

Desolate 1351

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 40: The Five Autarchs Chapter 2: Crazy

The realmship continued to fly towards the prison. Ji Ning could see that within the fiery field of ten billion kilometers, there were actually a series of other figures who were either seated in the lotus position or located within small buildings. These cultivators were scattered in the region around the Sithe Exalt, with even the closest maintaining a minimum distance of ten million kilometers.

“Daolord Darknorth,” Patriarch Treewind immediately explained, “The Earthfire Continent is extremely famous. Quite a few cultivators come here to visit, and every so often the imprisoned Sithe Exalt will provide them with some guidance.”

“Guidance?” Ning was surprised. “The Sithe are our mortal enemies. Why would it be so kind-hearted as to provide us with some guidance.”

“Can it perhaps be a trick?” Nuwa guessed.

Imperator Jade Rainbow laughed. “The Sithe Exalt has been imprisoned here for countless years. It is possible that to him, the occasional interaction with cultivators is a form of temporary release. How can there be any ‘tricks’ when pointing out the flaws in their Daos? If they were wrong in their Dao, they were wrong. Quite a few cultivators have already perfected their Daos thanks to this Exalt’s guidance.”

“Oh?” This was the first time that Ning, Su Youji, Nuwa, and many of the others within the realmship had heard such a thing. All of them felt that this really didn’t make much sense.

“Master,” Hegemon Azurefiend said, “There are other cultivators here. I’m afraid that they’ll immediately recognize you once you appear, and then word will probably spread out quite quickly. Is it possible that the Blazesun Ruler would head over here?”

Ning said, “Don’t worry; I wager that the Blazesun Ruler wouldn’t dare to come here on his own! It would take him time to summon four or five of the other Domain Rulers and then make it all the way over to the Earthfire Continent. All I wish to do is visit the Sithe Exalt; half a day will be more than enough! By the time the Blazesun Ruler arrives, we’ll have left long ago.”

Whoosh. Watched by many cultivators, the realmship finally descended upon this great continent. This entire region was covered by fiery light, but the pressure wasn’t all that great; the centermost region where the Sithe Exalt resided suffered the vast majority of the pressure.

“Which major power has just arrived?”

“He actually descended upon the Earthfire Continent via realmship. It seems an extraordinary figure has just appeared in our midst.” The scattered cultivators all stared towards the descending realmship. They watched as a large number of people flew out from within the realmship, with the leader being a white-robed youth who bore a black sheath on his back. Next to him stood the dazzlingly beautiful Su Youji as well as the honest-looking Protector Whitethaw. Nuwa, Hegemon Azurefiend, Hegemon Goodsong, the Flamewing God, Patriarch Treewind, Imperator Jade Rainbow, and the others all appeared next to them as well.

“That’s Patriarch Treewind!”

“It’s actually Patriarch Treewind and Emperor Jade Rainbow? I heard that they left this place alongside Daolord Darknorth. I even heard that the Blazesun Ruler had gone to Houwu City to hunt them down.”

“That white-robed Daolord at their head... his truesoul is slowly crumbling away. That should be the legendary Daolord Darknorth, right?”

“A white-robed youth who bears a black sheath on his back and who failed the Daomerge... Hegemon Goodsong is by his side, as is a dazzlingly beautiful red-robed woman... yes, that has to be Daolord Darknorth.”

“That almost certainly has to be Daolord Darknorth.”

The formerly-calm cultivators suddenly all grew excited. A violet-robed elder who was an old friend of Patriarch Treewind’s actually reached out to him mentally: “Brother Treewind, is that the legendary Daolord Darknorth?”

“It is indeed,” Patriarch Treewind said proudly.

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“Respectful greetings to you, Daolord Darknorth,” the violet-robed elder hurriedly rose to his feet and bowed as he said these words.

The other Hegemons and Emperors present emerged as well and all bowed respectfully towards Ning: “Respectful greetings to you, Daolord Darknorth.”

Although Ning wasn’t the type to stand on formal ceremony, all of the cultivators he had encountered recently had spoken to him in this very respectful manner, and so Ning no longer tried to dissuade them. In fact, if he was excessively courteous to them, many of them would actually begin to feel nervous!

“Carry on, gentlemen. I’ve merely come to take a look at the Sithe Exalt,” Ning said.

“Understood,” the cultivators all assented.

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The cultivators had all come out to greet Ning respectfully. Some of the other creatures residing here quickly noticed this behavior. This was an important place where the Sithe Exalt was imprisoned, after all; the Blazesun Ruler had naturally arranged for some of his subordinates to be permanently stationed here and watch over it.

“Daolord Darknorth?” Multiple creatures emerged. Some popped their heads up from beneath the earth while some manifested out of bonfires. All of them stared at the distant white-robed youth in astonishment.

“The Domain Ruler has been searching for Daolord Darknorth this entire time... who would’ve thought that he’d suddenly appear in the Earthfire Continent?”

“Notify the Domain Ruler right away.”

“Hurry up and notify the Domain Ruler!” None of the creatures dared to approach Ning, but since they were responsible for keeping a watch over the trapped Sithe Exalt, they naturally had ways to send information up the chain of command. They all sent word in almost the same instant.

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As Ning arrived, he didn't just attract interest from the cultivators and the other creatures; he also attracted the attention of the Sithe Exalt.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Explosions continued to blast away at his body. All of the power of the fiery light was concentrated here and continuously hammered away at him. These attacks all seemed quite ferocious, but in truth they were all quite different.

Some were like countless needles that stabbed into his body, piercing into his very soul and truesoul. They caused truly soul-tearing agony! Others were like knives that continuously cut away at his skin; they didn't cause any real injuries at all, but the pain was excruciating! Still others carried illusory effects. In short, all of these attacks served to torment it to the extreme! Although the Sithe Exalt was dressed in gray armor, the exposed parts of his arm, neck, and face were all covered by strange formation-diagrams.

Beneath his feet, there was an enormous formation-diagram that was ten thousand kilometers in size which was identical to the ones covering him. The formation-diagram was imprinted on every part of his body, ensuring that he was perpetually trapped, suppressed, and tormented.

“Ahhhh!” He let out a screeching roar. He had three curved horns growing out of his head, and a pair of azure eyes that stared intently at the distant Ning. “DIE! EVERYONE SHOULD DIE!” He continuously raved, repeating these words over and over again.

He had been trapped here for far too long. He had been imprisoned here since their defeat in the Dawn War. The Autarchs had used their full power to set up this sealing formation-diagram, then established the most tortuous methods available to them to force him to suffer perpetual torment. The suppressive effects of the formation-diagram made it impossible for him to even commit suicide! There was nothing save endless torture, unless he was willing to lower his head and choose a humiliating path...

“Everyone should die...” he mumbled. He had repeated these words far, far too many times.

“All of them are craven and afraid to move too close to me.” He stared off into the distance, his azure eyes filled with malice. He truly did wish to squish these bugs and kill them all! Alas, the little bugs were all quite cautious. After having been sealed away, his attack distance had become limited to a mere million kilometers. After he had successfully killed a few of those ants, the rest had grown cautious and stayed at least ten million kilometers away from him.

“Respectful greetings to you, Daolord Darknorth!” The distant cultivators all bowed towards Ning with tremendous respect.

“Eh?” The Exalt's attention was drawn to this. It had been a long, long time since he had seen these cultivators treated someone else so respectfully; the last time had been when the Blazesun Ruler had come to this place. Yes, the Autarchs also received this sort of reception when they came, but there was

no way any other cultivators would. This was because the cultivators here consisted of Hegemons and Otherverse Lords; it was extremely hard for someone else to convince them to display such respect!

“Daolord Darknorth? Huh? He’s a Daolord of their civilization?” He was puzzled. “Daolords should be weaker than Emperors in their system, right? Why are so many of them being so respectful?”

Although word that Ning had mastered the Eternal Omega Sword Dao had spread like wildfire across the cultivator civilizations, the imprisoned Sithe Exalt had not been informed.

“That feeling he gives me... wait. Something’s wrong. That’s no ordinary Daolord.” He focused his gaze on Ning. “And... he’s failed his Daomerge? In their civilization, the Daolords who fail the Daomerge shall face certain death. This Daolord has failed the Daomerge, but they are all so respectful to him... and he gives me a strange feeling, almost as though he is a match for me...”

Suddenly, his eyes widened as an enormous suspicion swept through his heart like a tidal wave. “Can it... is he... yes. There’s no mistaking it. That’s the only possibility!”

“A Daolord who can inspire such respect from even Otherverse Lords and who is a match for even myself... there’s only one possibility!” His azure eyes suddenly blazed with incredible luminosity. “Can it be that their civilization has finally given birth to someone who is in control of an Eternal Omega Dao? Thankfully, he’s a Daolord who has failed the Daomerge. He doesn’t have much time left; otherwise, he’d be a major problem.”

“A Daolord who has mastered an Eternal Omega Dao, eh?” The Sithe Exalt quickly came to this conclusion solely based off the scene appearing before him. It was an easy guess to make. The only way a Daolord who failed the Daomerge could be so powerful as to eclipse even Otherverse Lords was if that Daolord was in control of an Eternal Omega Dao. There were no other possibilities!

“Haha... if they’ve given birth to one, they’ll probably give birth to a second, a third, a fourth. Haha... are we finally going to lose? I hope we do. Let’s lose and end it all! Everyone should die. Everyone should die!” he mumbled, his eyes turning even more crazed than before.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 40: The Five Autarchs Chapter 3: Exalt Dauber

“The rest of you can stay here. No need to get too close to him,” Ji Ning said. “I’ll go and chat with the Sithe Exalt.”

“Be careful, Daolord,” Patriarch Treewind said hurriedly. “The Sithe Exalt can attack at any moment. Even though he has been imprisoned, he can launch attacks out to a range of one million kilometers.”

The nearby Emperor Jade Rainbow said, “Treewind, not even the Blazesun Ruler is close to being a match for the Daolord, much less this imprisoned Sithe Exalt. However... Daolord, Treewind speaks the truth. It wouldn’t be worth it if you ended up in a fight against this Exalt.”

“Haha, thank you for your advice.” Ning smiled and nodded, then began to walk towards the centermost region of this field of flaming light.

Nuwa, Su Youji, and Azurefiend all watched as he left. Flamewing hesitated for a bit, in the end deciding not to follow. In its heart, it couldn't help but feel a bit of aversion towards Sithe Exalts.

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This field of flaming light had accumulated all of the fire elemental energy of the surrounding area, concentrating it into a series of terrifying attacks at the center.

"Every single one of these strikes surpasses the maximum power of the Blazesun Ruler... but the Sithe Exalt is able to endure them with ease. No matter how I inspect him, I keep on having the feeling that he should be stronger than the Blazesun Ruler... but everyone in the outside world agrees that the Blazesun Ruler is on par with Sithe Exalts in power." Ning stared at the Exalt, his heart filled with suspicions. Suddenly, his gaze focused upon the incredibly complicated formation-diagram that covered the area of ten thousand kilometers around the seated Sithe Exalt. That formation-diagram was the center and core of this entire field of flaming light!

The exposed parts of the Sithe Exalt's skin were also covered by identical imprints of that formation-diagram.

