

Desolate 1391

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Book 41: The Daoguard Tower Chapter 22: The Storm

Whoosh. Ji Ning moved forwards at a terrifying speed, instantly avoiding two attacks that swished right past him.

It really was like dancing on the edge of a knife. Ning himself had never been in such an incredibly dangerous situation, and he wasn't certain that he would survive it. All he could do was to do his best. His wings of electric sword-light and wind sword-light had granted him incredible speed, allowing him to dodge repeatedly.

Slash! Slash! Slash! Slash! Suddenly, the semi-translucent rays of light began to swing over and shoot towards Ning. This caused Ning to immediately grow a bit nervous. Aside from the attacks from the thirty-six stone pillars, he also had to deal with the semi-translucent rays of light. Dodging became even more difficult for Ning now, and the light in this area had long ago transformed into an enormous web.

"Dodge. Dodge. Dodge." Under tremendous pressure, Ning continuously dodged at incredible speeds and moved in extremely unpredictable, bizarre ways.

"He's actually dodging?" The Emperors and Hegemons in the castle were all stupefied by this. As they saw it, these attacks were so ridiculously fast that none of them would even be able to react in time. Ning, however, was somehow about to continuously find an empty spot and avoid the furious attacks, evading and dodging past the attacks. Not a single one of them managed to hit him!

"Mixing the Wind Sword Dao and the Lightning Sword Dao together feels absolutely wonderful." This was Ning's first time using two different Sword Daos together, and as he continued to dodge the thunder wings and wind wings on his back became increasingly agile and nimble.

He was both fast and unpredictable. The two pairs of wings worked together in an increasingly marvelous way, allowing Ning to become increasingly faster and nimbler as well.

"Wind can support the lightning's momentum, while lightning can reinforce the wind's strength." Ning suddenly transformed into two howling streaks of lightning and wind as his two sets of wings merged together. Now, there was lightning in the wind and a gale in the lightning.

Fast, savage, dominating, unscrutable, mysterious.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! The blurry light of wind and lightning flashed past the semi-translucent rays of light. It avoided the attacks from the thirty-six stone pillars with ease as it repeatedly found the openings in the attacks, and it continued to advance towards the castle.

"How is this possible? How is he able to completely dodge all of our attacks? This is impossible!" The Hegemons and Emperors in the castle were growing increasingly nervous. If they were fighting ordinary cultivators, this castle alone would be more than enough to stop their opponents in their tracks. However, Ning was comparable to an Autarch in power! If he managed to get close to their castle, they

would lose! This was because Ning was more than strong enough to use his sword-arts to pierce through the castle, and he could also blink straight inside of it.

During the Dawn War, this was exactly what Autarch Bolin and the others had done; they had blinked straight inside the various warships, with the external defenses of no use against them whatsoever. Thus, the only way the castle could be a threat to Ning was by using external attacks against him. The problem was, they could clearly see that those attacks were completely incapable of stopping Ning.

“Go out, go out! All of you, go out! Use every Sithe weapon you have to assault this Daolord!” the Hegemon in charge commanded. “We have to stop him and prevent him from getting close to the castle. If he gets close to us, we’re finished!”

“Everyone, head out!”

“All Hegemons and Emperors on standby must head out immediately.”

“If you can disrupt his tempo even slightly, we’ll be able to land an attack on him. One attack will lead to another, and he might even die by our hands.”

“Let’s do this!” In truth, the Hegemons and Emperors inside were beginning to panic as well. Alas, most of them were needed to control the castle. Even though they had avatars, in the end the castle was only able to send out a total of three Emperors. These Emperors each had two or three powerful Sithe weapons. They stood on the surface of the castle, staring at the distant storm-shaped Ning. Gritting their teeth, they began to attack and attempt to knock Ning off his rhythm.

Swish. A chain flew out towards Ning, seeking to wrap itself around him. Alas, before it even reached Ning it was struck by a semi-translucent ray of light and sent tumbling to the ground.

Clearly, the rays of light could not differentiate between friend and foe. The castle was using many different types of attacks to assault Ning, and these attacks were harmonized with each other to a tremendous degree, ensuring that they wouldn’t cancel each other out. Unfortunately, it was hard for these three Emperors to fully avoid the semi-translucent attacks from the castle.

“Damnit!” The three Emperors were being driven mad with rage.

Alas, their rage was of no use. Ning continued to advance at high speed as he gained more and more familiarity with mixing his Wind Sword Dao and Lightning Sword Dao together. None of the attacks were able to land on him at all. The three Emperors did their absolute utmost to disturb Ning’s movements, but although an occasional attack managed to get close to Ning, none of them were able to actually threaten Ning at all.

One billion kilometers... nine hundred million kilometers... eight hundred million kilometers... Ning moved closer and closer to the castle, and as he did so a full-blown panic began to erupt amongst the Hegemons and Emperors inside. They all knew that once Ning reached the tower, they would die.

“Let’s run!” When Ning reached a distance of two hundred million kilometers from the tower, the Emperors inside began to break down. None of them harbored any further hopes of being able to stop Ning.

Boom! The entire castle transformed into a streak of light that hurriedly began to fly away. At the same time, the castle deactivated its spacetime suppression field as it began to teleport away.

“Do you really think you’ll be able to escape?” As soon as the castle began to flee, the semi-translucent rays of light all completely vanished. Now completely unimpeded, Ning instantly appeared in front of the castle. He reached out with one hand, touching the castle’s exterior.

“Blink.” Ning used just a tiny amount of Immortal energy to command the Dao to envelop him, instantly blinking him inside. The tough external shell of the castle seemed to have transformed into a gentle curtain of water which Ning easily passed through, arriving inside.

The Hegemons and Emperors inside all revealed looks of despair.

Slash! A streak of sword-light howled outwards, slaying two of the Emperors on the spot.

“Put down all of your treasures and accept capture. I’m willing to spare your lives for now,” Ning said.

“Huh? Spare our lives?” The Hegemons and Emperors were all rather shocked. Ning had pursued them with such ferocity and had instantly slain two Emperors upon entering the castle. This had truly scared them out of their minds.

Ning frowned. “It seems you would rather die than live, then?”

“No, we want to live! Live!”

“All of us want to live!” The Hegemons and Emperors immediately divested themselves of all their treasures and Sithe weapons, then obediently lined up in front of Ning.

Ning waved his hand, pulling them all into his estate-world. He then waved his hand a second time, pulling the treasures into a different estate-world.

“These so-called ‘Sithe progeny’ are still members of our own Chaosverse. I hope that they aren’t absolutely loyal to the Sithe,” Ning mused. When Ning had first arrived at Purgatory, his goal was to weaken the enemy as much as possible; there was naturally no way he would show mercy. But now that he already gained victory and entered the castle? Ning wasn’t going to just murder these people unless necessary.

Ning had been able to immediately recognize two of the Emperors as true Sithe. They were being ignored and suppressed by the prime essences of the Chaosverse, which was proof of their identity! The others, however, were actually ‘Sithe descendants’! They were creatures of this Chaosverse who had been born and bred here.

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Ning put away the entire castle, then collected the thirty-six stone pillars as well. He was in a superb mood. “I defeated those Hegemons and Emperors, broke into the castle, and managed to avoid using too much power.”

Ning was feeling absolutely wonderful. During this battle, the only thing he had done was use his wind sword-light and lightning sword-light to dodge and evade. Evasion-arts consumed much less of his energy than full-force blows; all that flying which Ning had engaged in was perhaps at most on par with

what would be consumed by a single sword-blow. Blinking into the castle used up very little energy as well.

He had been able to achieve his goals with a minimum amount of effort. How could he NOT be happy? He began to warp through space, arriving at somewhere else where the other Hegemons and Emperors were gathered.

“Eh?” Ning stared forwards, rather puzzled. There were a series of palaces off in the distance, with the central palace being the largest one. It was surrounded by a scattering of smaller palaces, and they were all connected into an enormous palace complex. Ning could vaguely sense the auras of many Hegemons and Emperors within the palace complex; there had to be more than twenty of them scattered throughout that place.

“I have the feeling that this palace complex is even more dangerous than the castle.” For some inexplicable reason, Ning shivered. He knew that this was his subconscious warning him of the danger. “Judging from how the palaces have been laid out, this should be some sort of enormous formation.”

Ning couldn't help but feel a bit of wariness when faced with such a formation.

“There's no rush.” Ning sat down in the lotus position. “Let me first spend some time meditating on my Wind Sword Dao and Lightning Sword Dao.” When he had been flying forwards at high speed earlier, he suddenly had the feeling that he could merge his Wind Sword Dao and Lightning Sword Dao on a deeper level.

It was similar to how Ning was planning to perfectly join his Space Sword Dao and Time Sword Dao into a Spacetime Sword Dao. Ning now felt certain that he could also perfectly join his Lightning Sword Dao and his Wind Sword Dao together into a 'Storm' Sword Dao.

“Perhaps I might find an unexpected surprise from this.” Ning immediately closed his eyes, allowing his awesome Sword Dao Domain to spread out around him as he began to meditate.

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Book 41: The Daoguard Tower Chapter 23: Dire Straits

Ji Ning remained seated in the lotus position. Gusts of wind howled past him, occasionally coming together into a mighty storm which was filled with flickers of lightning.

Time passed, one year after the other. The Emperors and Hegemons in the palace complex were all beginning to grow rather anxious and impatient.

“Why hasn't the Daolord attacked yet?”

“I can't believe he's actually in the mood to train.” The Hegemons and Emperors were all panicking. The calmer Ning was, the more panicked they felt. It wasn't that their Dao-hearts were weak, it was that Ning's performance in battle had been absolutely terrifying.

“Gentlemen, will our formations be capable of stopping this Daolord? The castle was also Apocalypse-class, but the Daolord managed to defeat it with ease. Although these formations seem quite profound and powerful to us, this Daolord might be able to solve them with ease. If that happens, we'll be in serious trouble.” Many Emperors were worried.

“Relax. The Exalt himself bestowed it upon us. I imagine he did so for a very good reason.”

“But the Exalt bestowed the Apocalypse-class castle as well, right?”

“Enough, enough. It’s far too late for worrying about things like this. Either we’ll win or we’ll die in battle. There are no other options! Besides, as all of you are aware, the castle was something meant for head-on battles, while we are relying on profound formations. If he can’t solve the formations, he’ll be trapped and perish.”

“You aren’t him. Who knows what tricks he might have up his sleeve?”

“Even if he DOES manage to solve the formations, it isn’t as though you have better ones that can be used! Remember, we’re exiles! This might be extremely dangerous, but it is also our only hope of survival.”

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This was absolute torture for the Hegemons and Emperors, and the Sithe Exalt in the Sacred Realm wasn’t feeling much better. Ning, however, focused all of his efforts on his training. This time, he meditated for an extremely long period of time. Over half a chaos cycle went past before he finished.

BOOM!

One day, the anxiously waiting Hegemons and Emperors suddenly heard a loud, rumbling sound appear in the area around the seated white-robed youth. Lightning howled like wind through the skies, while the wind itself flickered with crackling electricity. This awesome storm of lightning and wind possessed incredible momentum and ferocity.

