per se.

"Right. I'll go send the word now," Emperor Goldisle said. "I'll get you a response as soon as I can."

"Good." Ning felt excitement swell in his breast. He was asking a favor of an Autarch! A favor for a realmship... when would the Autarch come?

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Word quickly spread to Realmslord Windgrace's territory. He possessed a pre-eminent status; he was the only one in all the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance who was capable of contacting an Autarch.

"He wishes to use a realmship to ask an Autarch to revive his Dao-companion? This Daolord Darknorth is quite the romantic." Realmslord Windgrace laughed when he heard this, then immediately helped send the word.

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A distant region of great darkness. Within the emptiness of the void, there was an enormous triangular region with a series of dazzlingly beautiful palaces in the very center, each of which emanated specks of golden light.

At the very center was a particularly towering palace, the greatest of them all.

“Master.” An azure-robed youth who emanated the aura of eternity moved to stand respectfully outside a private room within the palace.

Inside the private room was a bald, black-robed old man who had a pair of fleshy antennae growing from the top of his head. His golden eyes were focused intently on the skull-sized round gray globe in front of him, and the countless runes and patterns the globe was covered with.

The fleshy antennae waved about above the bald old man’s head, but his eyes were filled with excitement. He gently reached out to tap the gray globe once, causing the countless patterns to instantly change and an aura of power to build.

“Still not right.” The bald old man shook his head, then reached out with his ashen white right hand to give it another tap, bringing it back into quiescence.

“Master.” A second call rang out from outside.

“Xian’er. Why are you bothering me?” Only now did the old man notice the distraction and respond.

“Realmslord Windgrace sent word that someone named Daolord Darknorth in the Flamedragon Realmverse wishes to use a realmship to ask you to help him reverse spacetime to revive his Dao-companion,” the azure-robed youth outside said respectfully.

“Another lovesick man.” The bald old man nodded. “Alright, fine. Got it. Stop bothering me, I’ll head over there soon!”

“Soon?” The youth outside the door murmured softly, “Master, the last time you said you would go ‘soon’, you delayed by over 600,000 chaos cycles...”

The bald old man’s antennae instantly begin to twist in embarrassment and irritation. “How dare you mock me, you brat! This time, it really will be soon! I’ve pretty much finished repairing this treasure. It needs just a tiny bit more work. Once I’ve finished repairing it, I’ll head over! Alright, don’t bother me again before I finish this project.’

“Alright.” The azure-robed youth had no choice but to leave, then send this response back to his good friend ‘Realmslord Windgrace’.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 37: Flamewing God Chapter 12: Escorted

After helping Ji Ning send word, Emperor Goldisle didn’t immediately hurry to depart. He instead continued to remain at Vastheaven Palace as he wanted for the Autarch’s response. Just half a day later, that response came.

“Darknorth.” Emperor Goldisle immediately sought Ning out. Ning was seated silently at the peak of a mountain. When he saw Emperor Goldisle fly towards him, he couldn’t help but feel nervous: “Do we have an answer?”

Whoosh. Emperor Goldisle alighted on the mountain top next to him. “We have an answer. Ever since the war against the Sithe concluded, it became hard to locate the Autarchs and virtually no Hegemons

know where they are! We had to rely on Realmslord Windgrace and his extraordinary status to accomplish it. He rendered major accomplishments during the Dawn War and is the only person in the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance who can contact the Autarchs... but this time, he was only able to reach out to Autarch Titanos!”

“Autarch Titanos?” Ning grew eager with anticipation. All Autarchs were transcendental figures. After the war, Autarch Bolin had created the Aeonian race and then disappeared. Autarch Awakener was an even more mysterious figure; he had wandered the entire Chaosverse then disappeared without a trace as well. It was only thanks to Ning’s encounter with the Azureflower Estate that he knew Autarch Awakener had perished in a way which ‘could be considered suicide’.

To contact an Autarch was no easy feat!

“The other Autarchs roam about too much. Only Autarch Titanos stays in his estate at most times. Supposedly, Autarch Titanos spends all of his time analyzing the Sithe civilization and is thus the easiest Autarch to reach. When we need an Autarch to do something, he’s apparently the one we usually manage to contact,” Emperor Goldisle explained.

“Did the Autarch accept?” Ning asked.

“Autarch Titanos did accept, yes. He said he’d come ‘soon’.” A resigned look was on Emperor Goldisle’s face.

“Soon?!” Ning was overwhelmed with joy.

“Don’t get too excited. Last time he said the same thing, but he delayed for over 600,000 chaos cycles,” Emperor Goldisle said. “You understand, I’m sure. We’re lucky the Autarch agreed to help out at all; there’s no way to demand them to come here immediately.”

Ning stared. “Did you just say 600,000!?” He would probably be long dead by then! Daolords only had lifespans of 108,000 chaos cycles.

“Realmslord Windgrace asked Emperor Yuxian to nag him a bit...” Emperor Goldisle shook his head. “Autarch Titanos promised that this time, he really would come ‘very soon’. He’s extremely close to finishing some repair work on a Sithe treasure.”

Ning was helpless. “How soon is ‘very soon’? Alright, I understand. I have no choice but to wait.”

“Realmslord Windgrace said that he’ll do his best to try and contact a different Autarch as well! But for now, he hasn’t been able to find any,” Emperor Goldisle said.

“Help me relay my thanks to Realmslord Windgrace,” Ning said. And in his heart, he truly did feel grateful. No relationship existed between him and the Realmslord, the most paramount expert of the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance. The man needed nothing from him; for him to work so hard on Ning’s behalf was already a show of great goodwill.

Ning felt a mixture of nervousness, excitement, and disappointment. It was quite rare for Ning to feel such an emotional potpourri, but this was simply too important to him. Reviving his wife was the greatest desire he had.

“Autarch Titanos knows you are a Daolord. He probably won’t delay for too long,” Emperor Goldisle said consolingly.

“Alright.” Ning nodded. He had already done everything he could. Hopefully, Autarch Titanos really would arrive ‘soon’.

“Next, I need to worry about how I am going to deal with the Hegemons and major powers who come from the other realmverses.” There was no way Ning was going to hand his realmship over to these outsiders.

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Hiddenfiend Realmverse. The Blacksun.

Three figures were standing atop a deserted plains. One was the chubby youth, ‘Emperor Wuye’, while the other two were also major powers.

“Wuye, you are being too greedy. It’s just a trip to the Flamedragon Realmverse. Why are you asking for that much?” One of the two was a skinny old man whose skin was covered with a layer of azure scales. He spoke in an unhappy voice as he looked at his comrade, a tall, muscular man who had two black wings on his back.

“I not only have to send you there, I have to bring you back as well!” Hegemon Wuye stared at him. “That’s a round trip!”

“But why do you have to insist on Hegemons costing three times as much as other Emperors?” the skinny old man continued to mutter unhappily.

“How can I treat them equally? All of you are going to the Flamedragon Realmverse to fight over the realmship, right? Hegemons naturally stand a much better chance than all the other Emperors.” Hegemon Wuye grinned. “Azurefiend, cut the crap already. You should be counting your lucky stars! You don’t even belong to the Hiddenfiend Realmverse, you were just passing through. That’s the only reason you even have a chance to get involved in this opportunity... and you are even so lucky as to be in the first batch of people I’m delivering. That means you’ll be amongst the first to get there.”

Whoosh. Whoosh. Two streaks of light flew towards them from afar. “Hurry up!” Hegemon Wuye called out to the two. “We’re waiting on you two!”

“Wuye, I can’t believe how much you are charging, given how long we have been friends for.” One of the two figures flying over was a three-eyed, golden-robed old man who shook his head as he spoke.

“Either pay the price or figure out a way to go on your own,” Hegemon Wuye muttered. “It’s pretty rare for me to have a chance to make some money with this realmship, so cut the moaning.” Hegemon Wuye often took advantage of his master and used his master’s golems to make money, but this time he wanted to earn a few more treasures than usual. This was why he had borrowed the realmship from his master, offering to send people forward but demanding a high price for it. He charged Hegemons one price and all other Emperors a different price.

“Dawnruler, the fact that we both belong to the Hiddenfiend Realmverse means that you are going to be the first group of people to arrive at the Flamedragon Realmverse. Just celebrate your good fortune quietly! Alright, now that everyone is here we’re going to head off!”

Hegemon Wuye waved his hand, leading Hegemon Azurefiend, Hegemon Dawnruler, and the other two Emperors into his realmship. He then left the Hiddenfiend Realmverse and began to advance through the endless Great Dark.

