

## Desolate 901

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### Book 26: World Level Chapter 52: A New Disciple

Ji Ning flew through the air towards the region where he sensed Su Youji was residing. She was within an estate at the very peak of a mountain, and there were eighteen figures seated in the lotus position in front of it.

“Why are eighteen World-level cultivators keeping watch over this estate?” Ning muttered softly to himself.

Within Ning’s estate-world.

The cultivator Ning had captured stared at the white-robed Ning in terror. “Senior, please spare me!”

“Smart kid. Answer all of my questions accurately. There exists no grudge between the two of us. Unless absolutely necessary, I won’t kill you,” Ning said calmly. He had created this clone using half of his divine power, and his clone would be easily capable of slaying this cultivator.

“Understood.” The tall, skinny World-level cultivator nodded repeatedly.

This was no joke. He had been captured so quickly that he didn’t even have a chance to fight back. He knew exactly how great the disparity between their power levels was. In fact, he even suspected that this white-robed youth might actually be a Daolord in disguise. Now that he was trapped in this estate-world, how could he dare to be disobedient? Wisdom lay in knowing when to resist and when to comply.

“I ask you this.” Ning pointed at the air next to him with a finger, causing a map of the Eastsmoke branch of the Bluegrace Sect to appear. This map included the estate at the top of the mountain, as well as the eighteen World-level cultivators seated in the lotus position before it.

“Who resides within this estate?” Ning pointed at the estate at the top of the mountain.

“That’s the estate of senior apprentice-sister Qingfan,” the captured cultivator said hurriedly. “Senior apprentice-sister Qingfan is extremely strong, and she has the power of a supreme World God. She ranks as one of the top ten cultivators here in the Eastsmoke branch.”

Ning nodded, then pointed and asked, “Why are there eighteen World-level cultivators in front of her estate?”

“Senior, are you friends with senior apprentice-sister Qingfan?” The captured cultivator suddenly asked in a soft voice.

“Answer me.” Ning frowned.

“Senior, senior apprentice-sister Qingfan is in a lot of trouble right now. That’s why her estate is under watch.” The captured cultivator said hurriedly, “When she was out adventuring with two other fellow disciples, she became friends with an outsider known as the Flamefairy. The two of them are very close to each other.”

A sharp light flickered through Ning's eyes. Flamefairy?

"I heard that they met each other and helped rescue each other in a dangerous ruins which had been left behind by Feixian the Exalted. They experienced many dangers together, and in the end this Flamefairy acquired the statue of Feixian the Exalted," the captured cultivator said. "Afterwards, the Flamefairy accompanied senior apprentice-sister Qingfan to our Eastsmoke branch..."

The captured cultivator let out an awkward laugh. "And here, a few rather embarrassing things happened."

"Speak!" Ning barked.

"Y-y-es! I'll tell you everything!" The captured cultivator said hurriedly, "One of the two fellow disciples who went out alongside senior apprentice-sister Qingfan, a World God known as Whiteswan, immediately made a report to the branch leader once he returned to the branch. My understanding is that our branch leader was interested in this Flamefairy's treasures and was planning to kill her and take them all."

Ning's eyes narrowed.

"Killing and looting is very common here, and it is said that this Flamefairy has a set of very powerful bugbeasts and golems, as well as that statue of Feixian the Exalted. She might have other valuable treasures as well." The captured cultivator let out a sigh. "But who would've thought that senior apprentice-sister Qingfan would notice that something was off? She helped the Flamefairy fight back, then actually helped the Flamefairy hide within her own estate. Now, the Flamefairy just hides in there and refuses to leave no matter what."

The captured cultivator explained, "Our Bluegrace Sect forbids its disciples from barging into the personal estates of our World-level cultivators. No one would dare to violate this rule, unless they were doing so on the orders of the sectlord himself. This is one of our laws. Thus, there's nothing our branch leader can do. All he can do is have his loyal subordinates keep a close watch as he tries to come up with some other ideas."

"Our branch leader wishes to kill the Flamefairy, whereas senior apprentice-sister Qingfan wishes to protect her. As a result, senior apprentice-sister Qingfan's been living a rather unpleasant life recently. I hear that she hasn't left her estate at all." The man secretly glanced at Ning's expressions. He was guessing that there had to be some sort of a special connection between Ning and Qingfan.

"Let me ask you something else. What type of protective formations does the Eastsmoke branch have?" Ning asked.

The cultivator immediately and obediently revealed everything he knew.

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Ning began to fly towards that distant estate, his mind filled with thoughts. He had been able to easily enter this branch, but taking Su Youji out of it would be no easy task. This was the Eastsmoke branch of the Bluegrace Sect, after all. If all the protective formations here were activated, things would become quite problematic.

Swoosh. Ning began to descend at high speed.

“Eh?” The eighteen World-level cultivators seated before the estate all raised their heads to look at Ning.

“Who are you?” One of the black-robed elders said coldly, “I don’t believe I’ve seen you before.”

“I am Darknorth. Greetings, fellow Daoists.” Ning smiled. “I just recently joined the Bluegrace Sect, and so I haven’t met with the vast majority of our fellow disciples yet.”

“Oh, a new arrival?”

“So a new junior apprentice-brother has joined our ranks.”

These eighteen were merely responsible for keeping a watch over this place. Aside from the black-robed elder who was in charge of them, these cultivators didn’t really have a great deal of status within the Eastsmoke branch. Thus, they were all quite courteous when they met fellow disciples.

In most schools, people knew each other by their unique auras. Once you met someone, you would be able to easily recognize that person in the future.

Schools like the Twelve Palaces had far too many members who were scattered throughout the Endless Territories, which was why the almighty Hegemon had personally crafted those identity medallions. It wasn’t easy to create these medallions, all of which resonated with each other. The Mirrorsnow Paintings had similar resonances as well. Even though these weren’t particularly high-quality items, the cost of creating each medallion wasn’t exactly cheap. The forging process was quite complicated! The Bluegrace Sect had more than five thousand World-level cultivators. It naturally wouldn’t outfit all of its people with such treasures!

The eighteen didn’t suspect a thing. This was a central region in the Eastsmoke branch, with hundreds of World-level cultivators present and a protective formation which had been personally established by Daolord Bluegrace himself. The formations here were all extremely complicated and profound. Which World-level cultivator would dare to barge into this place? Only a suicidal one!

“Junior apprentice-brother, why have you come here?” The black-robed elder said coldly.

“To meet with senior apprentice-sister Qingfan.” Ning smiled.

“Oh?” The faces of all eighteen tightened slightly.

“What sort of a relationship is between you and her?” The black-robed elder asked.

“Senior apprentice-sister Qingfan was my benefactor. To her, it was nothing more than a bit of casual guidance, but I’ve never forgotten it. Because of her, I decided to join the Bluegrace Sect after I became a World God, all for the sake of repaying her kindness,” Ning said.

The black-robed elder frowned as he looked at Ning, then instructed coldly, “Go ahead.”

In recent years, quite a few people had come to visit Qingfan. However, no one had been able to rescue the Flamefairy Su Youji from this gilded cage.

“Senior apprentice-sister Qingfan!” Ning walked to the entrance of the estate, then called out, “Senior apprentice-sister Qingfan! Senior apprentice-sister Qingfan!”

He called out multiple times.

Instantly, Ning could make out the vague form of a white-robed woman appear off in the distance. The woman gracefully walked out of the estate, then looked at Ning.

Ning immediately sent her a mental message. “If you want to save Youji, cooperate with me.”

Fairy Qingfan couldn’t help but feel startled by this. The Eastsmoke branch wasn’t a large place, and the story of the Flamefairy had quickly been made public. However, there were very, very few people who knew that the Flamefairy’s name was Su Youji. In addition, this sword-bearing white-robed youth was someone who she had never met before.

“Senior apprentice-sister Qingfan, long ago you provided me with tutelage. I finally have broken through to the World level and have joined the Bluegrace Sect as well.” A look of gratefulness was on Ning’s face. “Thank you for your guidance all those years ago, senior apprentice-sister.”

“I just gave you a few casual pointers.” A hint of a smile was on Fairy Qingfan’s face. “I didn’t expect that the Elder God I guided would have become a World God by now.”

The eighteen World-level cultivators could hear their oral conversation. But of course, there was no way they could eavesdrop on the mental one.

“Who are you?” Fairy Qingfan sent mentally. “Hmph. You wish to help out Youji? Hmph. These fools tried to use this method to cheat me before. Don’t even dream about getting into my estate.”

“Just help me tell Youji one thing, and she’ll know who I am,” Ning sent back.

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Su Youji was seated in the lotus position within her room. Everything was perfectly still.

“Little sister Youji.” Divine power flowed through the area, manifesting as a clone of Fairy Qingfan. Her true form was still conversing with Ning at the entrance, which was why she had manifested a clone here to speak with Su Youji.

“What is it, big sister Qingfan?” Su Youji opened her eyes and looked puzzledly at Fairy Qingfan.

Fairy Qingfan asked her, “Someone wishes to meet with you. Any idea who this person is?”

“Me? I don’t think I know many people at all, here at the Eastsmoke branch.” Su Youji was confused.

Fairy Qingfan looked at her. “He said... his name is Ji Ning.”

## [The Desolate Era](#)

### **Book 26: World Level Chapter 53: Leave It To Me**

Su Youji’s body trembled.

His name was Ji Ning?

“He came for me?” Su Youji’s mind was filled with many complex thoughts and feelings. She felt a hint of excitement, but she also felt a hint of remorse! She knew that this place was where the Eastmoke branch was headquartered, and that it naturally was protected by many restrictive spells. This was an extremely tightly guarded place. Although Ji Ning was quite formidable, fighting in an enemy’s nest was still an extremely problematic affair.

She had thought that Ji Ning would spend a million years in the Astral Islands. She had planned in quietly training in the legacy left behind by Daolord Feixian the Exalted, as Feixian’s skills primarily lay in the realms of charm, illusion, and control! She was a Daolord who was so terrifyingly powerful that she was given the title of ‘the Exalted’. Generally speaking, Daolords who were slightly weaker than her would instantly fall under her control after a single glance!

She was an individual who was incredibly powerful!

Su Youji was born with tremendous affinity for skills involving charm and allure. Even when she had no legacies to guide her, she had been able to create a charming technique of tremendous power. This was why she had been able to pass all of the deadly trials left behind by Feixian the Exalted, and in the end she was found to be qualified to become Feixian’s personal disciple!

“My original plan had been to train here for ten thousand years and reach the third stage of the ‘Flying Immortal’ secret-art, then take control of the eighteen World-level cultivators outside and leave stealthily.” Even right now, Su Youji was capable of taking control over two or three World-level cultivators at the same time. However, this sort of mind control spell could only be maintained for a brief period of time.

Su Youji had never attempted to leave by force. This was a branch headquarters of the Bluegrace Sect; who would dare to try to force their way in or out of a place like this? Her goal was to take control of those eighteen, then leave stealthily.

“Should I let him in?” Fairy Qingfan asked.

“Yes.” Su Youji nodded.

“Understood.” Fairy Qingfan looked at Su Youji and smiled. “You look so dazed and befuddled right now. What sort of a relationship do you have with him, exactly?”

Su Youji shook her head. “What do you mean, ‘dazed and befuddled’? I’m his retainer. He is my master.”

“Master...?” Fairy Qingfan was startled.

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At the entrance to Fairy Qingfan’s estate.

Ning and Fairy Qingfan were continuing to chat here.

“For you to join the Bluegrace Sect shows that karmic ties continue to bind us. Enter my estate. Stay here for a while and have a good conversation with me. As of late, your big sister’s been bored senseless.” Fairy Qingfan tossed Ning an intentionally playful look. Now that she knew that Ning was Su

Youji's master, she found herself quite impressed. This white-robed youth was definitely an figure of extraordinary power and ability. To have such an extraordinary figure address her as 'big sister' was quite diverting.

Ning gave her a look, then chuckled. "Please lead the way, senior apprentice-sister."

"Mm." Fairy Qingfan turned and walked towards her estate, with Ning following behind her.

The eighteen World-level cultivators seated outside all watched as this transpired. When the black-robed elder saw Fairy Qingfan actively invite Ning into the estate, a rather ugly look appeared on his face. He barked coldly, "Junior apprentice-sister Qingfan, don't try to seduce this new junior apprentice-brother of ours into helping you out."

"None of your damn business." Fairy Qingfan didn't even turn back to look at him. She simply let out a cold snort.

"Junior apprentice-brother Darknorth, remember... there are some things which you should do and some things which you should not do." A chill filled the voice of the black-robed elder.

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By now, Su Youji had already emerged from her room and was staring at the pathways in front of her, waiting eagerly.

Finally, Fairy Qingfan emerged from around the bends, and behind her was a white-robed youth who bore a longsword on his back. The youth looked the same as he always had, the same as he had in her memories.

"Master..." Su Youji stared at him, her heart filled with many emotions.

Guilt?

Gratitude?

In the Astral Islands, she had battled until she was at the point of absolute despair and exhaustion. When she saw Ji Ning appear, she had actually wept. And now, they were meeting at the Eastsmoke branch of the Bluegrace Sect. Even for someone like Ji Ning, a fight here would be quite troublesome. And yet... he had still come.