"Now THAT is a nasty trick!" Ning sucked in a cold breath. "The person who set up this formation-diagram vastly surpasses me in the Dao of Formation." Ning continued to stare. "And... this formation-diagram includes the Dao of Fire, the Dao of Illusions, the Dao of Darkness, and many other instruments of torture. Many are meant to attack the soul and truesoul. In all the Chaosverse, only the Autarchs could possibly set up a formation-diagram which contains so many Daos."

Autarchs were at the Daobirth level, where 'one Dao births many Daos'. Autarch Bolin had reached Autarchy via the Dao of the Claw, and he had also reached Hegemony in all of the other Daos! Formations, illusions... even Daos he had never trained in; he had reached Hegemony in all of them upon gaining Autarchy! Thus, Autarchs were naturally able to employ many different Daos in setting up formation-diagrams. The person who had set up this formation had mixed the various Daos together perfectly. It seemed as though the Autarchs weren't just the strongest cultivators in the Chaosverse, they were also the most terrifying torturers.

"How much hatred must the Autarchs hold towards them? Why is it that they continue to torment the Sithe Exalts, even after the war has come to an end?" Ning mused to himself, "And this punishment is eternal and unending... wouldn't just killing them be easier? Why spend so much time and effort in creating these formation-diagrams?"

"Or perhaps... the Autarchs have plans of their own?" Ning mused. As he pondered this question, he continued to draw closer to the Exalt. Eight million kilometers. Five million kilometers. Three million kilometers. Two million kilometers. One million kilometers...

Ning didn't hesitate at all as he advanced. Although he was now within the range of the Sithe Exalt's attacks, he didn't worry at all. Even though he had the feeling that the Sithe Exalt was more powerful than the Blazesun Ruler, Ning had outstripped the Blazesun Ruler in both power and insight into the Dao. He was probably at the Autarch level of power, and if it wasn't for the fact that his truesoul was continuously crumbling, Ning would've dared to actually take an Autarch on in a sparring match. How could he possibly fear an imprisoned Sithe Exalt?

“Eh?” The Sithe Exalt, seated in the lotus position with his head lowered, finally let out a little snort. The gray armor covering his body seemed rather rusted and old. He raised his head up, the curved horns on his head looking wicked sharp as he glared intently at Ning. A rumbling sound rang out from his throat: “You actually dare to approach me?”

“Why wouldn’t I dare?” Ning continued to walk towards him, only halting when he was roughly a hundred thousand kilometers away. At this distance, the two were able to clearly see each other’s features.

“Hah! You truly are someone who has mastered an Eternal Omega Dao. Haha... I, Dauber, feel admiration towards very few members of your cultivator civilizations. You’ve just joined that list.” The Sithe Exalt stared intently at Ning, his features occasionally twitching from pain but his voice quite calm and steady. “A pity that you failed the Daomerge. Death will be coming for you soon. A true pity. You are the first member of your civilization to master an Eternal Omega Dao, but you are about to die soon.”

“Where there is life, there is death.” Ning smiled. “There’s no reason to fear death, and death is far better than what awaits you. You literally are living a life worse than death.”

“Damn you.” The Sithe Exalt let out a low growl, his eyes flickering with savage light. “Kill me, Daolord. Kill me. I know you have the power to kill me.”

“The Autarchs must have imprisoned you for a reason. Why should I interfere and cause trouble?” Ning shook his head. “Besides... the Sithe are the mortal enemies of us cultivators. I am a Daolord who has failed the Daomerge; if I was to kill you, I’d have to use up my own lifespan. There is no relationship between the two of us which would impel me to make such a sacrifice.”

The Sithe Exalt was intrigued. It seemed as though this terrifying Daolord didn’t know why he had been imprisoned.

“Graaaaaah!” The Sithe Exalt let out a short, ragged growl of pain. Clearly, he was in a great deal of agony. A short while later, he suppressed the agony and continued to speak: “We Sithe were defeated, true. This was a war of civilizations, a war to the death; either you had to die, or we would die! We lost the war, and I’m willing to accept death as being the result of that. Why must you torment me like this?!”

Ning just listened silently.

“If I, Dauber, had been free and up to my own devices, I never would’ve wanted to launch such a cruel and deadly war. There was no way to avoid this war; if you cultivators remained in power, then we Sithe would’ve perished. That is why I HAD to take part in the war. Both our sides suffered greatly in the war. Why must you feel such hatred for me? Why must you torment me so?”

“Kill me. Grant me release. I’ve had enough of this endless torment.” The Sithe Exalt Dauber stared intently at Ning, his eyes filled with anticipation.

Ning couldn’t help but feel a sudden impulse to charge over and kill the man, releasing him from his torment. However, Ning quickly regained his usual calm.

“He was actually able to affect my thoughts?” Ning glanced at the Sithe Exalt, secretly shocked. From a certain perspective, the Sithe was telling the truth. Even Ning himself felt that wiping out the enemy

after winning the war was enough; there was no need to perpetually imprison and torment the survivors. However, the reason why Ning had felt that sudden impulse was primarily because the Sithe Exalt's voice had managed to bewilder him. This Sithe Exalt had definitely reached a terrifyingly profound level in the art of bewilderment; Ning had a truly perfect sword-heart, but he had still been briefly influenced by the Exalt's voice, even though he had quickly recovered from it.

A hint of disappointment flickered through the Sithe Exalt's eyes. He gritted his teeth and said resentfully, "Are you really not going to grant me release?"

"The Autarchs must have imprisoned you for good reason. They are the leaders of the cultivator civilizations, and they could well have done this because of some secret they know which has a major impact on the war between our two civilizations. There's no way I would intervene," Ning said.

"Damnit. I was so close." The Sithe Exalt Dauber instantly grew even more berserk and growled, "This is unfair. UNFAIR! An Eternal Omega Dao? If I had also embarked upon the path of the Omega Dao long ago, then regardless of whether I succeeded or failed I never would've ended up like this. My destiny would've been completely changed. This is utterly unfair!"

Ning could feel the deep emotions which filled the man's roar. It was a feeling of deep and intense regret, mixed with resentment! Ning couldn't help but mumble to himself, "So what if you had embarked upon the path of the Omega Dao? Even if you had embarked upon the path of the Omega Dao, you still would've taken part in this war as a member of the Sithe."

Whoosh! Suddenly, the growling Sithe Exalt reached out with both hands. His arms expanded dramatically in size, causing even the formation-diagram imprints on them to twist and distort. As he attacked, he finally spat out a murderous, hate-filled cry: "If you don't help me, you can go die."

The two arms almost instantly expanded to become over a hundred thousand kilometers long. His hands were filled with tremendous power, and he reached out to tear Ning apart. As they swept out towards Ning, they were infused with such strange, profound mysteries that Ning wasn't even able to dodge them; it seemed as though he absolutely had to face this attack head-on.

"Eh?!" Ning turned ashen, and his heart shook with shock. Ever since he had mastered an Eternal Omega Dao, he had always had a feeling that he was in complete control of his surroundings. Every so often, something would surprise him, but nothing truly caught him off-guard.

In this moment, however, Ning truly felt stunned, so stunned that his heart was shaking. Even his sword-heart had become rather unsteady. It was as though he had seen something that was completely impossible before him.

"But..." Ning had no time to think this matter over, because those two giant palms had already reached him.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 40: The Five Autarchs Chapter 4: Completely Stunned

Boom!

With but a thought, Ji Ning immediately summoned the awesome Sword Dao domain around him. Countless streams of sword-light descended upon this place, filling it with attacks that were all

comparable to full-strength blows from Otherverse Lords. The sword-light quickly moved in a marvelous way to block the murderous palms that were crashing down towards Ning, doing their best to slow the palms down.

Each of the fingers on the twin palms began to slowly change, as they changed they caused spacetime to change with them. Boom! Boom! Boom! Every single finger completely suppressed the streaks of sword-light that they touched!

This was a truly ferocious attack from the Sithe Exalt. If Ning wished to merely rely on his Sword Dao domain to defend against it, he would have to use the principles of using 'four grams of force to redirect a thousand kilograms of power'. However, his opponent was clearly at a far higher level of insight than the Blazesun Ruler was; thus, Ning's attempted block didn't truly succeed.

Riiiiip! The twin palms appeared in front of Ning and then slammed straight through Ning's body, tearing it apart into two pieces. Ning's body gradually faded away into nothingness, followed by a white-robed Ning reappearing over a million kilometers away.

"He's fast!" Exalt Dauber immediately halted his attacks, because Ning had already moved past his maximum attack range. Due to the suppressive effects of the formation-diagram, he was only able to launch attacks to this distance.

"The Eternal Omega Daos truly are impressive. I can't help but envy his incredible speed. It would've been wonderful if I managed to master an Eternal Omega Dao." Exalt Dauber couldn't help but let out a sigh. "To be honest, I knew I wouldn't be able to kill you. I just wanted to lessen your lifespan by a bit. Unfortunately, I wasn't even able to force you to draw your sword."

Ning stood a million kilometers away, a solemn look on his face. "I didn't draw my sword, but I had to use up a bit of divine power in using that evasion-art."

Eternal Omega Daos were as profound as the Daos of ordinary Autarchs. Thus, Ning actually had access to many truly incredible techniques, techniques which one would naturally gain access to upon reaching certain levels of insight. For example, when Ning had become a Daolord of the Fourth Step, he had reached such a high level of insight into the Dao of the Sword that he had gained natural mastery over the 'Shadowless form', an invulnerable form. His Dao of the Sword had gained the power to pierce through spacetime and sever karma, and he had reached incredible heights in many different areas.

Nowadays, Ning's abilities were even more unbelievable than before. If he was truly willing to exhaust his life energy, he could increase his speed to truly unbelievable heights. For example, when Ning had killed the Lonely King, he had taken a single step to move an extremely great distance to slay the Lonely King without the latter even being able to react! This was a testament to Ning's true speed. Similarly, he had been able to heavily injure the Blazesun Ruler with one strike, and the Blazesun Ruler hadn't been able to block at all!

As far as warping through spacetime went, if Ning chose to use his sword to tear through spacetime, he would actually be able to travel a greater distance than even the Blacksun was capable of! The Autarchs were able to easily tear through spacetime and warp tremendous distances... but alas, these incredible techniques all consumed enormous amounts of energy. Ning had to be extremely stingy with his energy usage.

Every single scrap of energy and power represented his vital energy. Just now, he had simply used an evasion-art to dodge a single step backwards, ensuring that the Sithe Exalt wasn't able to touch him. This didn't take up too much of his divine power, but it still wasn't nothing.

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"What?!"

"The Sithe Exalt just attacked Daolord Darknorth!" The distant cultivators and the creatures serving the Blazesun Ruler all stared in astonishment.

The Sithe Exalt's attack was as savage and overbearing as ever. It was strange. The Blazesun Ruler and the Sithe Exalt were clearly on the same level of power, but when they saw the Sithe Exalt attack, they felt a much greater sense of fear!

They had already witnessed the Sithe Exalt attack on numerous occasions, and several cultivators had died as a result. Daolord Darknorth, however, was naturally different. He took just a single step back and was able to dodge with ease.

"One side struck with full power, the other dodged with calm and unhurried grace. Daolord Darknorth truly is more powerful!"

"Incredible," the cultivators murmured. As for Nuwa, Su Youji, and the others who were close to Ning? They only felt nervous. Given how fast Ning had just moved, it was obvious that he had been forced to use some of his own power.