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The only people belonging to the Hiddenfiend Realmverse who wanted to take part in this expedition were Hegemon Dawnruler and the two Emperors! As for Hegemon Azurefiend, he was a wandering Hegemon who wasn’t native to this place.

Hegemon Wuye’s responsibility was simply to serve as a ferry. He had three batches of people he was going to deliver in total. Some realmverses were nearby while others were far away, after all. For the first batch, he would take a few detours on the way to the Flamedragon Realmverse, moving through two other nearby realmverses and picking up a few more people. Thus, he would bring a total of three realmverses worth of major powers to the Flamedragon Realmverse.

For the second batch, he would leave the Flamedragon Realmverse and make a roundabout trip, bringing the major powers of three more realmverses to the Flamedragon Realmverse.

For the third batch, he would only be able to bring the major powers from two of the most distant realmverses over.

This made for a total of eight realmverses! The reason why he was only responsible for eight was because someone was competing for the same business. In the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance, there was someone else known as Hegemon Fogsun who also had a realmship and was doing the same thing he was. Based on their respective locations, they had ended up carving out the sixteen realmverses in half, with one side responsible for eight while the other was responsible for seven.

Hegemons were charged one price while other Emperors were charged a different price. The people in the first batch would be charged a higher price, while those who went later would be a bit of a discount. However, the difference wouldn’t be that great. They all knew that given how Daolord Darknorth had been able to force an Archon to his death, it would be no easy task for them to force him to give up a realmship.

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The Terror Starsea. The Jedefire Realm. Within that hidden dimensional control center.

Ning remained seated in the lotus position in the air above the altar, staring down at the formation-diagrams below.

“Eh? Hegemon Wuye and Hegemon Fogsun are each in control of a realmship and are responsible for ferrying the people over?” Ning nodded slowly. “I wonder which Hegemons and major powers will end up getting involved.”

Some information remained highly confidential. Clearly, these major powers wished to keep as much secret as they could, so as to catch him off-guard.

“Fifteen realmverses and an otherverse...” Ning calculated silently to himself, “How many major powers will take part, all combined?” By now, he had learned quite a bit from Emperor Goldisle.

Rumors said that even foreign Hegemons were taking part, and more than one at that. Other rumors whispered that no one within the otherverse was going to take part. Still other rumors said that as many as three Hegemons and four Emperors from the Windnest Realmverse were coming for him. It must be understood that the Windnest Realmverse only had a total of four Hegemons; that meant that the majority of its elite experts were all coming...

All sorts of rumors were flying around, some real and some false. This caused Ning to feel a tremendous sense of pressure.

“I need to master the ‘flower petal formation’ as soon as possible. By then, I’ll be able to control the countless flaming passageways and use them against my foes.” Ning stared downwards, his Immortal energy pouring into the formation-diagram and causing the flower petals on the giant formation below to light up, revealing projections of the countless flaming passageways in the air around him.

Every single flaming passageway projection seemed extremely real, and they were all covered with countless traps and mechanisms.

“I have to figure out how to defeat the control mechanisms if I want to take control over the traps.” Ning shook his head. He had just barely been able to make some progress in the past few days, which was why he was able to cause the entire region to appear in the air around him. However, he was unable to actually control any of it.

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Book 37: Flamewing God Chapter 13: Control

Time flowed on, one day at a time. Ji Ning’s Primaltwin remained at the Azureflower Estate, relying on the Autarch’s stone dais to furiously meditate on the various techniques that belonged to the same school as the ‘Seven Flaming Hells Formation’.

Ten years. A hundred years. A thousand years...

In the blink of an eye, over nine thousand years had gone by.

“Haha...” The white-robed Ning seated in the lotus position in the air above the giant Seven Flaming Hells formation-diagram began to laugh loudly as he rose to his feet, a look of delight on his face. Immortal energy surged from his entire body, flooding into the formation-diagram and flowing towards the flower petals.

Boom. Boom. Boom. The projections of the countless flaming passageways once more appeared in the air around him. Each passageway was as thin as a strand of silk, and each strand-like passageway was filled with countless mechanisms and traps. In truth, Ning could see them all clearly with the naked eye, and he was now able to control every single one of them as well.

“After meditating for over 900,000 thousand years, I’ve finally managed to comprehend the flower petal formation.” Ning revealed a look of delight. Although only nine thousand years had gone by in the ‘real’ world, his Primaltwin had spent this entire period of time under 100x temporal acceleration.

Clack clack clack clack...

Boom boom boom boom...

The Jadedfire Realm was absolutely enormous, and the flaming passageways made up the largest part of it. Every single flaming passageway was incredibly long, and the countless flaming passageways formed an enormous nest which led to the prisons at the very heart!

By now, all of the countless flaming passageways were trembling. Some of the previously-revealed mechanisms suddenly went into hiding once more, while damaged traps began to automatically repair themselves, with quite a few returning to perfect condition. However, there were many other areas which had been forcibly torn apart; even though Ning was able to perfectly control those areas, he wasn’t able to repair them.

“Roughly 30% of the area has been wrecked.” Ning nodded slowly as he swept his glance across the countless illusory passageways in midair. “The Jadedfire Realm was damaged so heavily during the war that it is now a flawed creation. However... in the remaining 70%, the countless mechanisms and traps are all under my control. It’s now far more dangerous than it was previously.” Ning’s eyes flashed with the desire to do battle.

Previously, he was dreading the major powers who were attacking the Flamedragon Realmverse. Now, he was merely somber and careful. He was confident in his chances to deal with them, in his chances to fight back!

Previously, many of the mechanisms and traps within the countless flaming passageways were exposed due to there being no one in control; this made it extremely easy for them to move past the mechanisms. Now that they had a master again, things were different. Even if you didn’t activate a trap, Ning could cause it to activate with a thought to envelop you! There were some extremely powerful mechanisms that, when unleashed, would release blasts that would cover over ten billion kilometers. There would be no way to dodge them at all.

“Hmph.” Ning mused to himself, “Many Hegemons have come against me... but I, Darknorth, won’t necessarily lose.”

Although Ning was more confident in his chances now that he was in control of the tunnel passageways, he still didn’t dare to be overconfident. He knew just how powerful his foes were, and they all knew how dangerous the Jadedfire Realm was. There was no way they would be easily trapped.

“The only thing left is the ‘flower stamen formation’ at the core.” Ning began to work on analyzing the most difficult-to-understand part of the formation, the one governing the prison regions.

Controlling the ‘flower stamen formation’ meant controlling all of the prisons within the area, allowing him to save Ninedust. Alas, many of the prisons had been destroyed. If they were all perfectly undamaged, control over them would give him ability to unleash a Decimatus Wave.

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Time flowed on. More than 80,000 years had gone by in the blink of an eye. A rip in spacetime suddenly appeared in a region of empty primordial chaos within the Flamedragon Realmverse, followed by an invisible bubble of power pushing out of it with an ancient ship.

“Haha, everyone, we’ve reached the Flamedragon Realmverse.” A loud laugh could be heard, followed by the flying vessel disappearing into thin air and a group of figures appearing in its place.

There were a total of ten figures in total. One was Hegemon Wuye, the others were all various major powers he had picked up. “I’ve already brought you all to the Flamedragon Realmverse.” Hegemon Wuye looked at the nine. “You can decide for yourselves if you wish to wait here for the next batch of Emperors or if you wish to go off and hunt down Daolord Darknorth on your own. In short, once this is all concluded I’ll be back to bring you back to your respective realmverses. Alright, I’m off! I have to go get the next two batches of Emperors.”

“Thank you, brother Wuye.”

“Brother Wuye, just take your time with the others. The more you delay, the better.” The nine major powers were all in a good mood. Judging from time and distance, they should’ve been the first to arrive.

Hegemon Wuye took control over his realmship and departed.

“Let’s go. Let’s head to the Terror Starsea and the Jedefire Realm,” the skinny azure-scaled old man, ‘Hegemon Azurefiend’, said in a low voice. Of the nine Emperors present, five were Hegemons while the other four were quite powerful in their own right. Only those who were extremely confident in their abilities would dare to come here, with Hegemon Azurefiend being the strongest of the group.

“Let’s go.”

“We aren’t too far away from the Terror Starsea.”

“I travel the fastest. I’ll lead everyone with me,” an man dressed in graceful azure robes said with a smile. His fingers were as smooth as alabaster jade, and as he waved his finger he easily tore a path through spacetime.

