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Book 27: Twelve Palaces Chapter 4: Palace Lord Woodflower

Ji Ning stared off into the distance, where he could vaguely see quite a few figures seated in the lotus position within those ancient, enormous Sword Pagodas.

“All members of the Sword Palace are permitted to come here and meditate,” Daolord Fudan said. “Even we black-armored Daolords are permitted.”

“I’m going to take a look.” Ning walked forwards.

The Sword Pagodas were tall and erect, with each emanating a completely different sword-intent. It was as though mighty sword practitioners were standing right next to Ning! As Ning walked through the ancient Forest of Sword Pagodas, he felt as though he was walking through a sea of time. As Ning stared at the mighty sword-arts and sword-intents which the ancient powers had left behind, he couldn’t help but feel utterly stunned.

These were his predecessors, ancient masters of the Dao of the Sword.

The Sword Pagodas had more than just sword-arts. Many also had a few tiny words carved into them.

Ning’s gaze turned towards one particular Sword Pagoda. The sword-arts inscribed within this Sword Pagoda were quite similar to his own [Nameless] sword-art. They belonged to the same general style of swordsmanship, and they were similarly exalted and profound. As for the sword-intent, it was awe-inspiringly profound and seemed to encompass all things.

Daolord Everstarter. After joining our Sword Palace, he received the acknowledgment of the Sword Pagodas while still at the World level and became one of our Swordlords. He had a modest disposition and liked to teach his juniors and those weaker than him. He treated the Sword Palace as his home and rarely went out adventuring. Silently and without any fanfare, he reached the Fourth Step as a Daolord. However, because the Ancient cultivators went too far in their actions, Daolord Everstarter ventured forth all by himself and unveiled his utterly terrifying sword-arts, defeating three other Verge-level Daolords who were Ancient cultivators. In fact, he even defeated an Ancient cultivator who was an Eternal Emperor.”

“This battle brought him tremendous fame, and he became acknowledged as the number one Daolord of the Endless Territories in his time. Afterwards, as he prepared for his Daomerge, he began to travel to many different places. Ever since then, we have received no word of him. We do not know if he is alive or dead.

Ning was speechless.

This Daolord defeated an Eternal Emperor who was an Ancient cultivator?

Ning knew very little about the Ancient cultivators. All he knew was that they were incredibly, terrifyingly powerful. Only the most supreme of special lifeforms were comparable to Ancient cultivators. Eternal Emperors who were Ancient cultivators were definitely far more powerful than

ordinary Eternal Emperors. A Daolord had actually defeated one of them? No wonder he was publicly acclaimed as the number one Daolord in his time.

This feat was far more impressive than Daolord Allgod's feat of attacking and pursuing Emperor Melobo.

"No one knows if Daolord Everstarter is still alive or not." Suddenly, a voice rang out.

Ning was startled. Someone had appeared behind him without him even noticing?

He hurriedly turned and looked backwards, only to see that a golden-armored, tousled-hair, and rather decadent-looking man had appeared behind him.

"Greetings, senior apprentice-brother." Upon seeing the suit of golden armor, Ning immediately addressed the man with respect.

There were no 'masters' or 'apprentices' here in the Sword Palace, only brothers and sisters.

At this moment, Daolord Fudan hurriedly ran over and said with great respect, "Greetings, Lord Woodflower."

"Lord?" Ning was stunned.

"Junior apprentice-brother Darknorth, Daolord Woodflower is a Vice Palace Lord of our Sword Palace." Daolord Fudan sent a hurried mental message to Ning.

Although Ning didn't know the names of the various Daolords in the Sword Palace, he knew the general rules of the Twelve Palaces. The strongest member in every single palace was given the title of Palace Lord. Vice Palace Lords were the next most powerful! But of course, there were exceptions such as the Palace of Radiance, which had two powerful Daolords who were roughly on par with each other, which was why both were referred to as Palace Lord. Thus, the Radiant Palace had two Palace Lords.

Generally speaking, Palace Lords and Vice Palace Lords had the power to battle against Eternal Emperors. This was especially true in a place like the Sword Palace, which focused on combat.

"Greetings, Palace Lord," Ning said hurriedly.