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"I was only able to force you to use an evasion-art. How much energy could that possibly consume? You'd probably have to use it to take ten steps back in order to match the amount of energy you would use up from a sword-strike," Exalt Dauber said coldly.

Ning's face remained as solemn as ever. He stared intently at the Sithe Exalt, as though he was trying to see through to some hidden truth. After staring for several long seconds, Ning finally said, "The claw-arts you just used..."

"Ahaha! So you noticed, eh?" The Sithe Exalt laughed madly. "Ahaha, it makes sense... you are someone who has mastered an Eternal Omega Dao. Of course you would be able to notice!"

"Tell me everything." Ning stared at him.

"Haha... the only thing I'll tell you is that you saw exactly what you thought you saw." The Sithe Exalt, Dauber, continued to laugh with wild abandon. "I won't tell you anything else, ahaha! I'll let you worry away and wrack your brains trying to find an answer. Hah! I'm having fun just thinking about it. To be able to mystify the very first master of an Eternal Omega Dao in this Chaosverse... what a wonderful feeling!"

Ning frowned upon hearing this. The Sithe Exalt continued, "Unless... you were willing to kill me and grant me release. Only then would I tell you everything." Exalt Dauber stared hungrily at Ning.

“Impossible.” Ning shook his head. After seeing the Sithe Exalt’s claw-arts, he felt increasingly certain that there was an enormous secret behind the Exalt’s imprisonment. The Autarchs had to have imprisoned them for an extremely important reason.

“Then you will NEVER know the answer,” Exalt Dauber said viciously.

“Tell me... do you think the Autarchs know the answer?” Ning suddenly smiled.

“You...!” The Sithe Exalt was stunned.

“I’ll go and ask the Autarchs. I was planning to visit them a final time before dying anyhow,” Ning said. He then turned and left.

Exalt Dauber gnashed his teeth as he watched Ning leave, but there was nothing he could do. Use an illusion? That terrifying Daolord had an incredibly powerful Dao-heart, one which was truly perfect. It was already quite incredible that the Sithe Exalt had been able to have even a slight effect on Ning earlier; there was no way he would actually be able to actually influence Ning’s actions. Other methods would be equally futile; there was no way such a major power as Ning would succumb to the likes of mere curiosity.

“I’m going to be imprisoned here forever... tortured forever...” Dauber raised his head, his azure eyes staring into the endless fiery light in the skies. His gaze was filled with hatred and regret... and then he mumbled with a hint of exhaustion, “When will it come to an end? I really don’t want to hold on any longer...”

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Ning turned and left, returning to Nuwa, Patriarch Treewind and the others with a belly full of suspicions. The images of the Sithe Exalt using claw-arts to assault him continually replayed in his mind.

“How is it possible... how could that be? Is this the real reason why the Autarchs have imprisoned them?” Ning continually pondered this question.

Suddenly, Ning’s face turned slightly pale as he raised his head and stared towards the skies. Whoosh! A bolt of thunder suddenly appeared, tearing through the heavens and warping through spacetime, causing a stable but temporary passageway to form.

Right at this moment, eight towering figures appeared within the bolt of thunder, with one being the muscular black-armored Blazesun Ruler. The other seven all had different auras; one was as cold and remote as an endless sea of ice, a second seemed to represent the destruction of space itself... but all of them were of equal magnitude.

“The eight Domain Rulers!!!” Ning’s face turned completely pale. “Have they gone mad? The Blazesun Ruler must be insane!”

Ning had considered the possibility that the Blazesun Ruler might be able to recruit four or five of the others to work with him, but he never would’ve imagined that the legendary eight, the most powerful Sourcewalkers of the Eight Domains of the Chaosverse, would all appear en masse! All eight! Ning would probably exhaust himself and die without being able to do anything to the eight of them; there was simply no way he could fight at full-power for an extended period of time.

“The eight Domain Rulers?! B-but...” Patriarch Treewind, Nuwa, and the others were all shocked.

“That one over there is the Blazesun Ruler. Why is it that I have the feeling that the other seven are just as terrifying as him? Their auras seem to be of equal power.”

“The other seven are also Domain Rulers?”

“What?! The eight Domain Rulers are all here?!” Given that even Ning was shocked, the other cultivators present were all completely scared senseless. They had never even heard of all eight Domain Rulers appearing at the same time!

“They’ve gone mad! Stark raving mad! All eight have rushed over right away? I’m certainly not sticking around!” Ning took a single step forwards and reappeared in front of Patriarch Treewind, Nuwa, and the others. He pulled them into his estate-treasure with a wave of his hand.

Riiiiip! Ning brandished the Darknorth sword a single time, generating a streak of sword-light that tore a rift through spacetime. Ning leaped into that spacetime rift, which quickly closed and healed behind him. By now, only the Autarchs could surpass Ning when it came to tearing through spacetime. There was no way the eight Domain Rulers could possibly stop him at all.

The eight Domain Rulers had just used a valuable treasure to instantly teleport here. They could do nothing but stare, stupefied, as Ning disappeared from right in front of them... and they could find no traces of where he had gone at all.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 40: The Five Autarchs Chapter 5: The Castle

If Ji Ning wished to, he could’ve used his sword to tear through spacetime and let him exit the entire Blazesun Domain! However, as one of the Eight Domains, there were many places within the Blazesun Domain which were extremely hard to traverse via a spacetime warp; to forcibly tear through via the Dao of the Sword would require an enormous amount of energy. Ji Ning wasn’t willing to waste his lifespan on something like this. He was able to sense that there was something strange happening in spacetime nearby, and so he chose the exit tunnel to be placed there.

Whoosh. Ning vanished from the Earthfire Continent and followed the sword-formed spacetime tunnel to arrive at an extremely distant place within the Blazefire Domain. “Eh?” Ning swept the area with his gaze, slightly surprised: “I sensed from afar that the spacetime continuum here was quite unique. So this is what this place looks like?”

Ning was currently standing in empty space, facing a distant dimensional whirlpool. Battered bits of debris were flying out of the whirlpool, including some shattered pieces of golden metal, strange mechanical parts, and even an enormous but tattered-looking castle. These bits and fragments were all flying out of the whirlpool, while the whirlpool itself was starting to spin more slowly, almost as though space was going back to normal.

“It seems my luck isn’t bad. I managed to find a Sithe trove after just a single teleport,” Ning laughed. Ning waved his hand, releasing Nuwa, Su Youji, Patriarch Treewind, Emperor Jade Rainbow, the Flamewing God, and the others. As soon as this awesome group of experts appeared, they began to scan

their surroundings. They quickly noticed the dimensional whirlpool and were duly astonished by it and the Sithe treasures floating out of it.

“A Sithe treasure trove?”

“There’s actually a treasure trove here?”

“And, by the looks of it, it looks like it just appeared.” Patriarch Treewind and the others were all quite stunned.

As for Ning, he laughed. “I heard that otherverses and Sithe treasuries will often appear out of nowhere within the Eight Domains. Is that so?”

“It is.” Patriarch Treewind nodded. “When wandering through the Blazesun Domain, you’ll occasionally stumble across an otherverse which has no owners in it, and Sithe caches will sometimes appear out of nowhere as well. However, the ones we find have usually been floating around in the Blazesun Domain for quite some time. I’ve only heard stories about actually seeing them appear from dimensional whirlpools; this is my first time witnessing it in person.”

“Otherverses are created by Autarchs,” Ning said, “But the Sithe caches were left behind from the Dawn War. Why would they appear here out of nowhere?”

“Not sure.”

“The Autarchs are probably behind this for some reason.” Patriarch Treewind, Emperor Jade Rainbow, and the others who were familiar with the Blazesun Domain all shook their heads.

Ning continued to ponder this question. The giant, battered-looking castle off in the distance was in a more-or-less complete shape, but it had clearly experienced the ravages of battle. Otherwise, why would it be riddled with so many ‘wounds’? But it had been an extremely long period of time since the Dawn War had ended. Why had it and all these other treasures suddenly appeared now? Ning had only sensed that something strange was happening in spacetime in this location while he himself was warping through spacetime, which was why he had exited here.

Over the years, there had been other instances in the Eight Domains where Sithe treasure caches had appeared out of nowhere. In fact, even Nuwa had somehow vanished from the Three Realms and then appeared in the Blazesun Domain!

And the otherverses... those were personally hand-crafted by the Autarchs. Why would they appear here as well?

“Master, we have an entire Sithe treasury in front of us!” Hegemon Azurefiend was rather excited.

“Darknorth.” Nuwa remained quite calm, and she immediately asked, “Are the eight Domain Rulers still in pursuit of us?”

Ning laughed. “Don’t worry, they aren’t able to track us down at all. However... I really don’t understand what the eight of them were thinking. I still can’t believe all eight of them joined forces...”

“They probably have plans of their own.” Nuwa felt quite frustrated as well. Anyone faced with all eight Domain Rulers at once would feel a sense of tremendous pressure.

“They can keep searching if they want. I have no desire to waste my time on them.” Ning didn’t wish to waste any of his vital energy; otherwise, if he truly went all-out, he’d be able to dominate all eight of them. All they would be able to do would be to endure his attacks as best as they could, relying on their innate gifts; if they managed to tank the hits, they would live, but if they failed they would perish! Ning himself felt that if he was lucky, he would at most be able to kill one of the eight if all eight joined forces.

But why? What was the point? Ning naturally preferred to stay far, far away from the eight of them.

“Master, let’s go take a look at those floating Sithe treasures.” Flamewing stared quite curiously at the distant castle and the other relics floating in space.

“Darknorth?” Nuwa looked at Ning as well. She, too, felt curious about this treasure cache.

“Daolord.” All the others were also intrigued, but as they saw it, since Ning had discovered this cache its contents would naturally belong to him.

“Go ahead and take a look.” Ning laughed. “Just be careful. Don’t just rummage through things blindly; there might be traps hidden there.”

“Alright.”

“Let’s go.”

“Don’t worry, Daolord. We’ll be careful.”

“Master, I’m going to go take a look as well.” Not even Su Youji could refrain from taking a look. All of them flew towards the Sithe cache, with only Protector Whitethaw continuing to solemnly stand guard over Ning.

By now, the dimensional vortex had already vanished, allowing space to go back to normal. Ning didn’t really care that much about the Sithe treasury; he was already close to the Autarchs in power! Why would he care about Sithe treasures or armaments?

“What did I just see earlier, though?” Ning pondered by himself, his mind thinking back to the Earthfire Continent and the sneak-attack the imprisoned Sithe Exalt had launched against him. “It’s completely impossible, but I can’t explain it any other way...”

To this very moment, Ning still felt quite stunned by the implications. This was also part of the reason why he had no interest in exploring the Sithe treasure cache.

“I definitely wasn’t seeing things. That imprisoned Sithe Exalt... it had definitely reached the Autarch level of insight!” Ning was shaking inside. That Sithe Autarch had probably reached Hegemony in the Dao of Bewilderment, but the twin claw attacks he had launched against Ning had been incomparably profound. Ning hadn’t been able to disturb it or shake it at all with his Sword Dao domain.

Other cultivators might not be able to tell, but Ning had already reached a level of insight which was comparable to that of the Autarchs, and had also received guidance from legacies left behind by Autarch Awakener and Autarch Bolin. That brief moment of combat was enough for Ning to ascertain that the Sithe Exalt, Dauber, had definitely employed Autarchy-level mysteries in launching his twin claw attacks!