Under the watchful gazes of the nervous Hegemons and Emperors, the white-robed youth finally opened his eyes.

“The Storm Sword Dao.” Ning nodded in understanding. It had been easier than he had expected to master his Storm Sword Dao, even easier than it had been to simply master the individual Wind Sword Dao and Lightning Sword Dao. “Perhaps they are innately meant to be used together,” Ning mused.

The Dao of Space and the Dao of Time were naturally meant to be together. When used simultaneously, they would easily and naturally come together to form the Dao of Spacetime. This was because time and space were indelibly linked together like two spokes on a wheel that fit together perfectly.

The Dao of Lightning, the Dao of Metal, the Dao of Water, the Dao of Space, and Ning’s Eternal Omega Sword Dao were all completely irrelevant to each other. There wasn’t really a good way to link them together, making it extremely difficult to join them together.

However, the Five Elements, the Storm, and Spacetime were all ‘sets’ that contained highly compatible Daos.

“It is time.” Ning rose to his feet and stared at the distant palace complex. The entire palace complex was absolutely teeming with formations that were both complex and abstruse, but Ning held no fear of them.

Clink! He reached out to draw a Northbow sword from the sheath on his back, then began to walk towards the distant palace complex.

“He’s coming!”

“He’s headed straight for us.”

“That white-robed Daolord is coming. Quick! Everyone, make your preparations! When he’s trapped in our formations, we need to immediately launch all of our attacks against him and hold nothing back. If we give him enough time to breach our formations, we’ll be finished.”

“It’ll definitely take him some time to defeat this formation. We need to do our best to kill him.” The Hegemons and Emperors all stared at the white-robed Daolord walking towards them, sword in hand. It was as though they were looking at an absolutely terrifying monster. The only thing giving them some confidence was the fact that they were protected by an ancient and powerful Apocalypse-class formation.

Ning slowly sauntered forwards, the power of his Sword Dao Domain on full display as he used it to cover the region before him. It quickly spread out to cover the entire palace complex, which was hardened into a single entity. Ning’s Sword Dao Domain alone wouldn’t be enough to shake it in the slightest. The smaller palaces remained quietly rooted in place, not releasing any of their power at all.

“I want to see just how powerful they are.” Ning suddenly moved, transforming into an illusory shadow that shot towards a pathway which he felt was critical.

BOOM! As soon as Ning stepped into the palace complex, the earth began to shake beneath his feet while the skies began to change. The awesome might of the complex was fully unleashed, and the scenery in front of him completely transformed into a field of blurry light.

Ning was the only person flying through the region of blurry light. Whoosh! He instantly accelerated to fly ten billion kilometers through the light, but found himself still trapped within it.

“Hm. I feel as though I’m flying in place, as though I haven’t actually moved at all.” Ning unleashed his Sword Dao Domain, sending out countless streaks of sword-light but was only able to extend them to a distance of a million kilometers. Beyond this distance, there was no way for them to advance any further!

“What an incredible formation. It actually created its own spacetime continuum.” Ning began to ponder on his next step. Given his mastery over the Space Sword Dao, he was able to see some traces of how spacetime worked here but wasn’t even close to actually being able to solve it.

This place was already a spacetime continuum unto itself, and he was trapped inside it, unable to leave. “So they plan to simply trap me here?” Ning shook his head and chuckled. “If the Sithe truly wished to just trap me, they would’ve kept me locked within the dimensional realm-seam. There would’ve been no way for me to escape on my own.”

Thus, there was no way the Sithe would simply leave him trapped here. If they wanted to do that, they had plenty of other tools at their disposal.

“Eh?” Ning turned his gaze to one side. He could sense that spacetime was changing a bit there.

Boom! A streak of dense and dark astral light shot out, filled with malice and wickedness. It was as though endless amounts of sin had been concentrated in this attack, and it was flying towards Ning at terrifying speeds. Ning could sense that this dark astral light posed a threat to him. If he wanted to actually block it, he would have to use his sword.

The black astral light was simply too fast. Ning's form suddenly flickered, emitting a thunderous boom as a wild storm was created behind him which almost instantly pushed him out of the trajectory of the dark astral light aside. The astral light flew past Ning, burying itself deep into the edge of this spacetime continuum and then completely disappearing.

Swoosh. Ning immediately charged towards the place where the black astral light had come from, which was also the place he had sensed spacetime changing.

"Spacetime was temporarily parted there." Ning charged towards that area with his Northbow sword at the ready, but halfway there he came to a halt because spacetime had gone back to normal. No further fluctuations could be seen.

Just one heartbeat later... riiiiip! Another spacetime ripple appeared somewhere else, followed by yet another attack. This time, the attack was an extremely gentle-looking alabaster finger that shot straight towards Ning, almost instantly appearing right in front of him. Ning once more used his Storm Sword Dao to evade the attack, moving with almost ghostly speed.

"Damn!" Ning's face paled slightly. He knew what his opponents were intending. He was trapped within this tiny spacetime continuum and unable to escape, while his Si-the opponents were able to use their many powerful weapons to assault him time and time again at extremely close range. His only choice was to use his divine power to execute evasion-arts to dodge these attacks! Thankfully, he had just mastered the Storm Sword Dao, which specialized in speed and agility. As a result, he was able to dodge while using just a tiny amount of energy... but it would still add up.

If this continued, his energy supply would continuously deplete while his true soul began to crumble apart at an increasingly fast rate. Each time he used any of his power, the cracks across his true soul would widen and his lifespan would grow shorter!

"How should I handle this? What's the best way to break through this continuum?" Ning was beginning to grow anxious. He scanned the area around him, but it remained a blur of light. There were no flaws or openings at all for this spacetime continuum. An opening might appear when an attack was launched from the outside world, but that opening would quickly close up and be sealed away. Each time, just a single attack was launched, and so the opening was extremely small in size. The Hegemons and Emperors in the outside world could simply wait for the right moment to attack, giving Ning no chance to flee through the openings at all.

All sorts of attacks began to fly at Ning from within this spacetime continuum, and each time they launched from far away. Ning was forced to repeatedly use his evasion-arts to dodge. This was the most conservative use of his energy possible.

His power continued to deplete. Ning couldn't help but feel a sense of urgency as he pondered over the solution for breaking apart this formation. He never would've imagined that Purgatory would be enough to force him into such dire straits.

Just like that, Ning was actually in mortal danger.

“Ahahaha! He has no answer for our formation! He can’t solve it!”

“If he can’t solve it, he’s doomed.” The exiles were overjoyed, all their earlier concerns having vanished like the wind. Apocalypse-class formations truly were incredible. The white-robed Daolord was completely unable to overcome this formation, which meant that killing him would be simplicity itself.

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Book 41: The Daoguard Tower Chapter 24: Struggle

“Is the very first master of an Eternal Omega Dao their Chaosverse has given birth to going to die by my hands today?” The blue-haired Exalt watching the battle from the Sacred Realm felt excited as well. “Both of the Apocalypse-class treasures I gave those exiles in Purgatory are aimed squarely at that Daolord’s weaknesses. The castle had area attacks which that Daolord should’ve been unable to dodge; by all rights, it should’ve exhausted him to death! Who would’ve thought that he would possess such incredible speed. Now that we’ve trapped him within our spacetime formation, I refuse to believe he’ll be able to break free.”

Last time, Ji Ning had indeed very nearly died within that castle. Thankfully, the combination of the Wind Sword Dao and the Lightning Sword Dao had granted Ning a level of speed which surpassed what the Sithe Exalt had expected, rendering all of those attacks useless.

This time, however, Ning wouldn’t be so lucky. He had been trapped within a separate spacetime continuum, and breaking free would be extremely difficult.

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The Sithe Exalt in the Sacred Realm and the Hegemons in Purgatory were unable to contain their delight at Ning’s impending death.

Within the formation itself, the field of blurry spacetime remained completely separated from the outside world. Ning was still trapped within, and his Sword Dao Domain strained against the continuum to no avail at all. There was nothing he could do.

Far away from him, a spacetime ripple suddenly appeared, followed by a fiery red bird screeching as it shot towards Ning. Even as it attacked, the distant spacetime hole quickly healed and vanished.

Boom! Ning used his Storm Sword Dao to dodge once more. “I’m going to die if this continues.” Ning couldn’t find any flaws to exploit at all, and so all he could do was wave his hand and produce a precious pagoda in front of himself. This was one of the many Sithe treasures Ning had acquired.

Swoosh! Ning instantly entered the tower. “I hope it can last for a fairly long period of time.” For now, Ning’s only option was to rely on the tower’s defenses to buy him some time.

Ning waved his hand, causing Azurefiend’s avatar to appear next to him. “Master?” Azurefiend’s avatar looked at Ning.

“Hurry up and take control over this tower, then put your Immortal energy into it. Focus all your efforts on defending,” Ning barked mentally. It wasn’t worth it for him to waste his own Immortal energy on activating Sithe weapons.

“Understood.” Azurefiend’s avatar didn’t hesitate at all. He could sense from Ning’s grim expression how much danger they were in, and he immediately poured his Immortal energy into the tower, causing the many runes and barriers on its surface to light up.

“He hid inside a tower.”

“The tower won’t be able to dodge effectively. Just destroy it.” The Hegemons and Emperors were out for blood. They weren’t going to give Ning any chance to rest at all.

Slash! A dazzling streak of golden light flew out and appeared in front of the tower, delivering a vicious blow to it.

Although Ning was able to control the tower and use it to fly around, the attacks were simply too fast. Ning himself had to rely on using evasion-arts to dodge. There was no way this type of tower-type treasure would be able to do the same. Even if it could... he would still be using up his energy, right? The entire point of Ning hiding inside the tower was to save as much power as possible.

Boom! The surface of the tower erupted after being struck by golden light, causing a series of ripples to appear. The barrier remained unbroken, even though it looked a bit damaged. These were attacks that could threaten even Ning, after all; they were more than powerful enough to wreck ordinary Sithe artifacts.

“Hurry up and bind this treasure as well!” Ning tossed Azurefiend’s avatar another treasure, one that looked like a star. It seemed somewhat similar to the Blacksun, but it was a bit weaker.

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“It isn’t breaking apart? Hit it simultaneously at two different places!” The Hegemons and Emperors quickly decided to launch two simultaneous attacks against it.

As these two apocalyptic attacks landed, the barrier covering the tower was finally unable to endure any longer. The runes of the barrier collapsed, followed by the surface of the tower exploding into countless shards that blasted everywhere. Even the insides of the tower began to collapse and fall towards Ning, but before actually managing to hit him they would all be pushed to one side by his Sword Dao Domain.

Ning lifted his head, staring at the many cracks that had appeared to his left. “Release that star,” Ning instructed.

“Yes, Master!” Azurefiend knew that this tower wouldn’t be able to hold on for much longer, and so he immediately waved his hand, producing a jade-green star that the two of them instantly entered.

BOOM! Soon, the Sithe attacks completely destroyed the tower, causing it to explode and revealing the undamaged jade-green star inside of it.