“Since Hegemon Oldgem has chosen to guide us, let’s just go ahead and accept his kind offer.” The other major powers didn’t reject.

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Although he wasn’t quite familiar with the Terror Starsea, Hegemon Oldgem truly was a formidable figure when it came to travelling. It took him merely a century or so to arrive outside the Jedefire Realm.

“The Jedefire Realm. How beautiful.” Hegemon Oldgem stared at the enormous vortex of flames before them, each of the flames looking like the petal of a flower. “Supposedly, this was a nightmare for our people during the Dawn War. Many major powers were imprisoned in here, and all those who went inside perished.”

“Everyone, we’ve already collected quite a bit of information regarding the Jedefire Realm. Based on what we know, entering is easy but leaving is difficult.” Hegemon Dawnruler said in a cold voice, “Daolord Darknorth went in a fairly short while ago. I imagine he probably hasn’t been able to flee just yet. Shall we wait for him outside or shall we go inside?”

“Go inside of course,” Hegemon Azurefiend said, a glimmer of terrifying red light flashing in his eyes. “We were the first to arrive here. If we waste any time, Hegemon Fogsun’s realmship will probably arrive with another batch of Emperors. By then, we’ll have lost our first-mover advantage and it’ll be even harder to acquire the realmship. The more time we waste, the more Emperors will arrive and the more difficult things will become.”

“Right.” A bald, grim-looking red-robed man nodded slowly.

“I agree that we should all go in together right away as well,” a silver-haired elder with a stone sword on his back agreed.

Since the five Hegemons were all in occurrence, the other four Emperors simply exchanged glances but said nothing.

“Haha... what a pity! I hear that the most powerful figure in the Flamedragon Realmverse is Hegemon Brightshore. He should know quite a bit about this Jadedfire Realm, but he wasn’t willing to tell us anything about it at all.” Hegemon Azurefiend chortled. “Still... we were able to accumulate quite a good amount of intelligence. It should be enough. The Jadedfire Realm was shattered long ago and should no longer pose of much a danger to us. Come, come! Let’s go inside.”

Hegemon Azurefiend immediately transformed into a streak of light and flew inside.

“Let’s go,” Hegemon Oldgem said.

“All together now.”

“Let’s go.” The nine Emperors began to charge into the vast vortex of flames, either singly or in pairs. Soon, all of them had entered the Jadedfire Realm.

“There are this many flaming passageways?” After entering the Jadedfire Realm, the Emperors saw the countless flaming tunnels off in the distance.

“Which one should we choose?”

“We? Gentlemen, are we still planning to travel together? Haha, I’m more accustomed to moving by myself. I’ll go in first. If I’m the first one to find Daolord Darknorth, the realmship will be mine,” Hegemon Azurefiend laughed wickedly. He immediately charged into one of the flaming passageways next to him. He was the most powerful member of this group of Emperors and thus naturally wasn’t interested in working together with the others.

He refused to believe that he wasn’t able to kill a mere Daolord!

“Let’s go.” Hegemon Dawnruler scanned the area with his three eyes, then took a single step forwards and transformed into golden light that burrowed in a distant flaming passageway.

“Let it all be up to fate.” The bald, grim-faced man dressed in red robes revealed a hint of a smile as he flew into one of the flaming passageways as well.

“Brother Oldgem, let’s travel together?” the silver-haired elder with the ancient stone sword on his back asked.

“Let’s.” Hegemon Oldgem smiled. These two Hegemons flew towards one of the flaming passageways together. These two came from the same realmverse and were on extremely good terms with each other; if they acquired the realmship, they would share it. It wouldn’t really matter who owned it.

“The five Hegemons have all gone inside. We should go as well.” The four remaining Emperors exchanged glances. Soon, they formed into two squads of two which flew into the flaming passageways as well.

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The hidden control region within the Jedefire Realm. Ning remained seated in midair above the altar, scanning the surrounding area with his gaze. The area around him manifested projections of the flaming passageways of the Jedefire Realm, as well as the nine figures making their way through those passageways. These nine figures had entered the Jedefire Realm together, then had separately entered different passageways. Ning had watched all of this carefully.

“Have they come?” Ning murmured softly, “This first batch is already putting me under quite a bit of pressure.”

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 37: Flamewing God Chapter 14: Bait

Since Ji Ning knew that a host of major powers was coming from the various realmverses for him, he had naturally acquired quite a bit of material and information on his foes. Hegemon Brightshore and Emperor Goldisle had been particularly helpful, introducing detailed information regarding the most famous Hegemons and extremely powerful Emperors of the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance to Ning.

Thus, when Ning ‘saw’ those nine figures appear through the formation-diagram, he was able to recognize them at one go.

“Five of these nine are Hegemons. Hegemon Oldgem and the Paragon of Swords are actually working together? They are all being extremely cautious.” Ning shook his head slowly. “Hegemon Dawnruler... Hegemon Everworry... hey, this should be Hegemon Azurefiend.”

Ning’s gaze focused upon the figure of the latter. Hegemon Azurefiend was flying carefully through the flaming passageways, his eyes glowing with cold light as he carefully scanned the area in front of him. Hegemon Azurefiend was even using a pair of rope-type magic treasures to scout the path ahead for himself.

“Supposedly, Hegemon Azurefiend is one of the several foreign Hegemons taking part in this escapade.” Ning carefully scrutinized Hegemon Azurefiend. Based on what he knew, there were differences in power between Hegemons; Hegemon Brightshore, for example, was the number one Hegemon of the Flamedragon Realmverse! Even in the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance, Hegemon Brightshore was powerful enough to rank in the top five.

But of course, there was no way to rank anyone in greater detail than that, as most of the Hegemons had never actually battled each other. Rough rankings could only be based on the performance they had

shown in the past, which was why Realmslord Windgrace was acknowledged to be the absolute strongest. Next came the likes of Hegemon Brightshore.

Hegemon Windrain and Hegemon Netherlily were considered fairly 'ordinary' Hegemons in the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance.

"Hegemon Azurefiend is extremely famous! Supposedly, he was born a Chaos Godbeast and has a strange temperament. He's extremely powerful and ranks highly even amongst Hegemons," Ning mused. "Based on what the intelligence reports tell me, he should be even stronger than Hegemon Netherlily and Hegemon Windrain. He should be the strongest of the five Hegemons in this batch."

In the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance, there were only a few figures capable of suppressing Hegemon Azurefiend in power! "Hegemon Azurefiend, eh?" Several thoughts flickered through Ning's mind.

"I'll feign weakness first. These five Hegemons only constitute a small percentage of the Hegemons who will be coming, after all. The only trump card I have up my sleeve is my control over the flaming passageways; once I reveal it, the Hegemons and Emperors who arrive later will only be even more careful. They might even all travel together. That'll make things very troublesome for me," Ning mused.

Only by feigning weakness could he lull his foes into underestimating him. Only then would his foes move independently on their own, as only when they felt that Ning was not a threat would they be truly concerned about competing against the other Hegemons. This would be of benefit to Ning.

"My control over the flaming passageways is a killer trump card. I have to save it for a moment of maximum effect. That's my only shot at reversing the situation." Ning's gaze was focused on the nine illusory figures advancing through the countless passageways. Every single action they took was within his field of vision.

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"This Jadedfire Realm really is in terrible shape. A few mechanisms have appeared, but I was able to discover them all from afar." Hegemon Azurefiend continued to fly forwards, two billion-kilometer sized ropes scouting the way up ahead for him.

"According to the legends, the Jadedfire Realm was absolutely terrifying when intact. It's very weak now. No wonder so many Emperors of the Flamedragon Realmverse were able to come in, scout the place, and then leave safely." Hegemon Azurefiend shook his head and chuckled. He felt increasingly relaxed; things were much simpler than he had anticipated.

This place might be of danger to weaker Emperors, but he was an exalted Hegemon. How much of a danger could these damaged, unmanned traps and mechanisms possibly pose him?

"Daolord Darknorth, eh? You'll definitely be mine. Heh heh... I'll kill him and then take his realmship, allowing me to easily rove across the various realmverses. It won't be as difficult as it is now." Hegemon Azurefiend felt quite eager. He was a temperamental character, but was born liking to wander about by himself and adventure through the void.

Swoosh. Hegemon Azurefiend continued to advance at high speeds through the flaming passageways, using the many tools he had available to scout out the path ahead and avoid them with ease.

