

Desolate 1451

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Book 44: The Dusk War Chapter 2: Ji Ning's First Massacre

Boom! The door to a private room swung open, followed by the white-robed Ji Ning striding out.

“Father.”

“Young master.” Brightmoon and Autumn Leaf were the nearest, and they immediately came over to greet him.

Ning looked at his daughter and his ‘elder sister’, then turned to gaze at the world around him. His gaze saw past the walls of reality, allowing him to see all of the chaosworlds of the Three Realms at a glance.

“I hope that the flames of war will not scorch the Three Realms,” Ning murmured softly to himself.

“Nuwa,” Ning sent mentally. Whoosh! A figure warped through space and immediately appeared before him. It was Mother Nuwa.

“Darknorth, why have you summoned me?” Nuwa smiled.

“The war against the Sithe has already begun,” Ning said. Nuwa and Brightmoon both turned pale. Autumn Leaf, however, simply had a puzzled look on her face. She was at a very low level of power, and so there were many secrets which she simply didn’t need to know. Brightmoon was both a Daolord of the Fourth Step and Ning’s daughter. She was more or less considered a member of the Three Realms’ highest echelon, and so she was naturally informed of many secrets as well.

“Father, the war has begun?” Brightmoon looked very anxious. “Th-then...”

“The war has begun. The Sithe are targeting the various Hegemons of our realmverses,” Ning said. “As for the countless mortals, World-level cultivators, and Daolords? They don’t really care. They won’t even waste too much energy on hunting down the weaker Emperors. It’ll be safer for you to stay in the Three Realms.”

As one of the paramount leaders of the cultivators, Ning naturally had to lead the charge! He would go wherever there was the most danger. The Sithe had failed during their last attempt. Given that they dared to come again, they had most assuredly made ample preparations and adjustments based on their past experiences. The Annihilation Hive alone proved to Ning that the Sithe were to be dreaded! Most likely, even their Autarchs would be at risk of dying.

This meant it would be very dangerous for his friends and family members in the Three Realms to accompany him. It was actually far safer for them to remain behind in the Three Realms instead.

“Take good care of the Three Realms.” Ning looked at Brightmoon then instructed solemnly, “Do everything you can to keep it safe.”

“Yes, Father,” Brightmoon said hurriedly.

Ning nodded slowly. He had long ago fashioned many formations and other treasures which would ensure that the Three Realms was almost completely impregnable! Even Sithe Exalts would have a difficult time breaking into it.

“Nuwa, I’ll send you to the front lines,” Ning said. Mother Nuwa nodded. As a Hegemon, she had to take part in this war!

Before leaving, Ning gave a lingering final glance to the world behind him. This was the world he had loved and had roamed for so many years. He had spent many years here in secluded meditation, teaching his disciples, and even gardening...

“Let’s go.” Ning said nothing else, immediately leading Mother Nuwa in warping away from the Three Realms.

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A vast, empty region outside the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance. This place had long ago been designated as a major battlefield, much like the Terror Starsea of the past.

“Here we are.” Ning only needed to warp through spacetime three times before arriving at the battlefield, Nuwa in tow. The dimensional ripples generated by their arrival meant that the two of them were almost instantly discovered, and the disheveled-looking ‘Realmslord Windgrace’ personally came to greet them.

“Emperor Darknorth,” Realmslord Windgrace said with incredible respect.

“Have you finished preparing the battlefield?” Ning asked.

“We finished long ago. The many treasures which Autarch Titanos gave us made the process quite quick.” Realmslord Windgrace was filled with confidence. “The battlefield before us is a first-class battlefield. The Hegemons and Emperors of the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance and many other nearby realmverses have all been gathered here. We have over 105 Hegemons alone, and many of them brought their avatars. If the Sithe dare come, we’ll wipe out as many as they send.”

Realmslord Windgrace was very confident because back during the Dawn War, the cultivators didn’t have nearly as many powerful weapons as they did right now. They had relied purely on formations, and as a result they had suffered incredibly heavy casualties.

They had won the Dawn War, and they had acquired many Sithe weapons as a result! Autarch Titanos had also spent countless aeons forging many similar weapons which were even more suitable for cultivators to use. Autarch Titanos normally kept them in reserve, because he didn’t want to let these super weapons throw the entire Chaosverse into a state of turmoil! However, ever since Ning and the others had begun to suspect that the seal over the Sithe heartlands had failed, they had immediately begun to make the necessary arrangements. They had started to prepare battlefronts in secret, with the Hegemons and Emperors all gathered there.

Nuwa was responsible for helping Ning protect the Three Realms. As a result, she was a bit of an outlier and was permitted to remain in the Three Realms. When the battle began, Ning sent her over in person.

Hegemon Brightshore and the others had long ago travelled to this battlefield. Most of them had only left behind weak, newly-created avatars behind in their respective realmverses. Once the war actually began, they would immediately discard those avatars and focus on maintaining and strengthening a single mighty avatar.

“Very good.” Ning smiled. “This is going to be a long-lasting war. We need to conserve as much of our power as possible, even as we try to slay as many enemies as is possible. The Sithe have been lying in wait for many, many years. Now that they have arisen anew, you absolutely must not be complacent or underestimate them.”

“Understood,” Realmslord Windgrace responded.

“I’m off then.” Ning gave Nuwa a final glance, then turned and disappeared without a trace.

Mother Nuwa and Realmslord Windgrace both watched as Ning disappeared. They knew that as an Autarch-class combatant, Ning was responsible for many battlefronts throughout the entire Chaosverse.

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Swoosh! Ning appeared at the margins of a different realmverse. His godsense was so great that it was able to cover an area a hundred times vaster than a single realmverse. As a result, he was able to investigate everything within this realmverse with ease.

“There are no Sithe here.” Ning immediately warped away once more.

The war had already begun. The six Autarchs and Ning had long ago prepared their strategy for fighting this war! Countless Hegemons and Emperors had long ago been gathered in various prepared battlefronts which were spread throughout the Chaosverse! Every single battlefront varied in size, based on how many Hegemons and Emperors resided in the surrounding area. The region around the Flamedragon Realmverse didn’t actually have all that many Hegemons and thus probably wouldn’t be a high-priority target, but since it was his homeland Ning was going to do a wide-ranging inspection of it before leaving. As a result, there was no need for any other battlefronts to be prepared anywhere near the Flamedragon Realmverse!

The reason why the battlefield Mother Nuwa and Realmslord Windgrace were in was actually located extremely far away. Ning had to warp through spacetime three times before he could reach it! The sheer number of experts they had gathered there was why it was classified as a first-class battlefront.

“Hm.” The white-robed Ning appeared out of nowhere above a grayish planet. His godsense stretched out once more as he scanned for any traces of the Sithe.

“Nothing.” Ning disappeared once more.

Starting from the Flamedragon Realmverse, Ning began an inspection of all the nearby realmverses. If he found any hint of the Sithe at all, he would immediately be able to trace them and then slay them!

The six Autarchs and Ning, along with their respective avatars, were all responsible for watching over different regions. They began to ‘sweep’ through their assigned locations. However, each ‘zone’ was so incredibly vast that it would take time. It must be remembered that it would usually take them months

traveling in a straight line at top speed to pass through these zones! This was a testament to how truly vast the Chaosverse was.

Right now, they had to carefully inspect every single part of their zones in detail. The only reason they dared to do this was because they were so much faster than everyone else. They would get rid of the Sithe they encountered as soon as possible, so as to relieve the pressure on the Hegemons and Emperors on their side.

“Darknorth, six of our battlefronts have discovered Sithe warships and moved to engage them,” Autarch Titanos sent through the message-talisman. “The Sithe have already sent out their grand army. More and more Sithe warships will begin to launch attacks throughout our Chaosverse. We need to destroy as many of them as possible, since we have fewer Hegemons, Emperors, and treasures than the Sithe.”

“Alright.” Ning nodded. He also knew that the Sithe were better at producing Hegemons and Emperors. Given how much time had passed, they had probably also sent many new Hegemons from their homeland. Without a doubt, the Sithe had a significant advantage in cultivators and treasures. It was up to the six Autarchs and Ning to make up for that advantage!

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Ning continued to sweep through one realmverse after another. Thankfully, he was able to scan at extremely great distances. His techniques were also so incredible that he could detect even remnant auras left behind by already-departed warships. Thus... after the time needed to boil a kettle of tea, Ning found what he was looking for.

“An aura?” Ning’s godsense quickly discovered a faint rippling aura from somewhere far away in the Great Dark. This was an aura which the Chaosverse itself was pushing back against.

“Sithe!” Ning immediately recognized the aura and began to charge towards it.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Just a few short warps later, Ning was able to see an enormous warship cruising through space in front of him. This warship was so large, it was on par with the Tigerhill warship Ning had discovered all those years ago.

The person responsible for inspecting spacetime instantly discovered Ning warping through spacetime towards them. They detected Ning’s entire body blazing with such dazzling, luminescent power that the Sithe couldn’t even look at him directly.

“That’s one of the native Autarchs!” The Sithe Hegemons and Emperors within the warship instantly felt despair. Encountering one of the native Autarchs midflight... this was their worst nightmare.

“Flee! Flee, everyone! Let as many escape as is possible!” None of the Sithe believed they could possibly resist one of the Autarchs.

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Book 44: The Dusk War Chapter 3: Miserable

The warship was in control of spacetime in the surrounding area, making it impossible to warp through spacetime once you entered the range of a hundred billion kilometers around it.

“Eh? The warship actually blocks out heartforce?” Ji Ning had been planning on using his ‘Heartforce Eradicator’ technique to kill them, only to find that it wouldn’t go through the hull of the ship.

“Quick, let’s flee!”

“Run away!”

“Give him a blast first!”

Boom! A terrifyingly large dimensional blade shot out through space, smashing at Ning with Autarch-level power.

Ning immediately transformed into a storm of wind and lightning, instantly traversing the distance of a hundred million kilometers in a ghostly, unpredictable manner. The giant dimensional blade which had shot out of the warship couldn’t even come close to touching him, and just a heartbeat later Ning had reached the warship itself.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Hegemons and Emperors had begun to appear outside the vast warship. They were beginning to scatter and flee in every single direction. Every single person who survived would represent a ‘win’ for them.

“Die.” Ning swept them with his cold gaze, and an invisible surge of power instantly swept across them. This powerful heartforce assault instantly wiped them out.

“In I go.” Ning touched the outer hull of the warship, instantly blinking inside.

“Ahhh! Not good! The Autarch has come inside!”

“Doomed. We’re doomed.” The Hegemons and Emperors inside the warship all discarded any notions of escaping, because it was now clear that certain death awaited them outside as well.

“Revered Autarch, are you willing to spare these weak children?”

“Spare us! We were forced to do this.”

“Cultivator Autarch, you can kill us, but I would like to ask you to spare our children. They belong to your Chaosverse and are part of it.”

Some of the Hegemons begged for mercy, while some accepted death but asked for mercy for their descendants.

As soon as Ning had entered, he had immediately been able to scan every inch of the warship with ease via heartforce! With but a thought, he would wipe out all of the Sithe present. This was what made heartforce so deadly! If Autarch Bolin or Autarch Ekong had arrived, they would’ve had to waste time breaking through the various defenses. Heartforce cultivators, in contrast, were able to wipe out large numbers of opponents from afar.

“Get in here.” Ning flickered past over a hundred Hegemons and Emperors who had already given up. With a wave of his hand, he drew them into his estate-world.