“The Autarch level of insight... that means he should be an Autarch!” Ning simply didn’t understand. “But... he ended up being imprisoned, just like that?”

“If he really was an Autarch, it would be incredibly easy for him and his peers to capture the Flamewing God... but instead, three of them had to work together to accomplish this.

“In fact, the Sithe once had multiple Exalts. If the Sithe Exalts truly were Autarchs, they would’ve been able to overwhelm the cultivator civilizations with ease... but instead, their performance in combat proved that they were inferior to our Autarchs.

“And when Exalt Dauber battled against me... I could sense that although he had reached an incredibly high level of insight, the power of his attacks were vastly inferior to mine.”

Ning truly was puzzled. He felt certain that Sithe Exalt Dauber had reached the Autarch level of insight, but the amount of power the Exalt had unleashed in battle was much lower than that level; at most, it was on par with the Blazesun Ruler’s. Ning had only been forced to use a tiny bit of his energy, and a single backwards step had allowed him to dodge the attack with ease. Clearly, Ning had completely outstripped the Exalt in power.

“How odd. There’s no way I was wrong; he has to be at the Autarch level in insight, but for some reason he’s only able to unleash a fraction of their power.” Ning mused to himself, “It felt as though his techniques were only able to employ a tiny amount of the power of the Dao.”

For major powers, the power of the Dao was paramount. The higher a level of insight you reached, the more important the power of your Dao. Ning, for example, was able to form a Sword Dao domain with just a thought. He didn’t even need to use up any of his own energy, but the domain would be filled with streaks of sword-light that were comparable to full-strength strikes from Otherverse Lords! This was the power of the Dao, not Ning’s own internal power! When he himself fought in battle and used his sword-arts, his sword-arts were so profound that they were capable of unleashing many marvelous effects. This happened because he would use a fraction of his own energy to fully command the power of the Dao and unleash even more devastating amounts of might.

But... the Sithe Exalt was completely different. Ning could tell that he had clearly reached the Autarch level of insight into the Dao, but his techniques were only able to unleash a fraction of the Dao’s power. As a result, the overall power of his attacks was merely at the Blazesun Ruler’s level.

“So what’s the reason for this? As far as I can tell, he should be an Autarch... but he’s dramatically weaker than the Autarchs. Or perhaps these Sithe Exalts are pseudo-Autarchs? Perhaps they have inherently flawed Daos, which is why they are unable to unleash much power from them?”

Ning was filled with many questions. Why did these Exalts have such a high level of insight into the Dao? Were they truly Autarchs, or were they pseudo-Autarchs? Why was it that the true Autarchs did not kill them and instead chose to torture them forever?

“I imagine only the Autarchs know the answer to these questions,” Ning mused.

“Darknorth! Hurry over here!” Nuwa suddenly called out from nearby that distant, levitating castle.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 40: The Five Autarchs Chapter 6: Formation

“What’s wrong?” Ji Ning took a single step forwards and warped through space, rippling through it to appear right next to the battered, scar-covered castle.

Nuwa, Patriarch Treewind, the Flamewing God, Emperor Jade Rainbow, and the others all stood next to the castle, completely helpless. Nuwa pointed at the giant castle, which was fully fifteen thousand meters long. “We’ve already completely searched the place, and we’re sure that there’s a dimensional space within it... but we haven’t been able to open it up, no matter what we do, nor can we find a way to get inside. This castle seems to be quite complicated.”

“Let me take a look.” Ning scrutinized it carefully. The enormous castle just hung there in space, covered with many scars and with a number of damaged parts floating around it. Ning slowly flew in a circle around the castle, inspecting every part of it with care. He also took a look at the damaged parts.

“How does it look?” Flamewing couldn’t help but ask, “Master, are you able to open it up?”

“Even if I was, you wouldn’t be able to do anything to it. Why are YOU in such a rush?” Ning teased.

“I’m just curious!” Flamewing chortled. In truth, Su Youji and the others were quite curious as well.

Ning continued to inspect the castle for as much time as was needed to boil a kettle of tea. Suddenly, he waved his hand and caused two distant fragments to fly into his hands. One was roughly three meters long, while the other was merely fist-sized.

Clack! Clack! Ning placed the two fragments into two different locations on the castle. Rumble... instantly, the entire castle began to slowly swivel on its base, which looked like a series of leaf-shaped mechanisms. The center of this towering castle suddenly parted, revealing an entrance way.

“It’s open! It’s open!” Flamewing said excitedly.

“Daolord, you truly are impressive,” Hegemon Goodsong flattered. He was quite skilled in this regard. Ever since he had become a Golden Emperor, he had shamelessly chosen to follow Ning and flattered him nonstop. Ning had been in need of someone who was familiar with the Blazesun Domain, and so had nodded and accepted his service. Hegemon Goodsong had done his utmost to serve as Ning’s pathfinder, and so Ning had naturally decided to give him some tips from time to time. There were countless Hegemons and Emperors who envied Hegemon Goodsong, but alas... Ning wouldn’t accept a retainer without a good reason.

“This Sithe artifact seems to be usable... and generally speaking, castle-shaped Sithe weapons are incredibly powerful,” Patriarch Treewind said with praise. Due to the war, many powerful Sithe war machines had ended up being completely destroyed or rendered inoperable. The ‘Stone Hellephant Wall’ which Ning had once discovered, which had originally been known as the Sithe warship ‘Tigerhill’, was one example of an unusable Sithe war machine.

“This Sithe castle is probably comparable in value to Houwu City,” Emperor Jade Rainbow agreed.

Ning agreed as well. It was generally quite easy to tell from just a visual inspection as to how powerful Sithe weapons were. Chains, axes, shields... these were held items that generally wouldn’t be all that powerful! The Blacksun, Houwu City, the ‘Tigerhill’, and this giant castle in front of them... these were all large-scale war machines and generally were incredibly potent.

With but a thought, Ning summoned his Sword Dao domain and used it to completely cover the entire castle, as well as its internals. "Nothing dangerous inside. Let's go take a look." Ning immediately flew into the entrance.

Nuwa, Su Youji, Patriarch Treewind, and the others all followed Ning inside.

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The passageway was very deep, dark, and gloomy. From the outside, the castle looked as though it was merely fifteen thousand meters long, but on the inside it was absolutely enormous. Ning's group flew more than a thousand kilometers along the hallway before they finally reached an open, empty region. This region was divided up into three different levels, with each level representing three different core controls used to operate the castle.

There were Sithe corpses floating above the altars which existed in all three levels. The corpses all emanated the auras of Eternal Emperors. There were also some Black Emperors and Golden Emperors who had undergone the Ritual Sacrificium; all of them had perished here.

Ning slowly descended upon the bottommost layer, then glanced at his surroundings. Nuwa and the others came flying over as well, also landing on the altar at the very bottom.

"The insides of this castle are intact. How did they all die?" Azurefiend glanced at the corpses in astonishment. "I don't see any wounds on these corpses."

"Someone managed to kill these Golden Emperors through the protection of the castle." Nuwa and the others were all quite stunned.

"A total of thirty-two Sithe are inside here," Ning said. "It had to have been an Autarch who used either karmic techniques or truesoul destruction techniques to bypass the castle walls and slay the Sithe inside."

The Autarchs had chosen different Daos and thus had different areas of specialty. Some, like Autarch Bolin, specialized in frontal attacks. Others had techniques which were more mysterious and harder to understand.

"There are actually three command centers." Ning raised his head to look at the other two, his forehead creased into a frown.

"The bottom command center has an enormous formation within it which can be used to reach out from the base of the castle and connect it to an enormous area around it! This castle can be used to command, consolidate, and protect an entire region. It will gather chaos energy from the area around it."

"The middle command center is comparatively simpler. It controls a scanning formation, ensuring that any opponent who appears will find it almost impossible to escape. It has tremendous control over dimensional power, allowing it to scan an incredibly vast area and discover even the most minute of spatial ripples. Even I would probably be unable to avoid its detection," Ning said with a surprised sigh.

"As for the top command center... it is also quite complicated. It involves a powerful offensive formation that gathers together the power of lightning, focusing it together into an attack of incredible power.

Even Golden Emperors would probably perish before it,” Ning said slowly as he continued to inspect the insides of the castle.

“Is it really that impressive? That means this is a perfect weapon of war,” Hegemon Azurefiend said with a shocked sigh.

“During the Dawn War, it was probably just as important as the Blacksun,” Ning said. “This, too, is a war machine that is capable of affecting the flow of battle in an entire region. I’m amazed that we were lucky enough to stumble upon such an important war machine.”

“Haha, given your incredible prowess, Daolord, it is only natural that your luck is also extraordinary,” Patriarch Treewind praised.

Ning himself felt rather puzzled. Luck, eh? It was true that he was held in high favor by the prime essences of the Chaosverse. When he had failed his Daomerge, he could sense that the prime essences had sighed on his behalf. If the reason that he had just stumbled upon an incredibly valuable war-fort was because he was ‘lucky’ thanks to being favored by the prime essences... even Ning could do nothing but sigh.

Such war machines of this level of power were incredibly hard to find. Lord Houwu had only become known as the ‘Lord Governor of Houwu’ after finding Houwu City, while the Blacksun had made a ‘Realmslord’ out of Realmslord Windgrace.

“I would need at least three people to take control of the formations in order to operate this castle.” Ning frowned. “And all three need to be Hegemons.”

“Me and my avatar can account for two, but that won’t be enough.” Nuwa felt rather worried.

“What about me?” Azurefiend volunteered.

Ning shook his head. “I’m planning to leave this castle in my homeland. Azurefiend, are you really volunteering to stay in my homeland forever?”

Azurefiend was speechless. He loved freedom and loved adventuring. He really wouldn’t be able to endure staying in Daolord Darknorth’s homeland forever.

“The formations within this castle are quite complicated. Nuwa, you probably wouldn’t be able to take direct control of them either,” Ning said. “Let me take a closer look.” Ning was planning to modify the central command centers of this castle, making it more suitable for the Three Realms.

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Ning himself was able to easily control all three formation-diagrams, but modifying them even slightly would be difficult. Ning actually ended up creating a fourth formation-diagram inside the castle, one which would serve as the ‘master controls’. Thanks to this fourth formation-diagram, a single Emperor would be able to simultaneously control all of the castle’s functions. This took Ning over eight hundred million years to accomplish.

“Ahah! Finally, I’ve succeeded.” Ning let out a loud laugh, his laughter echoing within the empty space. Nuwa, Su Youji, and the others who had been quietly meditating all immediately stopped their training.

“Nuwa,” Ning said with a smile, “I added an additional formation-diagram that simplifies the process of controlling this castle! Once the castle has been activated, it will be able to scan to a distance of over a trillion kilometers, and it’ll be able to stand guard over this region. When I go back, I plan to modify the formations protecting our homeland and make this castle the centerpiece of our defenses. If anyone dares to attack our home, they’ll have to endure an assault from the castle.”

“My modifications have resulted in a decreasing in its scanning range, and have also resulted in it only being able to focus its firepower on a single target... but I think it should be enough,” Ning said.

“Besides, if we have enough Hegemons in the future, you can just ignore my fourth formation-diagram and take direct control over the three original ones.”

“Understood.” Nuwa nodded.