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“This is easier than expected.” The bald, red-robed, grim-faced man strolled through the skies, his body emanating with gray light that illuminated the area ahead of him and laid bare all of the hidden dangers.

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Each of the major powers felt as though the Jedefire Realm wasn't as dangerous as they had thought. So long as they were careful, they would be able to advance with ease.

Time passed, one day after the other.

“Soon. Hegemon Azurefiend is the fastest; he's about to go through the flaming passageway area and reach the prison region. It is time for me to make my own move as well. I can't let them get into and explore the prison region.” Ning was still seated in the lotus position above the altar, but a streak of light suddenly flew out of his body, manifesting into a second 'Ji Ning' in the air. This was a divine power clone.

“Whitethaw, let's go,” Ning barked.

“Alright,” Whitethaw said respectfully. Whoosh. Ning waved his hand, causing the ancient realmship to appear next to him. It was now in much better shape than it had been when Archon Silksnow had owned it. Ning and Whitethaw both entered the realmship, then quietly snuck away from the hidden region, leaving behind just the divine power clone inside.

Rumble... Ning's divine power clone remained seated above the altar and the formation-diagram, using its Immortal energy to manipulate the formation-diagram and maintain control over things from afar.

Controlling the formation-diagram took very little power. Although this divine power clone was fairly weak, for it to use Immortal energy to control the formation-diagram was simplicity itself.

With his clone present, Ning would be constantly aware of the locations and behaviors of the nine Hegemons and Emperors.

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Within the darkness of the void. An ancient realmship was hovering in the skies next to a flaming cage, with Ning's true body and Whitethaw inside the realmship.

Whoosh. Ten billion kilometers up ahead, an azure-scaled figure suddenly flew out from one of the flaming passageways. This figure emanated an extremely strange aura; it didn't seem that dominating or overbearing, but based on Ning's intelligence reports it definitely belonged to a terrifying figure who was ranked highly even amongst other Hegemons.

“Hegemon Azurefiend!” Ning grinned. “Let's move.” Swoosh! Ning controlled his realmship to immediately fly into a nearby flaming passageway.

“Eh?” Hegemon Azurefiend had just reached the prison region after leaving the flaming passageways when he suddenly sensed a ripple from afar. Turning his head, he immediately saw that realmship.

“The realmship!” Hegemon Azurefiend was instantly overjoyed, so excited that his eyes lit up. “Haha, I really am lucky. I actually ran into the realmship as soon as I arrived here, and it seems as though the other Hegemons haven’t discovered it yet.”

“You want to run? Heh heh...” Hegemon Azurefiend’s speed skyrocketed as he furiously chased after the fleeing realmship.

Ning sent the realmship fleeing into the flaming passageways, beginning a ‘panicked’ flight through the area. Hegemon Azurefiend naturally followed him into the flaming passageways as well from behind.

“You won’t be able to escape. You aren’t going anywhere!” Hegemon Azurefiend spoke out, his voice carrying a strange, magnetic cadence that caused the area around Ning to shimmer.

“Azurefiend, don’t try to show off such meager skill in illusions before me. Hmph.” Ning’s voice echoed within the flaming passageways as well.

“Hand the realmship over to me and I’ll spare your life. Otherwise, you are doomed!” Hegemon Azurefiend chased frantically from behind.

“You think you can doom me? Hmph. I’ll show you just how incredible a realmship truly is.” Even as Ning’s voice echoed within the flaming passageways, the realmship suddenly skyrocketed in speed. Swoosh! It instantly pulled away from Hegemon Azurefiend, throwing him off and making it so that he could do nothing but watch as Ning disappeared from his field of vision.

“T-that fast?!” Hegemon Azurefiend was briefly stunned, but his eyes then flashed with savage light. “Good. What a fine realmship.” Realmships were meant for travel. When Archon Silksnow had used it, it was in terrible shape but still far faster than Ning. Now, it had been repaired considerably and was even faster than before, allowing Ning to easily throw Hegemon Azurefiend off his trail.

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Time flowed on. A few months after the last encounter.

“A realmship!” Hegemon Everworry had just arrived at the prison region, and his eyes lit up as he saw the distant realmship.

“Another Hegemon?!” Ning’s enraged sound rang out from within the realmship. “Hegemon Everworry... don’t you feel that you are all being too shameless?” As he spoke, he sent the realmship diving into the flaming passageway.

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Three years later.

“The realmship is over there!” Hegemon Oldgem and the Paragon of Swords were both in hot pursuit of the realmship, which was fleeing in panic. Every so often, it would blast into certain traps that would send it spinning, but each time it was able to quickly stabilize itself and continue to flee at incredible speeds, shaking off both of them.

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Time flowed on. All nine Emperors and Hegemons were thoroughly enraged; it was as though the only thing Daolord Darknorth could do was flee! Given how fast the realmship was, it was extremely hard for them to catch up to it.

“Daolord Darknorth is extremely familiar with the flaming passageways, allowing him to avoid many of the most dangerous mechanisms with ease. Even if he does occasionally run into one of them, his realmship is able to take the damage.” The nine Hegemons and Emperors all felt rather helpless.

Every single passageway was extremely long, and the countless passageways were filled with even more mechanisms. The Emperors had to move with care, and for now there really was no way for them to catch Ning as the latter dove here and there.

Still, they continued to wait excitedly. At least the realmship was remaining within the flaming passageways this entire time. Sooner or later, they’d catch it.

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“Mm. For now, I’ll keep the most terrifying mechanisms of the passageways under wraps and keep them off their guard.” Ning remained quite calm from within his realmship. “I’ll keep their attention completely focused upon the flaming passageways for now. That way, so long as they avoid the prison region it’s unlikely they’ll be able to discover that hidden area.”

The reason why Ning had used himself as bait to repeatedly lure them out was because he was worried that if he just remained in hiding, the Emperors and Hegemons would begin to search the area with such care that they might scour every inch of the prison region. The hidden region was extremely difficult to locate, and Ning himself had only found it thanks to the guidance of Whitethaw... but his foes were Hegemons!

If an entire host of Hegemons chose to slowly and patiently search a region, they might one day be lucky enough to discover it. Once they did, they’d be able to take over that hidden region, at which point Ning would no longer be able to control the formation-diagram!

The chances of this happening were quite low, but Ning didn’t dare to take the risk.

“I need them to know that I’m in the flaming passageways. I need to focus their attentions on me. That way, they won’t search the prison region. Once a few more Hegemons and Emperors arrive, it’ll be time for me to make my move.” Ning was more than patient.

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Book 37: Flamewing God Chapter 15: The Second Batch

Within the realmship, located inside one of the flaming passageways inside the Jedefire Realm. Ji Ning was seated inside the realmship, drinking some wine. The fragrance of the wine filled the entire vessel, while the Protector stood solemnly by his side.

“Whitethaw, sit down and have some wine?” Ning said with a relaxed smile.

“I’m a golem. I don’t need to drink wine,” Whitethaw said flatly.

Ning shook his head. "That's where you are wrong. I don't 'need' to drink wine either, but I still 'like' to drink wine. We still need to have hobbies, you know. Come, come! I have plenty of precious wine stored up. Have a taste of all of them."

"No need." Whitethaw continued to stand there by himself.

"I order you to sit down." Ning frowned.

"Yes, Master." Whitethaw sat down obediently.

"Drink." Ning pointed at the wine goblet in front of him.

Whitethaw picked up the goblet and dutifully drank the wine, then frowned and said in a low voice, "I don't like it. I tried it back when I followed my previous master, 'Daoist Bluestone'. I didn't like it then, I don't like it now."

"Eh?!" Ning was truly surprised. He waved his hand, causing a hundred different wine goblets to appear before him as well as more than a hundred gourds of wine. Wine flew out from each gourd, filling each one of the goblets.

"Try them all. I refuse to believe this. Your body should've been constructed perfectly, including your senses. How could you have no taste for wine whatsoever? I wager Daoist Bluestone just didn't let you try enough types, which is why you didn't run into anything you like," Ning said. "Drink them all up, one cup at a time."

Whitethaw dutifully picked up one goblet after another, draining them in succession. A look of bewildered resignation was on his straightforward face. Why was this master of his forcing him to drink wine?

"All done." Whitethaw quickly finished all of the wine. He remained quite calm.

"Again." Ning refused to believe this. Cultivators drank wine when they had nothing better to do, and so Ning had plenty of wine on him at all times. He had acquired large reserves and stockpiles from the Daolords and Eternal Emperors he had defeated as well.

Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. Ning continued to pour, while Whitethaw continued to drink. After drinking for over two hours, Whitethaw suddenly shivered when he took a sip of wine and said, "Master, this one is good! I like this one!"

"Oh?" Ning was surprised. He waved his finger, causing some liquid to fly out of a gourd of wine off in the distance and into Ning's mouth. A pungent, sour, acidic taste instantly overfilled his mouth, followed by an absolutely foul aftertaste. It was so rancid that Ning couldn't help but twitch, and he immediately shut his mouth and turned to stare at Whitethaw: "This one? You like this one?!"

Ning liked all types of wine. Some wine was lightly flavored but had lasting aftertastes, others had flavors that permeated the entire body. He also enjoyed wine that would plunge his body and soul into a cool state of refreshedness... but he absolutely hated sour, acidic, and incredibly pungent wine like this. Even Ning himself wasn't sure where he had found this wine; today was the first time for him to even bring it out of storage.

"That's absolutely disgusting." Ning shook his head.

"It's good!" Whitethaw stared at Ning, wide-eyed.

"...Fine. The Chaosverse truly is filled with all sorts of marvels, including golems who like to drink wine like this. And who would even create this type of wine?! Ah, forget it. Come, let's drink together!" Ning laughed. He finally had someone to drink with him now. Life had been quite boring recently. Hide-and-seek with these Hegemons and Emperors was extremely boring. It was too simple, given that his divine power clone was in perpetual control of the flaming passageways.

"Master, do you have the feeling that something seems off?" Whitethaw quickly began to grow more loquacious as the happy feeling from the wine flooded his body.

"Something seems off?" Ning was startled. "What do you mean?"

"The Hegemons in the flaming passageways here in the Jedefire Realm aren't working as hard as in the past in trying to hunt you down," Whitethaw said.

Ning laughed. "Of course. It has been eighty thousand years! By now, they've realized that catching me will be virtually impossible. There's no need for to chase as frantically as they would've in the past."

"But they haven't exactly relaxed either. They've started to set up a few small traps in the various passageways, such as masking formations that hide some of the terrifying mechanisms inherent within the passageways. They've actually put down a few special-purpose formations to deal with me." Ning shook his head. "They don't realize that all of their movements are under my observation and control."

"Master, there are already eight Hegemons and ten other Emperors present. In the end, how many of them will have arrived in total for the sake of the realmship?" Whitethaw said, worried.

Ning nodded slowly. He felt a sense of pressure as well. 80,000 years... Hegemon Wuye and Hegemon Fogsun were both controlling realmships and thus both had delivered a first batch of Hegemons and Emperors to the Flamedragon Realmverse during this period of time. Hegemon Wuye's first batch had included five Hegemons and four Emperors, while Hegemon Fogsun's first batch included three Hegemons and six Emperors.

"Based on my calculations, the second batches should arrive soon," Ning said seriously. "I hope they will separately enter the flaming passageways as well. If they do so, I'll have a chance to stop them. My fear is that they will join forces and advance as one unit."

Hegemons had many and varied techniques. If four or five of them worked together, even if Ning unleashed the full power of the mechanisms in the flaming passageways he still wouldn't necessarily be able to stop all five of them!

After all, there were Hegemons who were extremely skilled in defense, so much so that they were a match for Otherverse Lords in this regard! Others specialized in speed, while still others specialized in karma. When they pooled their talents together, they would become extremely difficult to deal with.

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120,000 years after the public revealing of the existence of the realmship. Hegemon Wuye was sending the second batch of Hegemons and Emperors over on this date.

They had arrived next to a blazing star that looked like a fiery ball of heat. A spatial tear appeared in the void next to the star, followed by a realmship blinking through and coming to a halt next to it.

“Gentlemen, we have arrived. Based on our latest information, Daolord Darknorth has remained in hiding within the Jedefire Realm this entire time, while none of the Hegemons or Emperors who have already reached the Jedefire Realm have been able to take the realmship from him. You all still stand a very good chance,” Hegemon Wuye said with a laugh.

“Regardless of who ends up with the realmship, you’ve already made a fortune in treasure from this escapade, brother Wuye,” one of the eight figures said upon flying out of the realmship.

“I borrowed this realmship from my master. I’m going to give most of the treasure to him!” Hegemon Wuye glared at him. “Not gonna waste words with you. I need to go pick up the final battle. I have a long road ahead of me.” As he spoke, he took control of the realmship and flew off into the distance.

Eight figures remained there within the void, their auras mighty. One of them, a devilishly handsome man who radiated an aura of cold insidiousness, let out a cold snort: “Everyone, you can go to the Jedefire Realm. I’ll be there shortly.” As he spoke, he took a step forwards and teleported through the air, vanishing.

“Where is Hegemon Winterflame going off to?”

“Where do you think? Given the type of person he is, he’s probably off to capture any and all of Daolord Darknorth’s friends and family.” The speaker was a bearded man dressed in simple gray robes who carried eight strange azure planks of wood on his back.

“Winterfire always does stupid shit like this.”

“Brother Blackwood, don’t worry about him. I’ll tear through spacetime and lead the way.” Of the group of eight who had just arrived, four were Hegemons, with Winterflame one of them. In truth, his status was the highest of the eight.

“Let’s go.” Hegemon Blackwood, who was the bearded man with those eight pieces of azure wooden planks on his back, nodded.

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Whoosh. Tearing through spacetime at maximum speed, Hegemon Winterflame quickly arrived outside the Vastheaven Everworld. “Here we are.” Hegemon Winterflame stood there within the misty skies, staring at the distant Vastheaven Palace.

Hegemon Winterflame was dressed in white robes that glowed with blurry white light. His features were handsome to the point of appearing devilish, while his skin was so translucent and fine that one could almost see his blood vessels and veins. His eyes emanated an aura of terrifying coldness.

“Based on the intelligence records I acquired, Archon Silksnow probably chased someone called ‘Ninedust’ into the Jedefire Realm, then intentionally released word of this. Daolord Darknorth really did choose to ignore the danger and charge straight into the Jedefire Realm. He probably fought against Archon Silksnow inside, with Archon Silksnow eventually being defeated and forced to commit suicide.”

Hegemon Winterflame nodded slowly. "From this, we can tell that Daolord Darknorth is the sort of person who cares immensely about personal relationships."

"He knew it was a trap, but for his friend's sake he was still willing to risk his life and enter the Jafefire Realm... hmph. Headstrong, sentimental fools like him are the easiest to deal with." Hegemon Winterflame's eyes glowed with cold light. "The Ninedust Sectlord has probably already been rescued from the Jafefire Realm by Darknorth... and the other friends Darknorth care about all probably reside in his clan, Vastheaven Palace!"

Hegemon Winterflame stared at the distant Vastheaven Palace: "All I need to do is to abduct everyone in Vastheaven Palace. The World-level cultivators, the Daolords, the Emperors... I'll abduct them all and force Daolord Darknorth to give me the realmship in exchange for them. Given his personality, there's a chance he'll accept."

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Book 37: Flamewing God Chapter 16: First Meeting with Winterflame

"Those other Hegemons and Emperors arrived much earlier than I did, but they accomplished nothing at all. Those fools... all they know is to try their luck in the Jafefire Realm. I really wonder if they have any brains at all." Hegemon Winterfire shook his head and smirked.

It was normal for Hegemons to get involved in a competition for a realmship, much like how Daolords would plunder a World-level cultivators who somehow managed to acquire the fruits of Crimsonwave Temple. Amongst cultivators, if you weren't strong enough then you didn't deserve to hold good enough treasures.

But... Hegemons stood at the very apex of power in any major organization! They generally had their own sense of pride and cared tremendously about face. Realmships were incredibly valuable, and for them to attack with a Daolord for the sake of winning a realmship was nothing. But to go capture that Daolord's friends and then use them to coerce him? This was absolutely shameful! Figures as exalted as Hegemons generally did not have the face to do something like this.

Slightly less elevated figures such as Archon Silksnow might well decide to carry out such shameless acts, but it was clear from Ning's power that there was no chance for non-Hegemonic Emperors to do anything to Vastheaven Palace! In addition, even if they did make the attempt they wouldn't necessarily succeed; could it be that Daolord Darknorth wouldn't make any arrangements of his own?

This sort of behavior was both shameful as well as unlikely to succeed, which was why the Hegemons chose to head to Jafefire Realm rather than Vastheaven Palace. Only truly shameless and insidious figures like Hegemon Winterflame would choose such a course of action.