"It is always you helping me out, rather than vice versa. I'm your retainer, but I've never been able to do anything for you." In this instant, Su Youji suddenly realized that she would never be able to forget how Ji Ning had saved her from the Astral Islands. That moment had been indelibly imprinted into her very soul... and now, they were meeting again here at this branch of the Bluegrace Sect.

"Youji." Ning walked over towards her.

"Master." Su Youji nodded slightly. "I've caused trouble for you."

"I hear that this branch leader of the Eastsmoke branch is mainly trying to steal your treasures. I also heard something about a statue of Feixian the Exalted?" Ning asked.

Su Youji looked at Ning with some degree of surprise. "You already know?"

Ning turned to glance at the nearby Fairy Qingfan. "Fairy Qingfan, if Youji wishes to leave, who will try to stop her?"

Fairy Qingfan could instantly sense that this white-robed youth was now speaking in a very different way and had a very different attitude. When they had been at the entrance to her estate, he had modestly addressed her as 'senior apprentice-sister Qingfan'. Although he still spoke in a very relaxed way, his words and his demeanor revealed his absolute self-confidence and his dominating presence.

"If little sister Youji wishes to leave, she would first need to deal with those eighteen World-level cultivators standing guard," Fairy Qingfan said. "They are keeping a tight watch, and if anything happens they will immediately make a report to that fool of a branch leader. When that happens, that fool will undoubtedly order many of our other World-level cultivators to attack. In fact, he might even activate the many formations protecting this place. Once that happens, there really will be nowhere to run."

Ning nodded slowly. This was what he had expected.

"Master, give me another hundred thousand years and I might be able to work something out," Su youji said. A hundred thousand years would actually be millions of years if she used a temporal acceleration treasure. That should be more than enough.

"If too much time passes, new variables will enter the equation," Ning said. "Since this man was able to become the local branch leader, he probably has certain connections within the main base. If he wants to barge into the estate of a fellow disciple and seize an unaffiliated World-level cultivator, all he has to do is find a suitable excuse and he'll probably be able to convince Daolord Bluegrace into agreeing. You've only been here a few centuries, which is why he has been able to bide his time. If you wait too long, that will no longer be the case."

Su Youji's face turned pale. Right. Once the local branch leader received permission from the main base, he would be able to enter this estate and seize her. By then, she would have no recourse at all.

"Leave it to me. I'll bring you out of here," Ning said.

Su Youji felt a warm feeling in her heart. Although she was worried about Ning, as his retainer she held enormous faith in him. He was indeed an absolute freak of nature!

"Fellow Daoist Ji Ning." The nearby Fairy Qingfan said in a rather unhappy manner, "You must not act rashly. If you remain inside, they'll be limited by the rules of the sect and won't dare to cause trouble. But if you were to take little sister Youji out of this place... they'll be allowed to attack. They won't show mercy to an outsider who isn't a member of our sect."

"Fairy Qingfan, all you need to do is stand back and watch." Ning turned his head and said to Su Youji, "I'll take you into my estate-world."

"Alright." Su Youji nodded.

Fairy Qingfan said unhappily, "Little sister Youji, this isn't..."

Ning just waved his hand, drawing Su Youji into his estate-treasure. He then turned and began to walk towards the outside.

"You-!" Fairy Qingfan immediately hurried after him.

The entrance to the estate.

Ning emerged from the estate and saw the eighteen World-level cultivators seated outside of it.

“Leaving already?” The black-robed elder stared at Ning in a very solemn manner, as did all of the other cultivators.

“Did Fairy Qingfan ask you to help her out by taking the Flamefairy out with you?” The black-robed elder’s voice turned icy cold.

“She did not,” Ning said.

“Junior apprentice-brother, the Flamefairy’s matter has grave implications for everyone here. As a result, we can’t just let you leave like this.” A nearby red-haired child spoke in a hoarse voice.

“Do you plan on inspecting my treasures?” Ning frowned.

“Cultivators often hide many of their secrets in their treasures. We won’t insist on inspecting everything by force. However... you will need to swear a lifeblood oath that you are not taking the Flamefairy out of this place.” The black-robed elder said calmly, “If you truly are not carrying her with you, then this oath will have no impact on you at all. But if you are... then this lifeblood oath will immediately rebound upon you and devour your life. You’ll die on the spot.”

“Swear the lifeblood oath and we will let you leave.” Swish! A dark-red crystalline rod was sent flying towards Ning.

Ning glanced at the dark-red rod, then shook his head.

Suddenly, he manifested three heads and six arms. His six arms dramatically increased in size, and his palms became so large as to block out the skies as he struck out towards the eighteen cultivators nearby.

“What?!”

“Careful!”

Fairy Qingfan was standing right behind him, and her eyes immediately bulged out. He actually went straight to fighting? How could Su Youji’s master be such a fool? He actually dared to launch an attack within the Eastsmoke branch of the Bluegrace Sect?!

“Hmph.”

“What a fool.”

The eighteen World-level cultivators instantly activated their formation, allowing Immortal energy to pool together and then flow over their bodies. The reason there were eighteen of them here was so that they could join forces and fight against tough foes. Even if Su Youji tried to use her bugbeasts and golems to force her way out of the estate, they would be able to hold on against her for a period of time.

BOOM!



As the six enormous palms swept towards them, an enormous collision could be heard as one of the World-level cultivators was captured as easily as one might pick up a little chick. The man was forcibly dragged into Ning's estate-treasure, the entire formation having been forcibly torn apart.

Whoooooosh. The six enormous palms continued to howl forth and strike out towards them.

"Flee!"

"How can he be this powerful?!"

"Run away!"

The remaining World-level cultivators were all stupefied. This initial clash had just resulted in Ning capturing eleven of them, and the rest hurriedly began to scatter and flee.

However, the enormous power ripples caused by this clash spread out to encompass the entire Eastsmoke branch, which was merely ten million kilometers in size. Every single World-level cultivator here was able to easily sense that something had happened, and many streams of godsense swept outwards towards this region.

"Who dare you! How dare you barge into our Bluegrace Sect!" One stream of godsense carried a voice that exploded loudly within Ning's mind.

"Hmph!" Ning suddenly poured out his own godsense, sweeping it in all four directions in an all-encompassing wave. Thanks to the nurturing effect of his azureflower mist energy, Ning's soulw as comparable to that of a Daolord of the First Step, as was his godsense. Other World-level cultivators truly had far weaker godsenses by comparison.

As Ning's godsense flooded out, it boomed as it slammed into the streams of godsense that had flooded this area. Ning's godsense crushed everything in its path, smashing apart nearly three hundred different streams of godsense and chaosense. The difference between a World-level cultivator and a Daolord was simply too apparent.

Rumble...

For a moment, the only stream of godsense present within the ten million kilometer region of the Eastsmoke Sect belonged to Ji Ning. All the others had been completely crushed and wiped out!

"The Flamefairy is my retainer. Today, I've come to the Eastsmoke branch of the Bluegrace Sect to take my retainer away from this place." Ning's voice boomed out, echoing in every corner of the entire Eastsmoke branch. "I trust that most of you know about the matter of your branch leader seeking to steal my retainer's treasures, and you all know in your hearts who is in the right and who is in the wrong. I am going to take my retainer out of this place, and I'd rather not launch a massacre... but if anyone who seeks to bar my path shall die!"

His voice blasted out across every inch of the local branch's territory. Every single World-level cultivator found his godsense or chaosense completely suppressed, and they were all completely unable to push back.

Fairy Qingfan stood there at the entrance to her home, staring in amazement as this all happened. When she heard this earth-shattering voice boom out in her mind, she couldn't help but be shocked once again!

### The Desolate Era

#### **Book 26: World Level Chapter 54: Launching A Massacre**

Fairy Qingfan was completely stunned by the dominating power of Ji Ning's godsense. The power of one's godsense was derived from the strength of one's soul. This was something that simply couldn't be faked! All by himself, Ji Ning had crushed the godsenses of all the other World-level cultivators in the Eastsmoke branch. This alone was proof that he was a person who ordinary cultivators absolutely could not compare to! And, judging from Ning's words... he had only revealed a tiny fraction of his true power.

"Fellow Daoist Ji Ning." Although Fairy Qingfan was so stunned that she immediately spoke and acted in a much more humble manner, she still said to Ning frantically, "This place is the local headquarters of our Bluegrace Sect. It is protected by many mighty formations which Daolord Bluegrace personally set down! No matter how strong are you, you can't possibly withstand our guardian formations! You are acting far too impetuously!"

Ning gave her a glance. "Fairy Qingfan, I already told you that you only need to do is stand back and watch."

"Then I'll do just that." Fairy Qingfan gritted her teeth. "Although that idiot branch leader is a real imbecile, he won't show any mercy in activating those formations."

"If I really can't beat him, I'll just hide in your estate again, Fairy." Ning tossed a smile her way.

"You..." Fairy Qingfan stared, dazed. Good point. Ji Ning was standing right at the entrance to her estate. He really could simply retreat into it whenever he wished.

Ning then turned to stare at the distant main palace of the Eastsmoke branch, his gaze turning cold. The choice of how to proceed was up to the local branch leader. If he was wise enough to let Ning leave, Ning wouldn't pursue this matter any further and simply wipe the slate clean! It was very common for cultivators to fight each other out of greed for each other's treasures, after all, and Su Youji hadn't actually been harmed. This matter was a matter that could be easily glossed over.

However, if he chose to fight...

The outcome would be completely different. Ning wasn't certain in his ability to overcome the local formations, and so he wouldn't show any mercy at all.

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The main hall of the Eastsmoke branch.

"Who is he? Where the hell did he come from?" The Eastsmoke leader was a fairly handsome man, but his eyes were as cold as ice.

"No idea where he's from."

“Given how powerful his godsense is, he’s definitely an extraordinary World-level cultivator. In fact, he might be strong enough to enter the Twelve Palaces or might have already done so.” There were three other World-level cultivators in the main hall. Usually the various World-level cultivators of the Eastsmoke branch would reside within their own residences, and so the main palace only had three on duty.

The Eastsmoke leader’s face sank.

“Branch leader, what should we do?”

“Should we activate the formation and let them leave?”

The other three all looked at their branch leader.

The Eastsmoke leader was considering this very question as well. “It seems as though the master of the Flamefairy is quite a powerful figure... but no matter what, he’s just one man! So what if he really is a member of the Twelve Palaces? In this place, I can still kill him!”

The almighty Hegemon had long ago ordered all members of the Twelve Palaces to swear lifeblood oaths, preventing them from killing each other. However, these oaths were not binding upon the other cultivators of the Brightshore Kingdom! Although World-level cultivators who had been granted entry into the Twelve Palaces were generally incredibly powerful, over the course of countless years there had been a few occasions in which ordinary World-level cultivators had managed to somehow kill World-level cultivators of the Twelve Palaces. When this happened, the response was simple: Too bad! It was his own damn fault!

If you were protected from Daolords but ended up being killed by World-level cultivators, you deserved it!

“His retainer had so many treasures. He has to have even more.” The Eastsmoke leader grew more and more greedy as he thought about this. “No matter what, he’s just a World-level cultivator. The sectlord once said that not even the most powerful World-level cultivator would be able to defeat these protective formations.”

“Kill. Kill him!” The Eastsmoke leader made his decision, born of personal greed as well as confidence in the protective formation’s power. Ning’s own display of dominance and power had also angered the Eastsmoke leader, contributing to this decision.

Boom! The Eastsmoke leader sent out a strand of his will, merging it into the protective formation that covered the entire Eastsmoke branch. This was a sealing formation that prevented anyone from entering or leaving the place. This formation was perpetually active, which was why Ning had to pretend that he was interested in joining the Bluegrace Sect and be granted entry. If he hadn’t, there would’ve been no way for him to force his way inside. The sealing formation would’ve stopped him dead in his tracks, and the many other formations would’ve begun to launch spells against him as various World-level cultivators took control over them.

“Not only did you barge into the Bluegrace Sect, you act with such arrogance. It seems as though you truly have a death wish!” The Eastsmoke leader’s mind had become one with the formation, and his voice boomed out through the natural energy controlled by the formation as it echoed throughout the

region. "On my orders, all disciples of the sect are to take control over our various formations and kill him!"

Giving this order through godsense would've been more subtle, but Ning's godsense had completely permeated this entire region, giving him no option but to send the order through his formation.

"Yes."

"Take control of the formations!"

"Quick!"

Some of the World-level cultivators were hesitating, as they all knew that the Eastsmoke leader was in the wrong for lusting over the treasures of this man's retainer! In addition, the man's godsense was so strong that he was clearly an unfathomably powerful figure. Some of the vacillating cultivators began to delay on purpose, wanting to see exactly how powerful this mysterious expert was.

However, some of them did obey the orders right away. As for the ones who were extremely good friends with the Eastsmoke leader, they all began to fly straight towards the various formation-cores. "Once we kill him, we'll split some of the spoils as well."

"He dared to enter our base. He truly doesn't know his own limits!"

So long as they rendered merits in battle, there would be no way that the Eastsmoke leader would be able to refuse giving them a portion of the spoils. World-level fellow disciples were fairly important and respected, after all.

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Ning stood there in front of Fairy Qingfan's estate. When Ning heard the Eastsmoke leader send out a booming order to kill him, he just slowly shook his head.