With another flicker, Ning arrived at the centermost region of this entire warship. A large number of Sithe descendants lived here. Once the war had begun, the various hidden dimensions were exposed

and no longer safe. Over the course of countless aeons, those hidden dimensions had produced many Sithe descendants. They naturally had to accompany the warships in leaving.

“These Sithe descendants...” Ning shook his head slowly, then waved his hand and drew in all the thronging masses of Sithe descendants as well.

“The rest can die.” There were a number who were still struggling to flee. They were scattered throughout the warship, and Ning had no time to waste on capturing them one-by-one. He simply cast his ‘Heartforce Eradicator’... and with a thought, all of them were slain!

In truth, Ning knew that many of the Sithe warriors had been forced into this war. However, this was a clash of civilizations that would result in the destruction of one! Ning’s time was extremely precious. He was willing to capture and imprison a few Sithe instead of killing them if it didn’t take up too much time, but if it did? He’d rather just wipe them out.

“In you go.” After exiting the warship, Ning collected both the warship as well as several realmships floating around next to it.

Generally speaking, the warships which Ning or Autarch Stonerule were responsible for attacking would be captured in perfect condition. Autarch Ekong and the others mostly used highly destructive attacks, resulting in the warships being damaged or destroyed. As for this particular warship Ning had captured, it was a transport warship that had been filled with many artifacts and treasures that hadn’t even been used yet.

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“Twenty-six different battlefronts are under attack. They are located...”

New information came from Ning’s Autarch message-talisman. As one of the supreme leaders of the cultivators, Ning naturally knew where all their forces throughout the Chaosverse were located. Thus, he immediately knew which ones were under attack.

“I’m very close to the Springsea battlefront. I’ll head there immediately,” Autarch Stonerule sent to the other six. The Autarchs were all exchanging information with each other, ensuring that they were on top of the situation overall.

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Time flowed on. More and more battlefronts became embroiled in war. Given how far the various battlefronts were from each other, the Autarchs and Ning were all separately responsible for different theaters and could only do their best to cause as much damage as possible.

“That’s one of the native Autarchs!”

A dazzling figure of golden light suddenly appeared. The Sithe Hegemons and Emperors who were assaulting the battlefront were all stunned. They knew that encountering a native Autarch represented doom.

“Die.” Ning swept his gaze across the Sithe. In order to keep his true identity hidden, during battle he intentionally kept his aura flared to the max, making it impossible for the Sithe to know who he was.

An awesome wave of heartforce immediately spread out, covering an area comparable to more than half a realmverse. With but a thought, Ning eradicated over 99% of the Sithe who were spread out throughout the battlefield, even the ones who were located within forts and castles! Only the few who were lucky enough to be inside castles and warships which blocked out heartforce were able to survive, but Ning simply spent a few more seconds mopping them up.

"The Sithe in the Rearlake battlefield have all been exterminated." Ning sent word to the other six Autarchs, then hurried to his next destination.

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The Autarchs and Ning seized every moment, continuing hastening across the Chaosverse continuously scanning for threats. Every so often, they would make a stop at a nearby battlefield that had already been embroiled in war! As for the more distant ones, they wouldn't be in a rush to go to them.

The war began to expand in both scale and ferocity. By now, there were multiple battles going on throughout the Chaosverse at every moment.

Things weren't so bad for Ning and Autarch Stonerule, as they were able to use their heartforce powers to instantly exterminate large numbers of Sithe! The other Autarchs had a much rougher time of it. Many of the Sithe were protected behind castles or formations, and these Autarchs had to go through the time-consuming process of breaking through those defenses.

"Keep on killing them for all I care. How many can you possibly get rid of, Autarchs?" Iyerre sat upon his throne. He was quite calm despite the many messages he received from the squads he had sent out. "I have far, far more warriors under my command than your civilization does, and I have far more powerful treasures as well! Even if you massacre half of them, the other half is more than enough to ensure that countless Hegemons and Emperors belonging to your Chaosverse will die."

Iyerre didn't care at all about the casualties his subordinates had suffered. Even if they died, their truesoul fragments would return to the Sithe Chaosverse; there was no permanent loss at all.

However, when the native Hegemons and Emperors perished their truesouls would be devoured by Sithe techniques, resulting in this Chaosverse being weakened. Eventually the sheer magnitude of deaths would result in the Chaosverse being so weak that he, Iyerre, would have a very good chance of becoming the Lord of Chaos for this Chaosverse.

"Just keep fighting." Iyerre was in full control of the war. He knew exactly how many losses he had suffered and the cultivators had suffered.

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Ji Ning was feeling increasingly anxious. He killed at a very fast pace, but the majority of his time was spent traveling. The Chaosverse was simply too vast! The Sixteen Realmverses Alliance was only possible because those sixteen realmverses were quite close to each other. There were many realmverses which were extremely far from each other, which was why the empty space between realmverses was known as the 'Great Dark' to many. Ning would usually need anywhere from half a day to two days to travel from realmverse to realmverse.

The more he and his six peers slew, the fewer of their own Hegemons and Emperors would die. But if things continued the way they currently were, they were going to suffer enormous losses in Hegemons and Emperors on their own side as well.

“The Skywitch battlefront is in desperate need of assistance.”

“The Ninelamps battlefront is in desperate need of assistance.”

“The Dragoncaller battlefront is in desperate need of assistance.”

One report came after another. A total of twenty-six battlefronts were in dire straits right now. They had achieved great successes in some battlefronts, but these twenty-six were in grave danger! The Sithe had their own ‘elite squads’, and these squads were extraordinarily powerful.

There was nothing Ning could do. All twenty-six of these battlefronts were very far away from him. It would take him over half a month to reach even the nearest one.

“I’ll go to the Dragoncaller battlefront,” Autarch Skyfeeder replied. “I’ll need three days to get there.” She was the only one who could go respond. None of the other Autarchs would get there in time.

‘Desperate need of assistance’ meant that the situation was so grim, they wouldn’t be able to last much longer without help. In the end, they were only able to preserve half their forces in the Dragoncaller battlefront. They lost everyone else in all twenty-five of the other battlefronts! Clearly, while the Autarchs were busy massacring the Sithe they found, their own Hegemons and Emperors were being slain on the field of battle as well. This was a truly ruinous war of attrition.

Many Sithe died, but at least they would have a chance at being brought back to life! Those native cultivators who had been slain, however, could never be brought back if the soul-eater technique was used after their deaths. They became true martyrs for this war.

Ning had no choice but to suppress the rage he felt. Early on, he imprisoned as many of the Sithe as he could... but now, he was beginning to kill more and more of them!

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Book 44: The Dusk War Chapter 4: Powerless

A giant black warship hovered in the empty silence of space, completely unmoving. A white-robed figure was standing directly above the giant black warship. He seemed tiny in comparison, but his aura was utterly overwhelming and his eyes were ice-cold.

“It’s just too big. The Chaosverse is too damn big.” Ji Ning felt a sense of powerlessness.

More than half a year had gone past since the war had erupted. During this half year, all seven of the most powerful leaders of the cultivators civilizations had been scouring the Chaosverse for any and all traces of the Sithe, but the Chaosverse was simply enormous! Usually, battlefronts would consist of groupings of at least ten different realmverses, sometimes even more! Every single battlefront was very far away from the others, and the Sithe warships were just as sparse and hard to find.

The Sithe were constantly making adjustments as well. Each time Ning and the other Autarchs attacked a location, the Sithe would adjust for it and make it even harder for the Autarchs to find their other warships.

The warships were doing their best to avoid the Autarchs, while Ning and the others were doing their best to find them!

“The Tongwu battlefront is in desperate need of assistance.” Yet another report came flying in.

“The Tongwu battlefront?” Ning sighed to himself. “It is too far away. It would take me twenty days at maximum speed to get there!”

“Time to continue.” Ning waved his hand, collecting the warship and then continuing to warp through space and search for the Sithe. It was like searching for a needle in the bottom of the sea. This was a very robotic and numbing process; the Autarchs were relying on their overwhelming strength to scan large areas and ‘fish’ out a warship or two! This process was clumsy, yet it was also the most efficient process available.

“Have you noticed? This war has been quite odd,” Autarch Titanos sent to the other six. “The war has gone on for over half a year and the battles have been fierce. Now that the Sithe know where we are, it has become harder and harder for us to find their warships. All of this is expected, but... we haven’t encountered any Sithe Exalts at all!”

While hunting and killing, the Autarchs continued to exchange messages with each other. The hunting process wasn’t all that mentally taxing, after all.

“Right. I haven’t found any Sithe Exalts,” Autarch Ekong agreed.

“I haven’t found a single one of them either. Judging from the various reports which have been sent by cultivators throughout our Chaosverse, no Sithe Exalts have appeared at all,” Autarch Stonerule said.

“I haven’t found any either. Logically speaking, the Sithe should have many Exalts ready to fight,” Ning replied.

“They’ve lain dormant for aeons... I wouldn’t be surprised if they had dozens of Exalts ready to take part in this battle. But, they haven’t deployed a single one. This is extremely odd. Everyone, while hunting down the Sithe you need to constantly stay on your guard! I’m worried that there’s some sort of a plot behind the Sithe Exalts remaining in hiding,” Autarch Titanos sent mentally.

Autarch Skyfeeder agreed, “Perhaps they don’t know that Darknorth has become an Emperor, but they know that we have an Eternal Omega Sword Dao! Thus, the Sithe should know very well that this war against us is their final chance. If they lose, we’ll only grow even more powerful in the future and they won’t stand any chance against us. By all rights, they should be throwing everything they have against us! As soon as that behemoth hive appeared, I could tell that the Sithe had made extraordinary preparations for this war. For no Exalts to have appeared a full half-year after the war began... we really do need to be careful.”

“Agreed.”

“Stay on your guard.”

“Keep scanning at all times. Don’t let yourself fall into a trap.”

The six Autarchs and Ning were all quite confident in their abilities. They weren't like the Sithe, who suffered from rejection by the Chaosverse and were unable to use the Dao! Ning and the Autarchs had access to virtually limitless amounts of power. During the previous war, not a single Autarch had fallen.

"The Purejade battlefield is in desperate need of assistance!" Suddenly, another report arrived.

"The Purejade battlefield?" Ning was startled. He reflexively scanned his mental map of the Chaosverse, mentally placing the Purejade battlefield. It was fairly close to him. "I need two days. I'll go right away."

"Alright, Darknorth. I'll leave it to you. I'll tell them to hold on until you arrive," Autarch Stonerule said.

Swoosh! Ning began to fly at maximum speed towards the Purejade battlefield.

If he spent these two days slowly scanning, he might be able to locate one or two Sithe warships... but rescuing more of their own cultivators was more important than killing the Sithe! This was because when their cultivators died, their truesouls would be devoured by the Sithe soul-eater technique. This would harm the Chaosverse itself and make it impossible to revive them.

"I hope they can hold on until I arrive," Ning murmured softly. The leaders in a battlefield would only beg for assistance when they could sense that they really weren't able to hold out for much longer. This would generally only happen once the enemies revealed their full power and launched a final, all-out attack! Thus, the battlefields were usually lost shortly after the distress calls were sent.

Sometimes, the cultivators would last for four or five days. Other times, the cultivators would be wiped out before a single day passed.

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The Purejade battlefield. This was a place where an awesome astral river flowed through the region in multiple loops, almost like a snake coiling around itself. At the very center of the coiling flows of the river was an enormous castle, and the castle held over a hundred figures within it.