Hegemons generally were extremely prideful figures who cared tremendously about face, but every so often there would be an exception! Hegemon Winterflame was one such exception.

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Within Vastheaven Palace. The brothers of Vastheaven Palace were all gathered together, drinking and eating and discussing the Dao with each other. Ning's avatar, Ninedust's avatar, and Emperor Solesky all sat off to one side.

Boom! Suddenly, a terrifying level of power descended upon the palace. Ning's avatar raised its head, only to see a snow-white silver-scaled claw descend upon them from the skies, emanating an aura of endless, invisible frost. Even spacetime had been completely frozen by the pressure, and a bone-piercing chill instantly pervaded the entire palace. This caused Ning's face to turn completely pale.

"Someone came!" Ning shouted mentally, "Enter my estate-world for now." As he spoke, he waved his hand. Emperor Solesky, Ninedust's avatar, Daolord Battlemaster... none of them fought back at all, allowing Ning to draw them into his estate-world. Ning had already made preparations for this eventuality, after all.

He had attracted attention from fifteen realmverses and even some itinerant wandering Hegemons; he naturally had to make complete preparations for both Vastheaven Palace and the Three Realms. Ning had actually gone so far as to create a second avatar!

It must be remembered that Ning's true body and his Primaltwin were each capable of maintaining a 'peak' avatar! Thus, he chose to create a brand new avatar to stand guard over the Three Realms as well.

Boom! The countless runes and barriers covering Vastheaven Palace began to crack and shatter as the enormous silvery-white scaled claws rent through the skies. Ning's avatar flickered slightly as he used his Shadowless evasion-art to arrive in the air outside.

Cold energy billowed everywhere, forcing Ning to reveal himself despite his Shadowless evasion-art. Ning stood there in the air, gazing at the devilishly handsome man in the distance with alabaster skin who radiated an aura of coldness.

"So it is Hegemon Winterflame," Ning said. "Hegemon Winterflame, why have you come to Vastheaven Palace?"

"Hmph." Hegemon Winterflame's eyes were filled with cold malice. "Daolord Darknorth? So you've taken away all your friends and put them into your estate-world... do you really think there is nothing I can do to you now? And I think you should know exactly why I am here."

Hegemon Winterflame let out a cold snort: "Hand over the realmship immediately and I won't cause any trouble for you. Otherwise, your comrades are all dead."

"The realmship is with my true body, which is at the Jedefire Realm." Ning shook his head. "I merely have an avatar here. How am I supposed to hand over the realmship?"

"Simple. Swear a lifeblood oath to hand it over to me and I'll immediately leave." Hegemon Winterflame stared at Ning.

Ning raised his head slightly, glancing off into the distance towards some spacetime ripples which had just appeared, then let out a cold smile. No longer interested in wasting time on words, he said, "Keep dreaming."

"Hm?" Hegemon Winterflame glanced backwards as well, only to see that spacetime was beginning to split apart.

“Reinforcements? No reinforcements will make it in time,” Hegemon Winterflame roared angrily. Whoosh! He manifested a ball of white fire out of nowhere, sending it sweeping through the skies. In front of the ball of white fire were a series of eight silver-scaled claws, each of which held some of the white fire as they tore towards Ning.

The surrounding world had been completely sealed and locked away, while the aura of frigidity emanating from the white fire caused even Ning’s avatar to feel amazed.

Boom! Faced with those eight silver-scaled claws and the white fire they brought, Ning felt a sense of tremendous danger. The white fire in particular was something unique to Hegemon Winterflame alone; it was known as the ‘winterflame’.

Hegemon Winterflame had been born an Aberrant special lifeform. His true form was that of a sentient ball of fire that had slowly cultivated and increased in power until it finally became a Hegemon. The ‘winterflame’ technique was unique to him, and it could be described as an unspeakably cold ball of fire. Once it touched anyone weaker than it, it would almost instantly reduce its target to ash.

“Halt!” a low, fierce growl rang out as a titanic head appeared in the distant spacetime rift. It was Hegemon Brightshore. By now, Ning was on extremely good terms with Hegemon Brightshore. He was worried about Vastheaven Palace’s safety and thus had mentioned this matter to Hegemon Brightshore.

In the past, Hegemon Brightshore hadn’t really cared if Ning died or not, but ever since Ning had revealed his true power Hegemon Brightshore had begun to view Ning as he would his own right arm.

Whoosh. The silver-scaled claws and the flames tore through everything they touched. Ning’s avatar was almost indestructibly tough, comparable to a top-grade Eternal treasure, but it was still completely torn asunder. This was the power of a Hegemon.

“You want to stop me?” A face appeared within the midair ball of flames, a cold smile on its features. “Even though Hegemon Brightshore has arrived, he was just a step too slow. I have more than enough time to kill you and then seize all of your friends in Vastheaven Palace.”

He was a Hegemon, after all; although he was weaker than Hegemon Brightshore, he didn’t fear the man.

Boom! By now, Hegemon Brightshore’s massive bulk had exited the rift. He had six curved horns on his head, and his vast body seemed to be formed from incredibly thick layers of twisted stones. He reached out with one of his pillar-shaped arms, striking out towards Hegemon Winterflame.

Hegemon Winterflame’s eight silver-scaled claws hurriedly moved back to block the attack. An enormous explosion rang out as a shockwave of indescribable power spread out more than ten billion kilometers... but outside the ten billion kilometer range, there was no damage caused whatsoever. Clearly, Hegemon Brightshore wanted to protect the mortal lifeforms here.

“Eh?” The eight silver-scaled claws were destroyed, melting back into that pool of white fire which then resolved into a humanoid shape.

“What’s going on? I wasn’t able to grab anything?” Hegemon Winterflame had a stunned look on his face. He felt certain that he had destroyed Ning’s avatar. He wanted to seize Ning’s storage treasures, but hadn’t been able to find anything at all.

“Looking for me?” Far off in the distance, light flowed together to form a humanoid figure. It was Ji Ning.

“An invulnerable form?” Hegemon Winterflame’s face tightened. “You, a cultivator of the Dao of the Sword, have mastered an invulnerable form?” He had sought out much information regarding Ning and felt certain that Ning didn’t have an invulnerable form, which was why he was so confident in his chances.

Ning couldn’t help but sigh. His true body was so powerful that not even Hegemons would necessarily be able to force him to use his invulnerable form. His avatar, however, had been forced to use it almost immediately. This was his very first time exposing it in combat!

“Not bad, Darknorth.” The towering Hegemon Brightshore reverted to human form as well, and the snow-robed old man smiled as he looked at Ning. Hegemon Brightshore really was liking Ning more and more. Now that Ning had an invulnerable form, killing him would be no easy feat at all. It was entirely possible that Ning would survive Jadedfire Realm after all.

But of course, Hegemon Brightshore had no idea that Ning had already taken partial control over the formation-diagram of the Jadedfire Realm.

“Hegemon Brightshore, thank goodness you made it in time,” Ning said.

“Hmph.” Hegemon Winterflame glanced coldly at Ning, then gave Hegemon Brightshore a look as well. “You might be able to hide for a time, but you won’t be able to hide forever. You won’t be able to dodge me within Jadedfire Realm.” Swoosh. Hegemon Winterflame turned and moved to depart.

“Indeed, Hegemon Winterflame. We’ll meet again in the Jadedfire Realm,” Ning called out to him.

“Hmph! Quite arrogant. Very well then, we’ll meet again in the Jadedfire Realm!” Hegemon Winterflame’s voice was filled with cold malice as he tore through spacetime and departed.

Ning silently watched as Hegemon Winterflame departed.

“Something wrong?” Hegemon Brightshore walked over.

“Since Hegemon Winterflame has appeared, that means the second batch of Hegemons and Emperors should have arrived,” Ning said softly. The first batch held eight Hegemons; how many would the second hold?

Given how many Hegemons were present... would he really be able to use the flaming passageways to stop them?

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 37: Flamewing God Chapter 17: Divining Danger

“More and more Hegemons are arriving from the other realmverses.” Hegemon Brightshore looked at Ji Ning. “Darknorth, have you come up with a plan to deal with them?”

“Yes.” Ning nodded.

“Let’s go, then. Accompany me back to the Brightshore Kingdom,” Hegemon Brightshore said. Ning didn’t decline. This time, Hegemon Winterflame attacked; next time, it might be an even more shameless Hegemon. In the end, his avatar was just much too weak. Without the Darknorth swords, his avatar was merely on par with Archon Silksnow. This was why he had been so easily forced to reveal his invulnerable form. A Hegemon who was willing to pay an extremely high price would be able to kill his avatar; to reside in the Brightshore Kingdom would be the safest decision.