“He has more treasures? Keep attacking!” The Hegemons and Emperors continued to fight fiercely.

After three attacks, the star destroyed... revealing a realmship! The realmship was even weaker; it was completely destroyed after just two two attacks. Azurefiend couldn't help but feel aggrieved at how fast these priceless treasures were being used up, but Ning simply frowned. There wasn't enough time; treasures on this level simply couldn't hold for long ago.

"No other options." Ning had Azurefiend's avatar activate and take control over that Apocalypse-class castle.

This was the most powerful Sithe treasure Ning had acquired to date! It was more powerful than the Blacksun, the Tigerhill, and even the castle which was protecting the Three Realms! Ning had been planning to give it to the Three Realms once he left this place, but he was out of options. His other treasures were too weak; they weren't able to withstand more than just a few attacks. This meant he wouldn't have any time to analyze the flaws of this place... and once he died, all his treasures would be lost. Even the Paragon of Pills would die here. Now wasn't the time to hold back!

BOOM! A strange, monstrous-looking dark-red castle appeared. Ning and Azurefiend's avatars were located securely within the castle, while Azurefiend was burning up his Immortal energy at a rapid pace to maintain the castle's most basic defenses.

"That's an Apocalypse-class castle!"

"Wait, that's the castle from earlier."

"Attack! Attack! Break through it!" The Hegemons and Emperors continued to attack furiously, raining down blows upon the castle. However, the barriers and runes flowing over the surface of the castle were completely undamaged! An Autarch-level attack would have a chance at breaking through the castle's defenses, but these Sithe weapons weren't quite at this level; at most, these attacks were comparable to the Blazesun Ruler's attacks.

The only reason these attacks were dangerous to Ning was because of how brittle his body was. He was extremely powerful, but attacks from the likes of the Blazesun Ruler would still consume some of his energy. Apocalypse-class castles, however, were extremely stable; they could easily endure the blows head-on.

"Whew." Ning let out a sigh of relief.

"Master, if you had such a powerful treasure, why didn't you take it out right away? We lost so many valuable treasures, including a realmship!" Azurefiend couldn't help but feel some pain at the thought of all that lost wealth.

"They don't matter." Ning didn't explain, as he was still under tremendous pressure. He knew that hiding inside the Apocalypse-class castle would merely buy them a bit of extra time. There was no way the Sithe would just give up like that.

Ning waved his hand, causing the Paragon of Pills, Lord Annihilation, Hegemon Tia, and Hegemon Flameleft to appear. The four of them instantly sensed how grim the atmosphere seemed to be, and the Paragon of Pills looked towards Ning in a rather puzzled way.

Ning immediately explained, "Please take turns in launching area attacks with the castle." The castle technically had thirty-six stone pillars as well, but Ning didn't have the time to slowly lay down all of the

stone pillars into formation. Moreover, this Apocalypse-class castle's most powerful attacks were actually those rays of semi-translucent light! However, those incredibly powerful attacks consumed a similarly incredible amount of power.

Azurefiend's avatar was enough to maintain their defenses, but what about their attacks? Ning was forced to ask the Paragon of Pills and the others to help out. This castle needed a total of thirty-six Emperors to fully activate it, but it could also be used with a lower number.

"All you need to do is make sure you focus your attacks in the same direction," Ning instructed.

"I'll go first." Lord Annihilation instantly began to pour an enormous amount of Immortal energy into the castle. On top of his natural energy regeneration, he also began to make use of the many Immortal pills he carried with him.

The nine towers of the ugly, dark-red castle all lit up. Nine semi-translucent rays of light began to shoot out, tearing through the surrounding space even though they were unable to tear through local spacetime.

Slash! The nine towers shot out rays of light everywhere, causing the spacetime membrane of this dimension to ripple slightly. Alas, the membranes remained stable and unharmed.

"These rays of light are more powerful than the attacks most Sithe weapons can unleash," Ning mused. "The problem is that as a type of area attack, the power is diffracted. There's no way to use them to breach this dimensional space." This spacetime continuum was extremely stable. Ning had an Autarch's power, but he had the feeling that there was no chance he could break through via raw power! If all nine rays of light managed to concentrate their power on a single location, they might just barely come close to the necessary power level.

"Continue," Ning instructed. The ugly, dark-red castle once more began to launch those repeated attacks. As for Ning, he carefully watched as those distant holes appeared in spacetime with each enemy attack. He was trying to understand the mysteries inherent to this place.

"We can't break through! The castle is too powerful. We aren't able to breach it at all." The exiles were starting to grow anxious.

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Book 41: The Daoguard Tower Chapter 25: Remaining Lifespan

Their attacks were completely ineffective against this castle, and each time they attacked they had to temporarily create an opening in the membrane surrounding this field of spacetime. The fluctuations generated by these brief openings was enough to let Ji Ning analyze the composition of the formations. Alas, the fluctuations disappeared so very quickly that he couldn't actually go close and take a look in person. His only option was to scry them and their secrets from afar.

"Damn." The Sithe Exalt was watching everything from the Sacred Realm, and he was so angry that his teeth hurt. He never would've imagined that the castle he bestowed upon the first group would prove to be so troublesome now.

"He has to die!" The Sithe Exalt knew that they wouldn't necessarily have another chance like this. He instantly sent down eight more attack-oriented treasures which were strong counters for this castle.

“Here is a diagram of the barriers surrounding the surface of the castle. There are a total of twenty-one critical points in total. If you attack eight of them at the same time, you’ll have a chance to destroy it,” the Sithe Exalt ordered. The reason why he handed out eight was because he only HAD eight of these dark corrosive treasures. These were the only treasures which were strong counters against this particular castle.

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The exiles began to launch another wave of attacks, while Azurefiend, the Paragon of Pills, Lord Annihilation, Hegemon Tia, and Hegemon Flameleft used all of their power to fight back!

Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. Suddenly, a series of illusory black longspear shot into the area, slamming against the castle. This time, the barriers of the castle began to tremble and break apart, but thankfully the castle itself was so incredibly thick and sturdy that the attack only blasted out a small crater on its surface.

“Eh?” Ning’s face tightened slightly.

“Master, the barriers were breached!” Azurefiend’s avatar said rather nervously.

“It is fine,” Ning said calmly. “The Sithe created this castle. They know the weaknesses of the barriers, which is why they were able to breach them with ease. However, the castle’s outer layer remains incredibly thick. It won’t be easy for them to pierce through it.”

The strongest defensive strength of this castle lay in the materials it was made from. The Tigerhill, for example, was sheathed in a thick layer of deepfire blackstone! Breaking through via raw power would naturally be extremely difficult.

As for this castle? It was even more powerful than the Tigerhill. Its surface was created from a strange, dark-red metal that seemed to be alive. Ning didn’t really know how to describe it, but what he did know was that it was harder to damage than even deepfire blackstone! Those longspear had been filled with a strange type of corrosive energy, which was why they had managed to erode a small crater onto the surface of the castle. If it wasn’t for that, the castle probably wouldn’t have even been marked.

“Attack!”

“Attack!” One longspear after another flew towards the castle, breaking through its barriers repeatedly and gouging out more and more craters on its surface.

Ning cast a sidelong glance at the black mist which clung to those craters. The corrosive black energy was continuing to slowly melt through the surface of the castle.

“Those offensive weapons are applying the Dao of Darkness to a truly incredible degree.” Ning couldn’t help but sigh at this. The Sithe truly had reached the apex in virtually every single Dao.

However, Ning didn’t really care. His attention was primarily focused on analyzing the ripples in spacetime which appeared with each attack.

Time continued to flow on. The Hegemons and Emperors attacked nonstop, using up a large amount of Immortal energy. Thankfully, they had prepared a large amount of spirit-pills to replenish their power.

They attacked nonstop for nearly an entire hour. By now, the entire castle was covered with a layer of incredibly dense and corrosive black mist. Everyone inside the castle looked quite nervous, because they all knew that this powerful castle was at the verge of collapse.

“Darknorth, we can’t hold on much longer. What should we do?” The Paragon of Pills felt both anxious and guilty. She blamed herself for this, because Ning had only fallen into this Sithe trap due to having come here to rescue her.

“Master, do you have any ideas?” Azurefiend’s avatar was worried about Ning as well.

“At least it bought me an hour,” Ning said. “Don’t worry about the rest.” As he spoke, he waved his hand and drew away the Paragon of Pills and the others. As they disappeared, a look of worry was visible in their eyes. Some were worried about Ning, while others were only worried about themselves! Once Ning died, all of them would die.

To be precise... the Paragon, Azurefiend, Flameleft, and Tia were not afraid of death. They were worried for Ning. Lord Annihilation, however, very much wanted to stay alive!

“Nothing for it. Life and death shall be determined by this!” Ning suddenly cracked a smile. Both his true body and his Primaltwin had spent this period of time analyzing the mysteries of this dimension, seeking a way to destroy it. His Primaltwin had even made use of 100x temporal acceleration! Alas, this sort of spacetime formation would not be easy to deconstruct; even if Ning had 10,000x more time, it still probably wouldn’t be enough.

“We broke through!” The Hegemons and Emperors outside were excited at their successes. BOOM! The dark-red castle’s outer shell was finally corroded through by that dark mist.

“DIE!” A dazzling streak of sword-light suddenly lit up. In the middle of that sword-light was a white-robed figure whose eyes radiated a towering desire to do battle. Ning had discarded all other thoughts save for one – stay alive! He had to make it out of this place alive! Only if he made it out would the Paragon of Pills and the others survive as well.

“Break! Break! BREAK!” Ning manifested three heads and six arms, simultaneously wielding all six Northbow swords for the first time since his Daomerge. He seemed to have gone completely berserk, and every single attack he used was that of the Space Sword Dao. The destructive yet ephemeral sword-light began to skyrocket in power as all six swords stabbed out at the same time.

Ning attacked using maximum power with each sword, and his swords were the Northbow Swords, the preeminent offensive swords in all the Chaosverse. Every single strike he unleashed had power comparable to those of the most powerful of Autarchs! It must be remembered that although Ning had fought for quite some time, he generally didn’t strike with full-force on his attacks, while very little energy was used up when he merely used evasion-arts. The amount of energy consumed when he went all-out was quite shocking!

Sword-light flashed again and again and again.

BOOM! Finally, a hole appeared in one corner of this dimension, revealing the dark world outside. Swoosh! Ning immediately charged outside.

As soon as Ning charged outside the formation, he instantly appeared in front of a palace within the palace complex. He blinked inside the palace, slaughtering all of the true Sithe within it! As for the Sithe progeny, he confiscated all of their treasures and then locked them up for later testing. If they were truly loyal to the Sithe, they would be put to death in the future.

“Whew.” Ning’s face was rather ashen after he finished mopping up everyone in the palace complex. “Now that sucked. I only have six hundred chaos cycles left,” Ning said with a self-mocking chuckle. He had been forced to use too much power, using maximum-force blows each time as he rained a total of eighteen consecutive blows upon the formation in order to escape it.