Nearly half were Hegemons, while the rest were all normal Emperors. They poured all of their Immortal energy into maintaining this powerful castle, which was the core of the mighty defensive formation which protected them. Many of their avatars and comrades were situated throughout the astral river, where they were responsible for protecting important spots and were fighting against the Sithe.

"Autarch Stonerule sent word," a red-bearded Hegemon roared. "Two days! In just two days, an Autarch will arrive to save us!"

"What?!"

"We're saved!" Some of the Hegemons and Emperors who had been on the verge of despair instantly grew excited. This was just a second-class battlefield! They didn't expect that one of the extremely powerful Sithe elite squads would attack this place. At first, the Sithe had hidden their true power. They had first battled for more than a month to verify the defensive strength of the local cultivators, then had revealed their true prowess and launched a final assault.

Once the Sithe revealed their true power, the cultivators were instantly beaten backwards and forced to retreat to their final defensive lines within and around this castle. All they could do was try to delay as long as they could.

“Two days! Just two days! If we can hold on for just two days it’ll be the damn Sithe who die, not us!” the red-bearded elder howled.

“My brothers and sisters, fight on! If we can hold for two days, we’ll all make it out alive!” The voice rang out from the castle and echoed in the minds of the Hegemons and Emperors who were stationed within the astral river which coiled around the castle.

“Hold on! We must hold on!”

“We only need to hold on for two days.”

The battle continued. The Sithe furiously pressed the assault, while all of the defenders were equally frenzied in resisting. Even so, more and more of the defenders were defeated. First, it was their avatars which were destroyed. After that, it was up for them to use their true bodies to endure and fight on.

“Remember, even if you know you are going to die, you need to try and stay a safe distance away from them. Avoid that truesoul-eating technique or you’ll never have a chance of being brought back!”

“If you are out of options, self-detonate after you reach a sufficient distance.”

Bang! One defensive formation after another began to collapse, with most of the various Hegemons and Emperors electing to self-detonate. In doing so, their truesoul fragments blasted outwards and then quickly vanished. The Sithe soul-eater technique was limited in range, and self-detonation often caused some of the truesoul fragments to blast so far out that they returned to the Chaosverse.

“Hurry up! It’s been two days. Hurry up and come!”

“Why hasn’t he arrived yet?!”

The Hegemons and Emperors were still fighting back, hoping beyond hope...

BOOM! Suddenly, a figure stepped out of nowhere in the empty space above the coiling river. His entire form was blazing with energy, making it impossible to see him clearly.

“AUTARCH!!!!” All of the surviving cultivators let out cries of joy and excitement.

“That’s one of those native Autarchs! Quick, flee!” The Sithe who had been pressing the assault using their many treasures were stunned by the Autarch’s arrival. They had been trying to wrap things up as soon as possible, so that they could immediately depart and move to the next target. It would be quite hard to locate them after they left... but unfortunately, a cultivator Autarch had made it here in time!

The dazzling golden figure above them stared downwards coldly. Boom! A wave of invisible energy instantly swept across the region, extinguishing the auras of the attacking Sithe. Only a tiny percent of the Sithe who had been inside heartforce-proof warships managed to survive, but just a heartbeat later all of them died as well. The only ones Ning spared and took away with him were the ‘lucky’ Sithe descendants.

“Thankfully, at least half have survived.” Ning surveyed the castle below him, nodding to himself when he saw how many Hegemons and Emperors had made it.

“Thank you, Autarch!” The Hegemons and Emperors all felt excitement and gratitude. They knew that the vast majority of distress calls went unanswered, as the Autarchs simply couldn’t make it in time.

Ning nodded, then turned and left. He didn’t take any of the warships with him, electing to leave them behind with the survivors in a bid to strengthen their decimated forces.

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After saving that battlefield from defeat, Ning began to patrol the cosmos once more. Every so often, he’d exchange a message with the other Autarchs.

“The Hiddencloud battlefield is in desperate need of assistance.” Yet another report came. This time, it caused Ning to blink. The Hiddencloud battlefield? Wasn’t... wasn’t that the place where the disciple he was proudest of, his second disciple ‘Green Bamboo’ Yang Quding, was located?

Few of Ning’s friends were taking part in this battle, and those few that did take part were the ones in the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance, such as Nuwa. As for ‘Green Bamboo’ Yang Quding, he was fighting alongside his own friends in the Hiddencloud battlefield. Ning had naturally memorized his location.

“That’s more than twenty-six days away from me.” Ning’s heart turned cold. He couldn’t help but send mentally to the other six, “Can any of you make it there? My disciple Green Bamboo is there.”

“Your disciple, Darknorth?” At a time like this, no one would bother accusing Ning of selfishness. Who could be truly and completely selfless?

“I can’t make it in time.”

“That’s too far away.”

“The closest ones to it are the two of us, Darknorth,” Autarch Skyfeeder replied. “I need nineteen days to get there. That’s too much time, and they won’t be able to hold out for that long. Thus far, the maximum survival time after sending a distress call has been just barely ten days.”

Ning fell silent. There was nothing he could do... Nineteen days... Autarch Skyfeeder could probably wipe out over ten warships during that period of time. It wasn’t worth it to give that up just to try and save the Hiddencloud battlefield, especially seeing as how that battle would almost assuredly be completely lost after nineteen days.

Ning wasn’t just Green Bamboo’s master. He was also one of the seven most powerful leaders of this Chaosverse, responsible for safeguarding every part of it!

“Nineteen days is too long,” Ning replied softly. “Considering the grand scheme of things, it isn’t worth it. Forget it.”

Ning said nothing else. He went back to hunting for Sithe in the Great Dark.

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Book 44: The Dusk War Chapter 5: Death Holds No Fear

Ji Ning continued his search for the Sithe throughout the Great Dark, his heart filled with sorrow and anxiety.

“Green Bamboo... there’s nothing your master can do. I cannot save you. You have to escape. You have to,” Ning murmured to himself.

With no Autarch nearby to render assistance, it was all-but guaranteed that the ‘Hiddencloud battlefront’ which Yang Quding was located in would be overwhelmed. When this happened, the Hegemons and Emperors wouldn’t be so foolish as to just fight to the bitter end. Once they knew that they were going to lose and that no help was forthcoming, they would begin to flee and focus on keeping themselves alive.

However, the Sithe had many Hegemons and even more treasures. The fleeing cultivator Hegemons would scatter in every direction, but they would be hunted down one-by-one. The number of Hegemons who managed to successfully escape could be counted on one hand, and in some cases none would escape.

Ning, however, still held out hope. His disciple ‘Green Bamboo’ had a perfect Dao-heart, was an Otherverse Lord, and had treasures which Ning had given him. He was absolutely one of the most powerful Hegemons around, far more powerful than the Lonely King had ever been. In fact, he was close to the Blazesun Ruler in power! Alas, no individual no matter how strong could possibly withstand an entire army. Still... Ning felt that there was some hope that this disciple of his would be able to escape and stay alive.

“Damn. Damn! If my avatar wasn’t trapped in that hive, it could also take responsibility over a zone. I might be closer to the Hiddencloud battlefront and able to rescue my disciple.” Ning felt rather resentful.

Right now, a total of thirteen Autarch-class combatants were scattered throughout the entire Chaosverse, each responsible for a specific zone. Ning’s avatar was also an Autarch-class combatant, but it was tied up in the Annihilation Hive.

Within the black tower at the nexus of the Annihilation Hive. The golden-robed Ning was seated in the lotus position in midair, his eyes closed in meditation.

Rumble... an awesome aura of energy was swirling around him in rippling layers. These circular ripples of power emanated the aura of the deep earth, of grass and vegetation, of flowing water, of blazing flames, of indestructible ores. All the different ripples were circling around Ning, and as they moved closer and closer towards him, they gradually began to transform into ripples of space and ripples of time... and at the very heart, on Ning himself, they transformed into ripples of terrifying destructive power. Everything near Ning was being devoured and then annihilated.

This was raw, pure annihilation! All types of energy were being annihilated, and not even the Chaosverse was able to resist this annihilatory power. The profound mysteries behind this power surpassed even the Destruction Daobirth Essence of Autarch Ekong, the Autarch of Annihilation. If Ning could truly and successfully master this technique, he would have gained access to a technique of absolutely incredible power.

“I’m still not quite there yet. It just isn’t quite right.” Ning had drawn upon his six million chaos cycles of training and the many insights he had gained from the sphere of annihilation, but he still felt that it was a bit too artificial and forced.

The Dao was, above all else, natural. Only a Dao which was complete and natural, not artificial, could be described as 'perfect'. If you simply tried to artificially imitate this destructive power, which Ning called 'Oblivion', you would end up being far off from the real thing.

"Oblivion... it utterly destroys all things in its path. All forms of energy... the Five Elements... Yin and Yang... Darkness and Light... space and time... everything in the Chaosverse can be devoured and destroyed. This is what 'Oblivion' represents.

"I started with a foundation of the Five Elements, then drew upon the mysteries of Yin and Yang as well as that of the Cycle of Light and Dark, transforming them into pure spacetime which is then obliterated, producing fundamental particles where space and time no longer exist." Ning continued to ponder this problem. He didn't know what insights he was lacking, but this process had indeed resulted in him gaining a much deeper level of understanding in all of his Daos.

If it hadn't been for him meditating on 'Oblivion', he never would've understood how the Five Elements could be completely converted into spacetime.

Space and time were two unique types of wave-particle energies. When the two acted upon each other, they gave birth to Yin and Yang, Light and Dark, and also the Five Elements which birthed countless other things.

"It lacks... a soul. It lacks that quintessential quality of being part of nature itself." Ning continued to dissect many different Daos, ruminating over their connections to each other as he compared them to how the 'sphere of annihilation' operated...

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Ning's avatar continued to meditate on the Oblivion Sword Dao, and there was really nothing else it could do. Only when it learned how to destroy the 'sphere of annihilation' would it be able to leave this place. Until that happened the avatar would have to stay there, continuing to maintain the reverse-vortex formation.

The distant Hiddencloud battlefield. The native Hegemons and Emperors here suffered one defeat after another. They had already retreated to the final, most powerful defensive formation they had.

Within a beautiful world of flowers and grass. An azure-robed man was staring into the skies... and the skies were trembling. Dimensional cracks could be seen.

"Green Bamboo, any news?"

"Sword Immortal Green Bamboo, will the Autarchs come and save us?" Behind him was a host of Hegemons and Emperors. Thus far, over 70% of their original forces were still alive! This was because they had all sacrificed their avatars during the most dangerous parts of the battle. Now, their avatars had all been destroyed. Even Sword Immortal Green Bamboo's avatar had died in battle!

They had already retreated to the back lines. So long their final defenses remained, they could keep fighting... but once their defenses were breached, they would all be massacred.

"Calm down. I've already asked for aid," Sword Immortal Green Bamboo said.

The other Hegemons and Emperors were waiting anxiously as they maintained the defensive formation. Sword Immortal Green Bamboo was the disciple of the legendary Daolord Darknorth, and was someone favored by Autarch Ekong. Even though the fact that Ning had succeeded in his second Daomerge and become an Emperor remained a hidden secret, many felt certain that the Autarchs would come to save Green Bamboo so long as they could make it in time.

Suddenly, Sword Immortal Green Bamboo's face turned grim. "The Autarchs won't be able to make it in time." He swept his gaze across the other Hegemons and Emperors, all of whom turned pale. The hope they had felt instantly vanished, with many revealing looks of despair.