Riiiiip. A spacetime tear appeared in the starry cosmos, followed by Hegemon Brightshore leading Ning into the tear and disappearing without a trace.

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The Terror Starsea. The Jedefire Realm.

Whoosh. Seven figures flew into the giant vortex of flames and entered the Jedefire Realm. These seven figures belonged to the seven Hegemons and Emperors who had accompanied Hegemon Winterflame on this journey to the Flamedragon Realmverse.

“Hegemon Blackwood, what should we do next? Should we enter separately?” a gaudily violet-robed man spoke out.

“Brother Blackwood?” the alien Hegemon, a large and muscular man, spoke out as well.

Only three of the seven were Hegemons. Clearly, they all cared quite a bit about Hegemon Blackwood’s views. This was because Hegemon Blackwood was a Hegemon who was extremely skilled in the divination arts of Numerancy! Although he was much weaker in Numerancy when compared to Emperor Waveshift, he had still reached a level where he could be considered number one in the Dao of Numerancy amongst those who still resided in the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance.

As for Emperor Waveshift himself, he had long ago disappeared to parts unknown. He was doted on and shown great favor by many Otherverse Lords and other major powers, all of whom treated him with tremendous friendliness.

Generally speaking, everyone wished to befriend a major power of the Dao of Numerancy. No one was willing to offend such a figure. If you wished to try and kill him, he’d be able to divine it and flee before you even arrived. Conversely, if you encountered certain dangers or troubles you might need him to assist you in a bit of Numerancy divination.

“Let me give it a try,” the bearded Hegemon Blackwood said, adjusting the eight azure wooden planks on his back. “However, as you all know this struggle over the realmship involves numerous Hegemons as well as Sithe relics; to apply Numerancy to it shall be extremely difficult. I tried on the way over but failed each time. Now that we’ve already entered the Jedefire Realm... perhaps I shall succeed.” The closer they were to ‘reality’, the easier Numerancy was to engage in.

The other six figures didn’t dare to intervene. They watched as Hegemon Blackwood stood there, eyes closed as the eight azure wooden planks flew out from behind his black and surrounded him. They levitated there, circling around him nonstop and circulating with azure light. Countless runes appeared on their surfaces as an invisible ripple of power spread out.

In the blink of an eye, a full hour had gone by.

“Eh?” Hegemon Blackwood frowned as he opened his eyes.

“Brother Blackwood?” the alien Hegemon immediately asked.

“How did it go?” the violet-robed Hegemon asked as well.

“Don’t be impatient,” Hegemon Blackwood said. “Follow me into one of those flaming passageways. Remember, we’re going to stand in front of the passageway. We’re not going to actually go inside.” As he spoke, he flew over towards a passageway. The other six figures hurriedly followed from behind. They soon reached the nearest passageway, where they all came to a halt.

“None of you are to disturb me,” Hegemon Blackwood instructed. He then sat down in the lotus position and began to calmly focus his entire mind on Numerancy. The eight pieces of azure wood continuously swiveled around him, sometimes slow and sometimes fast, carrying a strange cadence to them.

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As soon as Hegemon Blackwood and the others appeared, Ning was immediately made aware of it. He watched these Hegemons closely from afar.

“E? Not good. They are moving together. Wait, why are they pausing at the entrance without going any deeper inside?” Ning was puzzled. To merely be at the entranceway meant they could retreat whenever they chose; Ning’s control over the flaming passageways wouldn’t give him any power of them.

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Hegemon Blackwood spent a total of three years engaging in Numerancy. His face was rather ashen as he finally opened his eyes, an exhausted look in his gaze.

“Blackwood?” The other six looked at Hegemon Blackwood, with the violet-robed Hegemon calling out to him.

“The dangers of the Jedefire Realm primarily reside within the prison regions and the flaming passageways. So long as we avoid the prison region, we won’t be in any danger,” Hegemon Blackwood said. “Thus... the main things for us to be concerned about are the flaming passageways! After physically entering one of them, my divinations became a bit clearer than before. There are many invisible forces disrupting my Numerancy, and those disruptions are extremely strong.”

What Hegemon Blackwood didn’t know was that Ning trained in the Omega Sword Dao. Divining anything which was related to Ning in any way was guaranteed to be a ridiculously difficult task. Given how many Hegemons were involved as well as the Sithe ruins known as the ‘Jedefire Realm’, those who didn’t have nigh-perfect mastery over the Dao of Numerancy wouldn’t be able to see anything clearly at all.

“So what’s the conclusion?” the alien Hegemon immediately asked.

“This is going to be extremely dangerous,” Hegemon Blackwood said softly. “I feel as though we are heading into a world of mist. Right now, I can only come to one vague conclusion... only if we stay together will we have a chance at being safe. Once we separate... we could very well die.”

“What?!”

“Very well die?!”

“As terrifying as that?” the other six were all shocked. Based on what they knew of this place, the Jedefire Realm was once deadly but had now fallen into disrepair. It also had no one in control of it, which meant that it shouldn’t be nearly as dangerous as it once was. To Hegemons and extremely powerful Emperors, it shouldn’t post much of a threat.

“If we separate... we might be safe, but we might also die,” Hegemon Blackwood explained. “But if we stay together, there will be almost no danger at all. Go ahead and decide; should we move together or separately? If you agree to travel alongside me, I’ll accompany you inside as a group. Otherwise, I’ll wait for the next group of Hegemons and accompany them instead.”

“Together.”

“Together, of course.” the violet-robed Hegemon and the others all immediately spoke out in unison. With Emperor Waveshift permanently ‘missing’, Hegemon Blackwood was now the number one expert of the Dao of Numerancy in the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance. Moving alongside someone like him would be the safest choice.

“Should we wait for Hegemon Winterflame?” an Emperor spoke out.

“Why the hell should we?”

“Hmph, traveling alongside him is a disgrace.”

“Let’s go. Given the detour he took, he’ll be at least two centuries behind us,” Hegemon Blackwood said calmly. “I certainly don’t have the patience to wait for him.” Hegemon Blackwood was an extremely proud figure, far more prideful than even your average Hegemon. He had never held Hegemon Winterflame in any respect!

Since Hegemon Blackwood had spoken, no one else argued the matter. Whoosh. The seven Hegemons immediately joined forces to advance through the flaming passageways together, each using their own techniques to keep everyone safe. Spacetime techniques, special treasures, secret arts... they were put on full display as they advanced.

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“Eh? They actually have chosen to advance as a unit?” Previously, Ning had been relaxing with Whitethaw within a flaming passageway inside the Jedefire Realm, sipping some wine from inside his hidden realmship. Now, however, he could no longer relax.

“Hegemon Blackwood, eh? I didn’t expect this many major powers to get involved, or that one of them would be able to divine a correct path of action despite my Dao being that of the Omega Dao,” Ning mused. He was on good terms with Daolord Badlands and thus knew a bit about the Dao of Numerancy. The more variables that were involved, the more difficult the divination would become.

Ning trained in an Omega Dao; each time Daolord Badlands tried to engage in Numerancy divinations regarding Ning, he saw nothing but blank fogginess. It was extremely difficult.

If (for example) an Autarch was somehow involved in a matter, most likely not even Emperor Waveshift would be able to divine anything whatsoever.

“The Dao of Numerancy truly is incredible,” Ning sighed. If his foes had chosen to travel separately, they would be like meat for his butcher’s block. Now that they were moving together, there wasn’t much he could do to them.

“Since Hegemon Blackwood and the others have started to move, it’ll be time to draw in my web soon.” Ning then pondered for a moment, “Wait, not just yet. I’ll wait for Hegemon Winterflame to arrive as well.”

Hegemon Winterflame had sought to use Vastheaven Palace to threaten Ning; how could Ning let him off the hook?

Soon, after roughly 180 or so years, Hegemon Winterflame arrived at the Jedefire Realm. He randomly picked a flaming passageway, then entered it. As he did so, Ning finally put down his winecup and rose to his feet within his realmship.

“The Jedefire Realm’s flaming passageways now have a total of twelve Hegemons within them!” Ning was able to clearly track the actions and movements of all the Hegemons and Emperors. “Once I move against one of them, I’ll be exposed and the rest will be forewarned. Thus... I’ll probably only be able to actually capture one of them.”

“Which one should I choose?”

Ning suddenly grinned. “The strongest one, I suppose!”