And this was after Ning had spent a full hour analyzing the dimension, discovering some of its critical points. Although he wasn’t even close to being able to solve it, by focusing his attacks on those critical points he was able to make his attacks ten times more effective than they otherwise would be. This was why he had chosen to take the risk of launching eighteen full-strength attacks with his Space Sword Dao.

An Autarch who was trapped in a similar situation would’ve been able to escape much more easily. He could’ve simply launched nonstop attacks! An Autarch would not run out of energy, and so after ten thousand attacks the formation would be unable to withstand it any longer and collapse.

“Six hundred chaos cycles,” Ning mused to himself. Based on his original estimates, he would probably die after another hundred full-force strikes... and based on his actual energy usage, the ten-plus full-strength blows he had launched had resulted in his lifespan being reduced from ten thousand chaos cycles down to six hundred!

This was because a Daolord’s crumbling truesoul was like a cracking dam! The more he attacked, the greater the cracks would become. When he first started to fight, the crack would double in size and the truesoul crumbling speed would double. As a result, his lifespan would shorten by half, from around 12,000 chaos cycles to just 6000 chaos cycles!

As he continued to attack, his lifespan would drop by yet another half. The second time, it would ‘merely’ drop from 6000 chaos cycles to 3000 chaos cycles.

After that, 1500 chaos cycles. After that, 750...

It only took four or five ‘rounds’ of attacks for his lifespan to drop from 12,000 chaos cycles to 600 chaos cycles, and it would continue to drop from there on. After another ten or so rounds, his lifespan would be reduced to just half a chaos cycle. Technically, however, those ten rounds would ‘only’ have consumed around 599 chaos cycles, whereas the first few rounds consumed over 10,000 chaos cycles.

Clearly, the more he fought the smaller the absolute value of the effect on his lifespan would be. Alas, once his truesoul crumbled to a certain degree it would completely fall apart! Much like a dam which was riddled with cracks would eventually collapse, Ning would die after roughly a hundred full-force strikes.

“Six hundred chaos cycles... it’ll be enough!” Ning revealed a smile. “At least I’m still alive. It was all thanks to that extra hour that I managed to survive and escape.”

His truesoul was now crumbling at a far, far faster rate than it had been in the past. Ning raised his head to stare towards the skies. “Next will be the Sacred Realm.”

Aside from Ning, Purgatory no longer held any other living beings at all.

The Desolate Era

Book 41: The Daoguard Tower Chapter 26: Daoguard Tower

Although Ji Ning very much wanted to bring the Paragon of Pills out alive, he knew that there was a high chance that he would die on this trip to the Sacred Realm.

“Before going there, I need to first take a look at the cultivation methods these Sithe descendants used.” Ning had always been curious as to how the Sithe had trained their progeny! Their descendants were born and bred within Ning’s Chaosverse, making it impossible for them to train in true Sithe techniques. How, then, did the Sithe teach them? Did they just hand over normal cultivator techniques, or did they use other retrofitted techniques?

Whoosh. Ning willed his Sword Dao Domain to expand outwards, preventing anyone from scrying him. At the same time, he caused a dazed-looking blood-robed Emperor to appear next to him. This was one of the several Emperors and Hegemons Ning had captured.

“Greetings, Daolord,” the blood-robed Emperor said hurriedly with respect.

“Mm. I’m going to ask you a few questions. Be a good boy and answer them for me,” Ning said.

“Go ahead, Daolord. I’ll tell you everything I can,” the blood-robed Emperor replied obediently. Moments later, his gaze turned rather muddled as an illusion took hold of him. He didn’t even try to resist it, and even if he did Ning had reached a far higher level in the Dao of Illusions. The tiny strand of sword-intent which Ning had sent into his consciously was enough to completely suppress his mind, ensuring that the following illusions worked without fail.

It was much like how ordinary mortals might find themselves going totally blank when they saw something that left them absolutely awestruck. They would briefly lose all capability of rational thought.

Autarchs who didn’t specialize in the Dao of Illusions were still able to take advantage of their overall overwhelming superiority to ensure that Hegemons would be unable to resist them. Trapping Hegemons within illusions was extremely simple... but of course, the stronger one’s Dao-heart was, the less effective this mind-suppressive technique would be.

“The Sithe truly are vicious.” Ning continued to flip through this Emperor’s memories. “They actually have forced all of their descendants to swear lifeblood oaths to obey all orders the Exalt gives them. That way, it’ll be extremely difficult for the descendants to break free from the Sithe, even if they wanted to.”

“Huh. They actually train in the exact same types of techniques that we cultivators use.” Ning shook his head. “Even the teaching methods are the same.”

He flipped through some of the memories he cared about the most, but didn’t find any pleasant surprises. Ning then began to review the many memories of the life which this Emperor had lived. This Emperor had been alive for so long and had so many memories that even Ning would need quite a bit of time to process them all. Ning primarily kept his focus on finding hints which would give him a better

chance to develop a perfect cultivation path like the one the Sithe used. He wanted to find something that could let him continue to live.

If he could live, why should he seek death? Hope was reserved for the living alone, and so Ning had never given up hope.

He spent a total of three days flipping through this Emperor's memories at high speed. Suddenly, a look of delighted shock appeared on Ning's face. "So this is..."

Long, long ago, the Sithe had transmitted certain special cultivation techniques for their progeny to try out! However, many Sithe descendants encountered problems during the testing process. Some self-detonated and died, while others saw their truesouls destroyed. The Sithe tested out a total of nine different types of techniques, but all of them ended up in failure. Even though the ninth and final technique allowed one to become a Daolord of the First Step, upon actually becoming a Samsara Daolord the cultivator's body would crumble and their truesoul would shatter apart.

From that day forth, the Sithe gave up their research into those nine unique techniques and started to pass down cultivator techniques to their children instead. Much like Ning, they trained in divine power and Immortal energy.

"Nine unique techniques?" A look of delight was on Ning's face. "The ninth one in particular... it actually allows divine power, Immortal energy, and all other types of energy to join together, strengthening both body and soul. Only, it would fail once the practitioner actually became a Samsara Daolord."

"Only the most supreme of Sithe could've created something like this. I wager it came from their Lord of Chaos, who repeatedly attempted to create a perfect cultivation technique suited for our Chaosverse." Ning felt rather excited.

"Nine techniques in total, with each cultivator swearing an oath not to pass it down to anyone else? I have to find them."

Ning felt a sense of excitement and desire for these techniques. The Sithe had failed in their nine special techniques, because they couldn't truly and directly connect to the Dao of this Chaosverse. Ning, however, could! He might not be at the same level as the Lord of Chaos, but if he acquired those nine Sithe techniques... maybe, just maybe, there would be a chance.

He knew that the chance was extremely low, but he still wanted to give it a shot.

The Hegemons and Emperors who Ning had captured had all been alive for an extremely long period of time. They all knew of the nine secret techniques, but they had all painstakingly followed the normal route to becoming Emperors. Most of them hadn't even been taught those special techniques! Three of them did know the techniques, but they had sworn oaths not to transmit them; if they attempted to do so, their truesouls would shatter and they would die.

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Outside the hidden dimension.

The black-robed Ning was alongside the avatars of Autarch Titanos and Autarch Mogg. They had been searching for many years for a way to break into the hidden dimension. During this period of time, all

the other Autarchs had also come over to give it a try, but none of them were able to lock onto the exact location of that hidden dimension.

“Autarch Titanos. Autarch Mogg.” Ning asked hurriedly, “Autarchs, have you heard of nine special techniques which the Sithe once bestowed upon their progeny?”

“We know of this, yes.” Autarch Titanos nodded slowly. “During the Dawn War, we actually fought against a number of Sithe descendants during our war against the Sithe. All of them were completely loyal to the Sithe and they fought like rabid dogs. Most of us were filled with bloodlust at the time and showed them no mercy at all. The only one who actually held back and captured a few of them was Autarch Skyfeeder. When she reviewed their memories, she came to learn that the Sithe had once transmitted nine special techniques to them, but all of those techniques were failures.”

The nearby Autarch Mogg nodded. “Most likely, the Sithe wanted to mass-produce a large number of Hegemons or perhaps even Autarchs! They could have their descendants swear lifeblood oaths to never rebel against them, after all. If they succeeded, they would be able to draw power from our Chaosverse... at which point, they could murder those descendants and steal their power, weakening our Chaosverse.”

Ning nodded.

“But they failed. As for those nine techniques, we wanted to find them to see if there was anything which might inspire us,” Autarch Titanos said, “But after the Dawn War concluded, we were unable to find any traces of Sithe descendants, and so we had nowhere to start.”

“What about the ones Autarch Skyfeeder captured?” Ning asked.

“All of them swore lifeblood oaths to never transmit those techniques. When we tried to forcibly rip the techniques out of their memories, their truesouls crumbled apart.” Autarch Titanos shook his head. “Given that we were unable to find any more Sithe progeny after this, we let the matter rest.”

Ning quickly understood. Sithe progeny were quite rare, and it was also fairly hard to recognize them at a glance. They looked just like ordinary cultivators, after all! The Autarchs couldn’t just spend their time wandering the cosmos and flipping through the memories of cultivators at random, right?

“The Sithe descendants.” Ning knew that many of the weaker Sithe descendants in the hidden dimension had never even heard of those nine techniques, much less studied them! The only ones who might truly know those techniques were the high-status Sithe who had been along for a long period of time. Those were generally at the Emperor level.

“I have to spend some time searching this hidden dimension and do my best to find those nine techniques,” Ning mused.

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The Sacred Realm. The Elder Hall.

The blue-haired Exalt remained seated upon his throne, with a large number of Emperors and Hegemons gathered before him. Some of them were true Sithe, while some had been raised and trained over the course of countless years within this enormous hidden region. The Sithe had put quite a bit of

effort into rearing these descendants, and their success rates were significantly higher than what the native cultivators were used to.

“Ever since the Dawn War ended... I, Exalt Bowenya, have been stationed in this dimension. I have been here for a very, very long time.” The blue-haired Exalt stared downwards, then continued slowly, “I feel a sense of deep attachment to this dimension, and I truly do not wish for trouble to occur here. In fact, I don’t even wish for a second war to begin against the cultivators.”

“However... that isn’t a choice I can make! Nor is that a choice any of you can make!” The blue-haired youth stared downwards at them. “A terrifying Daolord has arisen amongst the cultivators, and we have only one choice available to us... kill him!”

“If we can kill him, even sacrificing this entire dimension would be worth it.” The blue-haired youth let out a sigh. “I know that this place is home for many of you Hegemons... and I view it as home as well. I’ve spent the majority of my long life here. Life here has been peaceful and gentle. I don’t want to give it up.”

“But once this Daolord came here, our peaceful life came to an end.” The blue-haired youth’s voice rang out within the Elder Hall, and all of the silent Hegemons and Emperors began to emanate a murderous aura.

Some wanted to kill the Daolord for the great rewards they would be given... but most hated the fact that he had come here and embroiled them in war once more! They didn’t want to fight... but not even Exalts would dare to violate the standing orders of the most supreme Sithe!”