"Think of something, quick!" Fairy Qingfan said desperately.

"Formations... have to be operated by cultivators," Ning said coldly.

"Come out!" A crimson-black gourd instantly appeared in the air next to Ning. This was the Elementum Waterflame Gourd, and it immediately unleashed two dragon-like streaks of lightning. One was the Watersmoke Lightning, which surged out like a dark stormclouds that was filled with crashing waves of water. The other was the Firecloud Lightning, which spread out like an enormous billowing cloud of flames. The two streaks of lightning wrapped around each other, then began to blast out in every direction!

It must be understood that Chaos lightning moved faster than almost all Daolords. As for Dao lightning, it moved with such terrifying speed that even Daolords would be befuddled by it, to say nothing of World-level cultivators.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

The Dao lightning blasted out in every direction. In the blink of an eye, every part of the ten million kilometers of the Eastsmoke branch became filled by the Watersmoke Lightning and the Firecloud

Lightning. These two mighty types of Dao lightning were incompatible with each other, due to being water-aligned and fire-aligned, and each time they clashed with each other they would explode with utterly earth-shaking force.

“What?!”

“How is this possible?!”

The cultivators who had been the first to move, hoping to help kill Ning and then get a share of his treasures, watched in utter despair as Dao lightning blanketed the skies above them! The Dao lightning moved with such incredible speed that they were filled with complete hopelessness. It must be remembered that Daolord Allgod himself had used those nine secret arts including the [Novessence Thunder] to strike down Emperor Melobo. In terms of speed alone, Dao lightning was generally so fast that even Eternal Emperors were unable to dodge it.

Boom! The two streaks of Dao lightning slammed downwards.

“NO-!” Some of the World-level cultivators brandished their weapons, seeking to block. Alas, as the divine lightning swept past them they were instantly reduced to dust, their truesouls completely annihilated.

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The two mighty streaks of Dao lightning were so powerful that when they were completely focused on a single opponent, they would be able to slay even a supreme World God with a single blow. Even transcendent World Gods would suffer heavy injuries, and a few repeated strikes would result in their deaths!

However, since Ning had spread out his two streaks of Dao lightning into an area attack, the power of the attack was somewhat lessened. The elite World Gods were instantly swept through and destroyed! The master-class World Gods would be able to survive for two breaths before also perishing. As for supreme World Gods, they would generally be able to survive. However, this small Eastsmoke branch only had a total of around three hundred World-level cultivators. It only had roughly ten or so who had reached the supreme World God level of power!

Boom! The cultivators who had been the first to respond to their leader’s orders and charge forward began to die under the horrifying power of the two types of Dao lightning.

There had only been a single supreme World God who had responded to the Eastsmoke leader’s orders right away, and Ning focused an enormous amount of lightning on him, causing him to perish after a few breaths as well.

It had only been ten breaths worth of time, but all of the thirty-nine cultivators who had acknowledged their branch leader’s orders had perished! As for those who were hesitating or who were just watching, Ning didn’t act against them yet.

“Thank goodness.”

“Thank goodness I was cautious.”

“Thank goodness I hate that idiot.”

The many hesitating World-level cultivators in the branch all raised their heads to stare at the boundless streaks of Dao lightning filling the skies. The black lightning and the blazing lightning were tangled together, constantly crackling and exploding with such power that they all felt chilled to the core.

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Fairy Qingfan stared in a similarly stupefied manner at the endless lightning crackling in the skies. She then turned to stare at the crimson-black gourd hanging in the air next to Ning. The gourd was still emitting more streaks of lightning.

“As I said. Anyone who seeks to bar my path shall die.” Ning’s voice boomed out with the thunder, shaking the heavens and the earth. “If you do not get involved, I will not harm you. I do not harm the innocent.”

“You’ve killed the disciples of our sect. You must die!” The Eastsmoke leader’s furious voice echoed in the skies as well. “The nineteen of you who are already in position, activate the formations right away and kill him!”

The Eastsmoke leader had been driven absolutely furious. Normally, if an enemy attacked they would be able to rely on the protective sealing formation to defend them as the various World-level cultivators took control of the various attacking formations and used them to surround and assault their foe. The more powerful formations required multiple World-level cultivators to use, and there was obviously no point in having all of their cultivators be permanently stationed within the various formations. They needed to train and to go out on adventure! They would usually train in their own residences; all they had to do was hurry out and take part in any battles that did arise.

The problem was that Ji Ning was already inside the formation!

Even so, normal enemies would not have been able to prevent them from entering their various formation-cores. The problem was that Ning had the Elementum Waterflame Gourd, allowing him to wipe out all of them at one ago. Alas, nineteen World-level cultivators were permanently stationed in some of the formation-cores at all times, and so some of the formations were still activatable.

“If the nineteen of you do not get involved, I won’t act against you.” Ning’s voice boomed out once more. “But if you try to stop me... I guarantee that I will kill you all, no matter how much time and effort it takes.”

Instantly, the nineteen World-level cultivators within the formation-cores began to hesitate.

Should they get involved in this? If they didn’t get involved, they wouldn’t be in any danger. But if they did get involved and were unable to kill this mysterious expert, they would be in for a world of hurt.

“Kill him! Later, I’ll give all nineteen of you an equal share of his treasures.” The Eastsmoke leader spoke out using his Immortal energy through his formation.

“Kill him.”

“We are inside our formation. There’s no way he can touch us.”

“Kill him and his treasures will be ours.”

“If we act, we have to make sure we get rid of him.”

Three of the World-level cultivators chose not to get involved and instead just watch, but the other sixteen elected to activate their formations out of greed. Activating all the formations would require sixty cultivators, and they were only sixteen of them in position. Only a small part of the power of the formations had been unleashed, but they still felt quite confident. They trusted in the might of Daolord Bluegrace’s formation.

Rumble...

Multiple formations throughout the region began to activate!

Ning raised his head to stare into the skies, his eyes as cold as death.

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### **Book 26: World Level Chapter 55: The Formations Activate**

The Eastsmoke leader was in charge of the most important formation. This was the one preventing Ji Ning from leaving.

As for the other sixteen, they were able to control roughly eight other formations. Three of them were meant for bewildering opponents while the other five were meant for launching attacks.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! The enormous illusion of a axe slowly began to manifest in the air, drawing upon more and more of the power of Heaven and Earth as it corporealized. The illusion became increasingly solid, and its aura continued to increase.

“The power of this divine axe is so great that even a hundred World Gods would be slain by a single chop.” Fairy Qingfan had already hidden herself inside the estate behind Ning, and she watched all this happen with concern.

Rumble...

Thunder rang out, shaking both the heavens and the earth as streaks of lightning began to appear. These were all streaks of Chaos lightning, but they were so numerous that they still possessed tremendous power.

An axe, lightning bolts, flames, black mist, a divine sword... all five attacking formations had been activated. The three bewildering formations also began to unleash their power as well.

“Hmph. How laughable.” Ning simply stood there. His soul was so strong and his will was so resolute that all of the bewildering illusions were useless against him. It must be understood that not even a Heartforce Cultivator like Bertulu had been successful in using illusions to deceive Ning, to say nothing of these formations. These formations were designed to be used against World-level cultivators. They were completely useless against Ning.

“Break!!!”

Ning raised his head to the skies and let out a furious howl.

The two mighty streaks of Dao lightning immediately blasted out once more, striking towards the enormous axe, the Chaos lightning, the flames, the black mist, and the divine sword.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

One explosion after another could be heard as the Dao lightning began to battle the five offensive formations.

The first to be destroyed was the Chaos lightning. Next was the strange, billowing black mist, which was wiped out by the supremely yang-attribute, forceful, and destructive Dao lightning. As for the giant greataxe and the divine sword, they contained so much condensed power that not even the Dao lightning could shake them! The destruction of the Chaos lightning and the strange black fog had used up a tremendous amount of the Dao lightnings' power. In the end, it was only able to slightly weaken the blazing, Fiendgod-shaped flames.

"Kill!" The blazing Fiendgod flew through the air, roaring furiously as flames erupted in its wake.

"Kill!" The enormous greataxe hanging in the air quickly descended like a scythe, chopping down towards Ning with fury.

"Kill." The divine sword hanging in the air descended tip-first as it stabbed straight towards Ning.

"Die. Die! DIE!" The Eastsmoke branch leader gritted his teeth as he watched from within the main palace. He repeated the word 'die' over and over again, hoping that when the power of these three formations descended they would utterly annihilate this white-robed brat.

"You have to do. You HAVE to die." The sixteen World-level cultivators controlling the formations watched eagerly as well.

It was forbidden for members of the Twelve Palaces to fight amongst themselves, but ordinary World-level cultivators often dreamed of having the chance to slay a member of the Twelve Palaces! The status difference between the two was as great as the difference between the heavens and the earth, after all. However, the difference in power was similarly great, and those who were capable of completing such a momentous task were few and far between.

They now had a chance to accomplish such a deed... and if they won, they would gain access to this terrifyingly powerful World God's treasures.

"Ji Ning..." Fairy Qingfan raised her head to stare at the blazing Fiendgod, the enormous greataxe, and the divine sword.

"I wonder what will happen?"

The other World-level cultivators who were simply watching on the sidelines stared as the three weapons descended towards that tiny white-robed figure.

"Hmph." Ning suddenly let out an angry snort, instantly expanding in size to become a three-headed, six-armed Fiendgod who was more than thirty thousand meters tall. His six enormous palms were large enough to blot out the skies, and he swept them towards the three attacking formations.

"Kill! Kill!" The blazing Fiendgod continued to bellow furiously.



BOOM! BOOM!

Ning was using the same sword-art with all six of his palms – the Heavenbreaker stance!

This strike focused on using raw strength and power to overwhelm and crush foes in a head-on clash! After his experiences in the Astral Islands, Ning's [Brightmoon] sword-art had become dramatically more powerful as well. They were now comparable to the sixth stance of the [Nameless] sword-art! Ning's Heavenbreaker stance now had a similar aura of overwhelming dominance as the third stance of the [Quintessence Sword-Intent], the Astral stance, but it was even more direct and brutish in its might.

BANG! BANG! Two of the mighty palms slammed into blazing Fiendgod in succession. The blazing Fiendgod bellowed furiously as it attempted to fight back... but as the two palms simultaneously collided with it, its body began to break apart.

BOOM! Two enormous palms slammed direct into the chopping greataxe in a frontal collision. The result was the the greataxe was actually shaken into pieces, causing it to dissipate.

The final two palms smashed straight towards that descending sword.

In the blink of an eye, Ning had transformed into a towering Fiendgod, manifested three heads and six arms, then used his six palms to crush all three attacks. This sight caused all of the World-level cultivators in the Eastsmoke branch to fall silent.

"B-but..."

"How can he be this strong?"

"Thank goodness I didn't get involved!"

They all stared slack-jawed, especially Fairy Qingfan. She was completely dazed! "Youji mainly relied on her bugbeasts and golems! She herself wasn't that powerful. When this Ji Ning guy took out one of those legendary Elementum Waterflame Gourds, I thought that he had to be just like Youji, someone who relied on magic treasures. I never imagined that he himself is even more powerful than those treasures! H-he... he must be close to a Daolord in might!"

"That blazing Fiendgod, in terms of raw strength alone, was actually comparable to a Daolord of the First Step. Unfortunately, its insights into the Dao were so poor that it was even weaker than ordinary World-level cultivators in this regard." Ning couldn't help but shake his head. "As for that axe and the sword, they were materialized with many profound mysteries and were actually quite strong. Unfortunately, all the power they contained was used up after a single strike."

The weakness of the blazing Fiendgod was that it possessed a very low level of insight into the Dao. As for the greataxe and the divine sword, they had no staying power. They were only able to stay materialized for a brief period of time at their maximum level of power. Ning, however, was a cultivator and was thus able to fight at maximum power for quite some time.

"All things crumble before the face of my Heavenbreaker stance," Ning said calmly.

This was the fifth stance of the [Brightmoon] sword-art, the Heavenbreaker stance. This was Ning's most physically powerful attack, an attack relying on overwhelming might! It was far more ferocious and forceful than the Blood Drop stance or the Shadowless stance. However, the Blood Drop stance had

better penetration while the Shadowless stance was more unpredictable. When Ning battled against powerful cultivators, he generally tended to use some of the other stances, but when faced with these fairly weak formations it was actually the Heavenbreaker stance which was the most suitable attack.

“What should I do? What should I do?!” The Eastsmoke leader began to freak out, his eyes turning red with panic. “The formations can’t kill him. What should I do?”

“Branch leader, what should we do?”

“How are supposed to beat him?”

The other sixteen World-level cultivators in charge of those eight formations began to panic as well.

The Eastsmoke leader’s eyes were now bloodshot. Through his formation, he howled furiously, “No need to be afraid! He must have used some sort of incredibly powerful divine ability in order to be able to unleash such tremendous might! The more powerful a divine ability is, the more divine power it uses up. He’s probably using up divine power a thousand times faster than he would in a ‘normal’ battle. There’s no way he’ll be able to sustain this, but our formations will ensure that we can continue to launch attacks without pause.”

“Right.”

“Let’s kill him through attrition.”

“There’s no way he’ll be able to launch too many of those attacks.”

They had already made an enemy out of Ji Ning. If they were to now let him leave... unacceptable! The only choice was to follow this path to its conclusion.