"Simply address me as senior apprentice-brother Woodflower." The decadent-looking man chuckled. "I watched the battle between you and Bertulu. You aren't bad at all. Actually, your sword-arts are quite similar to those of Daolord Everstarter. If he is still alive, he should be an Eternal Emperor by now. Given how strong he was as a Daolord, as an Eternal Emperor he would probably be alive to this very day and might be willing to give you some personal pointers."

Ning nodded.

A Daolord who was able to defeat an Eternal Emperor of the Ancients and who was acknowledged as the undisputed number one Daolord of the Endless Territories of his time... if he was to become an Eternal Emperor, killing him would be almost impossible.

"Senior apprentice-brother Woodflower," Ning said hurriedly, "Can it be that he doesn't have an avatar here? Why is it that we don't know if he is alive or not?"

When Ning had entered Undermoon Lake, he had been quite weak, but his clones in the outside world could sense if he was alive or dead. Once his clones in Undermoon Lake perished, he would be able to recreate the clones in the outside world. This was an easy way to judge if he was dead or not.

Daolords, however, would generally leave avatars in their homes when they were entering dangerous regions. If not, they would leave behind other special techniques or spells. Generally speaking, it wasn't too hard to know what was happening or if they were still alive.

"The primordial chaos is vast and endless. Even the almighty Hegemon, who is older than the Twelve Palaces, wouldn't dare claim that he knows everything which happens within it," Lord Woodflower explained. "In the endless primordial chaos, there are indeed some places which will result in you being completely cut off from the outside world once you enter. There would be no way whatsoever to ascertain if you were alive or not."

"Given that we have heard no word from him in countless years, it is very likely that he is dead. However, there's no way to verify it, and so we generally will list these elders as 'status unknown' rather than 'deceased' on their Sword Pagodas," Lord Woodflower explained.

Ning nodded.

After chatting a bit about Daolord Everstarter, Lord Woodflower said, "Darknorth, as a new member of the Sword Palace, you are able to choose a single divine ability, secret art, or legacy from the Pavilion of Mysteries. But of course, some Daolords restricted their legacies, only permitting juniors who passed the trials they set down to make use of those legacies. Generally speaking, the more valuable a legacy, the more common this practice is."

Ning naturally understood this principle. His Mirrorsnow Paintings had trials as well. Actually procuring all four paintings was a major trial in and of itself, and of course he had to defeat the four experts within the four paintings.

"I'll go take a look first," Ning said.

"I'll lead the way." Lord Woodflower waved his hand, sending a surge of Immortal energy to surround Ning.

Sword-light flickered around them, resulting in them disappearing into the skies.

Daolord Fudan raised his head to watch them leave, a look of envy in his eyes. He murmured softly, "Lord Woodflower is quite nice to him. It seems he views Darknorth with great favor." As he spoke, he walked back to the outskirts of the Forest of Sword Pagodas.

"Who was that person who just flew away with my master?" Su Youji immediately asked.

"That was Lord Woodflower of our Sword Palace. Although he behaves in a very casual, laid-back manner, he's a very discerning man. It isn't easy to attract his attention. It seems he quite likes your master," Daolord Fudan said. "Let us wait for him here."

"Alright." Su Youji smiled. The better Ning's live here was, the happier she would be. She felt absolutely delighted by this.

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The Pavilion of Mysteries was located at the top of a mountain, surrounded by clouds and mist.

A streak of sword-light flickered and descended in front of the pavilion. Daolord Woodflower and Ji Ning both appeared once more.

“That was fast.” Ning was secretly shocked.

“Greetings, Vice Palace Lord.” Suddenly, a fiery red golem at the entrance to the pavilion rose to its feet and called out respectfully. Its entire body was made from magic treasures; a simple glance was enough to tell that it wasn’t an actual living creature.

“Swordthree, I’m going to take this new arrival of ours, junior apprentice-brother Darknorth, in for a look.” Daolord Woodflower smiled towards Ning. “This is Swordthree, the overseer of the Pavilion of Mysteries. He’s been guarding this place for an extremely long period of time, much longer than any of our Daolords have been alive. He is ranked the third most powerful golem in the Sword Palace, and so we just call him Swordthree. You can call him the same.”

“Swordthree,” Ning said hurriedly.

“Darknorth.” The fiery golem cracked a friendly smile towards Ning.

“Follow me inside.” Lord Woodflower led Ning inwards.