The Desolate Era

Book 42: The Five Truncheon Chapter 1: Hawkgang

“Exalt, who in the world is this white-robed Daolord? Why must we sacrifice everything for the sake of killing him?” One of the many Hegemons below the Exalt, a Sithe descendant, couldn’t help but ask this question. To this very day, the Sithe descendants had no idea what ‘a Daolord who has mastered an Eternal Omega Dao’ truly represented for the Sithe. In truth, the Sithe didn’t dare to tell their descendants too much either!

In the end, their descendants were native to this Chaosverse and had grown up here. Strictly speaking, it was destined for them to be unable to walk the same path together, and so they were purposefully kept in the dark regarding many things. As a result, they now felt that this was completely incomprehensible and not worth them losing their lives over!

“Right, Exalt! We had thought that killing him would be very easy, but Purgatory was defeated even after we gave it a pair of Apocalypse-class treasures. This Daolord is too powerful! Aside from the three Elder Halls, we don’t have any treasures that are superior to the ones we already sent down, but the three Elder Halls are immobile. If we want to proactively attack him, we’ll be at a huge disadvantage. Many of us will probably die.”

“We can simply keep him exiled in Purgatory and wait for his truesoul to collapse. He’ll still die, right? Why is it necessary for us to pay such an enormous price?”

“Why do we have to fight with him to the death?”

“Is such an enormous price truly worth it?” The Sithe descendants voiced their arguments, one by one. The true Sithe were silent. They knew the details behind this, but they didn’t dare to expose them! They had been ordered long ago to restrict the amount of contact between them and their descendants, for fear of their descendants learning the ‘truth’ and losing faith.

“Worth it?” The blue-haired youth, ‘Exalt Bowenya’, let out a soft sigh from atop his throne. “Yes... I, too, feel that it isn’t worth it.” Exalt Bowenya stared downwards. “But I’ve already told you everything I can. The things I have left unsaid, I have done so because I am not permitted to! If I told you the truth, I would be violating Sithe laws and my truesoul would be annihilated.”

“All you need to know is this! Our dimension may seem large, but we are nothing more than a small part of the Sithe race and empire. This is nothing more than a small part of Sithe territory.” Exalt Bowenya waved a finger, causing an image to appear in midair of the white-robed Daolord. “As for him... he is of grave importance to the entire Sithe civilization. We have to destroy him and then capture his truesoul. This will be an enormous accomplishment for our race! Sacrificing our entire hidden dimension will be worth it, yes. Even if the sacrifice was greater, it would still be worth it.”

Everyone below fell silent. The Sithe descendants also knew that they were nothing more than a small part of the massive Sithe empire as a whole.

“If we go against our orders, our entire dimension will be punished and annihilated. All of us, including myself, will be put to death.” Exalt Bowenya’s voice was glacially cold, and the Hegemons below him all felt an invisible sense of oppression. If they tried to find a way out, the only result would be death.

“There’s no way out. We have to kill him. If we kill him, we’ll all be rewarded heavily. If we do not... we will all die! If you must blame someone, blame that Daolord for having come to our home,” Exalt Bowenya said. “Now... obey my orders.”

None of the Hegemons voiced any further complaints. The true Sithe knew that there was no way to avoid this, while the Sithe progeny all knew that shirking back meant death.

“Jonnbach,” Exalt Bowenya called out. An extremely muscular four-armed man with curly hair who was three meters tall had been standing close to the front of the throng of Hegemons. He stepped forward and said respectfully, “Exalt.”

“Jonnbach, it is now time for war. We are throwing everything we have into this battle against that Daolord. You have past experience with controlling an Elder Hall, and so from this day forth you shall be the controller of the ‘Iceland’ Elder Hall.”

“Understood.” Jonnbach was a true Sithe and was second only to the Exalt in power. He had a perfect Dao-heart and was highly venerated amongst the Sithe.

“Hawkfang.” Exalt Bowenya’s gaze turned towards another man. Instantly, the entire hall began to stir. Some of the true Sithe began to frown, while others remained quite calm. Most of the Sithe progeny, however, grew excited. Hawkfang was a leader amongst the Sithe descendants and extremely powerful.

“Exalt.” Hawkfang bowed respectfully. His face was calm, and he was dressed in long black robes. His eyes seemed to contain an endless universe of space and time within them.

Exalt Bowenya couldn't help but secretly sigh to himself when he saw this. Hawkfang was a descendant he held in high regard, and was the son of a friend. The man was extremely talented and had reached Hegemony in a very short period of time. He stood a very good chance of becoming an Autarch in the future! Even the supreme leader of the Sithe paid a great deal of attention to Hawkfang.

Alas, during the Dawn War, Hawkfang's father (another Exalt) died in battle. Ever since then, Hawkfang seemed to have become filled with many thoughts and worries, resulting in him being unable to progress any further in his path of cultivation. The entire Sithe race sighed at the loss.

It must be remembered that if Sithe descendants became what the locals called 'Autarchs', then as natives to this Chaosverse they would gain full control over the power of the local Dao. An extra 'Autarch' on the side of the Sithe would be of enormous assistance to them.

As the supreme leader of the Sithe once said: "Hawkfang simply hasn't experienced enough. The only place he has ever lived is that single small dimension. The death of his father caused his heart to be filled with turmoil. He is unable to perfect his Dao-heart and he no longer has any chance of reaching Autarchy! If he had been able to spend more time wandering the universe, his father's death wouldn't have dealt such a deadly blow to his psyche. Now that a shadow has been cast over his heart, it will be very difficult for him to perfect his Dao-heart!"

He had been such a promising figure, but now he was destined to be mediocre! Still... in this dimension, Hawkfang remained the most talented member of the Sithe descendants, and he had reached Hegemony in a total of six Daos!

"Starting now, Hawkfang, you shall be in control of the same Elder Hall your father controlled – the 'Flameland' Elder Hall," Exalt Bowenya said. "Your father died a glorious death in battle for the sake of the Sithe. I hope you will prove to be as fearless as your father was and destroy this Daolord for the Sithe."

"Understood." Hawkfang remained completely expressionless as he bowed respectfully.

"Jonnbach, Hawkfang, the two of you should immediately go to your respective Elder Halls and take control over them. Once you do so, the three of us shall decide on a strategy for dealing with this Daolord," Exalt Bowenya instructed. "As for the other Hegemons, await your deployment orders."

"Understood." The throng of Hegemons and Emperors all acknowledged the order.

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The three Elder Halls were all glowing with white light. One of them was shining brighter than the other two, which were slightly dimmer. They had lain untouched for many years, after all; they were simply functioning on auto-mode.

Whoosh. The black-robed Hawkfang suddenly flew through the air, moving towards the towering, twelve-storied tower which emanated a scorching aura. When he arrived before it, he raised his head and stared upwards, a lost look in his eyes.

"Father," Hawkfang murmured softly. He still clearly remembered his father bringing him here when he was young. This was his father's Daoguard Tower, and they had played together here. Life back then had been truly carefree, and he had been so incredibly talented that he had succeeded in everything he

tried. His father had arranged him to experience a few setbacks to temper him, but they barely slowed him down at all. He had reached the Daomerge with incredible speed, then completed it and reached Hegemony.

“It’s been so long, but I’ve come again.” Hawkfang reached out to touch the tower. He could still remember that battle clearly.

During the Dawn War, his avatar had accompanied his father in their grand campaign. Towards the end of the war, they had fallen into dire straits. His father had personally destroyed his avatar, not wishing for his avatar to fall into the hands of their cultivator enemies. If the Autarchs managed to capture his avatar, they were completely capable of using karma to slay his true body as well! In contrast, when his father killed his avatar it would have no impact at all. Avatars didn’t matter too much to Hegemons, as they could simply remake them after they were destroyed.

In the end, his father had died during that battle. He had died at the hands of a cultivator known as ‘Autarch Bolin’.

“The cultivators...” Hawkfang mused to himself, “Am I a Sithe, or am I a cultivator?” Hawkfang shook his head. “Let us fight, then. If you can’t even stop someone like me, then you deserve to die. Even if I really am a cultivator, killing some of them in Father’s memory isn’t that big a deal.” He stepped into the tower.

“Young master.” A black golem instantly appeared on the first floor of the great tower, and it bowed respectfully: “I’ve already received orders to hand the entire Daoguard Tower over to you.”

“Mm.” Hawkfang nodded. He immediately took control over the entire Elder Hall and began to make plans to deal with the white-robed Daolord based on the various tricks and traps the hall contained.”

The Desolate Era

Book 42: The Five Truncheon Chapter 2: Illusion Sword Dao

Hawkfang and Jonnbech quickly familiarized themselves with their respective Elder Halls. After doing so, they went to meet with Exalt Bowenya again. The three met within a quiet side hall and began to discuss their battle plans.

“Exalt, these are all the tools which my ‘Iceland’ Elder Hall possesses.” Jonnbech waved his hand, causing a scroll to appear. This scroll was covered with dense scribbling which recorded the various offensive techniques the Iceland Hall possessed.

“These are all the attacks which the ‘Flameland’ Elder Hall can use.” Hawkfang also produced a scroll which was covered with a complete record of what his hall could do.

Exalt Bowenya carefully inspected both the scrolls. “Huh. My old friends certainly put a great deal of countermeasures inside their Daoguard Towers.” Exalt Bowenya chuckled. “My plans for dealing with this Daolord are simple. Let’s fight him openly and use the overwhelming power over our three Daoguard Towers to fight and kill him head-on.”

“Fight and kill him head-on? How?” Jonnbech asked, while Hawkfang simply listened without saying a word.

“Simple. Our three Daoguard Towers shall use all the long-distance attacks available to us, as well as treasures that are strong enough to pose a threat to him! Everyone else will swarm him as we do so, and we’ll wipe him out at the base of the Sacred Mountains,” Exalt Bowenya said.

Both Jonnbech and Hawkfang were startled. This was an extremely vicious ploy! They had been planning on setting down layers of traps to slowly whittle away at the Daolord’s longevity until he finally died, but Exalt Bowenya had a far crueler plan in mind.

They were going to send all the Hegemons and Emperors to attack while the Daoguard Towers launched virtually all of their attacks from afar! They would literally focus all of their firepower in one massive bombardment, using all of their tricks and traps and offensive powers at the same time. This was indeed likely to result in the Daolord’s death, but the maddened Daolord would probably butcher many of the Hegemons and Emperors swarming him. However, Jonnbech and Hawkfang didn’t voice any dissent. The Exalt was the final decision-maker, after all.

“What if he doesn’t die at the base of the Sacred Mountains?” Hawkfang asked.

“How could he possibly survive that many attacks?” Jonnbech frowned.

“And what if he does?” Hawkfang repeated.

Bowenya smiled coldly. “Then the only things left to us shall be our respective Daoguard Towers. Even if it costs us our very lives, we have to kill him... because if we can’t kill him, we will still die.”

“My plan is to have 70% of the Hegemons and Emperors take part in the battle at the base of the Sacred Mountains. The remaining 30% of them will be split amongst the three of us. If it really does come down to a series of final battles involving our Daoguard Towers, we’ll need their help.” Bowenya chuckled.