"We're out of options. We'll have to fend for ourselves," Green Bamboo said. "The 'microworld' formations protecting this grand formation have all been defeated. Even if we keep fighting, we'll only be able to last another two or three days before being completely overwhelmed. By then, none of us will be able to escape."

All the Hegemons and Emperors present agreed with this assessment.

"Thus... we should begin coming up with ideas for how we can escape," Green Bamboo said.

The supreme leaders of the cultivators had long ago given them their orders – if they couldn't win, they were to flee! Every single survivor counted! If they died in battle, they would see their truesouls devoured by that soul-eater technique. Their very Chaosverse itself would be weakened by this! In other words, just surviving was a form of victory.

"The Sithe have set up many scanning formations, and they have even more Hegemons and Emperors than we do. Even if we scatter and flee, our chances are very low," an Emperor said worriedly.

"There's always a chance," Green Bamboo said. "Let's do our best to deceive the Sithe and force them to disperse their forces. Every single survivor counts as a victory to me."

"We can use many of the other formations and treasures scattered throughout the Hiddencloud battlefield which we previously abandoned to slow the Sithe down."

"I myself am very skilled in using illusions and creating dopplegangers. Given the right treasures, I can make it difficult for the Sithe to know where our real members have gone."

The various Hegemons and Emperors all had their own specialties, and they all began to propose ideas. However, they all knew that the Sithe had their own specialties as well. The Sithe warship was a particular problem. It was so fast that it was on par with the Blacksun. Only Autarchs were able to catch them and destroy them! The warships also were outfitted with extremely sensitive tracking formations as well. Thus, very few of them would probably be able to escape its pursuit.

"Green Bamboo." There were four men and women standing next to Green Bamboo. One of them, a muscular and crimson-armored man, said in an awkward voice: "It's all my fault. I was the one to invite you to join us here at the Hiddencloud battlefield. If you were alongside Nuwa, Realmslord Windgrace, and the Paragon of Pills in their battlefield, you wouldn't be in this situation."

The battlefields were all divided up according to rank and status. The Sixteen Realmverses Alliance and the otherverse the Paragon of Pills lived in were all very close to each other, and so they were grouped

together into a single battlefield. That was the battlefield which would protect the homeland of 'Daolord Darknorth', a first-class battlefield which would be very difficult to overcome.

The only reason Green Bamboo had come here was for the sake of his lifelong friends who had also come here.

"It's fine. To live and die amongst my friends is a blessing. What is there to fear?" Green Bamboo smiled as he looked at these four dear friends of his.

"Green Bamboo." A red-robed maiden looked at Green Bamboo, then suddenly reached out to take his hand in her own.

Green Bamboo immediately revealed an excited, happy look as he gazed at the red-robed woman.

"Dawnclear..."

This woman was the real reason why Green Bamboo had chosen to come to this battlefield. He had wooed Hegemon Dawnclear for many years now, but she had always hesitated. Now that she had taken him by the hand, she had clearly chosen to truly accept him.

"Hahaha... death holds no fear for me!" Green Bamboo laughed loudly, deliriously excited and happy.

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Book 44: The Dusk War Chapter 6: Fangs Revealed (part 1)

Dawnclear smiled as well. She knew that it was very likely that both of them would die, and so she cast away all her misgivings and followed her heart.

"Congratulations, Green Bamboo. Congratulations, big sister Dawnclear." the other female Hegemon next to them said with a smile.

"Congratulations! Who would've thought that something so wonderful would happen during this calamity? Once we all leave this place safely, we'll have to hold a proper celebration," the muscular man said with a laugh.

"Yes, we must celebrate!" The other nearby Hegemons and Emperors all agreed. They were searching for a ray of light to illuminate them in this darkest hour. In truth, they all knew that the number of survivors could probably be counted on one hand... and if they weren't lucky, every single one of them would die!

After spending an hour in discussion, Green Bamboo's group of Hegemons and Emperors came up with an escape plan. They would separate into a total of fifty-nine squads which would flee in different directions. That way, they would stand the best chance of making it out alive. If they stayed together, they would be wiped out together.

"Everyone." Green Bamboo swept his gaze across all the others present. "The plan has been settled. Let us carry it out! I hope that after this all ends, we'll be able to meet again."

"Let's meet again."

“Let’s meet again.”

“Let’s meet again.” The many Hegemons and Emperors nearby all echoed his words. They were all filled with the desire to stay alive and were determined to risk it all in one final clash attempt.

A short while later, a towering warship appeared before the grand formation which protected the Hiddencloud battlefront. In front of the warship was a large group of Sithe Hegemons and Emperors who were employing their treasures to furiously assault the giant globe-shaped formation before them.

Suddenly, streams of power began to shoot out from deep within the formation. Some looked like streams of dark mist, some looked like bolts of thunder, some looked like pillars of solid light. These various types of energy all shot out in a counter-attack, instantly suppressing the Sithe offensive.

“They’ve launched their final counter-attacks! Haha! Keep attacking! They’re at the brink of collapse!” The Sithe leader who was watching within that towering warship felt extremely confident as they watched from within... but moments later, his face turned grim.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Countless figures shot out of the formation and began to flee, each going in a different direction.

“They’re running away! There are so many of them. Which ones are the real ones?”

“I can’t tell, can you?”

“Captain, which ones are real?” The many Sithe battling outside were all waiting for orders.

“They want to escape?” The Sithe leader stroked his long beard. His warship could detect even the approach of an Autarch! Its scanning abilities were absolutely unparalleled, and it almost instantly was able to detect which figures were real and which were false.

“They’ve split up into a total of fifty-nine squads, with three in each squad at most. Many of the squads are single-person squads. They’ve split up into fifty-nine different directions. I now order you to...” The Sithe leader began to issue his orders, deploying different Sithe warriors to chase after different squads. This warship was composed of Sithe elites, and it had an extraordinary number of Hegemons and Emperors.

“Chase after them separately. Let none escape,” the Sithe leader commanded mentally.

“Understood.”

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“Flee!” A green-robed Emperor was fleeing for his life. “I’m too weak. The Sithe would probably be able to track even Hegemons who tried to warp through spacetime. A normal Emperor like myself would stand no chance at all.” The green-robed Emperor knew just how slim his chances were. “We spent an enormous amount of effort in prepping the Hiddencloud battlefront. There are many powerful formations here that are intact; we were simply forced to abandon them. If I hide inside one of them, they wouldn’t necessarily be able to find me.”

He was going to hide inside one of the remaining formations to catch his breath. Once the danger was past, he would then flee to a more distant location.

Swoosh. The green-robed Emperor quietly snuck into a nearby formation, easily taking control over its great power.

Swoosh. Swoosh. Swoosh. Three figures simultaneously appeared outside. All three were Sith Black Emperors. The Sith knew that this target was just an ordinary Emperor, and so they had simply sent three Black Emperors to deal with him. Each of them had Hegemonic power, after all; catching an ordinary Emperor would be very easy.

“He fled into a formation?” The three Black Emperors exchanged a glance.

“Seal off the entire area around the formation. I’ll stand guard outside while the two of you follow him inside,” one of the Black Emperors said.

“Alright.”

“Let’s go inside.”

A mere hour later, the green-robed Emperor who had fled inside the formation had been driven to the brink of despair. Finally, one of the Black Emperors used a sky-blotting palm to smash him into dust!

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“Let’s run!” Two Hegemons fled in a blind panic, warping through spacetime over ten times. When they saw that they were about to be caught, they finally brought out a realmship. “Let’s run.”

The two Hegemons immediately began to flee within the realmship. As they did, the Sith squad pursuing them came to a halt and sent a message back: “They have a realmship. We aren’t able to catch up to them.”

After a brief period of time passed, the Hegemons began to breathe a bit easier. “Our realmship is flying very fast. We have a chance to escape.”

“We have to make it out of here.” The two Hegemons both clung onto hope... but suddenly, the realmship was unable to warp through spacetime any longer.

“Eh?” Both turned to stare outside the ship. An enormous, towering black warship had just appeared before them, and it was suppressing spacetime for a wide area around it. These warships had all been painstakingly created by the Sith leader. Even if Ning and other Autarch-class combatants were here, they would have to slowly fly towards the warship rather than simply teleport through spacetime to it. Its power was tremendous!

“We’re finished.” Looks of despair appeared on the faces of the two Hegemons. They exchanged a final glance.

Bang! Bang! The two didn’t hesitate at all. They immediately exploded into two enormous plumes of light which blasted out, reverberating within the realmship. They had chosen to self-detonate! They were far enough from the Sith that their truesoul fragments stood a good chance of escaping once they self-detonated.

The Autarchs had long ago instructed them to do this. If they self-detonated they might be brought back to life in the future, even if they were Hegemons!

As the Autarchs saw it, they might not be able to revive the Hegemons who died in the endless void between realmverses, but things would be different once their Chaosverse gave birth to a Lord of Chaos. A Chaoslord should be able to bring them back! They believed this because they had seen from the memories of captured Sithe that slain Sithe Hegemons could be brought back to life. In fact, even Exalts who died in battle could be brought back to life! However, the price was so great that they generally wouldn't be given such preferential treatment unless they had rendered great merits unto the Sithe forces.

Whoosh. The Sithe warship began to emit an invisible, terrifying sucking power which caused the realmship to tumble helplessly towards an enormous opening at the bottom of the warship. Moments later, the opening in the bottom vanished.

"They self-detonated right after we found them. Damn! Most of their truesoul fragments probably escaped us. Let's go back." The black warship immediately warped through spacetime to return to the Hiddencloud battlefield. This entire process had merely taken a few brief moments; they had almost instantly located and eliminated the realmship, then returned to their normal position.

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"I won't be able to escape... but those damn Sithe can forget about devouring my truesoul!" a horned, willowy woman howled angrily.

BOOM! She transformed into a burst of light.

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Self-detonation. Self-detonation. Killed. Self-detonation...

Some who weren't able to self-detonate in time ended up being killed by the Sithe, as did some who hesitated. The majority, however, had the wisdom to understand when flight was hopeless and thus chose to self-detonate.

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Green Bamboo and Hegemon Dawnclear were escaping together. As for their other friends, they had all scattered into different groups. If they all fled together, they would probably all be caught together.

Hegemon Dawnclear smiled as she glanced at Green Bamboo, who was using all his power to bring her alongside him in his flight.

"Why do you keep staring at me?" Green Bamboo teased. Even though they were being pursued, they were both quite relaxed.

"It's nothing," Hegemon Dawnclear said with a smile. "I just suddenly feel so very, very happy. Even if we don't manage to escape, dying together is fine as well."

"What nonsense are you spewing? We're definitely going to escape. Don't worry." Green Bamboo continued to flee at top speed.

Boom! Suddenly, a planet-sized castle appeared behind them. A voice boomed out from within the castle: "You must be the leader of the forces stationed in the Hiddencloud battlefront. You brought us quite a bit of trouble, kid. Now stop struggling! There's no way you'll escape."

Green Bamboo paled slightly. His greatest fear was this. He had been the most powerful cultivator in the Hiddencloud battlefront. When he had sent his avatar to battle against the Sithe, the Sithe had been forced to pay a very high price to defeat it. Without question, the Sithe were paying close attention to him as he fled. They had even sent one of their planet-sized castles to pursue him! Those things warped through spacetime far faster than realmships could.