They were using formations, and so they were able to draw upon the endless amount of natural energy that existed in the world. The formations were also powered by chaos jewels, ensuring that the controllers didn’t have to use up too much of their own Immortal energy. They’d be able to keep fighting for an extended period of time.

An illusion of an axe, an illusion of a sword, a black mist, a flaming giant, and lightning bolts once more began to form in midair.

Ning glanced upwards at them, then shook his head.

Attrition?

With each attack, the formations would have to build up power for quite some time before striking out. Ning himself was being reinforced by his azureflower mist energy and actually wasn’t using much of his own normal power. In a battle like this, the rate at which he absorbed energy from the outside world was actually faster than the rate at which he used it up.

Swoosh. Ning suddenly stepped forward, transforming into a streak of light that flew straight into the air.

“He’s moving.”

“He’s flying towards the main palace.”

Many World-level cultivators were watching this fight nervously. They didn't dare to take part in this battle at all, because even if all of them joined forces they would still be butchered by this white-robed youth! The difference between a World-level cultivator and a Daolord of the First Step was simply enormous. Ji Ning had a much lower level of insight compared to a Daolord of the First Step prior to the almighty Hegemon abducting him, but he was now on equal terms with an actual Daolord of the First Step.

As Ning flew forwards, he suffered yet another waves of attacks, but he was once more able to use his six giant palms to effortlessly crush the attackers.

"He's coming for me." When the Eastsmoke branch leader saw the towering white-robed youth fly towards him, an ugly look appeared on his face.

"Break for me!" Ning let out a cold roar as his six giant palms sliced through the air, striking simultaneously at the main palace of the Eastsmoke branch. The Eastsmoke leader was hiding within the main palace, and he was as small as an ant compared to the six mighty palms that were descending.

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### **Book 26: World Level Chapter 56: Ji Ning's Slaves**

The area around the main palace was surrounded by rings of light. When the six colossal heaven-covering hands came crashing down, only the outermost layer of light was shattered, and they regenerated almost instantly.

"Ahahaha! There's no way you'll be able to break through." The Eastsmoke leader was overjoyed upon seeing this. He stood there in the main palace, a cold smile on his lips. "This is the main palace. This is the most important part of the Eastsmoke branch, and it possesses the strongest defenses. It is guarded by eight layers of defenses, and you were only able to breach one of them. You aren't even close! Since you can't kill me, you'll be the one to die. I refuse to believe you'll be able to keep this divine ability of yours active indefinitely."

Ji Ning stared down towards him from his position in the skies. Ning nodded slowly as he mused to himself, "The main palace lives up to its reputation. This is the source of power for the entire restrictive formation"

The grand restrictive formation protecting this place required a formation-core, and the formation-core was under the control of the Eastsmoke branch leader and located in the tightly guarded main palace.

"It seems I'll have to use my full power." A hint of a smile played at the corner of Ning's lips. He then reached out with one hand towards his back, taking a firm hold over the sword which he had been carrying on his back this entire time.

"He's about to draw his sword."

"He's been carrying that sword along this entire time. It seems that sword should be pretty powerful."

"I wonder what will happen?"

The World-level cultivators of the Eastsmoke branch all watched intently, including both Fairy Qingfan and the Eastsmoke leader.

Clink.

The sword left its scabbard!

In the instant that Ning drew his sword, five other swords appeared in his other five hands.

Six hands, six Eternal swords.

“Astral stance!” As soon as Ning drew his swords, his six Eternal blades began to gleam with blinding light. They transformed into six streaks of bloody sword-light that descended towards the main palace like a tempest of blood.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

One layer of light after another was shattered. The main palace was guarded by eight formations, and six of them were broken through.

The shockwaves generated by the powerful collisions spread out in every direction, so strong as to cause even the surrounding mountains to crumble and topple. Countless trees were reduced to dust.

“What...” The Eastsmoke leader was so frightened that his face turned bone-white. He then swallowed, hard. “Thankfully, he didn’t break through. He won’t be able to break through.”

“Is this his true power?” Fairy Qingfan, still standing at the entrance to her estate, stared at the distant Ji Ning and the six mighty swords he was wielding. “No wonder little sister Youji was willing to follow and serve him. How can a World-level cultivator be this powerful.”

“Oh? It actually didn’t break?” Ning frowned, then raised his head to glance at the restrictive formations above him.

Swoosh!

Ning charged high into the skies.

“I knew he wouldn’t be able to hold on forever. He had to be using up an enormous amount of divine power to unleash those attacks.” A hint of delight appeared on the Eastsmoke leader’s face. Through the formation, he sent a mental message to the other sixteen cultivators. “Keep using your formations to attack him. Don’t be fooled by how powerful he looks. Soon, he won’t be able to fight back at all.”

“Right. He’s relying on his own power whereas we are relying on our formation.”

“He won’t be able to overpower us.”

The World-level cultivators continued to use their formations to attack.

“Impudent!” Ning frowned as he saw the greataxe, the sword, and the blazing Fiendgod charged towards him once more.

Whoosh.

Three streaks of bloody sword-light shot out into the skies, completely shattering the three oncoming attacks. Now that Ning was using his Eternal swords, these formations were nothing to him at all.

“Since I cannot break through the main palace with a full-force strike, I should give this grand restrictive formation a try.” Ning flew high into the air, head raised as he stared at the barrier in front of him. Although he knew that this barrier had to be extremely tough, he still wanted to give it a try.

“Go.” Six streaks of sword-light shot out like six meteors, simultaneously raining down together upon a thirty-meter region of the grand restrictive formation. Although the formation covered a region of ten million kilometers, Ning focused all of his attacks on one point. This would make piercing through it easier.

Rumble... the entire grand restrictive formation trembled slightly, then dispersed the power of Ning’s attack.

“It didn’t break?” Ning’s face changed slightly. “Again.”

Rumble... the six streaks of bloody sword-light sliced out once more as Ning furiously attacked the grand restrictive formation.

The entire Eastsmoke branch turned silent. All the World-level cultivators watched as the white-robed youth used his power to furiously assault the grand restrictive formation. It would be countless years before they would ever be able to forget this sight. A World-level cultivator was so audacious as to challenge the full power of their barrier... and was able to cause the entire barrier to tremble.

Ning sent ten consecutive attacks out against the formation!

“I really can’t break through.” Ning slowly shook his head. “It seems as though forcing my way out of this formation is impractical.”

If he wasn’t able to break out of this place, his only option was to carry out his original plan.

Ning lowered his head, staring downwards with a cold light flashing in his eyes.

Swoosh. Ning immediately charged downwards. In just two seconds, he arrived before a black palace.

“Break.” Six dazzling streaks of sword-light descended upon the black palace. Although the black palace was protected by three layers of barriers, it still exploded into pieces.

“Spare me!”

“Spare us!”

The three World-level cultivators hiding within the black palace immediately ran out, staring at Ning in terror.

Every single formation-core was protected by barrier spells, but those barriers couldn’t possibly compare to the barriers protecting the main palace! Transcendent World Gods might not be able to breach them, but Daolords of the First Step would be able to breach them through raw power.

“Hmph.” Ning waved his giant hand. Whoosh! The heavens seemed to turn dark as he captured all three of them.

“Next.” Ning began to fly towards another formation-core.

“What?!”

“We can’t stop him.”

“Mystdragon, this is all your fault. You ruined us, you idiot! Qingfan was absolutely right when she said you were an imbecile and buffoon.”

“We are finished.”

“We are all doomed.”

“He said earlier that anyone who stands in his way will be killed.”

Ning blew through the various formation-cores with ease, capturing all sixteen World-level cultivators.

“All of them are doomed.” The Eastsmoke leader’s face was turning pale from his position inside the main palace as he watched this happen. “I’m the only one left. He won’t be able to enter. He can’t break the main palace’s barrier spells.”

Although he consoled himself by saying this, he was still filled with terror. Although the barrier was able to trap Ning, it wasn’t able to kill. If too much time passed, who knew what additional variables might enter the picture?

“Big brother.” The Eastsmoke leader waved his hand, causing a black message-talisman to appear. He gritted his teeth, then crushed it into tiny pieces.

“Big brother. You have to come save me.” The Eastsmoke leader could now sense how dangerous this foe was. At a time like this, his only option was to ask his big brother to come protect him. His big brother had always doted on him.

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The main headquarters of the Bluegrace Sect.

The main headquarters was a vast place, stretching out to cover more than a hundred million kilometers. There were countless cultivators here, with more than three thousand World-level cultivators and innumerable Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals. There were also four Daolords! The most powerful was of course Daolord Bluegrace himself, and he was an extremely famous and reputable figure within the Brightshore Kingdom.

Bang!

A figure suddenly soared into the skies, leaving a deep gorge that was completely shrouded in black mist. This figure was dressed in black robes, had a cold and grim face, and looked quite similar to World God Mystdragon, the branch leader of the Eastsmoke branch. Only, his aura was colder and darker.

“Mystdragon actually shattered the message-talisman I gave him? What sort of danger has he encountered?” Daolord Batdragon’s face was grim, but his eyes were filled with worry.

Him and Mystdragon were actual brothers.

It was extremely rare for a pair of fraternal brothers to be able to train together and reach such heights in cultivation. Batdragon had long ago lost all his other kinsmen, and his little brother was the only one left. In truth, Mystdragon wasn't really strong enough to qualify for his current position, but since Daolord Batdragon gave him his full support he was able to become a branch leader.

Mystdragon. His one and only little brother.

"I'll go right now." Daolord Batdragon didn't hesitate at all. He immediately transformed into a streak of light as he flew out of the main headquarters and towards the Eastsmoke branch.

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At the top of a mountain of the Eastsmoke branch.

Ning stood there, a group of thirty-four terrified World-level cultivators before him.

Of the thirty-four, sixteen had been using formations to attack Ning while eighteen were the Eastsmoke leader's devoted followers. The eighteen were the ones who had been keeping tabs on the Flamefairy. Ning had captured them all.

"The eighteen of you obeyed the Eastsmoke branch leader's orders and wished to slay my retainer and steal her treasures.

"The sixteen of you wished to slay me!"

Ning swept the thirty-four with his gaze. "Quite frankly, I should kill you all."

The thirty-four were utterly terrified. When cultivators made the wrong enemy or chose the wrong master, they would often find themselves in mortal danger.

"However, I will give you two options. The first option is death! The second option is to immediately swear a lifeblood oath to be my slave." Ning tossed out an oathstone. "The oath is right here. If you are willing to swear the oath, you'll be able to stay alive."

"Slave?"

The World-level cultivators had ugly looks on their faces. World Gods and Chaos Immortals had exalted statuses; how many of them would willingly become the slave of another?

The problem was, if they refused they would die! Ji Ning was simply too powerful, far more powerful than any World God had a right to be. To submit to him... it wasn't completely unacceptable.

"This oath..."

"This is way too stringent..."

"B-but..."

When the thirty-four of them saw the oath, they were stunned.

Once they swore this oath, they would become absolute slaves who would have to serve Ning with utter devotion. In fact, they weren't even permitted to lie to him! This was one of the most stringent oaths

possible. The only thing that gave them hope was the clause that said they would regain their freedom after a thousand chaos cycles.

A thousand chaos cycles? This was an incredibly long period of time. How many cultivators would even be able to stay alive for that long?

Ning swept them with a glance. He had actually been planning on killing them all, but he had reconsidered as there was always a need for servants or slaves to take care of some minor matters that he simply didn't have time for. In addition, when he was out adventuring there were some dangerous places he could use them to scout for him. If some of them were so lucky as to stay alive for a thousand chaos cycles, for him to release them then would be fine as well.

A thousand chaos cycles? Ning couldn't even imagine what level of power he would have reached by then.

"Impossible."

"One wrong step, and it all comes to nothing." Several World-level cultivators raised their heads and sighed. Their truesouls immediately dissipated as they perished on the spot.

"I chose the wrong path. I'll have to bear the consequences."

"Forget it, forget it."

In the end, a total of five of them chose suicide. Ning didn't move to stop them.

The other twenty-nine chose to bow their heads and become Ning's slaves. As they saw it, this incomparably terrifying World God would most likely become a Daolord in the future. They were willing to accept becoming the servants and slaves of a Daolord.

Whoosh. Ning waved his hand, accepting these twenty-nine World-level slaves.

## [The Desolate Era](#)

### **Book 26: World Level Chapter 57: Daolord Batdragon**

World God Mystdragon, the branch leader of the Eastsmoke branch, continued to hide in the main palace of the Eastsmoke branch. He watched as all of this happened, and he felt no sympathy for them at all. Instead, he was celebrating. "Thank goodness the barriers protecting my main palace are much stronger. Although this white-robed kid is strong, he still can't do a damn thing to me. Hmph! Soon, my big brother will arrive. By then... hpmh!"

World God Mystdragon felt tremendous confidence in his big brother.

Whoosh. Ning suddenly transformed into a streak of light, flying away from the mountain and once more charging towards the main palace.

"He's coming back?" The Eastsmoke leader was badly frightened. "Why is he coming back? Does he have some even more powerful tricks up his sleeve?"

The Eastsmoke leader's heart was filled with alarm. He knew that if he didn't have these barriers and had to face Ning by himself, he probably wouldn't be able to withstand even a single blow!