“He’s nothing more than a Daolord whose truesoul is crumbling away. Our three towers should be enough to kill him.”

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Exalt Bowenya gave the order, and the entire Sacred Realm sprinted into motion. An awesome number of Samsara Daolords were teleported away from it, while some of the most supremely talented Daolords were actually given a chance to take part in the fight as well! They were given Sithe weapons and would be sent out as fodder to exhaust that terrifying Daolord in battle.

Rumble... the levitating Realmgate suddenly activated, once more glowing with the same dazzling light that it had emanated for countless years. The Realmgate was a hundred thousand kilometers tall, and it radiated eye-catching splendor.

Ji Ning was seated in the lotus position on the ground. He raised his head to glance at the distant Realmgate. “The Realmgate has been activated. However... I’m in no rush to go there just yet.” Ning then shut his eyes again, once more focusing on the Dao of Illusions.

Ever since he had learned of those nine special techniques, he had scoured the memories of all the Hegemons and Emperors he had captured. However, there had been two Hegemons who had extremely

powerful Dao-hearts. Ning had been unable to successfully review their memories! Ning was planning to capture more Hegemons during this trip into the Sacred Realm. He had to improve his mastery over the art of illusions, improving it to Hegemony!

Ever since he had mastered the Eternal Omega Sword Dao, he had been able to quickly master other Daos as well. For example, he had long ago reached Hegemony in the Dao of Space and the Dao of Time. Training to Hegemony was quite simple, but fusing them into his Eternal Omega Sword Dao was fairly difficult.

As for the Dao of Illusions? Ning had yet to upgrade it to Hegemony, much less infuse it into his sword-arts.

Time continued to pass on. He was able to reach Hegemony in the Dao of Illusions after merely eighty thousand years. It could be said that Ning was now at a level where he could easily reach Hegemony in any Dao he desired, even complicated Daos such as the Dao of Numerancy or the Dao of Karma. They might take a bit more time, but he could still do it. To Ning, however, there wasn't much of a point to doing so. These Daos were only useful when he infused them into his Eternal Omega Sword Dao.

Time continued to flow on. A hundred million years. A billion years. Ten billion years...

The Sacred Realm had finished making its preparations long ago. The Sithe were waiting for Ning... and they began to grow a bit anxious.

"Why hasn't that Daolord come yet?"

"It has been nearly half a chaos cycle. How much longer does he plan to train for?"

"If this continues, is it possible that he'll just naturally expire and his truesoul will crumble?" The Sithe were all rather worried.

"Don't worry. He won't. The fact that he is still cultivating is proof that he very much wants to stay alive. He wouldn't be willing to just train until his death."

"Let's keep waiting. That's the only choice we have! He's the only living person in all of Purgatory right now. There's no way for us to set up any formations there, and the power of the three Elder Halls would be dramatically weakened if used in Purgatory. We used two Apocalypse-class treasures which were a perfect counter against him, but both failed. There's no point in sending anyone else with any other treasures to Purgatory. Our only choice is to wait."

Ning was simply too powerful. In the end, even the 'perfect counters' against him had failed. Their only chance was to rely on their Daoguard Towers and wait for Ning to come to them. The Daoguard Towers, however, were in the Sacred Realm! Thus, the Sithe had to remain in the Sacred Realm. They wouldn't dare go to Purgatory!

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One chaos cycle. Two chaos cycles. Ten chaos cycles. A hundred chaos cycles...

Ning's Primaltwin in the outside world was training as well, paying no heed to the Sithe who were being driven mad with impatience.

Finally, the day came when a small smile appeared in Ning's face. He had been completely absorbed in cultivating for many years now, and today he finally felt the joy of finding the Dao he sought! He slowly opened his eyes, and his gaze seemed to be filled with illusions of the birth and destruction of all things in spacetime.

Boom! A strange surge of power flowed through the Sword Dao Domain around him, causing countless illusions to appear. Countless living beings were born, lived, and fought against each other. Some of them even possessed rudimentary levels of sentience. It could be said that they already had some of the qualities of actual living beings.

"I never would've imagined that when the Dao of Illusions came together with my Eternal Omega Sword Dao, its power would skyrocket by such a great amount. My illusions are beginning to become reality." Ning could sense that the illusory life forms he had created were all 'real'. They had their own sentience and even some rudimentary emotions; the only thing they lacked was a sense of self-awareness.

Ning now felt rather reluctant to bring this illusion to an end. Once he did, it would represent the annihilation of all the living beings within this illusory realm.

"So the guesses of countless cultivators who came before me were correct. If one can reach an incredibly high level in the Dao of Illusions, one truly can turn illusions into reality," Ning mused. "If I can make another breakthrough and upgrade my Omega Dao to Autarchy, I'll probably be able to make everything within my heartworld projection real."

With another thought, Ning gradually cast the illusory world around him into darkness. The countless beings within that world all fell asleep... and then, the illusion came to an end.

Although he was rather unwilling to part with them, he couldn't just spend all his time and energy maintaining that illusory realm.

"Illusions... reality... I imagine there are many cultivators who would rather live in an illusory realm." Ning's Illusion Sword Dao had reached such a level where many cultivators would willingly allow themselves to be captured by it, because it truly did feel extremely real. Only a tiny little bit of difference remained between it and true reality.

Ning's truesoul was affected by the power of his Illusion Sword Dao as well. Reality and illusion intersected repeatedly, resulting in his truesoul feeling more comfortable than ever before. Even the truesoul's crumbling speed was somewhat lessened! Ning's mastery of the Wind Sword Dao and Lightning Sword Dao had been of negligible benefit to his truesoul, but the Illusion Sword Dao was clearly quite helpful.

"For the sake of this Illusion Sword Dao, I spent a total of 185 chaos cycles in training! However, the Illusion Sword Dao has caused my truesoul to slow down its rate of crumbling. As a result, I still have six hundred chaos cycles left." Ning couldn't help but let out an involuntary chuckle. "I guess you really do win some and lose some."

"Now that I have mastered the Illusion Sword Dao, it is time to review the memories of those two Hegemons." Ning once more summoned the two Hegemons he had captured.

As soon as the two Hegemons looked at Ning, they instantly fell into a dazed stupor. Ning's mastery of the Illusion Sword Dao meant only Autarch Stonerule, the master of the Illusion Daobirth Essence, was superior to him in the art of illusions... and only somewhat superior at that. The other Autarchs were all slightly inferior to Ning in this regard! And so, Ning was able to review the memories of the various Hegemons with ease.

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Book 42: The Five Truncheon Chapter 3: Wandering the Sacred Realm Alone

This was another testament to how formidable the path of the Omega Dao was. Mastering the Eternal Omega Sword Dao put Ji Ning on par with the Autarchs, and as Ning infused more and more Daos into his Sword Dao, he began to improve in many other areas as well. Given enough time, he would undergo a final transformation and reach a higher level, the level which the entire cultivator civilization yearned for!

"A pity. Once again, no luck with those nine techniques." Ning slowly shook his head. "They are all bound by lifeblood oaths. There's no way to review those techniques at all. Can it really be possible that every single Hegemon and Emperor was bound by a lifeblood oath? Is there really no way at all?"

"No. The probability may be low, but there always is a chance. Mm. Well. Time to go to the Sacred Realm." Ning lifted his head to stare at the towering Realmgate. It had been glowing with dazzling light for many years now.

Ning took a single step forwards and moved towards the Realmgate. After stepping inside, he entered yet another tunnel that was formed from many different folds of dimensional space. This was the dimensional passageway which led to the Sacred Realm.

This time, he didn't suffer any attacks within the dimensional passageway. Sneak attacks had clearly proven to be useless against him, after all, and letting him die alone in exile wasn't worth it. They had been waiting for him for many years now... waiting for him to come to the Sacred Realm.

"The Sacred Realm." Ning stood at the exit to the tunnel, staring at the Sacred Realm around him. "Odd. I thought that this place would be quite dangerous, that there would be many different traps and formations awaiting my arrival. Who would've thought that there'd be nothing here?" Ning was rather surprised. There was no way any ambush could escape his detection. Ning had been planning to rely on his Storm Sword Dao to flee at high speeds if he discovered any traps, but now it seemed as it was all unnecessary.

Swoosh! Ning flew away from the Realmgate and into the skies. He stared down at the vast world around him, quickly seeing the palaces and estates which were located off in the distance. Clearly, there had once been many people who had lived here. Now, the entire Sacred Realm was deathly silent. All the Daolords had been evacuated, leaving their empty estates behind.

Ning took a deep breath, and as he did so a surge of energy flowed into his body, making him feel quite comfortable. An awesome aura of power pervaded this entire place. The energy here was so dense than an entire army of Hegemons could draw upon it and use it to cultivate.

"What a truly wonderful 'Sacred Realm'," Ning said with an approving chuckle.

“Daolord.” An icy void suddenly echoed in the skies above the Sacred Realm.

“Is that the Sithe Exalt?” Ning stood there in midair, a smile on his face. “I thought you’d attack me as soon as I exited the Realmgate. I didn’t expect you to behave so courteously.”

“I, Bowenya, have been waiting for you for many years now, Daolord,” the icy void said.

“I, Darknorth, was teleported into this place by you Sithe. Heh.” Ning chuckled. “Honestly, I would really rather not fight you. If you just let me go, that would be the best outcome for both of us! Otherwise, our only option is to fight each other.”

Many of the Sithe descendants were moved by these words. They knew just how powerful Daolord Darknorth was, and they weren’t willing to fight him. If it truly was possible for them to avoid this battle, how wonderful it would be! However, they all knew that this was a fantasy. No one dared to disobey the orders from the supreme Sithe leader! There was no way out of this deadly battle.

“Daolord Darknorth?” The icy voice spoke out once more: “A fine name. There is no need for us to waste time on words. If you wish to leave this place, you must do so through overpowering us. Given how strong you are, I imagine you can tell where the exit path lies.”

“The exit path should lie within the Daoguard Tower in the very rear, I imagine,” Ning said. Ning was able to sense and scan the entire Sacred Realm through the power of his Wind Sword Dao, and he knew of the presence of those three Daoguard Towers.

All three Daoguard Towers had a total of twelve stories. Based on what Ning knew regarding the Sithe, this meant that these were Daoguard Towers which belonged to Sithe Exalts! There was no way they would be as easy to deal with as the Daoguard Tower he had dealt with some time ago. Ning’s acute attunement to space also allowed him to ascertain and verify that the center of the Sacred Realm, the place where all the dimensional controls were located, was within the Daoguard Tower at the very rear.

What he didn’t know was that during the Dawn War, all three Daoguard Towers shared part of the dimensional controls! After two of the Sithe Exalts died, the Daoguard Towers had been modified so that the only one which could be used to control this hidden dimension was the one which Exalt Bowenya controlled.

“Impressive, Daolord Darknorth.” The icy voice continued, “Then come and fight me, if you dare.”

“Hmph.” Ning let out an amused snort. “Be there shortly. Relax.”