"Dawnclear, remember to bind the treasure I gave you earlier. It's something which will allow you to warp a tremendous distance through spacetime and escape," Green Bamboo immediately sent mentally. "I'll stop them for now. You need to run! Once you reach a safe distance, use that item. It'll let you flee incredibly fast, and if you can avoid detection for ten seconds they won't be able to find any trace of you."

"No...!" Hegemon Dawnclear grew anxious. "What about you? Are you just going to throw your life away?"

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Book 44: The Dusk War Chapter 7: Fangs Revealed (part 2)

As a Hegemon, Dawnclear had an extraordinary Dao-heart. She had already discarded all of her previous concerns and had chosen to become Dao-companions with Sword Immortal Green Bamboo. How could she possibly fear death?

"If we delay, neither of us will escape," Green Bamboo sent frantically. "Dawnclear, you aren't strong enough to slow them down. Only I can do that! Don't worry. After you flee, I'll do my best to escape as well. If I cannot, I'll choose to self-detonate. I'll tell you a secret which you absolutely cannot share with anyone else – my master Darknorth has used the 'Truesoul Everlasting' technique and has redone the Daomerge. He's now comparable to Autarchs in power. So long as any of my truesoul fragments remain, I'll definitely be brought back in the future."

Hegemon Dawnclear was startled. So the legendary Daolord Darknorth had actually successfully used that technique to repeat his Daomerge?

"In other words, even if I am forced to self-detonate I'll still be brought back," Green Bamboo said urgently. "And I have other tricks up my sleeve as well. I'll stand a good chance of escaping on my own. Hurry up and go! If you die, there'd be no point in me living."

"Fine." Hegemon Dawnclear no longer hesitated. She knew that as she was much weaker, it would be harder for her truesoul fragments to escape the Sithe soul-eater technique.

Whoosh! Hegemon Dawnclear turned and immediately fled. After fleeing for a time, she managed to leave the reach of spacetime suppression. She turned to glance backwards, seeing Green Bamboo already engaged in a fight against the Sithe.

"We'll definitely be together in the future." Hegemon Dawnclear gritted her teeth, then immediately warped through spacetime and disappeared.

“Ahahaha!” Green Bamboo himself was in an excellent rule. A total of nine leaf-shaped treasures were around him, and he was able to use them to shockingly powerful effect with his perfect Dao-heart. Each of his strikes was comparable to attacks from the Blazesun Ruler!

Boom! Boom! Boom! The two sides continued to blast attacks at each other.

“The cultivator leader of this battlefield is really powerful. Given his might, I imagine he has a perfect Dao-heart.”

“Anyone who can gain a perfect Dao-heart in this backwards Chaosverse has to be one of its truly peerless geniuses.” The Sithe continued to launch attacks from their castle. They held the upper hand and it was clear that victory should be in their grasp... but somehow, it continued to elude them.

In truth, this was a strategy which Green Bamboo was using. He wanted to give these Sithe the feeling that they could kill him by themselves, and so they wouldn't be in a hurry to report it to their higher-ups.

They battled for ten full seconds.

“Ugh. This cultivator leader is a pain to deal with. Hurry up and report it to our superiors. Who knows how long it would take for us to kill him? Hurry up and report it to them so we can hunt down that female cultivator next.” These warships were able to scan a realmverse-sized area in a twinkling! Even realmships would produce trails when flying that could be picked up by Sithe scanners, which was why escape was very difficult.

Green Bamboo felt rather relaxed. “It's been over ten seconds. Dawnclear has probably escaped by now.” He had told Dawnclear that Darknorth would revive him so long as his truesoul fragments escaped, but that wasn't the complete truth. Green Bamboo knew a great deal about this war. He knew that this was the last chance the Sithe had, and that they would battle to the bitter end. It was possible that even his master Darknorth would die! If that happened, Green Bamboo might not be brought back either.

Rumble... suddenly, a spacetime ripple manifested. A heartbeat later, a towering warship appeared as well, once more suppressing spacetime in the surrounding area.

“Not good.” Green Bamboo's face tightened.

Boom! All nine leaf-type treasures instantly flew back to circle around Green Bamboo, 'gripping' him as they then transformed into a streak of light that flew away at incredible speeds.

“You think you'll escape?” The Sithe immediately moved to pursue.

BOOM! The distant streak which was Green Bamboo suddenly blew apart into an enormous blast of light as he exploded.

Even as he self-detonated, he remained calm. A little smile was on his face to the very end. It was all worth it. So long as his beloved survived, everything was worth it.

“Another self-detonation. Ugh. How many of his truesoul fragments did we manage to capture?”

“Just part of it, I think. Almost all of these natives have chosen to self-detonate from afar. We're usually only able to capture part of the fragments.”

“Continue the hunt. He had a woman with him.”

After forcing Green Bamboo to commit suicide, the Sithe immediately began to chase after Hegemon Dawnclear. Alas, no matter what they tried they were unable to find any traces of her.

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Rumble...

An iridescent ring-shaped treasure was warping through spacetime with ease, moving just as fast as the Blacksun but with even greater secrecy. Ten seconds after its initial use, all traces of its activation would vanish. This had been Green Bamboo's personal escape treasure. He had only trained for a short period of time but had a perfect Dao-heart. This meant that he was viewed as an incredibly talented prospect for this Chaosverse who could very well become an Autarch in the future.

This was why he had been given such a valuable treasure... but in the end, he had given it to Hegemon Dawnclear.

“No...” While fleeing, Hegemon Dawnclear suddenly turned to stare at the direction from where she had just fled. She could vaguely sense through the power of karma that the most important person in her life had just perished. The karma binding them together had fallen apart, leaving behind an empty feeling that tore at her heart. Her tears began to fall.

“Green Bamboo, you promised me that you'd be able to escape. You promised.” Tears blurred Hegemon Dawnclear's vision. “I'm sure they'll bring you back. You are senior Darknorth's disciple. They definitely will.”

In the end, Hegemon Dawnclear was the only person to survive the battle at the Hiddencloud battlefield. Everyone else died.

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Ning was soaring through the Great Dark, searching for Sithe and destroying them when he found them. Suddenly, he turned pale and his heart trembled.

Ning turned to stare towards the direction of the incredibly distant Hiddencloud battlefield. “Green Bamboo!” Ning could sense through the power of karma that his disciple was gone. He had vanished from this Chaosverse. Clearly, his truesoul had been destroyed.

“Not even someone as powerful as Green Bamboo was able to escape?” Ning was filled with agony.

In truth, if Green Bamboo had fled on his own he would've had a 30% - 40% chance of escaping. Instead, he had given this chance to Hegemon Dawnclear and had gone to delay their foes.

“SITHE!!!” Ning cast away his pain, replacing it with a cold and hard determination. This was war... a war which would determine the destinies of two different civilizations! Many, many Hegemons had died and would die in this war. Green Bamboo was just one of them.

“DIE!” Ning knew that all he could do was to annihilate as many Sithe as he could.

.....

Time continued to flow on, and the war only grew increasingly deadly. Four years of frenzied warfare went by in the blink of an eye. The initial wave of frenzied Sithe attacks finally began to ebb, as they suffered so many casualties that they were unable to continue assaulting all of the various battlefields.

During these four years, Ning and the rest of the thirteen Autarch-class combatants had been hunting them down nonstop. They had annihilated so many Sithe that in many areas, the remaining Sithe Hegemons and Emperors were only able to pose low levels of danger.

“All of you shall die.” Autarch Ekong descended upon a battlefield, immediately blinking inside the towering Sithe warship.

“Die, die, die!” Autarch Ekong was the Autarch of Annihilation, and he used his awesome power to completely massacre the many Hegemons and Emperors within the warship.

Right at this moment, Autarch Ekong’s face suddenly turned grim. He immediately blinked outside the warship, only to see that the battlefield had just changed completely.

An absolutely massive temple complex had just appeared in the area, and he was inside the complex. The warship he had just destroyed was miniscule by comparison! The vast temple had a total of seven miniature temples surrounding it, and within each of the temples was a figure seated in the lotus position. Judging from their auras, all of them were Sithe Exalts.

“So the Sithe Exalts have finally shown themselves... seven at one go!” Autarch Ekong turned pale. He could sense the incredible threat they posed to him. They could kill him. This vast temple was entirely capable of destroying him!

“Autarch Ekong, I presume? You won’t be able to escape.”

“Prepare to die.” The seven Sithe Exalts had frenzied looks in their eyes. They knew just how powerful Autarchs were, and so they had made plentiful preparations for this battle.

Autarch Ekong immediately sent word to Ning and the other five Autarchs. Four years after the war had erupted, the Sithe Exalts were finally making their move. The Sithe had finally revealed their fangs!

During the Dawn War, the Autarchs had also encountered multiple dangerous situations. They didn’t even dare to truly assault the heart of the Sithelands and instead chose to simply seal away the outer perimeters! Creatures like the giant tree, which Autarch Titanos and Autarch Mogg had spent a fairly long period of time to kill, was just one of many tools the Sithe had prepared for this war.

The Annihilation Hive had shown without the shadow of a doubt that the Sithe were terrifyingly powerful. They were more than strong enough to threaten the Autarchs now.

If the Autarchs were truly invincible, Ning and the others could’ve simply gathered all the Hegemons and placed them into their own estate-worlds. If the seven of them just stayed together in one place they would be guaranteed to win, right?

But the truth was that the Autarchs weren’t truly invincible... and they knew it. It was possible that they could be killed, which was why they had the Hegemons be scattered across the Chaosverse. This would at least ensure that they weren’t destroyed in a single alpha strike! Even if the cultivators lost a few battles, they would still be able to recover in the future.

“After four years of war, the Sithe Hegemons and Emperors are no longer much of a threat to us. The Sithe have finally begun to mobilize their elites,” Autarch Titanos sent mentally. “This will be the last great war we shall face! If we win, we’ll be able to grow so powerful that we’ll never need to fear any invaders ever again. We’ll be truly free... but first, we have to win this war.”

“This will be the final war, the Dusk War. Let us fight! In victory, we shall be without worries for all of time. If we fail, we may never recover.”

Ning and the six Autarchs all understood this concept. Their hearts were filled with unprecedented resolve. There was nothing and no one capable of shaking their will for battle. They would fight!

Now that the weaker Hegemons and Emperors were no longer a threat, the Sithe Exalts had joined the fray. The final battle had begun!

“If we win, I might be able to one day revive Yu Wei and my friends and disciples. If we lose, everything will be lost. My parents, Brightmoon, my teacher... they’ll all be gone. All of civilization will be gone.”

“The war to reclaim our destinies has now truly begun.” Ning’s eyes were blazing with determination.

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Book 44: The Dusk War Chapter 8: The Vast Temple

What’s the situation, Ekong? How strong is that Sithe temple?” Ji Ning and the others were all worried about Autarch Ekong. Given how long the Sithe Exalts had been biding their time, they definitely had been preparing something truly extraordinary to use against the Autarchs. The worst part of it was, Autarch Ekong’s true body was in the trap!

If it had been his avatar which fell into the trap, Ning and the others wouldn’t feel all that worried. If his avatar died, he would merely need a few more years to rebuild a new one. In truth, given the benefits of temporal acceleration just half a month would be needed to create an avatar, albeit it would have at most 50% of his full power.

In a war against the Sithe, that extra 20% of power made a great deal of difference... but if his true body died, then his avatar would die along with it. That was a far greater loss, an irrecoverable one.