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Book 37: Flamewing God Chapter 18: Captured

If he was going to rely on the flaming passageways and their traps to capture a Hegemon, he was going to capture the strongest one. Of the twelve Hegemons, the strongest had to be Hegemon Azurefiend!

“Damn that slippery Daolord Darknorth. He must have gained an extremely detailed intelligence report regarding the Jedefire Realm; otherwise, how could he have been able to throw me off with ease so many times in a row?” Hegemon Azurefiend sat there in the lotus position in the air, two rope-type treasures coiling around him. He just quietly sat there, his senses keenly attuned.

“However... sooner or later, he’ll make a mistake,” Hegemon Azurefiend with with a cold laugh. “The flaming passageways no longer have just the original traps in them, they also have the traps set up by the other Hegemons and Emperors. One instance of bad luck and he’ll hit one of them. My chance will come them.”

Hegemon Azurefiend was extremely patient. The fact that he was willing to spend such incredible amounts of time drifting between realmverses on his adventures was testament to his patience. Even if he had to spend a thousand chaos cycles here in the flaming passageways, he’d still be more than patient enough to do it.

“Eh?” Hegemon Azurefiend’s ears twitched slightly. He opened his eyes to stare towards the front, where he soon saw a realmship carefully advancing through the air.

“There it is. The realmship.” Hegemon Azurefiend was delighted. Swoosh! He immediately transformed into a streak of light that shot after Ning. He had spent more than a hundred thousand years in these

flaming passageways, and was already quite familiar with the ones in the area he was in. He knew where the 'native' traps were and where the traps placed by the Hegemons were, making it easy for him to chase after his foe.

"Hegemon Azurefiend!" The occupant of the realmship seemed to be badly shocked, immediately turning to flee in a different direction.

"You aren't going anywhere!" Hegemon Azurefiend roared as he chased from behind.

The realmship continued its panicked flight. Boom! Suddenly, with a loud explosion, a large amount of boulders appeared out of nowhere and furiously began to spin and smash against everything within the reach of the trap. Although the realmship was able to endure the attacks, it was still smashed flying backwards.

"A perfect opportunity." Hegemon Azurefiend was overjoyed upon seeing this and immediately chased over. However, the realmship quickly escaped from the confines of the trap and began to accelerate once more as it fled.

The realmship fled while the Hegemon pursued. Hegemon Azurefiend used his ropes to blaze a path for him, sweeping away all dangers. Although he furiously chased after Ning and felt quite familiar with his surroundings, he still remained quite cautious. This was one of the reasons why he was still alive despite having visited so many dangerous regions in so many realmverses.

"Perfect. Come closer." Ning smiled merrily as he glanced backwards from within his 'fleeing' realmship. He knew the exact locations of all passageways, all 'native' mechanisms, and all Hegemon-emplaced traps. When he occasionally activated one of them by mistake, it was nothing more than a pretense!

"We're arriving up ahead." Ning felt quite eager... because a terrifying trap was not too far away from him. This was one of the most deadly traps located within the endless flaming passageways. The Sithe had once used it to trap cultivators, then sent them off to the prison regions. The power of this trap was so great that it could capture a Hegemon with ease. Even two or three Hegemons in a group would be caught.

However, a larger group of Hegemons meant that one Hegemon might fall into the trap while the others were still far away, due to them moving at different speeds. That would be troublesome, which was why Ning chose a single target this time.

"Time to catch a Hegemon." Ning felt quite excited. In the past, he never would've dared to even imagine such a thing, but now that he was in control of the flaming passageways he did.

Swoosh! The realmship instantly flew past that dangerous mechanism, which remained unactivated. In recent years, Ning had maintained control over all of the most dangerous mechanisms and kept them in a deactivated state, not allowing them to unleash their full power. This was why the Hegemons hadn't encountered any serious problems thus far. The ones that they did see were the ones which had been revealed long ago by others.

"Don't even think of escaping. Your realmship is mine!" Hegemon Azurefiend furiously chased from behind, attempting to use his ropes to coil around the realmship from afar. Alas, Daolord Darknorth was simply too fast in escaping.

“And here we are. Right there.” Surrounding by the countless illusions of flaming passageways, Ning’s divine power clone had been watching this entire time from above the formation-diagram altar. It had watched as two specks of light had progressed through the passageway, the first being the realmship while the second being Hegemon Azurefiend.

“Activate!” Ning’s divine power clone instantly activated the terrifying mechanism via the formation-diagram, causing the power that had been hidden for all these years to suddenly explode forth with terrifying might.

Whoosh! Swish! Hegemon Azurefiend had been chasing after Ning at high speed, and he slammed right into the area of the mechanism.

Boom! A strange ripple of dimensional power suddenly appeared. Eight different places in that flaming passageway began to glow with light which came to form a vast, illusory cage in midair. The void cage completely trapped the charging Hegemon Azurefiend, who continued to fly forwards only to ram straight into the ‘membrane’ of the cage.

BOOM! Hegemon Azurefiend was sent staggering several steps backwards.

“Eh? What’s going on?” Hegemon Azurefiend suddenly turned pale, a look of shock and horror appearing on his face as he scanned his surroundings. He could clearly sense that he had been trapped within a void cage and see the continuously changing and transforming membranes around him.

“Break!” Hegemon Azurefiend reached out with his right hand, transforming it into a terrifyingly destructive claw that rent towards the void membrane. The void membrane made no sound at all. It simply flexed slightly like a bubble, easily deflecting his power without suffering any damage whatsoever.

Hegemon Azurefiend’s heart turned ice-cold. He had visited many places and seen many things, and so he instantly realized that even if he was ten times more powerful than he was right now, he still probably wouldn’t be able to defeat this void cage.

“How could there be a void cage here? This is impossible. I’ve traversed this passageway over ten times, and I’ve scouted out this place with my ropes right after the realmship flew past it. Neither the realmship nor my ropes activated the trap. Why did it activate as soon as I walked past it?” Hegemon Azurefiend could hardly believe it. “And I didn’t encounter it in the past either. Why did such a terrifying mechanism suddenly activate without any warning?”

It had been over a hundred thousand years. None of the Hegemons or Emperors had run into any trouble upon entering this place! If there were any particularly deadly traps here, then logically speaking some of the other Hegemons and Emperors should’ve been trapped long ago. However, there had been no word from anyone else in the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance, which meant that the other Emperors were all fine.

“Why has it suddenly activated now when it wasn’t activated previously? Is there someone in control of them now?” Hegemon Azurefiend could think of no other possibilities.

Whoosh. The 'fleeing' realmship suddenly turned and flew back, coming to a halt outside the void cage. Two figures emerged from the realmship. One was a white-robed youth with a black sword sheath on his back, while the other was a furry, white-furred Sithe Protector.

"Daolord Darknorth." Hegemon Azurefiend stared at the white-robed youth.

"Hegemon Azurefiend. This should be our first time actually meeting face-to-face." Ning smiled.

"What, have you come to gloat now that I've fallen into this trap?" Hegemon Azurefiend said coldly.

Ning shook his head slowly. "No. I've come to rescue you."

"Rescue me?" Hegemon Azurefiend's face tightened.

"Right. I'd like to ask you a question. Would you like to live, or would you like to die?" Ning smiled as he looked at Hegemon Azurefiend.

These words stnnned Hegemon Azurefiend. He immediately called out in shock, "Y-you?! It was you?! The person controlling the mechanisms is you? I thought that some other Hegemon or major power was behind this trap. I didn't expect it to be you, you puny little Daolord."

As soon as he had fallen for the trap, he had calculated that it was most likely for someone to have actively unleashed this mechanism. Otherwise, why would it have remained dormant for so long, ignoring both his ropes and the realmship but activating when he flew past? It had to be a formation that could be activated or deactivated as needed, which meant there had to be someone controlling it.

"Hmph. What price must I pay to leave this place?" Hegemon Azurefiend stared at Ning, his eyes flickering with cold light. His voice, however, remained quite calm.

"Simple. Be my retainer. I won't ask for too long; 108,000 chaos cycles will do," Ning said. "To a Hegemon like yourself, spending 108,000 chaos cycles wandering the outside world is nothing."

"I... a Hegemon... serve you, a Daolord, as a retainer?" A furious look appeared in Hegemon Azurefiend's eyes as he growled, "Don't you think you are overestimating yourself a bit much?"

"I am indeed nothing more than a mere Daolord, but your fate, exalted Hegemon, is now under my control." Ning stared intently at Hegemon Azurefiend.