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Ning began to leisurely fly through the Sacred Realm, blinking through the various regions within it and inspecting it carefully.

“Huh.” Ning stood before a mountain wall which was filled with many carvings as well as some cultivation techniques. “Now that’s interesting.” Ning was like a tourist, wandering through the various parts of the Sacred Realm and visiting many of the sects it held.

The Hegemons and Emperors had been waiting for battle for many years now, and they all felt rather speechless at Ning’s behavior. Still... they had already managed to wait for over a hundred chaos cycles. A bit more time would make no difference at all. They could be patient.

Ning spent a total of fifteen days touring the Sacred Realm.

“A pity. I didn’t find any trace of the nine techniques I’m interested in.” Ning couldn’t help but sigh to himself. The Sacred Realm had been used to train Samsara Daolords for countless aeons. Many techniques had been recorded here, and not all of them had been destroyed during the evacuation. Ning was able to broaden his horizons by inspecting the remaining ones, but he didn’t find the ones he really needed.

Whoosh. Ning began to fly closer towards the Sacred Mountains. There were a total of three towering Daoguard Towers at the peaks of three of the mountains, and they were all glowing with dazzling light that caused spacetime to ripple around them. The effect of the light extended to a distance of a trillion kilometers, and the effect was continuous. Not even Autarch Mogg, who specialized in the Dao of Space, would be able to teleport through this region, to say nothing of Ning.

This was one of the things which made an Exalt’s Daoguard Tower so incredibly dangerous! Spacetime was completely suppressed here.

“This truly is a beautiful world. A pity that it is about to be torn apart by war,” Ning said.

“Even if it is destroyed, we can remake it in the future,” that icy voice replied.

Ning said nothing further. He drew a Northbow sword from the sheath on his back, then continued to fly forwards as he carefully inspected the area around him. “I can sense danger within every inch of the Sacred Mountains. It doesn’t matter which direction I enter from; I’ll still be facing incredible danger. I have no choice but to just charge in.”

Whoosh. Ning continued to fly forwards. Suddenly, the hills below him began to tremble and shake, followed by rippling ley-lines to appear. A massive formation that was a hundred billion kilometers in size began to activate, and it completely separated the surrounding dimension away from the normal spacetime continuum.

“The Dimensional Separator again?” Ning shook his head and laughed. An area of a hundred billion kilometers around him had been completely separated from the outside world. Ning had suffered a similar attack while rescuing the Paragon of Pills. Ning couldn’t help but sigh at how the Sithe seemed to be able to play with space, cutting through it as though it was a cake.

Ning simply stood there in the air, sword at the ready as he calmly glanced at the stand-alone dimension which had been formed around him. He was waiting for them to come to him. If he didn’t fight, how was he supposed to capture more Emperors and search for those nine techniques?

Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. Vile auras began to appear at the margins of this sealed spacetime continuum, and the vile auras began to come together and form vilefiends. These vilefiends were all extremely powerful, the most powerful vilefiends Ning had seen thus far. They were probably all at the Otherverse Lord level of power.

“Exalt-level Daoguard Towers are able to make use of even more of the power of the Sithe energy generator. As a result, they can give birth to vilefiends of tremendous power. Still, for them to produce a total of 105 vilefiends of such power at once... they’ve probably brought out everything they built up

over the course of aeons." Ning remained quite calm. This was all as he had inspected. These vilefiends would at most be able to slow him down a bit.

"GWAAAAR!" "KILL!" "DIE!"

Cracks began to appear in the ground at the margins of this sealed continuum, and various creatures began to fly out of those cracks. Their eyes were all dead, and they were at varying levels of power. Some had auras comparable to Otherverse Lords, while others were noticeably more powerful. Still, they were all somewhat inferior to the likes of the Blazesun Ruler."

"Not that strong, but there are certainly quite a lot of them. If they all attack at once, it'll be a bit troublesome." Ning frowned slightly. It would consume quite a bit of his energy to kill all those vilefiends as well as those poor mind-controlled living golems.

Moments later, a total of nine figures appeared around Ning.

"Eh?" Ning frowned again. "Daolords?" The nine figures were all Samsara Daolords, but all of them were unspeakably powerful.

"Daolord Darknorth, we'll be more than enough to deal with you. You aren't worthy of the Hegemons and Emperors dirtying their hands!" The nine Daolords all had crazed looks in their eyes. Daolords were generally fearless to begin with, and the Sithe Exalt had offered them enormous rewards for this mission. He had also given them control over many vilefiends and living golems. They naturally were going to do their absolute utmost in this battle.

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Book 42: The Five Truncheon Chapter 4: Successfully Surrounded

Within this sealed continuum, Ji Ning's Sword Dao Domain was only able to extend up to a distance of one billion kilometers. The invisible suppressive power of the Sacred Realm was simply too strong.

"Attack! Once Daolord Darknorth's domain sweeps over us, we'll be dead," a black-winged Daolord sent mentally. Given Ning's power, even Hegemons and Emperors would fall to his domain unless they were protected by incredibly powerful treasures, to say nothing of mere Daolords. He would be able to toy with them as he pleased.

"You actually want to attack me with such a miniscule amount of power?" Ning made his move, transforming into a streak of light that flew towards the Daolord closest to him.

The nine Daolords were all separated at the margins of this sealed continuum, each in a different direction. That way, if Ning wanted to deal with them he would have to fly to them one-by-one.

"Kill!"

"Kill this Daolord!"

"Kill him!" The vilefiends and the living golems let out crazed roars as they fearlessly swarmed towards Ning, seeking to surround him. As for the nine Daolords, they immediately set up various treasures which were controlled by the power of a Daoguard Tower.

Ning's answer to this mass attack was to continue flying forwards at high speed while manifesting countless streaks of sword-light within his Sword Dao Domain. They sent the vilefiends and the living golems stumbling backwards, falling to the ground, or even go flying into the air. Only a tiny number of them were able to get close to Ning, with the majority unable to approach him.

This was why a powerful domain was so useful in battle. Ning was able to use it toy with anyone at or below the Otherverse Lord level of power.

Clack! Clack! Clack! Strange edifices began to appear in front of the nine Daolords. They looked like miniature castles, with each being 9,900 meters tall and completely golden. Semi-translucent towers could be seen at the very top of the castles. These nine Sithe treasures were controlled by the Daoguard Tower, and they were powerful treasures which could be used to attack from afar.

The main mission for these nine Daoguards was to get in and then put these nine treasures in position. If they managed to do that, they would have succeeded in their task!

"These Daolords truly are fools." Ning flew so incredibly fast that he was already within a billion kilometers of the first Daolord. His Sword Dao Domain instantly captured the Daolord, preventing him from moving at all.

"Get in here." Ning didn't attack, instead choosing to draw both the Daolord and the treasure into his estate-world, separating it from the power of the Daoguard Tower.

Riiiiiiip! Beams of dazzling, destructive energy spat out from the other eight castle towers, moving with incomprehensible speed and striking with nigh-Autarch levels of power! The attacks were incredibly powerful, but in the end they were generated by treasures. There was no way these attacks could compare with attacks from actual Autarchs in terms of profundity; they relied strictly upon overwhelming speed and power.

Swoosh! Ning used his Storm Sword Dao to evade. Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! He evaded all eight destructive rays of light. By the time those eight rays of light had flown tens of billion kilometers and reached Ning, Ning was able to brush past them and let them splatter against the distant dimensional membrane, causing it to tremble.

As for the vilefiends and living golems? The ones touched by the rays of light were instantly and easily chopped apart! However, the vilefiends and the living golems were able to quickly recover. Killing them wouldn't be that easy.

Rumble... suddenly, yet another rift appeared at the margins of this sealed continuum. A total of fifty-plus Hegemons and Emperors flew out from within this rift! Ning raised an eyebrow, then immediately transformed into a streak of light as he flew towards those fifty-plus Hegemons. However, as he did so another rift appeared in the distance. Another squad of fifty-plus Hegemons and Emperors appeared from this second rift as well.

"Eight of the nine treasures remain intact. Good enough." The Hegemons began to advance. When they saw that eight of the castle towers were once more glowing with destructive light, they couldn't help but secretly feel a sense of joy.

“This ‘Daolord Darknorth’ is nothing more than a Daolord whose truesoul is crumbling away. We have over a hundred Hegemons on our side and are supported by treasures from the Daoguard Tower. I refuse to believe we cannot kill him.”

“We’ll smash him apart with one coordinated strike. We’ll be rewarded for our victory and this calamity shall be at an end.”

“Attack!” The Hegemons and Emperors were brimming with malevolence. Whether it was because they had to obey orders, wanted to protect their home, or desired the great rewards promised, they had to kill Ning!

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! A miniature star began to appear in front of each of the hundred-plus Hegemons and Emperors. The hundred-plus miniature stars manifested runes which began to accumulate different but equally terrifying types of power.

“Flameland Astral Chains!”

“Iceland Astral Chains!”

The Hegemons began to launch their various weapons as well. The nine castle-like treasures were fixed in location and didn’t need to be controlled, but the various ‘astral chains’ were more complicated and needed to be controlled. Thus, the Sithe had sent over a hundred Hegemons and Emperors to man them. Each of the miniature stars was drawing power from the Daoguard Towers, then controlled by a Hegemon or Emperor to launch attacks via a formation that made it hard for Ning to dodge.

Whoosh! The fifty-plus Hegemons and Emperors to the left released streams of icy energy from their miniature stars. The icy energy shot straight towards Ning like rays of frozen light, completely freezing even spacetime. The combined power of the freezing energy was absolutely at the Autarch level of power; even Autarchs would be temporarily suppressed by such an assault.

To the right, streams of fiery golden light appeared as well, joining together and shooting towards Ning at terrifying speeds.

To one side, freezing cold. To the other, blazing heat. These were two diametrically different types of energy, and each was capable of threatening even an Autarch. When used in concert, they became even more terrifyingly powerful, especially now that they came together in accordance with an incredibly profound formation. They flew towards Ning in an intricate manner, making it almost impossible for him to dodge.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! The eight streams of apocalyptic light continued to attack as well, slowing down Ning’s movements.

“Hmph.” Ning moved like the storm, transforming into a blurry shadow of lightning and wind. However, the ‘Flameland Astral Chains’ and the ‘Iceland Astral Chains’ being used by the Hegemons and Emperors had completely locked onto Ning, and they arced in the air as they continued their pursuit of him.

“I can’t dodge them?!” A look of shock and anger appeared on Ning’s face, while looks of excitement appeared on the faces of the hundred-plus Hegemons and the eight Daolords.

Whoosh! Ning hurriedly retreated backwards, wishing to draw those two terrifying types of energy together and cause them to collide.

“That fool.”

“Did he think that our treasures would interfere with each other?”

“When the two astral chains link up, merging fire and ice together, the power shall only increase!” The Hegemons all smirked as they watched the freezing energy swirl together with the golden flames as both continued to shoot towards Ning. Finally, the energies began to clash together. Tink! Each collision was extremely soft, and the only result was a series of strange dimensional ripples being generated as the attacks became even more powerful.