“I can’t see anything at all!” Autarch Ekong sent back hurriedly. “Moments ago, I saw that those Sithe Exalts were seated within seven small temples surrounding a big one. They suddenly activated the power of the main temple, causing my surroundings to transform. I’ve now been trapped inside a giant formation in the form of a massive hallway. No matter where I go, I’m unable to escape this hallway. I can’t see through any of the mysteries behind this formation at all!”

“A formation?” Ning, Titanos, Skyfeeder, Mogg, Stonerule, and Bolin were all shocked. Not even an Autarch could make heads or tails out of this formation... how powerful did it have to be?! If Autarch Ekong was unable to escape it, all he could do was wait and endure terrifying attacks from the Sithe Exalts.

“Darknorth and I have some skill in formations. I’m closer to you than he is. Ekong, take care of yourself. My avatar is headed straight towards you and should get there in twelve days!” Autarch Titanos sent. Avatars were just as effective as true bodies when it came to understanding and disassembling formations.

“Alright. Hurry up! Trapped inside this formation, I can’t even find my foes.” Autarch Ekong was rather anxious.

This hallway was merely thirty meters wide, but he could see no end to it. No matter how long he walked, he wasn’t able to walk out of it!

As for the walls? Autarch Ekong had already tried to break through them with force, but clearly there was no way for him to tear through a formation which seven Sithe Exalts had set up with the help of this temple.

“Trapping me here was probably just the first step. Their actual killer attacks will be coming soon.” Autarch Ekong manifested six arms, with three of them holding shields and the other three holding a saber, a sword, and a shuttle. As the Autarch of Annihilation, he was naturally skilled in many different weapons. It was rare, however, that he was forced to use shields to defend himself.

“Twelve days. I have to last for at least twelve days.” Autarch Ekong’s eyes were very tranquil, but he was on high alert.

Ning was very worried about Autarch Ekong, but for now sending Autarch Titanos’ avatar was the best option they had! Ning himself had devised the Sword Formation Dao, but Autarch Titanos had spent countless years analyzing Sithe artifacts and researching Sithe formations. He was just as skilled in the Dao of Formations as Ning was, but he had far more experience in dealing with Sithe techniques.

Last time, Autarch Titanos hadn’t even needed to enter the Annihilation hive before devising the reverse-vortex formation. All he had needed was the information Ning and Mogg had provided!

Although the various Autarchs were most skilled in their own Daobirth Essences, they had other specialties as well. For example, Autarch Bolin had been unable to create the Samsara Daobirth Essence, but he still far eclipsed the Hegemon level when it came to understanding life and death. Not even Ning was a match for him in this regard.

As for Autarch Titanos, he was not only the master of the Karma Daobirth Essence, he was also tremendously skilled in creating and deconstructing powerful artifacts and formations.

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Five days after Autarch Ekong had first been trapped.

“Whew. That was close. Gentlemen, I nearly died just now,” Autarch Ekong sent to Ning and the others. “Thankfully, combat is my forte. I was forced to use my invulnerable form to endure those repeated attacks and actually used up over half of my energy. I came so close to dying, haha! But I managed to make it.”

Ning and the others all had nervous looks on their faces. This was just day five; Autarch Titanos needed twelve days! How terrifyingly powerful were those attacks, for them to exhaust half of an Autarch’s energy reserves in just a few days? Autarchs had nigh-limitless amounts of energy because of how quickly they replenished their energy stores.

“Be careful. You have to hold,” Autarch Skyfeeder sent frantically.

“Haha, we’re lucky that I’m the one stuck inside. If it was you here, Skyfeeder, you probably wouldn’t have been able to withstand those terrifyingly powerful attacks. You’d be dust by now,” Autarch Ekong teased. “Don’t worry. I’ve already taken the worst they could dish out. I’m an Autarch, you know! I’ve already replenished my energy stores.”

“What did they use to attack you? How are these attacks so powerful?” Ning sent.

“The attacks are powerful but quite clumsy. Anywhere else, I’d be able to dodge or redirect those attacks with ease. The problem is, I’m trapped in this hallway and have nowhere to go. The attack comes in the form of a faint azure seal which is completely linked to the hallway and seems to be part of it. It just comes smashing at me, giving me nowhere to dodge at all. My only choice is to meet it head-on!

“This grand seal is marvelously made and it can launch a total of 352 explosive attacks before the energy in it is used up, followed by the seal itself dissipating. In the end, I was forced to transform into my invulnerable form in order to endure the terrifying destructive power of the seal’s attacks. Otherwise, I would’ve been crushed to dust and my truesoul annihilated.”

Ning frowned when he heard this. So it was just a giant seal which came smashing at you? But the problem was that when you were trapped in the hallway, there was nowhere to run at all. You had to take those attacks head-on. Autarch Ekong was being treated as a punching bag!

“If I was attacked by three or four of these things in a row, I’d definitely be doomed,” Autarch Ekong said.

“Don’t worry too much,” Autarch Ekong said. “The Sithe are different from us. They are foreigners to our Chaosverse. We can endlessly replenish our energies from our Chaosverse, but they cannot; if they try to take power from the outside world by force, the process will be incredibly slow. They must have prepared many different energy-generating treasures, and each time they use such a powerful attack it will cost them greatly. Most likely, a single giant seal is their absolute limit. There’s no way they can just generate four of them in a row without resting. If they could, they would’ve done so long ago.”

“Hah! Killing an Autarch won’t be that easy,” Autarch Ekong laughed.

As more time passed, the Sithe used many different techniques in an effort to kill Autarch Ekong. They first started with grand seals, then switched to insidious and strange techniques. However, the only ones which truly brought him to the brink of death had been that grand seal and a strange tentacle-attack.

On the twelfth day, Autarch Titanos’ avatar finally arrived. He was unable to breach the formations from outside, and so he had no choice but to charge into the temple.

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“Immediately report to our superiors that we’ve already tied down two Autarch-class combatants. One of them is Autarch Ekong, and it appears to be his true body! If we can kill them, it’ll be the equivalent of reducing three Autarch-class combatants from the ranks of the native cultivators. Our temple is mainly meant for trapping foes, which means its attacks aren’t quite strong enough. Hurry up and tell our superiors to send us more forces to wipe the two of them out.” The seven Exalts within the vast temple were all extremely excited.

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Ning and the others continued to stand guard over their respective zones, catching and wiping out Sithe Hegemons and Emperors. The overall situation in the Chaosverse had taken a turn for the better, with the native Hegemons now being under much less pressure. However, there were still a number of formidable Sithe warships roaming about.

Five days after Autarch Titanos' avatar joined Autarch Ekong inside that formation.

"Die!" Ning had just discovered a vast black warship which was suppressing spacetime in the surrounding region. However, Ning transformed into a storm of wind and thunder as he shot towards the warship, intending to blink inside and slaughter the Sithe within.

"Not good! That's an Autarch!"

"Flee, quick!" The Sithe Hegemons and Emperors in this warship were members of an elite squad. They had survived the first waves of the war and had achieved many accomplishments, destroying a total of three cultivator battlefronts.

Swoosh! After blinking into the warship, Ning showed no mercy at all to these 'successful' Sithe warriors. Their 'accomplishments' came from murdering local Hegemons.

"All of you can die." A vast wave of heartforce instantly swept out, causing the many Sithe to perish.

Suddenly, Ning's face turned grim and he immediately blinked outside the warship. There, he discovered that the outside world had just changed. He was now within a vast grayish-white temple complex, and there were a total of eight stone pillars surrounding the temple at its margins. A figure was seated in the lotus position atop each of the stone pillars. Although their mighty auras were inferior to Ning's, Ning knew without a shadow of a doubt that these were all Sithe Exalts. There were eight of them!

"Judging from how you Autarchs have been sweeping through our Emperors, it would seem that you have a total of thirteen Autarch-class combatants! If we factor in the one within the Annihilation Hive, that means you have fourteen in total." A tall, thin Sithe Exalt who was seated atop one of the stone pillars stared at Ning with glowing eyes. "If each of you has one true body and one avatar... that means you have a total of seven Autarchs! Six we already know about. Now... who is the seventh? Is it a newly promoted Autarch, or is it an Emperor Darknorth who had used a 'Truesoul Everlasting' technique?"

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Book 44: The Dusk War Chapter 9: Iyerre's Response

The Sithe Exalts seated on top of the eight stone pillars stared intently at the glowing humanoid before them. None of them could clearly see who that person was.

Who was the seventh leader of the cultivator forces? Was it a new Autarch, or was it an Emperor Darknorth?

This was a question the Sithe paid close attention to. Even Iyerre wanted to know the answer for sure! They would rather see a new Autarch rise than for Daolord Darknorth to have mastered a 'Truesoul Everlasting' technique and become an Eternal Emperor! Someone who was so incredibly talented as to

be able to produce a 'Truesoul Everlasting' technique would be extremely dangerous to the Sithe. The pressures of war might well result in him breaking through to becoming an Omega Autarch!

"Why don't you guess." Ning laughed loudly as he transformed into a streak of light that shot off into the distance.

Just as Ning moved, the vast grayish-white temple suddenly burst with power. The eight Sithe Exalts had activated it, causing spacetime to twist and distort around Ning. Ning could sense his surroundings changing, transforming to become a dazzlingly beautiful world of white clouds and fragrant flowers. Ning stood in the center of all of it... and a strange little smile was on his face.

"An illusory formation?" Ning mused. "Playing around with illusions in front of a Heartforce Cultivator... what a joke!" He was both a formations expert and a Heartforce Cultivator. With the aid of his heartforce, he was easily able to understand some of the secrets behind how this formation operated.

Although Ning was completely confident in his chances, he was still very careful and immediately went into his three-headed, six-armed mode with all six Northbow swords at the ready.

"Break!" Ning's sword-light lashed out, and it cut cleanly through the beautiful illusory world as though the formation was nothing more than tofu. Just like that, the seemingly-formidable formation was defeated! Ning then transformed into a storm of lightning and wind as he flew off into the distance.

"Haha, impressive! You actually defeated our illusions with ease. Of the six known Autarchs in your civilization only Autarch Stonerule, the master of the Illusion Daobirth Essence, would be able to accomplish this. However, we already know that Autarch Stonerule is quite far from here... which means you are most likely Emperor Darknorth," an ancient voice said.

"Emperor Darknorth, we merely cast those illusions so that we could be sure of your identity. Did you really think you'd actually be able to escape so easily?"

"Await death, Emperor Darknorth."

"Seal!"

With a rumbling sound, the titanic grayish-white temple complex began to swivel in place, its outer walls rising upwards while its heart sank downwards. Ning had transformed into a storm of lightning and wind, seeking to escape, but just moments later the entire temple had completely transformed in shape. It was now shaped like a hemispheric prison cell that had been completely sealed off, trapping him inside.

He was completely locked into this place. Ning glanced at the securely-fashioned hallway which imprisoned him, then reached out to touch the walls while following his senses.

"Eh?" Ning frowned. "Yet another spacetime-sealing formation?" With but a thought, Ning blinked past the wall and appeared outside... only to see a vast region of empty space. The only thing within this void was many miniature spacetime continuums. The large ones were ten billion kilometers in size, while the small ones were merely tens of thousands of kilometers in size. All of them came together to form an extremely complicated sealing formation that locked away spacetime! There was no way to simply fly out of this place. If he wanted to escape, he would have to first solve the formation.

“Sealed spacetime...” Ning’s head hurt. In the Annihilation Hive, he had encountered countless spacetime bubbles which were linked together into a complicated formation that was used to devour energy from his Chaosverse! It didn’t have much of a bewildering or trapping effect, as that wasn’t its primary purpose. This one, however, existed solely for the purpose of trapping powerful foes.