The Bluegrace Sect's area of influence was quite large, as was its territory. Its nine branches were all located in nine different corners of its territory, and even someone like Daolord Batdragon who flew roughly twice as fast as the speed of light would need to fly for roughly an entire day before arriving.

World God Mystdragon had to hold on for at least a day. By then, his big brother the Daolord would arrive and he would be safe.

"Come out."

Ning landed in front of the main palace as a crimson-black gourd appeared behind him. This was the Elementum Waterflame Gourd. The gourd immediately belched out the Watersmoke Lightning and the Firecloud Lightning, and the two mighty streaks of Dao lightning immediately began to hammer down upon the barrier spells, shattering through the two outermost layers.

"I hope this breaks it." Ning manifested three heads and six arms, once more wielding six Violetjewels as he began to furiously assault the main palace.

Boom! Boom! Boom! The main palace echoed with the sound of explosions.

Even though Ning now had the Dao lightning helping him, he was still only able to breach seven of the barriers. The eighth and final barrier remained unbroken, and it was the strongest barrier of all.

"You can't break it." The Eastsmoke leader laughed coldly as he saw this. "And you can forget about escaping."

Ning, however, continued to rain down furious blows with his Eternal weapons. As for his Dao lightning, it was constantly replenished by the natural energy of Heaven and Earth and thus was also able to attack unabated.

"Let's see how long he can keep attacking for. He has to be using up an enormous amount of divine power, but I'm using up very little Immortal energy in maintaining these protective barriers." The Eastsmoke leader smiled coldly.

Two hours later. Ning was still furiously attacking, not having taken any break at all.

"What the hell is going on." The Eastsmoke leader had an ugly look on his face. "He has to be using an insanely powerful divine ability to launch such powerful attacks. It has to be consuming a thousand times as much divine power as a normal strike would. How can he keep going for so long?"

It must be understood that the barriers themselves used up an incredible amount of energy after having been breached and repaired so many times. Although most of this energy came from chaos jewels and the extracted natural energy of the world, a small part of it did have to come from the controller of the formation. His Immortal energy was instrumental in keeping the barriers and the formations active.

After two hours, more than half of his Immortal energy had been used up!

"Let's keep fighting then. I'll be able to hold." The Eastsmoke leader gritted his teeth. "I have plenty of chaos jewels. I'll be able to fight for a long period of time if I use my chaos jewels to replenish my energy."

He was the fraternal brother of a Daolord and a branch leader. He naturally had quite a few chaos jewels, and the main palace itself also had an emergency cache of chaos jewels to ensure that the formations would remain active.

In truth, Ning really was using up quite a bit of energy. Although the azureflower mist energy was being consumed fairly slowly, it was still being used up far faster than he could replenish it. If he continued launching maximum-power attacks like this, he would probably run dry on energy after six hours. However... the one thing which Ning absolutely did not lack for was treasures and chaos jewels. For the sake of being able to end this sooner, using up a few chaos jewels was more than worth it.

Four hours.

Six hours.

Eight hours.

Ning continued his furious attacks. Every so often, Ning would draw some of the chaos jewels into his Jindan chaos region and absorb the pure, distilled chaos energy from the chaos jewels. As for the Eastsmoke leader, he had naturally started to use chaos jewels well before Ning had.

“Mystrdragon, I urge you to just withdraw the formation and let him leave.” Fairy Qingfan had already flown over to the main palace. In truth, she was feeling quite stunned at the fact that Ji Ning was able to maintain such a high intensity over such a long period of time. It must be understood that World Gods used up divine power at an alarming rate when they launched full-power attacks. Even if they tried to use chaos jewels to replenish their energy, it wouldn’t be enough.

There was a limit to how fast chaos jewels could be used to replenish energy. Ning used up energy at a very slow rate, which was why he was able to easily use chaos jewels to keep himself topped off.

For those who truly did rely on powerful divine abilities to fight, they’d usually run out of energy after a short battle. There was simply no way for chaos jewels to keep up with their energy expenditures.

“You traitor.” The Eastsmoke leader laughed coldly.

“This was all caused by your attempts at robbery. If you let him go, then this matter will be at an end,” Fairy Qingfan urged.

“At an end? Ahaha, he’s completely unable to breach the main palace. I’m using up almost no Immortal energy in keeping the barrier spells active. I’ll be able to keep going for an extremely long period of time thanks to my chaos jewels. Soon, my big brother will arrive and he’ll be in for a world of trouble.” How could the Eastsmoke leader be willing to give up at a time like this?

So what if the white-robed kid belonged to the Twelve Palaces? His big brother was a member of the Twelve Palaces as well, and a retainer to Daolord Bluegrace. The Eastsmoke leader didn’t feel any fear at all.

And if this kid wasn’t a member of the Twelve Palaces, his big brother could simply kill him!

“Big brother?” The furiously attacking Ning cast him a glance. By now, Ning had a belly full of fire. Anyone who had been forced to continuously launch full-force attacks for so long would have a belly full of fire.

“It wouldn’t matter even if his big brother is Daolord Bluegrace himself.” Ning was truly furious now.

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“Mystdragon.” The black-robed Daolord Batdragon was flying through the clouds at high speed. His nervousness had caused a layer of bloody light to appear within his eyes. “You have to hang on, Mystdragon. Hang on until I arrive.” He couldn’t even imagine what sort of threat had caused his little brother to shatter the message-talisman and beg for rescue.

He needed a full day to fly from the main headquarters to the Eastsmoke branch. All sorts of things could happen within a day.

“I don’t care who it is, if someone kills my little brother... I, Batdragon, swear that I will pay any price, up to and including my very life itself, to take revenge.” The bloody light in Daolord Batdragon’s eyes grew even more ominous. The two of them had grown up together as children, then had together embarked upon the path of cultivation. They had even braved many life-and-death dangers together. The relationship between the two simply couldn’t be describe by the word ‘deep’ alone. Mystdragon had been the most important person in his life for countless eons. For the sake of his little brother, he truly was prepared and willing to give up life itself.

“Hold on. Wait for me.” Daolord Batdragon continued to fly forwards at high speed.

A full day and a full night later, Daolord Batdragon finally reached the Eastsmoke branch. Thus far the life-tablet of his little brother, which he carried with him at all times, was still intact. That meant that his little brother was still alive.

Whoosh. When Daolord Batdragon arrived at the grand restrictive formation, he immediately charged in while shouting loudly, “Let me in!”

“Big brother?” The Eastsmoke leader was instantly overjoyed. As controller of the formation, he was able to immediately create a small opening for the black-robed Daolord Batdragon to enter through.

The atmosphere in the branch instantly turned quite odd and eerie.

Ning, Fairy Qingfan, and many other World Gods could all sense that something had just happened to the formation. They saw that black-robed figure fly in, and they could sense from the overwhelming aura radiating from him. This was indeed the aura of a Daolord.

“A Daolord arrived.”

“That’s Daolord Batdragon.”

“Our branch leader’s big brother has arrived. That invader will be in trouble now.”

The various World-level cultivators were all secretly chatting amongst themselves. As for Ning, he halted his wild attacks and turned to stare at the black-robed figuring making a beeline in his direction. This black-robed figure had quite a cold and sinister face which was very similar to the Eastsmoke leader’s appearance.

“Eh?” When the black-robed Daolord Batdragon saw Ning, he could immediately sense the ripples from a identity medallion of the Twelve Palaces.”

Daolord Batdragon flew into the main palace, and the barriers surrounding the palace all vanished. Clearly, the Eastsmoke leader held complete faith in his big brother.

“Hm.” When Daolord Batdragon saw his little brother, a quick and careful scan showed that he wasn’t injured at all.

“Big brother, this World-level cultivator barged into my Eastsmoke branch.” The Eastsmoke branch leader, World God Mystdragon, pointed at Ning as he howled furiously, “Not only did he kill a group of dozens of my World-level cultivators, he forcibly abducted and enslaved a second group. He wanted to kill me, big brother!”

All of the resentment he had felt was bubbling out now. With his big brother by his side, who did he have to fear?

WHAP!!!!

Daolord Batdragon suddenly struck out with his palm, delivering a vicious blow to the face of the Eastsmoke leader. The Eastsmoke leader’s face immediately twisted and distorted as he was sent flying into the walls of the main palace. BOOM! He collided so hard that the entire palace shook. The palace walls were now covered with blood as the Eastsmoke leader lay on the blood-soaked ground, his body twisted brutally.

The Eastsmoke leader raised his head to stare at his elder brother in disbelief.

“Why haven’t you apologized to this fellow Daoist yet!” Daolord Batdragon stared at him as he furiously roared out these words.

## [The Desolate Era](#)

### **Book 26: World Level Chapter 58: Resolution**

“Big brother.” The Eastsmoke leader had a befuddled look on his face as he stared at his elder brother. He was to lower his head and admit that he was in the wrong?

“I told you, apologize to this fellow Daoist immediately!” Rage blazed in Daolord Batdragon’s eyes. His voice was very deep, and he growled out one word at a time.

The Eastsmoke leader felt unhappy with this. So what if this white-robed kid really was a member of the Twelve Palaces? His big brother was a member as well. It was forbidden for members of the Twelve Palaces to kill each other; why should he apologize? But judging from the way in which Daolord Batdragon had just spoken, the Eastsmoke leader could sense that his big brother was truly upset this time. He had long ago grown accustomed to obeying his big brother in all things.

“I was in the wrong.” The Eastsmoke leader bowed his head towards Ning. “Please pardon me, fellow Daoist.”

“I am Batdragon.” Daolord Batdragon looked at Ning and spoke in a very courteous manner. “I knew that this good-for-nothing little brother of mine must have done something to offend you, fellow Daoist. I’m willing to offer you fifty thousand cubes of chaos nectar in compensation. I hope that you can spare my little brother, fellow Daoist.” As he spoke, he produced a circular bracelet.

“This contains ten thousand cubes of chaos nectar and two Eternal weapons. The total value here is fifty thousand cubes. I hope you are willing to accept this, fellow Daoist.” As Daolord Batdragon spoke, the bracelet flew straight towards Ning.

Ning was stunned. An immediate apology, followed by fifty thousand cubes of chaos nectar?

Ning knew that this person was a black-armored Daolord, one who had reached that level only thanks to a Pseudo Samsara Pill. The man wasn't exactly wealthy. The fifty thousand cubes probably didn't represent all of his wealth, but it definitely would sting.

Ning glanced at the bracelet, in no hurry to accept it.

This branch leader had first tried to kill Su Youji, then tried to kill Ning himself. Even though Ning had dominated so many World-level cultivators and nearly breached the main palace, the man had refused to bow his head and insisted on keeping the grand restrictive formation active, preventing Ning from leaving in the hopes that his big brother would arrive. By now, Ning had an extremely deep urge to kill. Was he supposed to just write it all off due to a small token of compensation?

Although Ning wasn't able to do anything to the branch leader now that Daolord Batdragon was here, Ning wasn't willing to accept the bracelet. Accepting it meant accepting that this matter was resolved.

The rage that had built up in Ning's breast after a full day of combat was not going to be quenched so easily.

“Swear a lifeblood oath right now.” After delivering the bracelet, Daolord Batdragon turned to glare at the Eastsmoke leader. “Within a thousand years, you must travel to Hydragon Mountain and spend a hundred chaos cycles there as a miner. I can see that you've completely let being the Eastsmoke leader go to your head. You've completely forgotten the proper way to behave. Go mine and get your thoughts straight!”

“Mine for a hundred chaos cycles?” The Eastsmoke leader was instantly furious. “Big brother!” A look of rage and resentment was on his face.

“Didn't you hear what I just said? Swear the lifeblood oath right away!” Daolord Batdragon roared.

The Eastsmoke leader was furious as well. “Big brother, why should we be afraid of this brat? So what if he is a member of the Twelve-”

WHAP!!!!

Daolord Batdragon delivered another heavy slap. This time, the Eastsmoke leader was injured even more heavily than last time. He was smashed into the nearby wall by this palm, completely staining it in his blood. The Eastbranch leader slowly slid down the wall. He stared at his big brother.

Daolord Batdragon, seeing the look on his face, instantly sent a furious mental message. “Do you think I would ever do anything to hurt you?!”

The Eastsmoke leader slowly began to come to his senses, but he truly didn't understand. He sent back, “But big brother, why?! He's just a World-level cultivator. Giving him fifty thousand cubes of chaos nectar is already giving him more face than he deserves. And you are going to send me off to mine for a

hundred chaos cycles? Mining in Hydragon Mountain is an extremely arduous, boring life. Although it is fairly safe, it will sometimes be dangerous.”

As the Eastsmoke branch leader, he knew a great deal about the legendary Hydragon Mountain.

Hydragon Mountain wasn't located in the Brightshore Kingdom. It was one of the dangerous zones that was located elsewhere in the Endless Territories. However, the Brightshore Kingdom had taken complete control over it! Combat was forbidden within Hydragon Mountain, making it an extremely safe place, but Hydragon Mountain itself would occasionally give birth to some dangerous things and places. Even when that happened, the miners would still have to go mine. Thus, there were occasionally a few casualties, albeit extremely rare.

“And with you here, big brother, he's not able to do a damn thing to me. You also belong to the Twelve Palaces!” The Eastsmoke leader sent mentally.