They watched as Daolord Darknorth continued to retreat, his face ashen as he frantically used the Northbow sword in his hand to execute the Water Sword Dao. A stream of watery light circled around him, striving to block the attacks, but some of the destructive power managed to pierce through the water. Of course, this was with Daolord Darknorth doing his best to conserve his energy.

Daolord Darknorth had clearly been caught off-guard by the hundred-plus streams of energy assaulting him. He executed repeated sword-arts, striving to block as his truesoul began to crumble more quickly.

“Hahaha... the Exalt’s prediction was spot-on!”

“He might be fast, but the astral chains are a perfect counter for him. When the astral chains from the Flameland Elder Hall and the Iceland Elder Hall merge together, they are his absolute nemesis. It’ll be hard for us to kill him outright, but we’ll be able to exhaust a large amount of his energy and hasten the collapse of his truesoul.”

The Hegemons grew increasingly excited. To kill this terrifying Daolord was unrealistic; all they could do was exhaust as much of his power as was possible! Each time the Daolord defended, his lifespan would be shortened. Eventually, he would die without them needing to do a thing.

“Kill! Kill! Kill!”

“Again!” The Hegemons and Emperors were all in a wonderful mood.

Ning had gotten the worst of his first clash against them. This time, he transformed into a streak of light and shot straight towards them. Clearly, he wanted to try and capture or kill as many Hegemons as he could. If he succeeded, the astral chains would become ownerless and he could take them away with ease.

“Daolord Darknorth, our Exalt has already predicted your every move!” The Hegemons scattered every which way, but as they flew the miniature stars flew with them, allowing them to maintain the astral chain formations.

Boom! Yet another rift appeared at the borders, resulting in thirty-five more Hegemons appearing. After they appeared, they immediately produced their own treasures and joined together into a formation. Soon, a thick black miasma began to sweep out and cover the entire sealed continuum, causing an ominous feeling to arise in Ning’s heart.

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Book 42: The Five Truncheon Chapter 5: Exhaust Him!

Ji Ning remained quite calm, because this entire time he had the feeling that this sealed continuum had not finished revealing all of the dangers hidden within it. Although none of these dangers were truly lethal, if he didn't handle them correctly he would pay a heavy price for it.

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Inside the brightest of the three Elder Halls in this hidden dimension. Exalt Bowenya was looking nervously at the images in the air before him. The images were displaying the chaotic battle going on within the sealed spacetime continuum. Explosions were occurring everywhere as energy blasted about willy-nilly. Even though he was in control of the Sacred Realm, he wasn't able to clearly see what was going on in the battle. Clearly, a chaotic and terrifying war was going on, with all three Exalt-class Daoguard Towers focusing their long-distance firepower against Daolord Darknorth, with all the Hegemons working to assist the towers!

"What's the situation?" Exalt Bowenya barked coldly. He was able to get a vague sense of what was going on from watching the images, and it *seemed* as though his side held the advantage. They had surrounded Daolord Darknorth and were blasting him with attacks.

"Exalt." More than twenty avatars belonging to the battling Hegemons and Emperors were gathered next to him. True Sithe did not have avatars, as they were constantly being rejected and suppressed by this Chaosverse. It was impossible for them to use their godsense to keep and maintain an avatar.

In contrast, the Sithe descendants were native to this Chaosverse. They all had avatars. Clearly, then, the avatars located next to Exalt Bowenya all belonged to the Sithe progeny. These avatars belonged to the various squads who had been assigned to take part in this battle. Through them, the Exalt was able to quickly issue new orders as well as be updated on how the battle was progressing.

"Exalt, don't worry. We have an absolute advantage in this battle. We're definitely going to win," a horned man said excitedly. "The astral chains have completely countered Daolord Darknorth's advantages. Each time, he is forced to use his sword-arts to defend against us. He's constantly using up energy, and his truesoul is crumbling at an increasing pace while we are sending more and more people into the sealed continuum to assault him. He'll only be able to capture or kill one of two of us within a short period of time.

This sealed continuum was a hundred billion kilometers in size. Ning moved much more slowly due to all of the attacks raining down on him, and he was using up a lot of energy. As a result, he had to slowly move from Emperor to Emperor as he captured them.

"With our grand formation having been established, he won't have any chance at all of capturing anyone from our team of thirty-five Hegemons and Emperors," a black-robed elder said confidently.

"He's already used his sword-arts at least ten times by now, and this is just the beginning! We have many tools remaining that we haven't even used yet."

"Exalt, let us use all the tools we have at our disposal."

"Exalt, let us take part in the battle as well!"

“Alright.” Exalt Bowenya revealed a look of delight. “Hah! I knew it. He’s not going to pull anything unexpected out of his sleeves.”

The Exalt was no fool. Each plan he had used against Ning had a very high chance of success. In Purgatory, the Apocalypse-class castle would’ve stood a good chance of exhausting Ning to death, if it hadn’t been for Ning’s Storm Sword Dao allowing Ning to move much faster than anyone had anticipated.

As for the spacetime formation, the only reason why Ning had survived it was because the Apocalypse-class castle had bought him an extra hour of time to gain insight into a few of the formation’s mysteries. As a result, he had launched eighteen strikes and broke through that formation.

After these past two failures, the Sithe Exalt was actually beginning to lose confidence in himself. This time, however, everything was progressing smoothly in accordance with their plan. This caused him to feel quite delighted.

“This attack is much more powerful than the two previous attacks in Purgatory combined.” An expectant look was in Exalt Bowenya’s eyes. “We have three Daoguard Towers working together to rain attacks on him, after all, and we also have a large group of Hegemons and Emperors going all-out against him. Even if we can’t kill him head-on, we can exhaust him to death.”

“Send in the Bloodfiend Maze Formation as well,” Exalt Bowenya ordered.

“Understood!” Two of the Sithe descendants next to him immediately acknowledged the order respectively, then sent their squad of fifty-two Hegemons into battle as well.

“Have all eighteen of the Death Attendants enter as well!” Exalt Bowenya commanded.

Just a short while later... “Exalt, Daolord Darknorth is completely helpless against the Death Attendants. All he can do is rely on his speed to dodge. The more he dodges, the more awkward his movements become. We’re landing more and more attacks from the astral chain formations and the other formations, and he’s forced to use more and more sword-arts to defend.”

“His truesoul is beginning to crumble faster and faster.”

“Exalt, we’re definitely going to win!” All of the avatars of the Sithe taking part in the battle were extremely confident.

“Hahaha, I knew...!” Exalt Bowenya let out a laugh as he prepared to issue his final orders, but then he suddenly hesitated. He asked, “How many of our Hegemons and Emperors have been captured or killed?”

“Around sixty-five of them were taken or slain,” a black-robed elder said. Their formation was in control of the entire battlefield, allowing them to know the casualties they had suffered.

“Quite heavy.” Exalt Bowenya couldn’t help but smile, even as he said these words. Even if all the Hegemons died, it would be worth it if they killed Daolord Darknorth. Right now, just twenty percent or so had perished!

“Yes, our casualties are indeed quite heavy, but Daolord Darknorth is extremely important to the entire Sithe race. If we can kill him, it will all be worth it.” The Hegemons and Emperors were brimming with

the desire to do battle. They had known long ago that this would be a calamitous battle, but at least the situation was better than they had expected, even though more and more Hegemons and Emperors were being slain.

“If that’s the case, then send in the final two formation squads as well. All remaining Hegemons and Emperors, use your respective treasures to assist. Don’t let Daolord Darknorth focus his attention on any one area in particular,” Exalt Bowenya said.

“Yes.” Instantly, a large number of Hegemons and Emperors charged forth. This final wave included an enormous number of Emperors; there had to be over two thousand of them!

In truth, there was a limit to how many Hegemons could be used by the three Daoguard Towers. At most, eight hundred Hegemons was enough! More than two thousand of the other Hegemons were simply there to obscure Ning’s vision and to distract him. After all, Ning would continuously counter-attack and either kill or capture these Hegemons! If he managed to kill someone who was in control of a Daoguard Tower treasure, the impact would be significant, but if he only managed to kill one of the screeners, it would have no impact on the Sithe combat power.

Of course, even though these Emperors were merely a screening force, they were also provided with formations and Sithe treasures to slow Ning down.

“It seems I’ll be able to deal with Daolord Darknorth just by sacrificing a few Hegemons and Emperors.” Exalt Bowenya smiled broadly.

Time continued to tick past, second after second.

“We’ve already lost more than ninety Hegemons and Emperors.”

“Daolord Darknorth has used his sword-arts over forty times by now.”

“He managed to capture another thirty Hegemons and Emperors, but most of them were useless pawns. It won’t affect our combat power much. By now, he’s used his sword-arts over fifty times!”

The battle grew increasingly ferocious.

“He’s already captured over two hundred Hegemons and should have used his sword-arts at least eighty times by now. His truesoul is crumbling quite rapidly.” The avatars continued to make detailed combat reports to the Exalt.

“Over twenty Hegemons belonging to the Iceland Astral Chains have been captured. The formation has been destroyed!” Suddenly, this new report came out. The astral chain formations could still be maintained after suffering light casualties, but at a certain point it would still break apart.

“Keep fighting! Daolord Darknorth won’t be able to last much longer,” Exalt Bowenya said calmly. “He’s used his sword-arts many times... even if he didn’t go full-force for most of them, it should still have exhausted him tremendously.”

As time continued to flow on, three more of the major formations were breached as well. By now, Ning had either killed or captured over five hundred Hegemons and Emperors, and had used his sword-arts over 180 times.

“Almost. Almost!” Exalt Bowenya was waiting eagerly. “We’re going to win.” Each strike would consume a significant amount of Daolord Darknorth’s vitality, even if the strikes were not full-force. Based on his calculations, the Daolord would die after a total of around two hundred strikes.”

“We’ve lost over six hundred Hegemons and Emperors, while he’s already used his sword-arts more than two hundred times. We still have over two thousand people left, but we only have three formations remaining. Daolord Darknorth is quite clever; he’s been focusing his efforts on the Hegemons who are in control of the formations.”

“Hold nothing back!” Exalt Bowenya ordered coldly. “He’ll be dying any moment now, while we have over two thousand Hegemons and Emperors left. We’ll be able to exhaust him to death!”

But... for some reason, the closer they came to success, the more uneasy Exalt Bowenya suddenly began to feel. He shook his head, forcing down that uneasy feeling and reassuring himself that it had appeared because he wanted to win too badly.

“Over seven hundred Hegemons and Emperors have been captured, while we only have two main formations remaining; the other formations aren’t important and are just meant to screen the real ones. Daolord Darknorth hasn’t died yet!”

“Over eight hundred have been captured. He’s used his sword-arts over 250 times, but he still hasn’t died! We only have one main formation left.”

“Why hasn’t he died yet?!” Exalt Bowenya was growing increasingly nervous and impatient.

“Not good!”

“Exalt!” Suddenly, half of the remaining avatars turned completely ashen. One of them said frantically, “Exalt, we’ve been counter-trapped!”

“Counter-trapped?!” The Exalt was completely dumbfounded.