Ning waved his hand, causing a jade slip to appear with instructions on how to control the castle. “Take it.” Ning handed the slip over to Nuwa. “Test it out and see how strong it is.”

“Alright.” Nuwa scanned the slip, quickly memorizing the information.

“Let’s go out,” Ning said, “And take a look at the castle’s power.” The group of cultivators immediately left the castle, leaving only Nuwa behind. They all stood outside in the void, staring at the castle.

Rumble... the very tip of the castle suddenly began to light up. BOOM! An invisible dimensional ripple suddenly spread out to cover an area of a trillion kilometers, making it so that nothing within this area could escape its sensors.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 40: The Five Autarchs Chapter 7: Acting On Orders

There was a round disk located at the ‘neck’ of the castle, which was divided into a black side and a white side. Flickers of terrifying lightning could be seen gathering around that location. According to the castle’s original configuration and power, it was capable of shooting out two bolts of thunder simultaneously, each one carrying a tremendous amount of power. In order to simplify the controls, Ji Ning had made it so that just a single bolt of thunder could be unleashed. However, this had the beneficial side effect of reducing energy costs by 50%. Attacks of such power consumed enormous amounts of energy, after all.

“That looks absolutely terrifying. I can sense that the power of that thunder is more than enough to wipe me out,” Azurefiend said with a sense of lingering fear.

“You? Even I would find it hard to survive.” Patriarch Treewind felt fear as well, as did Emperor Jade Rainbow and the others.

These types of Sithe war machines were absolutely terrifying. During the Dawn War, they were used to stabilize entire regions; so long as an Autarch didn’t intervene, these things spelled certain doom for any cultivators who faced them! However, they had to build up power before launching each shot, and so during the Dawn War the cultivators who were faced with these terrifying war machines used their own lives to ‘block’ their attacks and buy time for their peers.

BOOM! A streak of lightning suddenly shot out, causing both space and time to congeal into a liquefied state.

A distant, fiery-red boulder which was levitating in the distance suddenly disappeared, silently and soundlessly. The bolt of lightning briefly showed itself as the boulder was destroyed, followed by it immediately continuing its forwards surge. The power of this attack was so great that everyone save for Ning and the Flamewing God felt utterly stunned. This attack was more than enough to wipe them all out.

“That attack was too fast. Space wasn’t just twisted, it was liquefied! Anyone within a range of ten billion kilometers would find it almost impossible to dodge,” Patriarch Treewind said with a frown.

“The only option would be to stay out of its range. In the future, I’ll have to remember to stay at least fifty billion kilometers away from that thing,” Emperor Jade Rainbow said with a laugh. “If I’m too close, I won’t even be able to dodge. Treewind, your disciple is now even more powerful than you are.”

“Nuwa has always been far more talented than me. Even without Daolord Darknorth’s help, she would eventually grow to eclipse me in might,” Patriarch Treewind chortled. Daolord Darknorth was wholeheartedly helping out Nuwa, and Nuwa was his disciple. As a result, Treewind himself would benefit from the process. The more powerful this female disciple of his became, the more influential he himself would become.

Whoosh. The silver-robed Nuwa flew out from the castle. She waved her hand, causing the castle to quickly shrink to become palm-sized and fall within her palm. Clearly, she had already fully mastered the control technique Ning had given her and was in full control of this castle.

“It really is powerful. With this castle under my control, our homeland shall be impregnable,” Nuwa said, her face covered with joy. “Given how mighty its attacks are, its defensive prowess should be even better. Even the likes of the Blazesun Ruler would find it difficult to break through.”

Ning felt delighted as well. After fleeing from the Earthfire Continent, he had actually warped to this place and discovered a treasure that he was in desperate need of! He had actually been planning to spend some time finding a treasure which would be suitable for the Three Realm’s defense; now, one had just appeared before him.

“Darknorth, this castle is still riddled with damage. What should we do?” Nuwa looked at Ning.

“There’s nothing that can be done. I’m certainly not able to repair Sithe artifacts,” Ning said with a laugh. “Thankfully, at least its interior is in perfect shape. The damage on the outside makes it look a bit ugly, but all we need to do is add another protective layer on top and it’ll look as good as new.”

“Eh?” Ning suddenly frowned and turned to stare off into the distant. Boom! A faint dimensional ripple appeared, followed by a strange creature with a sharp head and furry tail appear. It stared curiously in their direction.

“These creatures again?” Nuwa said.

“That thunderbolt you launched was probably so powerful it attracted their attention. We’ve been discovered,” Patriarch Treewind said. “These creatures seem quite weak; the strongest of them are

perhaps just barely comparable to ordinary Hegemons.” Patriarch Treewind and the others naturally wouldn’t care too much about a squad of such weak creatures.

“Daolord, these creatures are often under the Blazesun Ruler’s command,” Emperor Jade Rainbow said hurriedly. “Now that they’ve seen you, they’ll probably send word to the Blazesun Ruler and he’s probably going to rush over here again.”

“The Blazesun Ruler...” Ning felt resigned. There was nothing he could do against the eight Domain Rulers. “Let’s go.”

“Daolord Darknorth!” A voice suddenly rang out, followed by the most powerful of the tailed beasts flying towards Ning at high speed.

“Eh?” Ning glanced at the strange creature, puzzled.

“My name is Stoneblade.” The strange creature bowed respectfully, then said, “My humblest greetings to the mighty Daolord Darknorth.”

“Oh, so you actually recognize me?” Ning smiled.

“The Blazesun Ruler long ago spread word that he is searching for you and provided a great deal of information about you. When I also saw Nuwa and Patriarch Treewind by your side, I naturally was sure that it was you,” the creature said respectfully.

“The Blazesun Ruler certainly is persistent. It seems everyone has been notified about me, including you and your peers. Speak. What do you need from me?” Ning asked.

The strange creature said respectfully, “The Blazesun Ruler sent word long ago that if we encountered Daolord Darknorth, we were to immediately inform you that they bear you no ill-will at all, nor do they intend to fight you. Instead, there is something important they must inform you.”

“Oh?” Ning was puzzled. “Something important? What is it?”

“That I do not know. After discovering you, I immediately sent word back. I imagine the Domain Ruler will soon be notified, and they’ll probably hasten here at full speed. Once you see him you’ll know the answer, Daolord,” the creature said.

“Understood.” Ning nodded.

The strange creature then bowed respectfully a second time before retreating.

“Darknorth, the Blazesun Ruler and the other Domain Rulers have important business with you?” Nuwa was puzzled. “What important business could it possibly be?”

“Could it be a scheme of some sort?” Flamewing immediately asked.

Ning laughed. “Flamewing, when did you learn about ‘schemes’? Haha! However, I don’t think it is a trick or a trap... because I’m powerful enough that if I wish to leave, the eight of them are completely unable to stop me. There’s no need to lie to me either! And, when I saw all eight of them last time, I felt quite puzzled. For all eight Domain Rulers to join forces against me is quite odd. Now, it seems, they have other business with me.”

“We shall wait here for a time. Let’s wait for the eight Domain Rulers to come and see what they want,” Ning said.

“Very well.”

“We fled so quickly last time, I didn’t even have a chance to see what the other seven looked like.”

“Me neither.”

“I saw two of them. This time, I’m going to see what all eight of them look like.” Hegemon Goodsong, Treewind, Jade Rainbow, Azurefiend, and the others all felt quite relaxed. With Ning present, they had nothing to fear at all. In any other situation, they would’ve been utterly terrified by the prospect of facing the eight Domain Rulers.

Roughly an hour later.

Whoosh! A bolt of thunder appeared, splitting through the void and creating a temporary but stable spacetime tunnel. Eight figures appeared within the tunnel. It was the Blazesun Ruler and the rest of the eight. When they saw the distant Ning, they revealed looks of delight and hurriedly flew towards him.

“It really doesn’t seem as though they come with bad intentions,” Nuwa sent mentally.

“Let’s see just what they want, exactly. They have infinite lifespans and should be living without any worries or concerns whatsoever. There shouldn’t be anything they need me to do for them,” Ning said. And of course, if they came for his ‘Eternal Omega Sword Dao’, there was no way he would transmit it to them.

Soon, the eight Domain Rulers arrived. They all shrank down to human size as they met with Ning and his team.

“Respectful greetings, Daolord Darknorth.” All of them spoke quite courteously.

“Respectful greetings, Domain Rulers.” Ning smiled. “Last time I saw you, Blazesun Ruler, you were thirsting for battle and completely mad with bloodlust. This time, all eight of you have appeared but are so courteous... and I hear there is something important you wish to tell me? Might I ask what that is?”

The eight Domain Rulers traded a glance. The Blazesun Ruler voluntarily stepped forward and said, rather embarrassed, “Daolord Darknorth, I was rash in my actions. As soon as we fought, I immediately knew that I was no match for you. A while ago, when we came to speak to you at the Earthfire Continent, it wasn’t for the sake of continuing the fight. Rather, we came on orders.”

“On orders?” Ning was startled.

“Yes.” A Sourcewalker dressed in deep blue armor respectfully replied, “After you appeared in the Blazesun Domain, word of your presence quickly made its way to the Autarch. The Autarch is within the Quintessence of the Chaosverse and is too busy to come out, and so she instructed the eight of us to find you and bring you to meet with her.”

“We’ve been searching for you this entire time. Last time, we found you, but you left so quickly that we weren’t able to catch up,” a Sourcewalker dressed in fiery armor said.

Ning was enlightened. “The Autarch is located amongst the prime essences and wishes to meet with me? Might I ask, which Autarch is it?”

The Desolate Era

Book 40: The Five Autarchs Chapter 8: Entering the Quintessence

The Blazesun Ruler said hurriedly, “It is Autarch Skyfeeder. Ever since the war against the Sithe concluded, the Autarch has spent almost all of her time within the Quintessence of the Chaosverse. We were lucky enough to have received some guidance from her.”

“Skyfeeder?” Ji Ning nodded slightly. The only Autarchs he knew of were Autarch Bolin, Autarch Awakener, and Autarch Titanos. He didn’t really know much about the others.

“Go ahead and lead the way,” Ning said.

“Daolord...” The Sourcewalker dressed in deep blue armor glanced rather hesitantly at the many cultivators behind Ning. “The Autarch is within the prime essences, a place filled with tremendous power. There is no way ordinary cultivators can enter there! You need to have either reached the incredible level of the Autarchs, which you Daolord have, or be like us and the Chaos Primordials. We’re able to endure the power of that place with our powerful bodies. Weaker cultivators are completely incapable of moving about within the prime essences. I’m afraid that we would at most be able to bring you and your Chaos Primordial.”

“Don’t worry about us at all.”

“The Autarch wishes to see YOU, Daolord. We wouldn’t dare go,” Patriarch Treewind, Azurefiend, and the others said hurriedly. They had all but stopped breathing when they heard that an Autarch had summoned Ning. How could they possibly dare to get involved in a meeting between Daolord Darknorth and such a supremely august presence?

“Darknorth, go ahead and go. Don’t worry about us,” Nuwa concurred.

“Very well.” Ning nodded. Even if he did bring them, there was no way for them to move about inside the prime essences. “Stay here within the Blazesun Domain. Once I return, I’ll reunite with you.”

“Very well.”

“Understood.” Su Youji and the others hurriedly assented.

“Darknorth, you must be careful,” Nuwa instructed.