“You idiot.” Daolord Batdragon explained, “Yes, both of us are members of the Twelve Palaces, but... it isn't the same.”

Daolord Batdragon looked at his little brother. “Look. I made my breakthrough because I used a Pseudo Samsara Pill. I'm a black-armored Daolord, the lowest-ranked type of Daolord in the Twelve Palaces.” Daolord Batdragon began to mentally explain some of the hidden secrets pertaining to the Twelve Palaces. “The Twelve Palaces have some truly horrifying Daolords who are so strong that many of the other organizations in the Endless Territories are terrified of them. Do you think they have the same level of status as me, someone who relied on a Pseudo Samsara Pill to become a Daolord of the First Step and who will never make any more advancements?”

“But he's still not able to do anything to you, big brother.” The Eastsmoke leader was beginning to understand, but he remained a bit stubborn.

“Wrong.” Daolord Batdragon sent mentally, “You don't get it. Members of the Twelve Palaces are forbidden from fighting amongst each other, but if an enormous grudge somehow results from something, palace members are generally expected to go through mediation first! If the mediation fails, then the result will be a duel to the death!”

“Ah!” The Eastsmoke leader instantly grew excited. He sent mentally, “Then he should be afraid of you, right? How could he be a match for you in a duel to the death?”

“Wrong again. I'm a black-armored Daolord who only reached this level due to a Pseudo Samsara Pill. How can I be qualified to force him into a duel to the death?” Daolord Batdragon sent mentally, “Generally speaking, the Palace Lords or Vice Palace Lords of the Twelve Palaces are the ones responsible for mediation. Do you think I would dare to reject what their ruling is? I have no future prospects and my position is low... but this Darknorth was given direct entry to the Twelve Palaces at the World level. His future prospects are unlimited! Once he makes his breakthrough, he will quickly reach the power level of a Daolord of the Second Step. In fact, he might become even stronger than that.”

Daolord Batdragon shook his head. “People like me generally end up as retainers to more powerful Daolords. All we are... are servants.” Daolord Batdragon sighed. “Little brother, you need to understand that in the Twelve Palaces, people like me are looked down upon due to having used Pseudo Samsara

Pills. The only reason the other Daolords are somewhat courteous to me is because I am Daolord Bluegrace's retainer, and they wish to give him face."

"Ah?!" The Eastsmoke leader was amazed. He knew none of this, because his big brother rarely discussed matters pertaining to the Twelve Palaces with him.

"It makes sense. People like us will never make any more breakthroughs, which is why we chose to use Pseudo Samsara Pills. To then advance from the First Step to the Second Step as a Daolord? Absolutely impossible." Daolord Batdragon sent mentally, "That's why I wanted to try and resolve matters between you and him. Otherwise... even though he can't kill you, once he becomes a Daolord he'll have plenty of ways to deal with you."

Daolord Batdragon suddenly asked, "Oh, right. What exactly is the problem between the two of you?"

"To be honest, it is because he has a retainer known as the Flamefairy..." The Eastsmoke leader didn't dare to lie to his big brother. He honestly revealed the entire affair to him.

"You imbecile. He was actually able to use his godsense to crush the godsenses of more than three hundred World-level cultivators? Even the Twelve Palaces are rarely able to recruit World-level cultivators of such power. How could you possibly be so reckless as to offend a freak like him?" Daolord Batdragon was once again enraged by what he was hearing. "But let's put that aside from now. He furiously attacked the formation and was able to break through seven of the eight barriers protecting the main palace. Given how strong he was, what you should've done was just cancel the restrictive formation and let him leave! But you insisted on forcing him to fight with you for a full day and night. Also... did he really attack for a full day and night without resting?"

"Yes. He didn't rest at all." The Eastsmoke leader was beginning to feel scared.

"He was able to attack at maximum power for that long?" Daolord Batdragon was growing angrier and angrier. "No wonder he's emanating such a murderous aura! As soon as I arrived here, I could sense his desire to kill. When I offered him that bracelet, he didn't accept it. Ugh! Ever since I became a Daolord and let you become the Eastsmoke leader, you became completely full of yourself! If you continue to act so rashly... even if you survive this time, you'll have a very short life ahead of you!"

"I-I... what should I do?" The Eastsmoke leader looked at his big brother.

"My worry is that this Darknorth is a man who holds grudges," Daolord Batdragon explains. "Swear a lifeblood oath right away that you'll go to Hydragon Mountain. Hydragon Mountain is an important place to the Hegemon, as that's where his mines are. No one will dare to attack you there. A hundred chaos cycles from now, this matter will be ancient history. If he still holds a grudge after a hundred chaos cycles, it'll obviously be a problem with him. I would have an excuse to ask Daolord Bluegrace to intervene and help out."

The Eastsmoke branch leader now completely understood. He now realized that even his big brother was nothing more than a small pawn in the Twelve Palaces. If this Darknorth was the vengeful type, he really would be in trouble in the future.

"Fellow Daoist Darknorth, I was in the wrong and let greed blacken my heart." The Eastsmoke leader looked at Ning. He bowed respectfully, then immediately swore a solemn oath. "I swear on my very life

itself that I, Mythdragon, will go to Hydragon Mountain within a thousand years. I will spend a hundred chaos cycles there as a miner in order to expiate my sins towards fellow Daoist Darknorth. If I violate this oath, let my truesoul shatter and let my Dao vanish.”

Ning was flabbergasted.

Actually, he wasn't really worried about Daolord Batdragon as Ning himself already had the power of a black-armored Daolord. The two were already on par with each other, but Ning was merely at the World level.

Still... Ning understood that with Daolord Batdragon here, it would be extremely hard for Ning to do anything to the Eastsmoke leader. For the Daolord to offer a gift and an apology was one thing, but the branch leader was now swearing to spend a hundred chaos cycles mining at Hydragon Mountain? A hundred chaos cycles was an extremely long period of time. There were many cultivators who wouldn't even live to be that old. Ning could sense that Daolord Batdragon truly did care about this little brother of his.

“Then let this matter come to an end.” Ning accepted the bracelet, in effect accepting the proposed resolution. “I won't stay here any longer. Farewell.”

Ning immediately left the main palace.

Daolord Batdragon let out a sigh of relief as he watched Ning accept the bracelet and Ning. Finally, this matter had been included.

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Outside the main palace. Ning looked at Fairy Qingfan.

“Fairy Qingfan.” Ning looked at her, then waved his hand and sent a message-talisman towards her.

Fairy Qingfan stared blankly at the message talisman.

“This matter has been concluded, and I trust Daolord Batdragon won't pursue this matter any further. Still... if you encounter any problems in the future, you can shatter this talisman and I'll immediately hasten to your side,” Ning said. Fairy Qingfan truly had helped the Flamefairy out this time.

“Alright.” Fairy Qingfan nodded as she slipped her fingers over the talisman.

Ning soared into the skies, transforming into a streak of light as he flew off into the distance. The grand restrictive formation had long ago been lifted, and Ning soon disappeared into the clouds in the horizon.

Fairy Qingfan watched as Ning left, her fingers unconsciously tightening over the talisman. She murmured to herself, “Just now, if I told him that I wished to become his retainer, he probably would've agreed, right? Perhaps my path of cultivation and my destiny would both completely change...”

The path of cultivation was a path which one would have to choose for one's self. No one else could make these choices for you, and different choices would result in different results.

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Daolord Batdragon stood at the entrance to the main palace, letting out a second sigh of relief upon seeing Ji Ning disappear. He then turned to stare at his little brother. He immediately said, "Hurry up and make your preparations. I'm going to send you away from this place today. You are going to Hydragon Mountain right now."

"Today?" The Eastsmoke leader hesitated a moment, then nodded. "Alright. I'll go make the preparations." As he spoke, he immediately turned and left to gather his things.

Daolord Batdragon mused to himself, "This Darknorth fellow doesn't look like the evil, backstabbing type. This matter probably has truly come to an end. Still..." Daolord Batdragon glanced in his little brother's direction. "It is all for the best. Hydragon Mountain will help to temper his disposition. Still, it is true that the place can be dangerous sometimes. Mm... I'll go and request to become one of the overseers. I'll take care of him in secret."

There were overseers who were charged with overseeing the mining operations in Hydragon Mountain. This sort of boring job was almost always carried out by black-robed Daolords. The stronger Daolords would all be out adventuring. None of them would be willing to do this job.

"But I have to help him out in secret. I can't let him know." Daolord Batdragon made his decision.

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Now that the matter had been resolved, Ning and Su Youji began to advance in their flying vessel. They spent five months flying before finally reaching the Twelve Palaces.

"So beautiful." Su Youji stared at the surroundings from within the flying vessel.

Ning stared off into the distance as well.

At the edges of the horizon, twelve enormous palaces could be seen hovering there in midair. In their center was a dim black cavern. Those twelve palaces were the actual Twelve Palaces. They looked quite close to each other, but in reality the palaces were all separated by many layers of space. They were actually many trillions of kilometers away from each other, but the almighty Hegemon was so powerful that he was able to make them look as though they were located right next to each other. Together, these Twelve Palaces formed the most supremely powerful formation the Brightshore Kingdom had to offer.

Even Eternal Emperors would not dare to enter the Twelve Palaces without permission.

"To the Sword Palace." Ning laughed.

Swoosh.

The flying vessel quickly began to move towards the direction of the Palace of the Sword.

## [The Desolate Era](#)

### **Book 27: Twelve Palaces Chapter 1: Swordlord**

The Palace of the Sword was incredibly large. It was like an enormous island-continent that hovered in the air, filled with countless buildings and radiating a sword-aura that caused Ji Ning to feel speechless.

The Sword Palace had numerous black-armored Daolords on patrol outside of it.

“Fellow Daoist.” A black-armored Daolord sensed Ning’s medallion and immediately flew towards him, then said in a fairly courteous and modest manner, “Is this your first trip to the Sword Palace?”

“Yes.” Ning nodded.

“My name is Fudan. Let me guide the way for you, fellow Daoist.” This black-armored Daolord was courteous to the point of being obsequious. He glanced at Su Youji. Seeing that Su Youji clearly wasn’t a member of the Sword Palace, he didn’t say much to her.

“I am Darknorth,” Ning said.

“Junior apprentice-brother Darknorth, you come to us with an identity medallion on your very first visit. Are you from the Astral Islands?” The black-armored Daolord asked while leading the way.

“Yes.” Ning nodded.

“A new entrant into our Sword Palace from the Astral Islands. Junior apprentice-brother, you are incredible!” The black-armored Daolord laughed. By now, they had already reached a stone path that was three thousand meters wide. This path led straight towards the main gates of the Sword Palace. Right above the massive gates were two words that were written in a vigorous, bold manner: ‘Sword Palace’!

These two words were overflying with so much sword-intent that it filled the entire Sword Palace, then soared upwards into the skies. Even the multiple layers of folded spacetime around the palace were unable to impede it.

Ning felt stunned upon seeing it. These two characters possessed such incredibly dense sword-intent that they could be described as the most terrifying example of calligraphy he had ever seen.

“These two words were left behind by the first Palace Lord of our Sword Palace, Emperor Windsnow,” the black-armored Daolord said. “Junior apprentice-brother Darknorth, have you been informed about the rules one needs to follow in order to establish a new palace?”

“Establish a new palace?” Ning was puzzled. He truly had never heard of such a thing.

The black-armored Daolord Fudan explained, “Long, long ago, the almighty Hegemon established the Brightshore Kingdom and put tremendous time and effort into cultivating his Daolords. Back then, the Twelve Palaces didn’t exist. As the almighty Hegemon put it, one had to be strong enough to be the equal of an Eternal Emperor before one could set up a new palace of one’s own.”

The black-armored Daolord continued, “Emperor Windsnow was the earliest of the major powers of the Brightshore Kingdom. Back when he was merely a Daolord, he was already an utterly dazzling figure who was more than strong enough to match an Eternal Emperor in might. He established the Sword Palace and became its first Palace Lord. Later on, he succeeded in his Daomerge and became an Eternal Emperor, at which point he rewrote the words ‘Sword Palace’ that hung above the palace gates. As the

Emperor once said... those two characters contain the essence of the Dao of the Sword which he used to gain eternity.”

Ning nodded slowly.

As more time had passed, more palaces had arisen. By now, the Brightshore Kingdom had a total of twelve palaces.

There eventually were quite a few cultivators who were a match for Eternal Emperors or even capable of slaying them! However, these current twelve palaces encompassed the vast majority of cultivation paths, and thus it had been an extremely long time since a new palace had been established. Ning was a good example. His path was that of the Dao of the Sword, and thus even if he became an Eternal Emperor in the future he would belong to the Sword Palace. There was no need and no point to establishing a new palace.

“That is the Dao of the Sword he used to gain eternity?” Ning raised his head to stare at those characters.

“I don’t understand it,” Su Youji murmured softly.

“Neither do I.” Ning laughed. “The intent and will which this Dao of the Sword embodies isn’t for people like us to comprehend. The difference between it and us is simply too great. Perhaps when we become Daolords of the Third Step or Daolords of the Fourth Step, we can come back and scrutinize the secrets it holds.”

The three continued to advance as they chatted and laughed.

This wide stone path had quite a few other cultivators traversing it as well, all of whom were World-level cultivators. Although they were quite spread out, the path was so long and so wide that Ning estimated that he had seen at least ten thousand people.