Within this bamboo hall, there were a series of jade slips. There were also stone steles, statues, books, paintings, leaves, wine gourds, and all sorts of other items. They all looked quite ordinary, as though this was a flea market filled with many miscellaneous objects.

“This place holds many divine abilities and secret arts,” Lord Woodflower said. “All Twelve Palaces share more or less the same divine abilities and secret arts. Our legacies, however, belong to us alone.”

Lord Woodflower continued, “There are differences amongst the legacies. Some are more profound, some are less. Some were left behind by fairly ordinary Daolords, some were left behind by awe-inspiringly powerful Daolords who were as strong as Eternal Emperors, and some were left behind by actual Eternal Emperors. There’s no need to pass any trials to use the divine abilities or secret arts; all you need to do is choose one and you will be able to train in it. Legacies, however, generally come attached with trials and conditions.”

“The legacies left behind by Eternal Emperors are the most valuable. Here within this bamboo hall, there are five legacies that were left behind by Eternal Emperors.” Lord Woodflower explained, “Here in the Sword Palace, we have an additional requirement. World-level cultivators have to become acknowledged as ‘Swordlords’ by the Sword Pagodas before they are qualified to select a legacy left behind by an Eternal Emperor... but of course, they still need to pass the trials which the Eternal Emperor set down.”

Ning said with surprise, “Don’t some of those freakishly powerful Daolords possess sword-arts that equal the sword-arts of Eternal Emperors? Why is it that the legacies of the Eternal Emperors are so much harder to obtain?”

“Anyone who was able to become an Eternal Emperor had already perfected his Dao of the Sword to a level where it could gain eternity,” Lord Woodflower explained. “These legacies will give you experience

that will help guide you to eternity. Over the course of countless years, we have seen several freakishly strong Daolords in every single generation. However, very few of them are ever able to become actual Eternal Emperors.”

Lord Woodflower continued, “Based on the rough numbers we have for the Endless Territories, less than one in a hundred thousand Daolords shall become an Eternal Emperor. Although our Sword Palace is assisted by the almighty Hegemon and selects only the cream of the crop, the elites of the elites, we’ve only given birth to a total of three Eternal Emperors since the establishment of the kingdom.”

Lord Woodflower shook his head. “Of the three Eternal Emperors... one perished, while the other two were solitary figures who went off wandering by themselves.” Lord Woodflower let out a sigh. “Our ratio of Daolords to Eternal Emperors is actually fairly high. The Dao Alliance has a much lower ratio than the Twelve Palaces.”

Ning was speechless. At present, the Sword Palace didn’t even have a single Eternal Emperor?

“It’s simply too hard for a new Eternal Emperor to be born. Even if one is born... they live far too long and easily grow bored, and so they often delight in exploring places which no one has ever been before. Sometimes, they never come back.” Lord Woodflower continued, “As for the freakishly strong Daolords... after they fail their Daomerge, they know that they shall die and so they will often go out and try to find chances to slay Eternal Emperors belonging to enemy organizations.”

“Although there aren’t that many freakishly strong Daolords, there’s usually a few in every generation. Although Eternal Emperors are untouched by the ravages of time, they can still perish through other means,” Lord Woodflower explained. “But of course, there are always differences. Take our almighty Hegemon. He’s actually an Eternal Emperor, but he’s just far, far too powerful. As a result, he’s still alive to this very day. Even though he occasionally abducts World-level cultivators who belong to other organizations, they just ignore it and pretend not to see it.”

Ning let out a sigh.

What sad, sad fates these Eternal Emperors had. They were incredibly rare in number, but the freakishly strong Daolords who failed their Daomerge would often target them in suicidal attacks. Daolord Allgod was a good example. After he failed his Daomerge, he attempted to chase down and kill Emperor Melobo.

Far too many Eternal Emperors disappeared while adventuring, were slain by Daolords, or went into hiding. Only truly almighty figures like the Hegemon were capable of staying alive.

“As a result, there are very few legacies that were left behind by Eternal Emperors. Even the weakest Eternal Emperor’s sword-arts are comparable to the sword-arts of supreme Daolords, and they contain a hint of eternity...” Lord Woodflower looked at Ning. “I’m sure you know this, but cultivators must find and walk their own paths. After becoming a Daolord, you must develop a sword-art all your own. These so-called ‘legacies’ are mainly valuable because they will help guide you in that.”