“Don’t worry.” Ning smiled. The eight Domain Rulers wouldn’t dare to cause trouble, which meant that Nuwa’s team of cultivators had nothing to fear.

“Take me with you, Master! Take me with you!” Flamewing said eagerly. “It’s been forever since I was back inside the prime essences!”

Ning laughed and nodded. “Very well. Follow me.”

“This way please, Daolord Darknorth.” The Blazesun Ruler took out his warship and invited Ning and Flamewing inside. Moments later, the warship tore through spacetime and disappeared without a trace.

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The eight Domain Rulers used all the considerable tools at their disposal. Just three days later, they exited the Blazesun Domain and entered a silent, empty region of space. There was a total of ten people in this group, and they all stood there within the empty region.

“This Sithe warship is useless once we go inside the prime essences. Once we go inside, we’ll have to slowly fly on our own,” the Blazesun Ruler explained.

“Open up!” One of the Domain Rulers stepped forward and made a slashing motion with his hand. Swoosh! A gateway was torn within spacetime, and at the opposite end of the gateway was a region filled with an incredible, awesome amount of power and energy.

“After you, Daolord,” the eight Domain Rules said very respectfully.

“Let’s go.” Ning was the first to step into the spacetime door, with Flamewing and the eight Domain Rulers following from behind. After they entered, the spacetime door vanished without a trace, leaving behind a very ordinary-seeming region. Ordinary cultivators who came here, including Otherverse Lords, were completely incapable of finding the prime essences.

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The region they entered was filled with overwhelming power. Imagine a mortal falling into an ocean; the entire area around him would be surrounded by endless waves of suffocating might. The pressure from these waves could easily cause even Hegemons to perish, while Otherverse Lords would find it too difficult to take as much as a single step here.

Rumble...

The eight Domain Rulers and the Flamewing God were all under tremendous pressure as well. They had powerful bodies and thus were able to endure it, especially Flamewing whose body was virtually indestructible and who could thus completely ignore the pressure. However, they still had to use all the power they could muster in order to advance through this region. Thankfully, Flamewing had such an endless source of power that this wasn’t of concern.

“Which way shall we go?” Ning was the most relaxed of the ten. The Sword Dao domain emanating from him was enough to cause the surrounding pressure to instantly vanish without a trace.

This was because the Dao of his Sword Dao domain was the same as the prime essence of the Dao of the Sword. The prime essence of the Dao of the Sword was naturally part of the collection of prime essences, and so Ning was able to move through this region as easily as a fish moving through water. He didn’t suffer any pressure or sense of rejection at all.

Unfortunately, Ning wasn’t able to protect anyone else. The power of the prime essences was omnipresent, while the prime essence of the Dao of the Sword was merely one part of them. If Ning pulled Flamewing and the others into his estate-world, they would be protected. Otherwise, they would simply have to endure it on their own.

“Just follow us, Daolord,” the Blazesun Ruler said respectfully.

“If you feel tired, you can rest inside my estate-world for a time,” Ning said with a chuckle.

“No need.”

“Don’t worry about us, Daolord. We’re used to this place.”

“Haha, this bit of pressure is nothing at all, Master!” The eight Domain Rulers and Flamewing continued to advance rapidly, but they were all using their full power to do so. As for Ning, he was able to effortlessly follow from behind.

Ning scanned at his surroundings. The Quintessence itself was like a place that was divided into many different ‘lakes’, with each lake representing a prime essence. He saw the prime essence of thunder, the prime essence of water, the prime essence of ice, the prime essence of the Dao of the Sword... every single prime essence was here and overflowing with might. Through them, Ning was able to more clearly scry some of the secrets of the various Daos.

The prime essence of the Dao of the Sword was nothing more than one of many prime essences.

“This is the true foundation of our entire Chaosverse,” Ning murmured softly. “Even I am only able to control a tiny part of it.”

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All of them flew very fast, but even so it took them a full five days before they flew past the many different prime essences. Finally, they arrived at an ordinary-looking wooden cottage that was floating in midair. There was a small courtyard surrounding this wooden cottage which looked rather like a small crop field.

“Here we are.” Looks of delight appeared on the faces of all eight Domain Rulers. Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! They hurriedly flew closer, stepping into the courtyard around the wooden cottage. Ning and Flamewing followed them from behind.

Invisible barriers had been placed here which kept out the natural pressure of the Quintessence. Only now did everyone finally relax.

“What a marvelous formation.” Ning scanned the formation, then let out a sigh of approval. A formation capable of completely blocking out the pressures of the Quintessence is impressive indeed. Ning then glanced at the surrounding area. He could sense that no one was here aside from them. He immediately turned to the Blazesun Ruler and asked, “Where is the Autarch?”

“This is a place where the Autarch often rests,” the blue-armored Sourcewalker said. “She’s cultivating nearby. As soon as we entered her residence, she would be immediately notified. She’ll be coming soon.”

“Cultivating nearby?” Ning glanced at the area around them. “Eh?” Soon, Ning was able to detect a strange ripple of power emanating from a place off in the distance. This was a temporal ripple, and it contained utterly savage levels of power. It was almost like a terrifying apocalyptic demon that sought to devour all before it. Ning couldn’t help but turn slightly pale; how was it possible that ‘time’ itself could become so terrifying?

However, the ripples quickly calmed down. A short while later, an ephemeral figure began to drift towards them, quickly leaving the prime essences and arriving in front of the wooden cottage.

This was a willowy woman whose features Ning wouldn't describe as exceptionally beautiful. In the Three Realms, her features would be considered quite common and ordinary. Her face was slightly plump, her gaze was gentle, and her aura was both awesome and mysterious, tinged with the ripples of time. Time itself was like an obedient child which swirled around her. She was the only female Autarch in all the Chaosverse... Autarch Skyfeeder.

"Darknorth greets you, Autarch," Ning said immediately.

Autarch Skyfeeder walked barefoot into her courtyard, then smiled merrily at Ning and said, "Skyfeeder greets you, Daolord Darknorth."

Both spoke quite courteously. As soon as they glimpsed each other, they were able to sense the level of insight the other had reached.

Ning could sense how tremendously powerful this Autarch's 'Temporal Daobirth Essence' was, while the Autarch was able to sense how incredible Ning's 'Eternal Omega Sword Dao' was. They had embarked upon different paths, but they had now reached the same heights of power.

Autarch Skyfeeder and the other Autarchs had all first become Hegemons after fusing multiple Supreme Daos together, then broke through to become Autarchs!

Ning had embarked upon the path of the Omega Dao, and he had eventually come to master the Eternal Omega Sword Dao. Although strictly speaking he was still just an 'Eternal Emperor', he truly had reached the same heights of insight as the Autarchs possessed; his only weakness was that the breadth of his understanding wasn't quite as wide. In actual combat, however, their blows would be incredibly close to each other in might... but of course, as someone who failed the Daomerge, Ning wasn't able to fight for too long.

"Darknorth, let's chat inside," Autarch Skyfeeder said. She pushed the door to the wooden cottage open. The cottage was quite plain, with a few seams appearing between the wooden logs that allowed one to clearly see what was inside.

Autarch Skyfeeder sat down on the ground in front of a table. Ning did the same in front of another table. Each table had a flagon of wine, and the fragrant aroma of the wine instantly caused Ning's eyes to light up. This was, without a doubt, the finest wine he had ever seen.

Although the two of them were merely separated from the eight Domain Rulers and Flamewing by a thin wooden door, the nine were completely unable to hear a word of the conversation within.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 40: The Five Autarchs Chapter 9: The Autarchs

When Ji Ning smelled the aroma of the wine, he couldn't help but pour himself a cup and taste it first. He then nodded and sighed happily, "What fine wine. My soul itself is uplifted by it; in fact, I can sense that even the disintegration of my truesoul slowed down for a brief instant."

"Unfortunately, the disintegration of the truesoul is irreversible." Autarch Skyfeeder slowly poured herself a cup, her voice tinged with regret. "Otherwise, our civilization would have given birth to a truly

incredible figure. To tell you the truth, your rise is far more more important to our civilization than the rise of a new Autarch. You are, after all, the very first who truly mastered an Eternal Omega Dao. Sadly..."

"I can only blame myself for not having trained well enough," Ning said with a laugh. "Perhaps if I was just a bit better, I would've succeeded in the Daomerge."

"The path is always the most perilous for the first trailblazer," Autarch Skyfeeder said. "There has never been anyone who has mastered an Eternal Omega Dao before you, and so there were no guideposts or experiences you could draw upon. If you did, you probably would've succeeded in the Daomerge."

Ning was startled. Indeed. He had been so very, very close. If he had just a few extra months worth of time, he probably would've been able to find the flaws during his Daomerge and he would've been able to discover the true Eternal Omega Sword Dao before it ended. Alas, he had wasted three entire years on perfecting his sword-heart.

Ning let out a chuckle. "Well, there always has to be a trailblazer. To serve as the trailblazer for the Eternal Omega Daos isn't a bad destiny to have."

Autarch Skyfeeder smiled and nodded. "I just heard about you a short while ago. When I found out you were in the Blazesun Domain, I immediately sent the eight Domain Rulers out to search for you. I have something important to discuss with you, something which involves the very existence of all cultivator civilizations in the Chaosverse. We need your help."

"Something involving the very existence of the cultivator civilizations?" Ning was startled. This sounded serious. "Is there something which is capable of threatening us?" Ning couldn't help but ask.

"There is indeed." Autarch Skyfeeder nodded. "Just now, I informed the other Autarchs of your arrival. They are all hastening here as fast as they can. When the others arrive, we'll discuss this matter. It is a blessing that the cultivator civilizations have finally given birth to someone who has mastered an Eternal Omega Dao. Unfortunately, you failed the Daomerge. If you had succeeded, we would be even more overjoyed."

"The other Autarchs?" Ning was rather shocked.

"The cultivator civilizations currently have a total of six surviving Autarchs. One of them is permanently stationed in front of the Sithelands and won't be able to make it. The other four will all be coming," Autarch Skyfeeder said.

Ning nodded slowly. Six Autarchs in total, with five of them coming to meet him. This was indeed a weighty affair they wished to discuss.

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Autarch Titanos' residence.

Autarch Titanos was almost always secluded away within his private chambers, analyzing the marvelous parts and artifacts which floated in the center. "Huh?" Suddenly, Autarch Titanos' face turned pale.

"WHAT?!?!" The two fleshy antennae on top of Autarch Titanos' head suddenly stood up straight, and his golden eyes bulged out. "An Eternal Omega Dao? Someone from our civilization has finally mastered

an Eternal Omega Dao?!" Autarch Titanos was truly stunned. "And his name is... eh? Darknorth? Wasn't that kid I saw a while ago also named Darknorth? Back then, he had merely improved his Omega Dao to the level of a Daolord of the Fourth Step. He actually mastered an Eternal Omega Dao?"

"This is huge! How did it happen that the old biddy Skyfeeder actually ended up being the one to find out and notify me?!" Autarch Titanos completely ignored the Sith artifacts floating around in his room. He immediately charged outside in a fine rage, slamming open the door with a boom.

"Master." The azure-robed youth immediately moved to welcome him.

"XIAN!" Autarch Titanos said furiously, "Have you heard about the Daomerge of that kid who once asked me for help? Daolord Darknorth?"