“Why?”

“Why did I fail yet again? A hundred chaos cycles, only to fail yet again... ahahaha...”

Wild laughter rang out from afar from a cultivator who seemed to be laughing with tears or crying with laughter. He seemed utterly mad.

“Who is this?” Ning was puzzled.

Daolord Fudan shook his head. “These are all World-level cultivators who seek to pass the trials for joining the Sword Palace. Aside from those like yourself who are given formal invitations, junior apprentice-brother Darknorth, cultivators who wish to join us generally have to undergo multiple layers of trials. All of them are here training, and once they reach a certain level of power they will try out the trials. Alas! Ignore them. After enough time passes, most of them realize that they have no hopes of entering and will leave on their own.”

Ning nodded slowly.

“This path into the palace is known as Sword Road,” Daolord Fudan said. “Aside from those who are taking part in the various trials, most of the visiting World-level cultivators spend their time here on Sword Road. They are forbidden from entering any other part of the Sword Palace.”

They continued to walk forwards through Sword Road. Sword Road was ten thousand kilometers long, and they saw many World-level cultivators along the way. When these cultivators saw Ning, many found it difficult to disguise the envy they felt. For a black-armored Daolord to treat Ning with such courtesy and deference meant that he had to be a formal member of the Sword Palace.

Boom!

Bang!

Explosions suddenly rang out from afar.

Ning glanced over with surprise. “Is that a duel?” Upon closer examination, he saw that a red-haired man wielding a greatsword was battling an opponent with six arms. The red-haired man had tousled hair and was standing there in a relaxed fashion as he launched his attacks, while his opponent was fighting back at maximum power with many magic treasures.

Alas, it was like an ant trying to shake a tree. The second person was completely unable to do anything to the red-haired man, but with each strike the red-haired man was able to cause the space around him to oscillate in a manner reminiscent of a beautiful song. Although he was able to force his opponent back repeatedly, his opponent wasn’t injured either.

Ning’s face turned pale as he watched. What terrifying sword-arts. These sword-arts... they were definitely superior to his own! In the Astral Islands, most likely only Bertulu was at a higher level of skill than this man.

“Haha, senior apprentice-brother Wildfire is dueling,” Daolord Fudan said.

“Senior apprentice-brother Wildfire?” Ning was puzzled. Fudan was a Daolord. No matter how badass the red-haired man was, he was still just at the World level. Fudan addressed Ning as ‘junior apprentice-brother’, but addressed this man as ‘senior apprentice-brother Wildfire’?

“Senior apprentice-brother Wildfire is one of the six mighty Swordlords of our Sword Palace,” Daolord Fudan immediately explained.

“Six Swordlords? They are all World-level cultivators, right?” Ning was puzzled.

“The Sword Palace has a total of more than a hundred Samsara Daolords and more than two hundred World-level cultivators,” Daolord Fudan said. “The two hundred-plus World-level cultivators were accumulated over the course of many years. They represent the most powerful experts of the Dao of the Sword which the Brightshore Kingdom has managed to recruit.”

The Brightshore Kingdom was a top-tier power that was on par with the Dao Alliance. Only the most dazzlingly, outstandingly talented World-level sword practitioners were able to join it, and only around two hundred had been granted entry.

“Of these two hundred, only the ones who are acknowledged by the Sword Pagodas are given the title of Swordlord,” Daolord Fudan said. “There are more than two hundred World-level cultivators but just

six Swordlords. Although they are merely at the World level, the Sword Palace treats them as they would Daolords. This is because they are generally capable of killing some weaker Daolords of the First Step.”

“Kill Daolords of the First Step?” Ning stared in amazement at the relaxed-looking red-haired man.

A World-level cultivator who could kill a Daolord of the First Step?

Being ‘able to fight’ someone and being ‘able to kill’ someone... these were two completely different concepts.

In the Astral Islands, perhaps only Bertulu in his true form would be capable of killing a Daolord of the First Step. But the Sword Palace actually had six individuals capable of this?

“They could’ve broken through to become Samsara Daolords long ago, but they refused to do so because their sword-arts are still improving.” Daolord Fudan sighed. “Each of them are working on perfecting their sword-arts. They wish to perfect those sword-arts to the absolute maximum possible level before they become Daolords. After all, the more perfect one’s Dao of the Sword is, the stronger one will be as a Daolord.”

Ning nodded.

Bertulu was a good example of someone who was at such a high level of insight that even without revealing his true form, he was capable of dominating Ning with his two warhammers. Given his profound insights, once he became a Daolord, he would probably be able to match Daolords of the Third Step! Clearly, the six supremely talented Swordlords of the Sword Palace were all people of great ambition.

“My sword-arts are not even enough for me to become a Daolord. This ‘senior apprentice-brother Wildfire’, however, could’ve used his sword-arts to become a Daolord long ago... and he’s only gotten even better since then.” Ning was stunned. “No wonder his sword-arts are so much better than mine.”

“Next!”

Suddenly, the red-haired man’s greatsword suddenly swept out. Boom! Even before it had touched his opponent, invisible layers of spatial energy crashed out and swept his opponent away, sending him flying multiple kilometers.

“Thank you for your guidance, senior apprentice-brother Wildfire.” His opponent hurriedly spoke out to express his thanks. Actually, he had yet to pass the trials of the Sword Palace; for him to address Wildfire as ‘senior apprentice-brother’ was a show of shamelessness, but that was how most of the other World-level cultivators acted as well.

“Please give me some guidance, senior apprentice-brother.” Yet another World-level cultivator stepped forward, then began to use all the techniques he had available to fight Wildfire.

“He’s able to effortlessly crush them with a casual blow.” Ning couldn’t help but sigh. “He is like an old man instructing children. They are all at the World level, and his challengers are extraordinarily strong cultivators who wield Eternal weapons and are comparable to supreme World Gods, but they seem to be absolutely nothing before his might.”

“The Sword Palace has built up tremendous power over the years.” The nearby Daolord Fudan laughed. “Once you enter the Sword Palace, you’ll need to start improving your own skills as well. Still, to reach senior apprentice-brother Wildfire’s level will be very difficult. After all, there are over two hundred World-level cultivators in the Sword Palace, but only six have been given the title of ‘Swordlord’.”

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### **Book 27: Twelve Palaces Chapter 2: A Holy Place for Sword Cultivators**

Ji Ning led Su Youji forwards alongside him as Daolord Fudan continued to introduce the people and places within the Sword Palace.

Boom!

The red-haired man sent his opponent flying with a single sword-strike. His gaze then fell upon Ji Ning, and his eyes instantly lit up. He laughed loudly, “Is this a new junior apprentice-brother of ours?”

“I am Darknorth. Greetings, senior apprentice-brother Wildfire,” Ning said.

“That explains it. I’ve sparred with and recognize everyone in our Sword Palace.” The red-haired man let out a loud, clear laugh. “Junior apprentice-brother Darknorth, since you are a new arrival I won’t disturb you, but in two days I’m going to go find you and have a little competition with you. I trust you won’t decline?”

“I’d be delighted to accept,” Ning said modestly.

“Mm. Go, go. We can chat later,” the red-haired man said.

Ning nodded.

As they moved past the red-haired man, Daolord Fudan said in a low voice, “Of the six exalted Swordlords, senior apprentice-brother Wildfire is the most heroic and straightforward. He loves to duel other cultivators and won’t look down upon weak ones. He’s a person who is easy to make friends with, and is much more approachable than many of the other World-level cultivators of the Sword Palace.”

Ning laughed. He could sense how friendly and relaxed this senior apprentice-brother Wildfire was.

A sword cultivator who was capable of breaking through to become a Samsara Daolord at any time would have a clear understanding of his own nature, be it good or bad, honorable or dishonorable. Wildfire clearly was an extremely friendly and straightforward man, and his sword was similarly a sword that crushed all before it in an open and aboveboard manner.

“We are going to go to the Ancient Library next. It is right up ahead.” Daolord Fudan pointed towards a large, ancient-looking hall that was made of wood that was beginning to turn yellow with age. The entire ancient hall took up many kilometers, and just by looking at it Ning could sense the power of its aura.

“The Ancient Library was built alongside the Sword Palace itself. It has been around for an extremely, extremely long period of time,” Daolord Fudan explained.

“Eh?” Ning stared at it in amazement.

The Ancient Library had quite a few black-armored Daolords around it. Some were seated in the lotus position on the ground, some were relaxing and drinking wine, some were training with their swords. There were over a hundred of the present.

“Senior apprentice-brother Fudan.” Ning was puzzled. “On the way over, I saw quite a few black-armored Daolords. If we include in the ones before us, I’ve seen more than two hundred. But you told me that the entire Sword Palace only has a hundred Samsara Daolords...”

Daolord Fudan paused, a mixed look appearing on his face. “Let me explain.” He let out a sigh. “In the Sword Palace, all cultivators are like brothers. There’s not much of a difference in terms of status between us. World-level cultivators who run into Verge-level Daolords will simply address them as ‘senior apprentice-brother’.”

Ning nodded.

The Sword Palace was a place where elite sword cultivators gathered. Everyone treated everyone else in a fairly equal manner.

“But there’s still some differences, despite the overall equality,” Daolord Fudan said. “The cultivators in the Sword Palace are generally divided into two different types.”

“The first type consists of those who relied on themselves and their own insights to become Samsara Daolords! The six Swordlords are categorized along with them, even though they aren’t actually Samsara Daolords, because they can break through whenever they wish and possess tremendous potential. Once they break through, they will be far stronger than most Daolords of the First Step. This is why even Samsara Daolords treat these Swordlords as equals.

“The second type consists of the other World-level cultivators as well as black-armored Daolords like us.

“In the end, World-level cultivators are still just cultivators who have a chance of breaking through to become Daolords. They naturally have a somewhat lower status. As for us black-armored Daolords, all of us reached this level through using Pseudo Samsara Pills. We will forever remain at the First Step and have no hope of improving any further. There are even some freakishly strong World-level cultivators who are even stronger than us.” Daolord Fudan shook his head. “Some Samsara Daolords view us as the lowest of the low. They’d rather show kindness to World-level cultivators with potential than show us any real respect.”

Ning was silent. He could sense the sadness emanating from Daolord Fudan.

“In the Sword Palace, there are actually a total of more than 2300 black-armored Daolords,” Daolord Fudan said softly. “There are many more of them than there are World-level cultivators. There were quite a few people in the Brightshore Kingdom who become Daolords through using those pills, after all, and the almighty Hegemon has ordered that all Daolords must join the Twelve Palaces. This is why the Twelve Palaces has so many black-armored Daolords.”

Ning finally understood. The Sword Palace had more than two thousand black-armored Daolords, but just two hundred World-level cultivators and around a hundred ‘real’ Samsara Daolords. Given that they were fairly weak and had no prospects for future advancement, it wasn’t surprising that they had low statuses.

“Most of the black-armored Daolords are outside the Sword Palace, with just over five hundred staying inside of it,” Daolord Fudan said. “Although they are treated with some disdain, they still choose to remain within the Sword Palace because there, we will have a better chance to improve than we would anywhere else. Power depends on more factors than just enlightenment. Different sword-arts can also result in different levels of power, as do divine abilities and secret arts.”

Ning nodded. The [Novessence Thunder] was a great example of a very powerful secret art.

“They have a chance of earning those things in the Sword Palace, which is why so many remain within it,” Daolord Fudan said. “Come. I’ll take you to the Ancient Library for a look.”

They arrived at the Ancient Library.

“Is this a newcomer? You can come in. The one behind you cannot.” The two black-armored Daolords standing guard in front of the library looked at Ning.

Ning turned to glance at Su Youji, who was following him from behind.

“Youji, wait for me here,” Ning said.

“Alright.” Although Su Youji was quite curious, she didn’t really care because the Sword Palace was for those who walked the Dao of the Sword. For now, her path was the path of Feixian the Exalted. She was focusing on the path of charm and control, a completely different path from the Dao of the Sword.

Although the wooden floor and walls were protected by powerful formations, the unfeeling power of time had left its mark on them as well.

The ancient hall was incredibly large, and it was completely filled with bookshelves as far as the eye could see. Every single bookshelf was filled with many jade slips and scrolls.

“Eh?” Ning casually picked up a jade slip and sent his godsense into it. He immediately realized that it was filled with a large amount of information, and he accepted the information as it flowed into him.

“What a powerful sword-art.” Ning was rather shocked. This was a sword-art of tremendous power. In fact, it was just as strong as the [Nameless] sword-art. Alas, it was fragmentary and incomplete.

Ning couldn’t help but spend a bit of time reading through it before finally putting it back down.

“Don’t be impatient, junior apprentice-brother.” Only now did Daolord Fudan speak. “These sword-arts have been passed down since the most ancient of times. Some were left here by the almighty Hegemon while some were accumulated or created by the Sword Palace’s members over the course of countless years. In fact, when the other eleven palaces acquire new sword-arts they will often send them to us. We have tens of millions of sword-arts placed here, all of which are at least at the Daolord level.”

“Tens of millions of scrolls?” Ning was speechless.