“Then I’ll destroy spacetime here!” The three-headed, six-armed Ning sent six streams of sword-light flooding through the area, using his Spacetime Sword Dao to assault and destroy one spacetime bubble after another. Alas, the destroyed ones were quickly replaced by others.

“I can’t do it by force. I have to understand the mysteries behind this formation, then breach it.” Ning began to consider his next steps.

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The eight Sithe Exalts seated on the stone pillars all exchanged a glance. They could see and sense everything Ning was doing inside their formation.

“Anything involving Emperor Darknorth is extremely important. Report this to our superiors immediately,” one Exalt said.

“Alright.” A black-haired man nodded as he produced a silvery formation-base before him. This formation-base had a total of three loops above it which were slowly spinning in place. Gradually, a blurry pillar of light appeared within the loops which resolved into a humanoid figure. A second later, the blurry figure completely solidified into the tall, muscular, gray-robed Iyerre.

Iyerre was seated upon his throne, eyes closed in meditation. Only after fully manifesting did he open his eyes.

“Almighty Iyerre.” The black-haired man remained seated, but he still bowed downwards in respect.

“What is it?” Iyerre glanced down at the man from his throne.

“The eight of us have captured an Autarch-class combatant using the temple you gave us! We suspected that this person is the mysterious ‘seventh Autarch’, and so we first used illusions to test him out. He almost instantly defeated our illusions, and so we now believe that there is at least an 80% chance he is Emperor Darknorth,” the black-haired man said respectfully. “We know just how major this is, so we immediately decided to report it to you.”

“Emperor Darknorth?” Iyerre’s previously placid gaze suddenly shone with terrifying light. This was the variable which worried him above all others!

Iyerre had made many, many preparations for this war! The Sithe Hegemons and Emperors he had poured into the vanguard had been nothing more than cannon fodder. Iyerre didn’t feel the slightest bit of guilt over their deaths, because they had no impact at all. So long as they died killing native Hegemons and Emperors, it could be said that they had succeeded in their purpose! Only when he sent out the Sithe Exalts would the final battle have truly begun.

If it wasn’t for Emperor Darknorth, Iyerre was certain that he had over a 99% chance of success! This was why he hadn’t shown himself a single time. He was confident enough to continue lying in wait, biding his time. Once he did finally reveal himself, it would be in a way which shocked everyone.

However... Emperor Darknorth worried Iyerre. Someone who had failed the Daomerge and yet was able to devise a 'Truesoul Everlasting' technique before dying was undoubtedly a figure of absolutely unearthly talent! If Emperor Darknorth took that one final step, he would become an Omega Dao Autarch! Omega Autarchs in their own Chaosverses were absolutely invincible.

"An 80% chance it is him?" Iyerre murmured softly. "Good. Very good. My first target shall be him, then! Use everything you have to keep him trapped and wait for my arrival! I'll head there at maximum speed and kill him myself."

"You are coming in person?" The black-haired man was shocked. Iyerre had yet to personally take part ever since they had entered this Chaosverse and launched the war against the local cultivators. They all knew how powerful Iyerre was! Although he was unable to summon the power of the Dao in this Chaosverse and was rejected by it, he had prepared many trump cards for this war. Once he made his move, he would undoubtedly be able to kill this 'Emperor Darknorth'.

"Understood. We'll use every tool at our disposal to keep Emperor Darknorth contained," the black-haired man said.

"Very well. I'm heading out right away." The pillar of light began to vanish, and the last thing they saw was a fuzzy image of Iyerre rising from his throne.

Iyerre still wasn't completely sure if the seventh native 'Autarch' was Emperor Darknorth or not. Even if it was someone else, killing a trapped Autarch wouldn't be a complete waste of his time. If it really was Emperor Darknorth, things would be perfect!

Thus, to make sure that nothing unexpected might happen, Iyerre elected to personally deal with this new variable.

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Ning stared at the countless spacetime bubbles in the void. He was able to almost instantly tell that he wouldn't be able to solve this formation right away, and so he quickly sent word to the other six.

"Gentlemen, I've also become trapped within a Sithe temple. Mine has eight Sithe Exalts controlling it," Ning sent via the message-talisman. "I'm now trapped within a spacetime formation. It'll take me some time to break out of it."

"What?! Darknorth, you've been trapped as well?"

"Darknorth, I'm not too far away from you. I'll come help out," Autarch Stonerule replied immediately.

"No need. I'm quite skilled in both spacetime and formations. I'm better suited for dealing with this type of formation than anyone else," Ning sent back. "Don't worry too much. I'm about to start meditating on how to deconstruct this formation. I'm just giving you all a head's up! For both myself and Ekong to be trapped in short succession means that the Sithe have probably prepared squads of Exalts for all of us. Don't let yourselves be trapped as well."

"Alright." The other six Autarchs all felt a sense of pressure. Ekong had been trapped in a temple commanded by seven Exalts, while Darknorth had been trapped by a grayish-white temple controlled by eight. The Sithe most assuredly had more Exalts under their command than simply fifteen!

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Book 44: The Dusk War Chapter 10: Eighty-Two Days

“Starting today... Skyfeeder, Mogg, Bolin, and Stonerule, the five of us must cease using our true bodies to hunt down Sithe warships,” Autarch Titanos sent to the others. “The cultivators across the various battlefronts are no longer under too much pressure. That means the hunt for Sithe Hegemons is no longer as pressing as it was previously! Let’s simply have our avatars engage in the hunt. Let’s not send our true bodies.”

“Right. Leave our true bodies in safety. Darknorth and Ekong have both been trapped; if two or three more of us are trapped, we might end up losing this war,” Autarch Skyfeeder sent back.

“Darknorth, be careful,” Mogg said.

“Solve it and escape as soon as you can. Too much time can result in new variables being introduced,” Autarch Bolin said.

Everyone understood that the longer one was trapped for, the more dangerous it would be. Even if Ning was able to temporarily survive the grayish-white temple thanks to his formidable abilities, it was just a matter of time before the Sithe sent even more reinforcements to attack him! Thus, the more time they wasted the uglier the situation would become. He had to escape as quickly as possible.

“If there’s anything you need us to do, just ask,” Autarch Skyfeeder said. “Of the seven of us, your life matters more than anyone else’s.”

“I understand.” Ning also understood that his fate no longer belonged to him alone; his death would have an impact on their entire Chaosverse and all the cultivators within it.

The white-robed Ning stared at the countless spacetime bubbles and the formation they had been arranged into. Spacetime continuously changed around him, and Ning simply watched while under the effects of 100x temporal acceleration. His every thought was focused on understanding how this grand spacetime formation actually worked.

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Riiiiip. A spacetime rift suddenly appeared deep within the Great Dark, followed by a tall, gray-robed, barefoot man walking into it. His eyes were warm and gentle, seemingly filled with love towards all living beings.

“Hmph.” Iyerre stared into the void, letting out a slight snort as he frowned. A strange type of energy was circling around his body, preventing all forms of karma from touching him! This was the reason why no one from the local cultivator civilizations had ever been able to discover his existence, despite the passage of countless aeons. Given Iyerre’s power, if the prime essences of the Chaosverse were able to sense him it would’ve immediately ranked him as the most terrifying threat in all of existence and have warned the Autarchs long ago.

“Ugh. I can’t use even a sliver of the power of the Dao, and I’m constantly being suppressed. Even my travelling speed is slowed to a crawl,” Iyerre murmured anxiously to himself. Given his power, back in his own Chaosverse he was able to travel more than a hundred times faster than right now. Even in the

Infinite Void, he travelled much faster than he did right now. In this Chaosverse, however, he was being constantly suppressed to the point where he moved roughly as fast as the native Autarchs.

“It will take me eighty-two days to reach the place where we’ve trapped Emperor Darknorth.” Cold light flashed through Iyerre’s warm eyes. “I hope nothing happens during this period of time. We’ve used the ‘Eight Revolutions Spacetime Temple’ to trap Emperor Darknorth. He shouldn’t be able to escape in such a short period of time.”

He had been waiting back in the heart of the Sithelands, which was very far away from the place Ning was trapped. And yet, he would still be able to reach Ning in just a bit over two months, despite being unable to use any of the power of the Dao and being suppressed by this Chaosverse. This was a testament to how truly formidable he was!

“Emperor Darknorth is the only variable which is outside my control. If I can get rid of him, the six remaining Autarchs will pose no danger.” Iyerre felt a tinge of worry. “He’s the most unpredictable variable, and he’s definitely in the highest of favor with the local Quintessence. The entire Chaosverse will concentrate virtually all of its luck onto him! This is what allows him to create one miracle after another... but in the end, going from being an Omega Emperor to being an Omega Autarch will still be incredibly difficult. Luck and favor alone will not be enough.”

In the end, karmic luck was just a form of external aid. It could be ridiculously helpful to ordinary mortals, allowing them (for example) to easily acquire various treasures which could allow them to become Immortals and understand the Dao. For Autarchs, however, luck was much less useful.

Autarch Titanos and the others didn’t care too much about karmic luck either. It was almost impossible for them to improve any further, no matter how lucky they were! Ning, however, was the only person in this entire Chaosverse who stood a chance of becoming an Omega Autarch. He would definitely be blessed with tremendous luck, but luck alone wouldn’t be enough to produce an Omega Autarch. It wasn’t even enough to allow him to come up with a technique like the ‘Truesoul Everlasting’; such a thing required many other factors, including personal insights and tremendous hard work!

Generally speaking, the more powerful you became the better your karmic luck would also become. When Ning had been reborn via the Netherworld Kingdom, he had been an unremarkable little fellow in the vast chaosworld that was the Three Realms. It was only once he grew stronger that his luck truly improved. Iyerre, in contrast, wished to suppress the entire Chaosverse and then bind it to him. To an expert like him, only personal strength was worth putting your faith in.

“He might be a variable, but he still has far less than even a 10% chance of breaking through to becoming an Omega Autarch. I still stand a very good chance of winning this war. Eighty-two days... so long as they can hold him for eighty-two days, I’ll be able to make it in time and get rid of Emperor Darknorth.” Iyerre had an ironclad will, but he still couldn’t help but feel a bit of anxiousness. He knew that whether or not he was able to kill Emperor Darknorth was one of the biggest factors in determining if he could gain control over this Chaosverse or not.

Riiiiip. He continued to tear through spacetime, warping at Autarch-like speeds towards Ning’s location.

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Within the Eight Revolutions Spacetime Temple. Ever since Ning had been trapped here, he had spent all of his time analyzing the complicated formation around him. He had no idea that a terrifying figure like Iyerre was heading towards him, but he did know the more time he wasted, the more dangerous the situation would become.

On the fifth day of Ning's imprisonment. Autarch Titanos and Autarch Ekong managed to break free of the hallway formation trapping them... but then, a new danger appeared before them.

On the ninth day of Ning's imprisonment. The two Autarchs very nearly escaped, but all of a sudden the most terrifying danger of all descended upon them.

On the tenth day of Ning's imprisonment. Autarch Titanos' avatar was forced to use his own life to block the dangerous attack crashing towards them, resulting in him dying in battle! However, this allowed Autarch Ekong to escape unharmed. He was heavily wounded, but at least he managed to stay alive.