"Heard? Of course I heard." The azure-robed youth nodded repeatedly. "This was major news which quickly spread everywhere! He failed his Daomerge, but he still managed to master an Eternal Omega Dao. Even the Lonely King of the Icepeak Army was killed by a single slash of his sword. He went out searching for Nuwa, and Realmslord Windgrace did everything in his power to help spread the word. He even asked us to help out! I told quite a number of my friends about this. By now, I imagine the major powers in most of the realmverses and otherverses all know about him."

"BUT I DIDN'T KNOW!" Autarch Titanos stared at him, eyes bulging. "Why the hell didn't you tell MEEEE!!!"

"B-but..." A baffled and miserable look was on the azure-robed youth's face. "Master, didn't you forbid me from disturbing you while you were analyzing those Sith weapons unless something really big happened?"

"This IS big! This is literally BIGGER THAN ANYTHING ELSE!" Autarch Titanos exploded.

"Daolord Darknorth failed his Daomerge. He'll probably die soon, leaving behind nothing more than a legend. Why would this be 'big news' to you, Master?" The azure-robed youth was completely puzzled. To him and the other Hegemons, this was a stunning piece of gossip, but in the end it was nothing more than that – gossip. He didn't feel there was a need to bother the Autarch over it.

"For the love of..." Autarch Titanos felt helpless.

There were six Autarchs in total. One was permanently stationed in front of the Sithelands and thus didn't know of Ning. The other four were almost impossible for Hegemons to find, which was why they didn't know of Ning even though Ning's legend had long ago spread far and wide amongst the Hegemons and Emperors.

The only Autarch who was in fairly constant contact with the Hegemons and Emperors was Autarch Titanos, but he had been researching in seclusion and his subordinates didn't dare to disturb him. As a result, he didn't find out either. It wasn't until just a short while ago that the Autarchs found out about Ning, with Autarch Skyfeeder who was located within the Quintessence being the first to find out. She had notified the other Autarchs, and only then did they realize what had happened.

"...forget it." Autarch Titanos shook his head. "I've really embarrassed myself this time. I am usually the first to find out about things, but this time I was the last." As he spoke, he waved his hand and immediately warped through spacetime and departed.

He couldn't help but feel angry. The Autarchs had agreed long ago to a division of labor, and Autarch Titanos had agreed to be the one responsible for maintaining contact with the Hegemons and Emperors; he was to serve as the bridge linking the Autarchs to the rest of civilization. If anything major happened amongst the Hegemons and Emperors, news of it would quickly make its way over to him, and he would then notify the others.

This time, the news involved the rise of someone who controlled the Eternal Omega Sword Dao. This was news of incredible importance... but he ended up being the notified party rather than the notifying party. Of course he felt humiliated by this!

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An empty, barren region. The stars and chaosworlds here seemed to have sunken into the silence of death. This entire region, which was the size of dozens of territories, was completely and utterly still. No life could rise here, nor would anyone dare to draw near here! If Hegemons did dare to draw near this place, they would sense the terrifying power of death seep into their bodies... and if they came any closer, they would die.

And so, this region was in a perpetual state of death and silence.

There was an enormous planet here that was roughly a hundred billion kilometers in diameter. This entire planet was a dark gray color, and an incredibly dense aura of death surrounded the entire planet. This planet was the source of the deathly energy which pervaded this entire region, and even the stones here had been completely broken apart into countless grains of dark gray sand.

Rumble... the earth began to tremble, and the endless aura of death began to change. The ground slowly began to turn fertile and full of life. Soon, countless blades of green grass began to appear on the surface of the earth as the power of life began to emanate from this planet, and the aura of death that surrounded this region slowly began to dissipate.

Rain began to fall from the skies, resulting in rivers, lakes, and seas appearing. The earth began to change, with mountains and valleys taking shape. Vegetation began to grow rapidly, with prairies and forests appearing.

This transformation from utter death to brimming life happened in just a single breath's worth of time! In this single instant, time itself seemed to have somehow twisted. An incredibly long period of time seemed to have gone past, more than enough time to allow this place to become brimming with life.

Whoosh. A figure suddenly appeared on the surface of this planet. A sorrowful look was in his eyes, and he slowly shook his head. "I trained for very long this time. Why is it so difficult to gain insight into a Daobirth Essence from the line that separates life from death? If I mastered an additional Daobirth Essence, there would probably be a new transformation. Ugh. I failed yet again. Perhaps cultivators are only capable of mastering a single Daobirth Essence? Perhaps all the efforts of myself, Bolin, are for naught?"

"However... Skyfeeder just sent some good news. It seems our civilization has finally given birth to someone in control of an Eternal Omega Dao. His name is Daolord Darknorth, eh? A pity, truly a pity... how wonderful would it be if he had succeeded in his Daomerge? Still, no matter what, at least he has

mastered an Eternal Omega Dao.” He took a single step forwards, causing space to ripple around him, then vanished without a trace.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 40: The Five Autarchs Chapter 10: The Autarchs Gather

Within the sea of the prime essences of the Chaosverse. Inside the wooden cottage.

Ji Ning and Autarch Skyfeeder were seated in the lotus position. They were going to patiently wait for the other Autarchs before talking business. While waiting, Ning began to discuss the Dao and its myriad mysteries with Autarch Skyfeeder.

Over two hours went past in the blink of an eye.

“Haha...” A thunderous laugh rang out, followed by the door swinging open and a muscular man dressed in loose green robes walking in. He had a pair of curved horns on his head, and his eyes were like an endlessly dark abyss. He emanated an aura of terrifying pressure that caused Ning to feel shocked, and his palms were quite large and thick.

“Daolord Darknorth.” The muscular man smiled when he saw Ning.

“Darknorth, this would be Autarch Ekong,” Autarch Skyfeeder introduced with a smile. “He is the only Autarch who rose from our civilization after the Dawn War against the Sithe concluded. He was incredibly talented and rose to become a Hegemon in a very short period of time. He caused quite a stir in his youth, and he has a rather special title – he is known as the Autarch of Annihilation.”

“I’m actually a fairly nice guy and I rarely kill people, but my path was that of the Destruction Daobirth Essence. That’s why I’m known as the ‘Autarch of Annihilation,’” the muscular Autarch Ekong said with a booming laugh. “You can just call me Ekong.”

“Ekong, hurry up and sit down,” Autarch Skyfeeder said. “Sit and chat with us.”

“I can’t help it! I’m so happy to meet Daolord Darknorth. Our civilization has finally given birth to a master of an Eternal Omega Dao.” Autarch Ekong sat down.

Ning couldn’t help but secretly sigh in approval. Every Autarch truly was an extraordinary figure. For example, Ning felt as though Autarch Skyfeeder was a transcendent figure that was quite unlike ordinary living beings; she was like the mother of all things who benevolently watched over all creation.

As for Autarch Ekong, he emanated a heroic aura that was tinged with a terrifying, all-encompassing dominance that whispered of a hidden potential for destruction.

“Ekong, you little drakeling! I can’t believe you actually got here faster than me.” The door swung open once more, followed by a bald, black-robed old man walking in with a smile on his face. The two fleshy antennae on his head twirled around, seemingly quite delighted.

“Old man, can you knock it off with the ‘little drakeling’ thing? Just because you started training a bit earlier than me...” Autarch Ekong said helplessly.

“It’s your own fault for calling me ‘old man’.” Autarch Titanos gave him a ‘hard’ look, then turned and beamed at Ning. “Darknorth, my young friend... we meet again.”

“Respectful greetings, Autarch Titanos.” Ning smiled.

“You’ve met?” Autarch Skyfeeder and Autarch Ekong were both surprised. Autarchs were quite hard to meet, and Ning had only trained for a fairly brief period of time. They had thought that Ning had never met with any Autarchs before.

“Yes indeed. My young friend Darknorth once asked me to help him reverse spacetime to revive his Dao-companion.” Autarch Titanos let out a sigh. “Alas... the chaosworld his Dao-companion resided within was a world that was created from the godgems left behind by ol’ Awakener after he died. In fact, it was a world created from TWO godgems that collided together. I’d probably kill myself trying to bring her back to life, and it still probably wouldn’t work.”

Skyfeeder and Ekong were both startled. As for Ning, he fell silent for a moment before letting out a chuckle: “What’s past is past.”

“Come, let me offer you a toast.” Ekong lifted up his wine cup. “I’ve had quite a few Dao-companions in the past and thus have experienced the travails involved in reversing spacetime to bring them back. Thankfully, my Dao-companions resided in a mundane chaosworld, making reviving them much easier. I was a bit luckier than you, I suppose. Let’s drink together.”

Ning lifted up his own cup and drank some of the wine.

“I didn’t expect that you would actually have a connection to Awakener, Darknorth.” Autarch Skyfeeder let out a sigh. “Awakener was tremendously talented and was actually one of the first Autarchs to rise to power. The only one remaining from the oldest days is you, old man Titanos.”

“That’s because I’m not tired of living yet!” Autarch Titanos stared at her. “But you, Skyfeeder... you’ve trained for a shorter period of time than me. Are you thinking of taking the same route which Awakener and Entropos took?”

“There are no other paths to take. That was the same conclusion they came to. However... thankfully, our civilization has finally given birth to someone like Daolord Darknorth, a master of an Eternal Omega Dao. As a result, I can relax a bit and won’t rush off to give it a try.” Autarch Skyfeeder smiled as she glanced at Ning.

Ning couldn’t help but ask, “Awakener and ‘Entropos’; who were they?”

“Two other old fellows,” Autarch Titanos chortled. “The three of us were the originals, the ones who lived the longest – Entropos, Awakener, and myself! A great deal of time passed before Skyfeeder and the others made their breakthroughs. Alas, Awakener and Entropos have already died.”

“Both of them died? How did they die?” Ning couldn’t help but ask.

Autarch Titanos, Autarch Skyfeeder, and Autarch Ekong exchanged a glance. Autarch Titanos then let out a chuckle and said, “Darknorth, my young friend, don’t be impatient. We’ll discuss this matter later, and I’m sure you’ll come to understand. This actually is connected to the reason why we need your help. Let’s wait for the other two to arrive. Actually... hah! They’ve already arrived.”

Ning and the others all turned to look towards the outside. The seams between the wooden logs were quite large, allowing one to clearly see what was going on outside. Right now, two figures were walking

side-by-side towards the cottage. These were the two remaining Autarchs of the five who were meeting today.

The eight Domain Rulers and the Flamewing God continued to wait outside in the courtyard, their eyes growing wider and wider. "They just keep coming..." they mumbled breathlessly.

Every single person who came was an Autarch. Each time, the nine could sense that invisible aura of might and pressure. Even the normally brash Flamewing was now on his absolute best behavior.

"Two more Autarchs?" Flamewing and the others all stared as two figures emerged from the sea of prime essences and walked into the courtyard. The two glanced at the eight Domain Rulers and Flamewing but didn't say a word, simply walking straight inside the cottage.

"Five Autarchs." Flamewing muttered to itself, "What do these five Autarchs want from my master?"

"I've been alive for an eternity, but I've never seen five Autarchs together."

"Even I have only seen three of them."

"Five Autarchs have gathered together. How rare must this be?!" The eight Domain Rulers were all speechless. Autarchs were incredibly hard to find; even during the Dawn War against the Sithe, the Autarchs had commanded separate troops of Hegemons. Some of the eight Domain Rulers had taken part in this war, but none of them had seen all of the Autarchs.