“The problem is, 99% of them are fragmentary and incomplete,” Daolord Fudan said. “The ones on these bookshelves here are all fragmentary. The ones placed on the tables at the very front are all complete, with teachings that will guide you from the early stages to the late stages. That way, you can slowly train in them step by step. The tables have over five hundred thousand techniques.”



Tens of millions of incomplete techniques?

More than five hundred thousand complete techniques?

“Some of these sword-arts are strong, some are weak. Some were left behind by Eternal Emperors, while some were acquired by the almighty Hegemon by happenstance and possess incalculable power.” Daolord Fudan smiled.

“Are there any limitations or restrictions on learning these sword-arts?” Ning was worried.

“None.” Daolord Fudan sighed with emotion. “Any member of the Sword Palace is permitted to freely study any of the scrolls and slips here.”

Ning sighed in amazement as well.

As he walked through the Ancient Library and saw the many jade slips that had been placed here for countless chaos cycles, he couldn't help but occasionally reach out to grab a scroll to take a look. Even the fragmentary ones were incredibly profound. If he was to give them to the Fogstone Dominion, they would be treated as supreme techniques.

Any technique placed within the Ancient Library of the Sword Palace had to be at least at the Daolord level.

“Simply incredible.” Ning sighed with amazement. He even saw a silver-armored Daolord seated in the lotus position, silently meditating on a sword-art.

“There are simply too many sword-arts here,” Daolord Fudan said. “Some of them, especially profound ones such as the ones left behind by Eternal Emperors, will take countless years to learn. There are so many sword-arts here that no one can truly learn them all. They will at most flip through some and try to gain some experience.”

Ning was incredibly excited. His Dao of the Sword required him to understand the true essence of the sword by analyzing and dissecting many different sword-arts. This place was an absolute treasure trove for him.

“The Ancient Library is actually considered a fairly ‘ordinary’ place here in the Sword Palace.” Daolord Fudan let out a secretive smile. “It doesn't even rank as one of the top three places here in the Sword Palace.”

“Ah?!” Ning was stunned.

As Ning saw it, the Ancient Library was already sacred grounds for those who trained in the sword. And yet, it didn't even rank as one of the top three places in the Sword Palace?

“Come. I'll take you to another place,” Daolord Fudan said. “You'll understand once you get there.”

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### **Book 27: Twelve Palaces Chapter 3: The Forest of Sword Pagodas**

Ji Ning and Su Youji followed Daolord Fudan in flying through a mountainous forest grove.

Every so often, one would be able to see the residences of cultivators spread out throughout the mountains. Daolord Fudan suddenly pointed off into the distance towards a distant valley. "That place is known as Armaments Gorge. That's another one of the very important places in the Sword Palace. It is just as important as the Ancient Library."

"Armaments Gorge?" Ning stared off into the distance, as did the nearby Su Youji. None of this really had anything to do with her, but it was a chance for her to learn a few things.

Distant buildings could be seen hidden throughout the gorge, with some located deep in the very bottom.

"Armaments Gorge is filled with many weapons, magic treasures, and unique artifacts," Daolord Fudan said. "The weapons here are primarily swords of all shapes and sizes, but there are also many types of other magic treasures, including pills. All treasures are stored here."

Ning's eyes lit up. All treasures were stored here? Would perhaps Mirrorsnow Paintings be stored here as well?

"What must be done if I wish to acquire some of those treasures?" Ning said.

"The treasures inside Armaments Gorge were accumulated by the Sword Palace over the course of countless years. They cannot be taken away without paying a cost," Daolord Fudan said. "If everyone just took away treasures as they pleased, the gorge would soon be completely emptied. When you are free, you can go and take a look. The Armaments Gorge has certain rules that govern it. Still, in the outside world, many of these treasures are completely unobtainable no matter what price you are willing to pay. At least they are available in the Armaments Gorge."

Ning nodded. The more valuable a treasure was, the harder it would be to acquire it. Daolord Solesky had been willing to risk his own life and pay a heavy price in order to get Daolord Badlands to help him in his quest to obtain a certain treasure. It seemed as though the Armaments Gorge had many priceless treasures within it.

"The Ancient Library is filled with sword-arts, while this place is filled with treasures." Ning nodded. These two places truly were on par with each other.

"Next, I shall take you to the third-most important place we have." Daolord Fudan continued to fly forwards, leading Ning higher and higher into the skies.

"Look over there." Daolord Fudan pointed at the tallest building in the entire Sword Palace. It was a strangely shaped building that was shaped like a towering pillar of cloud layers. Each layer was thirty thousand meters tall. The first layer was formed of black clouds, the second layer was formed of azure clouds, the third layer was formed of silvery-white clouds, and the highest layer was formed from golden clouds.

The four layers of clouds came together to form this towering edifice that was at the heart of the entire Sword Palace.

"This is the Daolord Cloudworld." Daolord Fudan sighed. "This is one of the most important places in the entire Sword Palace, ranking within the top three."

“What is it for?” Ning was puzzled.

“The Daolord Cloudworld is filled with many powerful golem opponents, and more than 90% of them wield swords. They will use different types of sword-arts, with the strongest ones being comparable to the sword-arts used by Daolords of the Third Step.” Daolord Fudan sighed. “Sword cultivators need combat more than anything else, and battles against other supremely skilled swordsmen help more than anything else.”

Ning absolutely agreed with this comment. One of the reasons why his sword-arts had improved so quickly was because he had been able to duel those three powerful swordsmen within the three Mirrorsnow Paintings. That had been of tremendous benefit to him.

“When you battle against other supremely skilled swordsmen, not only will you have a chance to discover the flaws in your own sword-arts, you’ll also learn from the sword-arts they used.” Daolord Fudan sighed. “However, battling against such powerful swordsmen in the outside world carries the risk of death. In the Daolord Cloudworld, however, you won’t be at any risk of dying. The Daolord Cloudworld has many golems because the entire Sword Palace has put tremendous resources into it over the course of countless years. That’s why it has so many golems of such incredible power.”

Ning nodded. There were quite a few cultivators who had sword-arts on the level of most Daolords of the Third Step, but creating a golem that possessed the same level of sword-arts would carry a tremendous price that even Eternal Emperors would feel pain upon paying. Generally speaking, powerful golems relied on using overwhelming speed and power, with their weakness being their insights into the Dao. This was even true for golems who could battle Verge-level Daolords.

Golems weren’t cultivators, after all. They were innately weak in this respect.

“There are many powerful expert swordsmen there who all use different types of sword-arts, some of which are comparable to Daolords of the Third Step.” Daolord Fudan sighed. “Which cultivator of the sword wouldn’t dream of gaining access to such a place as we have here in the Palace of the Sword?”

Ning was growing even more excited. No wonder the Sword Palace was able to give birth to six freakishly strong World-level cultivators like the six Swordlords!

“And there’s more! Remember, the Daolord Cloudworld has a total of four layers,” Daolord Fudan said. “The Blackcloud World is the first layer; if you overcome it, you will be awarded a set of black armor. This black armor is merely a top-grade Dao armor. The Azurecloud World is the second layer, and if you overcome it you’ll be given azure armor. The Silvercloud World is the third layer, and if you overcome it you’ll be awarded silver armor. The highest layer is the Goldcloud World, and if you overcome it you will be awarded golden armor. The azure armor, silver armor, and gold armor are all Eternal treasures of different levels of power. The suits of golden armor are top-grade Eternal treasures, and they possess many marvelous properties.

“Being able to acquire the black armor means you have reached the threshold of a Daolord of the First Step.

“Being able to acquire the azure armor means you have reached the threshold of a Daolord of the Second Step.

“Silver armor is for those who have reached the threshold of Daolords of the Third Step.

“Golden armor belongs to those who have reached the threshold for Daolords of the Fourth Step.”

Daolord Fudan explained the stages one by one.

Ning nodded. ‘Reached the threshold’ simply meant that you were at the minimum level of power for that level. When Ning had first broken through to the World-level, he had reached the threshold of a Daolord of the First Step. As for right now? He was comparable to an average Daolord of the First Step.

“In the Sword Palace, we have eight World-level cultivators who have won azure armor,” Daolord Fudan said softly.

“What?” Ning was shocked.

Although he was fairly powerful, he didn’t think he had reached the threshold of a Daolord of the Second Step. But the Sword Palace had eight such figures?

“Five of them are special lifeforms while three of them were cultivators, but even the cultivators have freakishly powerful divine abilities or secret arts,” Daolord Fudan explained. “In challenging the Daolord Cloudworld, you can use all abilities and techniques that you have available, such as divine abilities and secret arts. But of course, you can’t use certain single-use treasures, Dao-seals, bugbeasts, golems, or other similar treasures.”

“Don’t be too surprised. Divine abilities and secrets are can be tremendously powerful,” Daolord Fudan said. “I’ll take you to another place now.”

Daolord Fudan led him to a bamboo hall erected at the peak of a mountain which was wreathed in clouds and mist.

“This is the Pavilion of Mysteries.” Daolord Fudan pointed at the bamboo hall. “It is filled with many divine abilities, secret arts, and a few legacies left behind by ancient powers of the Dao of the Sword. Divine abilities can increase your strength a hundredfold, while secret arts are even more difficult to gauge. The strongest secret arts can unleash utterly terrifying levels of power,” Daolord Fudan said.

Ning nodded. His own [Novessence Thunder] technique was classified as a secret art! Certain incredibly powerful secret arts truly could allow the wielder to challenge cultivators who were at a higher level of power. If some of the freakishly strong World-level cultivators like Kilostar gained access to some of the terrifyingly strong secret arts or treasures the Twelve Palaces had to offer, it was entirely possible that he would be able to battle his way through the second layer of the Daolord Cloudworld and earn the azure armor.

However, if you had merely reached the threshold of the Second Step as a Daolord, you would probably be defeated in one blow by a true Daolord of the Second Step. Still, you would probably be strong enough to kill most Daolords of the First Step.

“Many of the divine abilities and secret arts stored in this place were left behind by Daolords who were comparable to Eternal Emperors in might. Some were left behind by actual Eternal Emperors. The same is true for the full legacies,” Daolord Fudan said. “However, the full legacies are fewer in number.”

Ning nodded.

Legacies were completely different from the sword-arts held within the Ancient Library.

To have a legacy was to essentially have a master. Not only did a legacy include many sword-arts and detailed instructions on learning them, it would often include a detailed analysis and explanation of every single stance from the Daolord who had left the legacy behind. To have a Samsara Daolord guide you step by step on your path... true legacies were thousands of times more valuable than mere sword-arts.

Take the [Nameless] sword-art which World God Northrest had transmitted to Ning. Its first five stances all had their own sword-intents, but Northrest himself had never learned the sixth or seventh stance. All he had been able to do was to leave behind a record of the stances.

This was the flaw of the Ancient Library. Its sword-arts consisted of nothing more than movements and techniques; there was no sword-intent for the cultivator to attune to.

“Every newcomer is permitted to choose a single thing from the Pavilion of Mysteries,” Daolord Fudan said. “The Daolord Cloudworld and the Pavilion of Mysteries are two of the top three sacred areas here in the Sword Palace. Now... I am going to take you to the most important place of all, the indisputably most sacred place.”

They continued to fly forwards, moving towards the very rear of the Sword Palace.

“There. Right there.” Daolord Fudan pointed off into the distance, towards a place which was covered in darkness. The black earth was filled with erect towers, and the towers filled the landscape like a forest or like a sea. Every single tower emanated an aura of incredible sword-intent which filled the entire region.

A million chaos cycles or even longer might go by... but the sword-intent here would never dissipate.

“Ever since the Sword Palace was established, every single person whose sword-arts are acknowledged by the Sword Pagodas shall leave behind a Sword Pagoda of his own,” Daolord Fudan said softly. “To be acknowledged by the Sword Pagodas, you have to at least reach the level of the six Swordlords. Over the course of countless years, every single true Samsara Daolord or Eternal Emperor has left behind a Sword Pagoda that belongs to them. Every single Sword Pagoda holds the sword-arts they learned and developed. They personally recorded those sword-arts down and left them here, infusing their pagoda with their sword-intent.

“Countless Daolords have died since the Sword Palace was founded, and even Eternal Emperors have disappeared into the endless darkness as they went out exploring parts unknown. Their Sword Pagodas, however, have been kept safe.

“There are a total of 83612 Sword Pagodas here!

“This place represents the greatest wealth, the greatest fortune the Sword Palace possesses. This is the most sacred place in the entire palace.” A look of awe and veneration was in Daolord Fudan’s eyes.

Ning could sense that the sword-intents here were incredibly ancient, having existed for countless chaos cycles. In fact, some of the sword-intents were absolutely lawless and dominating. These sword-intents had all been left behind by some of the most supremely talented cultivators of the Endless Territories,

many of whom were capable of battling Eternal Emperors or actually were Eternal Emperors. All of them had been gathered here... and every single Sword Pagoda represented an ancient power.

Samsara Daolords. With each step they took, they walked the tightrope which existed between life and death. Daolords had to eventually succeed in the Daomerge, as they would otherwise die one day. Some of the earliest Daolords had already perished, but their sword-arts and their sword-intents had been left behind and would forever exist.

“The most sacred place of the Sword Palace... the Forest of Sword Pagodas.” Daolord Fudan’s voice was trembling slightly. He dreamed of one day being able to leave behind a Sword Pagoda of his own... but alas, his sword-arts were not good enough.