"I could feel death breathing down my neck. I could literally feel death's icy grasp reaching for me! It was all thanks to you, Titanos. Otherwise, there's no way I would've been able to escape. Even if I did escape the first hallway, the second trap would've done me in." Autarch Ekong was extremely grateful. "I'm ashamed of having caused you to sacrifice an avatar."

"It's fine. I can make another one! For you to have escaped counts as a win in my book. Besides, it was my fault for being unable to fully divine all the dangers of that place," Titanos said.

"Haha! Ekong, Titanos just saved your life. After this war is over, you need to offer him some of that fine wine you've been stockpiling."

"No problem whatsoever," Ekong agreed straightforwardly.

Ekong's escape was something for the cultivators to celebrate. Of course, Titanos had to recreate an avatar, which would start off at 50% of his power at most. This avatar would now be the weakest of their Autarch-class combatants, which would have a negative impact on their total combat prowess, but it was still a much, much better outcome than Autarch Ekong dying.

Now, the only one trapped was Ning himself. Titanos, Skyfeeder, Mogg, and Bolin all offered advice and strategies based on what Ning had told them, and they also tried to help come up with ideas for solving the formation. Alas, they weren't able to see the formation in person and so they could do nothing more than give general advice.

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On the nineteenth day of Ning's imprisonment. Ning was still unable to escape, but something else happened. Autarch Bolin's avatar was also assaulted by a squad of Sithe Exalts. He had been very cautious, but he still ended up trapped within an evil black temple.

"The Sithe really do have more squads of Exalts roving around. Damn." Autarch Ekong was furious.

"Thankfully, only his avatar has been trapped there. If Bolin's real body was trapped, we'd be in much more trouble," Titanos said. "Bolin, hurry up and try to solve the formation and escape as soon as possible. Even if you can't escape, the sooner your avatar dies the sooner you can start working on a

new one and making it stronger. Every extra day counts. Of course, I hope you can escape intact. That avatar is an Autarch-class combatant, after all.”

If they were continuously weakened like this, they might end up being defeated in the final battle. Small losses of strength could have a major impact on the outcome of the war.

“Darknorth, you be careful as well. Staying alive matters more than anything else,” Titanos said.

“Darknorth, my avatar’s remained fairly close to you this entire time. It can probably reach you in around ten days or so. If you ever need my help, just let me know,” Autarch Mogg sent. “Your life is extremely important to us. If I can sacrifice an avatar to keep you alive, that’s a worthwhile trade.”

“No need. I’m still analyzing the formation trapping me. You coming in wouldn’t really help me much. If I ever do need you, I’ll let you know.” Ning felt quite grateful for the offer, but he knew that Autarch Mogg coming wouldn’t make any difference.

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Book 44: The Dusk War Chapter 11: Breaching Spacetime, Succumbing to Eight Revolutions

Within the Eight Revolutions Spacetime Temple.

The Sithe Exalts remained seated on the eight stone pillars ringing the outer perimeter of the temple. They were closely watching all of Ji Ning’s actions within the formation, not daring to be the slightest bit negligent. Thanks to their control over the formation they were able to scry and see Ning’s white-robed figure seated in the lotus position, surrounded by countless divine runes of incomparable complexity.

“He’s skilled in formations, illusions, spacetime...” A Sithe Exalt sighed in amazement. “Only an Omega Emperor could be skilled in so many aspects!”

As Sithe Exalts, they had the same level of insight as the native Autarchs of this Chaosverse. Thus, they were able to tell from the runes surrounding Ning that the man had reached incredible heights in both formations and spacetime.

“Emperor Darknorth lives up to his reputation. Still... it isn’t likely that he’ll be able to solve this formation in just eighty-two short days. Twenty days have already gone past.”

“Perhaps the spacetime formation alone will be enough to trap him.”

The Sithe Exalts were conversing mentally with each other. They knew just how important Emperor Darknorth was to the war. He was most likely the greatest obstacle to almighty Iyerre taking control over this Chaosverse! This was why Iyerre was hastening towards them at top speed. If they managed to successfully keep Emperor Darknorth trapped for eighty-two days, they would have carried out their primary mission. Once Iyerre became the Lord of Chaos for this Chaosverse, he would definitely give them great rewards.

Time continued to flow on, one day after another. The spacetime formation was indeed quite complicated, but on the thirtieth day of Ning’s imprisonment, an explosion suddenly erupted forth from within the formation, followed by the faces of the eight Sithe Exalts turning grim.

The white-robed Ning had risen to his feet. He had assumed his three-headed, six-armed form and was using his six Northbow swords to furiously assault the spacetime formation around him.

He seemed to be randomly hacking to the right and to the left, but somehow his 'random' hacks managed to disrupt the functioning of the entire formation. He had located and broken through some of the energy nexus points, causing the power of the formation to drop dramatically.

"He's discovered the secrets behind our spacetime formation. The formation is going to break. It won't hold much longer!" The eight Sithe Exalts were shocked by Ning's speed.

Boom! The spacetime formation finally collapsed, followed by those countless miniature spacetime bubbles popping and dissipating.

After thirty full days, he had finally defeated the spacetime formation.

"Incredible. Simply incredible." A black-haired Sithe Exalt sighed in amazement. "He was able to breach the formation in just thirty days. If I was trapped there, I probably wouldn't be able to get out even if I spent a hundred chaos cycles trying."

"You aren't skilled in formations. You'd stand no chance whatsoever."

"He really is impressive."

"Thirty days have gone past. Only fifty-two days are left. The 'eight revolutions formation' should be able to trap him for fifty-two days, right?" a Sithe Exalt with golden fur covering his face said.

"The Eight Revolutions Spacetime Temple's strongest trap-type formation is the 'eight revolutions formation'; the spacetime formation isn't quite as strong. When I tested the spacetime formation out, I was able to get an overall sense of what I needed to do and could calmly meditate on it, but when I tested out the eight revolutions formation I just felt completely baffled and lost," a female Sithe Exalt said. "If it took him thirty days for just the spacetime formation, the eight revolutions formation will probably take him over three years."

"There's no way he's getting out of there."

"Check out that stupid look on his face."

"Haha, he wants to break through via raw force? What a joke!" The Sithe Exalts all began to laugh when they saw what Ning was doing. They knew just how powerful their 'eight revolutions formation' was.

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Boom! Ning had just broken through the vast spacetime formation. Now, he surveyed his new surroundings with a frown. He was within a sealed dimension of raw fire. The flames filled every inch of this dimension, but they were pushed aside before even getting close to Ning.

"A sealed dimension?" Ning had no idea that he had now entered the most dangerous and most difficult part of the Eight Revolutions Spacetime Temple... the eight revolutions formation! This would be his greatest obstacle to escaping the temple. If he managed to break through this, the temple wouldn't have much else left.

“I should be able to just tear through dimensional membranes via raw force.” Ning didn’t hesitate at all, immediately using the technique which Autarchs favored the most – raw force!

Boom! Ning shot upwards while manifesting three heads and six arms. His six Northbow swords furiously chopped against the dimensional membrane, with each strike empowered by the mysteries of the Space Sword Dao. Ning unleashed several hundred chops just the blink of an eye!

When Ning had been trapped within that ‘hidden’ dimension, Autarch Mogg and Autarch Titanos had used the same principle to break through the dimensional membrane – raw force! This was because, unlike the Sithe, they had nigh-limitless amounts of energy here in their own Chaosverse. There was no worry about running out, whereas the Sithe had to consider how much energy they had available when planning their killer attacks.

Thus, using raw force to overpower a formation was actually a highly effective technique, even though it seemed rather brutish and clumsy!

“It seems like it is breaking.” Ning could see that the dimensional membrane was shuddering in the face of his frenzied attacks.

In the spacetime maze, Ning had tried to furiously assault the spacetime bubbles in this manner as well. However, all of the spacetime bubbles he destroyed would release their energies to the local spacetime field, which would then give birth to new bubbles. As a result, the actual energy of the formation wasn’t depleted in the slightest. Raw force was useless against a tactic like this, unless he reached a level where he was so strong he could tear apart the entire formation with just one strike of the sword.

Dimensional membranes, however, were different. They had to endure the weight of Ning’s strikes head on, and each time that happened they would be depleted of energy. Eventually, they would be so weak that they would simply collapse!

Boom! After the time needed to boil a kettle of tea, one of Ning’s strikes finally tore open a giant wound that was roughly three hundred meters in size. Through the tear in the dimensional membrane, Ning was able to see... a vast world of water outside.

“Eh?” Ning turned to stare at the world of fire he was currently in, then back at the world of water on the opposite side of the dimensional membrane. The rift in the membrane was already beginning to quickly heal.

“Another dimension?” Ning frowned, but he didn’t hesitate in immediately charging through the rift and entering the world of water.

“That was fast. The dimensional rift closed after just three seconds.” Ning watched as the tear he had created vanished before his very eyes.

“So this is a world of water, eh?” Ning flew through the water. The waves were powerful and heavy, but like the flames they were incapable of harming Ning in the slightest.

“I’ll break through again.” Ning once more used his sword-arts as he flew to the edges of the world, then began to frenziedly assault the dimensional membrane. It once more took him the amount of time needed to boil a kettle of tea to once more tear a dimensional rift open... and this time, he was able to see a world that was filled with vitality and boundless green light.

“Yet another world?” Ning had a bad feeling about this, but he still flew through and continued to assault the dimensional membrane in this third world.

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And so, Ning began to enter and then furiously chop through one world after another without stopping. An ordinary person probably would've given up long ago, but Ning spent an entire day chopping through a hundred different dimensional membranes before stopping. Alas, there was no end to them.

“I've broken through over a hundred worlds in a row.” Ning was standing atop a mountain, pondering to himself. “These hundred worlds seem to be constructed from eight dimensional archetypes. I can view them as the ice world, the water world, the life world, the earth world, the mountain world, the fire world, the lava world, and the metal world. The dimensions continuously fluctuate between these eight worlds...”

“There's only eight basic 'types', but each world I enter seems to have a slightly different aura than the previous ones.” Ning was growing a bit nervous. He had spent an entire day analyzing the worlds, but still had no idea how he was supposed to break through them.

When he had been within the spacetime formation, at least he could tell that there were countless spacetime bubbles that were linked together into a formation. He was able to glean insights on the workings of the formation from those bubbles before finally solving it!

However, the 'eight revolutions formation' he was trapped in simply gave him a new world once he broke through the previous one. It was a never-ending cycle of these eight types of worlds, a cycle without end...

“How should I break through? How should I escape?” Ning continuously pondered this.

“Can it be that there are actually only eight worlds in total? No, that can't be right. I can sense through my mastery of spacetime that there should be more than just eight.” Ning simply had no idea as to how he was supposed to understand the mysteries behind this formation!

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Time continued to flow on one day after another. The Sithe Exalts on the eight stone pillars gradually began to relax. Everything was as they had predicted. The eight revolutions formation was much more difficult to break than the spacetime formation, after all. In truth, every single one of these temples was quite extraordinary. Autarch Ekong had only been able to escape his temple thanks to Autarch Titanos sacrificing his avatar.

“Once Iyerre gets here, we'll have completed our mission.” The Sithe Exalts continued to wait silently.

As for Ning, he was now seated in the lotus position at the very center of a world of lava. Time was sped up to a rate of 100x around him as he continuously pondered the problem before him. Ning had already notified Titanos, Mogg, Skyfeeder, Bolin, and the others. All six Autarchs were helping him with suggestions, but none of them were able to come up with any true solutions for this deceptively simple cycle of eight worlds.