All eight of the Domain Rulers and Flamewing stared towards that wooden cottage with curiosity. That ordinary looking cottage actually held five Autarchs and a Daolord who was the first person in the Chaosverse to master an Eternal Omega Dao. All nine of them were curious... what was being discussed inside?

Inside the room. The two final Autarchs walked in alongside each other, and Ning couldn't help but smile when he saw them. Compared to Autarch Ekong or Autarch Titanos, Ning could be considered quite handsome. Even Autarch Skyfeeder wasn't all that attractive... but the final two Autarchs who had just arrived were both ravishingly handsome men of empire-toppling beauty. Ning could use every single superlative in his vocabulary to describe their appearance, and it would all be completely justified.

The one on the left had white hair. He had a rather tired aura and his face was unshaven, but he was without a doubt a truly handsome man. He seemed to be walking the line between life and death; he seemed like the font of all life, but he also seemed like the final resting place of the dead. All living creatures would feel an uncontrollable sense of yearning towards him... but of course, major powers like Ning wouldn't be affected.

As for the one on the right, he was an incomparably noble figure. He had black hair, bore a smile on his face, and seemed to be a truly perfect person. Even someone whose Dao-heart was incredibly strong like Ning couldn't help but feel somewhat attracted to this man, who seemed to embody the very essence of beauty itself.

"This is Bolin." Autarch Titanos pointed at the tired-looking white-haired man, then smiled: "This fellow has been ruminating on life and death, or something like that. That's why he looks so terrible. When I first met him, he was quite a dashing and imposing figure. He's the master of the Claw Daobirth Essence, but now he looks like this... tsk!"

“Eh?” Autarch Bolin looked at Ning, rather startled. “The two of us are actually connected by karma?”

“There is indeed some karma between us,” Ning said with a laugh. “Autarch Bolin... you don’t know me, but I actually benefited through your actions. That Chaos Primordial outside? I actually tamed it due to the verdant azuresoul you left behind in one of your beastworlds, Autarch.”

“Oh?” A hint of a smile appeared on Autarch Bolin’s face. “Yes, long ago I did in fact leave behind quite a few estate-worlds throughout the Chaosverse. I was worried that we would lose the final battle and wanted to ensure that the seeds of rebirth and resistance would be planted for our civilization. However, we ended up winning, making the estate-worlds of limited use. I stopped paying attention to them as a result. I didn’t expect that they would end up helping you out, Daolord Darknorth. It seems my work wasn’t wasted after all.”

Ning felt a sense of tremendous admiration for Autarch Bolin. Autarch Bolin clearly walked the path of the Claw Daobirth Essence, but he had reached such incredible heights in the Dao of Life that he had been able to create an entire race... the race of Aeonians!

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 40: The Five Autarchs Chapter 11: The Source Of Everything

Ji Ning had just heard Autarch Titanos say that Autarch Bolin was studying the secrets of life and death, which was why his aura had changed so dramatically. Based on this, Ning surmised that the Aeonians probably represented certain accomplishments Autarch Bolin had reached in understanding the mysteries of life. What, then, were his accomplishments in the mysteries of death? And... why was an Autarch even researching the principles of life and death?

“And this gentleman is Stonerule.” Autarch Bolin pointed at the perfectly beautiful man next to him and chuckled, “Stonerule become an Autarch via the Dao of Illusions. His divine body is filled with boundless magnetism and charm. Those of us who have perfect Dao-hearts aren’t affected too much, but Hegemons and Otherverse Lords who run into him would be instantly charmed and would willingly do whatever he commanded.”

“Illusions?” Ning was shocked. So Autarch Stonerule’s path was that of the Illusion Daobirth Essence? How impressive!

“Respectful greetings, Daolord Darknorth.” Autarch Stonerule smiled. “My little parlor tricks are nothing to you, Daolord. We have been waiting a long, long time for someone to finally master an Eternal Omega Dao, but we never knew when it would finally occur! Very few can even become Daolords of the Fourth Step through an Omega Dao, while the Daomerge for one would be even more incomparably difficult!”

“It truly was hard.” Ning nodded.

“Although you failed, Daolord, you still managed to master an Eternal Omega Dao. This truly is a blessing for our civilization,” Autarch Stonerule said.

“All of you, sit down. Look at how antsy you all are,” Autarch Skyfeeder said.

Autarch Bolin and Autarch Stonerule immediately sat down. Now, all five Autarchs and Ning were all seated. Ning felt a sense of anticipation. He knew that it was finally time to discuss business.

“Shall I go first?” Autarch Titanos swept the others with a glance.

“Go ahead, old man,” Autarch Ekong said. The other Autarchs all nodded.

Autarch Titanos looked straight at Ning. “Darknorth, by now you should be aware that the Sithe have not been truly exterminated, right?”

“They haven’t been truly exterminated?” Ning was astonished.

“You didn’t know?” Autarch Titanos was rather surprised. “Haven’t you visited the legendary Sithelands?”

“I’ve heard of the Sithelands but haven’t visited them yet,” Ning said. The Sithelands were indeed quite famous. Ning had heard Emperor Waveshift speak of them and had discussed them with several major powers. The Sithe had arisen from that place, and to this very day it held more Sithe treasures than any other place. Major powers often went there to go adventuring.

“Weren’t the Sithe exterminated after losing the war?” Ning asked.

Autarch Titanos chuckled. “I would’ve assumed that after you failed the Daomerge, you would’ve gone to visit as many of the famous places in the Chaosverse as you could prior to dying. I thought you visited the Sithelands already. If you had... given your current level of insight, you probably would’ve seen the truth. You would’ve understood that the Sithe are not truly extinct. Rather, we’ve completely sealed them away, making it impossible for them to return once more.”

Ning continued to listen attentively.

“Long ago,” Autarch Titanos said, “The vast Chaosverse arose, giving birth to countless living beings. Slowly, some embarked upon the path of cultivation. Entropos was the first Autarch, and he was followed by Awakener, then by myself. Next came Autarch Skyfeeder, Autarch Bolin, Autarch Stonerule, and Autarch Mogg.”

“Back then, we lived without any worries or concerns. Entropos died trying to take the final step, but that didn’t matter; everyone was seeking their own paths, after all. But then... all of a sudden, and without any warning, the Sithe emerged.

“The Sithe were both mysterious and powerful. The prime essences of the Chaosverse sent us a warning, ensuring that we could subconsciously sense that the Sithe posed an enormous threat to us,” Autarch Titanos said. “Have you seen any Sithe Exalts yet?”

“I have.” Ning’s eyes lit up and he immediately said, “I saw the Sithe Exalt imprisoned in the Earthfire Continent. If I’m not mistaken... that Sithe Exalt had the insights of an Autarch. Logically speaking, he should’ve been an Autarch... but his actual power level was far lower. He was probably just on par with the Domain Rulers outside this cottage.”

Autarch Titanos nodded. “Yes. They are Autarchs.”

Ning was stunned. “They really are Autarchs? B-but their power...”

“They aren’t Autarchs from this place,” Autarch Titanos said. “Although our Chaosverse is almost infinitely vast... outside the Chaosverse there is a truly infinite and endless region which has other living creatures within it. The Sithe race stems from another Chaosverse located within the Infinite Void!”

“A different Chaosverse?!” Ning had yet to even leave this Chaosverse.

“Once we became Autarchs, we were able to glean some secrets from the prime essences of the Chaosverse,” Autarch Titanos said. “The vast and endless void is filled with a number of enormous celestial bodies, with the largest being the Chaosverses! But even in the Infinite Void, Chaosverses are incredibly rare and few in number. The most powerful and most invincible of all beings in the Infinite Void are the Lords of Chaos, the controllers of the Chaosverses!”

“If you wish to become a Lord of Chaos and master a Chaosverse, you must first become an Autarch! Then, you must master and bind the entire Quintessence of that Chaosverse, which would give you full control over all the power that Chaosverse has.” Autarch Titanos looked at Ning. “You should understand by now how much strength would be needed to take full control over the power of the Chaosverse.”

Ning was stunned. Of course he knew! The power hidden within the vast Wellspring Seas of the Eight Domains was already vastly beyond the power which Autarchs could command. The power of the entire Chaosverse? That would be insanely, indescribably vast. Taking control over all of it was completely inconceivable.

“The Sithe come from a different Chaosverse which already has a supremely exalted Lord of Chaos controlling it! This was why their civilization has reached such incredible heights, and why they have so many marvelous techniques at their disposal,” Autarch Titanos said. “But because their Chaosverse already has a person in control of it, there’s no way for a second Chaoslord to arise... and so they have invaded our Chaosverse and seek to dominate it instead!”

“But they are foreign invaders, while this is our home. Here, they will suffer invisible pressure which ensures that they aren’t able to gain any additional power from the Dao here. Even their Autarchs are weakened by this invisible pressure. Without the power of the Dao supporting them, they are naturally much weaker than they should be,” Autarch Titanos said.

“They are completely different races from us, because they were born in a completely different Chaosverse... but once they are able to take control over our Chaosverse, they can transform it and make it suitable for them. As for those of us who were born here? All of us will perish! From that day forth, all creatures born from our Chaosverse shall be like them – Sithe.” Autarch Titanos looked at Ning. “This is literally a war of survival. We cannot shirk our duty.”

Ning asked, “So the enemy Lord of Chaos is afraid to come here?”

“He wouldn’t dare.” Autarch Titanos explained, “The wellspring of his power is his Chaosverse! He’s able to make use of that power anywhere in the Infinite Void, which is why he is invincible. But... if he was to enter our Chaosverse, he would lose access to that power and would be suppressed, just like everyone else. That’s why he wouldn’t dare to enter himself.”

Ning nodded.

“And besides... why would he? He already stands at the very peak of power in all the Infinite Void, capable of accomplishing anything he desires.” Autarch Titanos sighed. “Alas, the other creatures within his Chaosverse wish to become Lords of Chaos as well. Their only choice is to leave their Chaosverse and invade other ones... and so, we ended up becoming a target for them.”

“We’ve already killed sixteen Sithe Exalts and trapped six of them. There are probably other Exalts sealed away within the Sithelands as well. In other words... tens of ‘Autarchs’ from their Chaosverse have invaded ours. From this, you should be able to tell the difference in power between them and us.”

Ning nodded. The difference was clear, obvious, and enormous.

“They surpass us in many ways, such as in fashioning treasures and techniques,” Autarch Titanos said. “We were able to suppress them during the war thanks to our geographical advantage and managed to lock them away into their ‘homelands’, making it impossible for them to invade us again... but in the end, they will always pose a threat. Even worse, if enough time passes we might be invaded by other civilizations as well!”

“Thus... the only way to forever get rid of all these problems is to produce a Lord of Chaos ourselves!” Autarch Titanos said. “If we can take control over our own Chaosverse, then we’ll be able to make full use of its power. When that happens we would have the power to invade others, but no one would dare to invade us.”

Ning agreed with this assessment. Their Chaosverse was without a ruler, but they had still managed to fight back for so long. Once they did gain a Chaoslord, then they would become truly invincible.

“Alas, taking control over the Chaosverse is simply too hard.” Autarch Titanos shook his head. “Entropos gave it a try, but he died. Awakener also tried, but he also died.”