Ning nodded.

“By now, you should understand why the legacies left behind by Eternal Emperors are so rare and valuable,” Lord Woodflower said. “I urge you to do your best to acquire one of them if you can. But of

course, it is up to you. What do you want? A divine ability, a secret art, or a legacy? What will you choose?"

"What will I choose?" Ning began to ponder this question.

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Book 27: Twelve Palaces Chapter 5: Hope

A divine ability? Ji Ning's greatest advantage was his azureflower mist energy, but there was no way to use it to execute divine abilities. For now, his [Golden Idol] and [Three Heads, Six Arms] were enough.

A legacy? He was still missing the fourth Mirrorsnow Painting for the legacy of Emperor Mirrorsnow.

"Senior apprentice-brother Woodflower," Ning said.

"Have you made your decision?" Lord Woodflower looked at Ning. "There's no need to choose right away. Think it over. You'll only have one opportunity to pick something of your choosing. After that, you'll have to pay a heavy price."

"I actually want to ask a question. Is it possible for the Twelve Palaces to acquire a copy of the fourth Mirrorsnow Painting?" Ning asked.

"You already have the first three?" Lord Woodflower was surprised.

"Yes." Ning nodded. There was no need to hide this; the Sword Palace had many legacies, and Lord Woodflower himself was a supremely strong Daolord who was comparable to Eternal Emperors in power.

"I don't think the Sword Palace has a copy." Lord Woodflower pondered for a moment, then let out a laugh. "Later, you should go to the Armaments Gorge and take a look for yourself. If they really don't have a copy, you can ask them to help out. They'll help you find a fourth copy in the Endless Territories. Given the might of the Twelve Palaces, I trust that they shouldn't find this to be an overly difficult task. But of course, you'll need to pay for it."

"Understood." Ning relaxed slightly.

"Emperor Mirrorsnow was an extremely powerful Eternal Emperor, and he's still alive." Lord Woodflower let out a sigh. "His legacy is an excellent one."

Ning suddenly gave voice to something which had been puzzling him. "Senior apprentice-brother Woodflower, there's something which has been bothering me. Advancing from the Samsara Daolord level to the Eternal Emperor level should represent an incredible increase in power... and I would imagine that anyone capable of becoming an Eternal Emperor should have been an extraordinary Daolord as well. Why, then, do I often hear about Daolords slaying Emperors?"

Lord Woodflower was startled, and a complicated look appeared on his face.

"You were going to be told about this eventually." Lord Woodflower looked at Ning. "Samsara Daolords all have their own paths, and different paths will result in different levels of difficulty in becoming Eternal Emperors."

“If you choose a simple path, you will be fairly weak amongst your peers. As a Daolord of the Fourth Step, you probably won’t be as strong as I was when I was a Daolord of the Third Step. However... that will also make it somewhat easier for you on your road to gaining eternity.

“If you choose a difficult path, you will be extremely powerful. As a Daolord of the Fourth Step, you might even be able to slay some of the weaker Eternal Emperors. However... to succeed in your Daomerge on this difficult path and gain eternity will be even more difficult.”

Lord Woodflower looked at Ning. “That is why there’s an old axiom that has rung true for countless chaos cycles... the more powerful the Daolord, the less likely he will be successful in his Daomerge.”

“The many freakishly strong Daolords that have appeared over the course of countless years have almost all failed in their Daomerge. Thus, junior apprentice-brother Darknorth... you need to think over what path you would like to take. Shall you choose a path that is a simple one? Or a path that is a difficult one?” Lord Woodflower looked at Ning. “The difficult path means that it is guaranteed that every single step you take as a Daolord will be very dangerous, and your Daomerge will be even more difficult! However, you’ll also be incredibly powerful and will be a dazzling figure amongst your peers. The simple path will be easier to walk, and in the end you will have a slightly larger chance of completing your Daomerge and gaining eternity.”

Ning was stunned by this revelation.

Still... it made sense. He himself had already found the direction in which his Dao of the Sword would lead. His path involved analyzing and dissecting all sword-arts he encountered in order to better understand the fundamental essence of the sword. His goal was to infuse all of the mysteries of all sword-arts into his own Dao of the Sword.

This path was an insanely ambitious one. To understand the fundamental essence of the sword and to absorb all of its mysteries meant that in the end, he would have developed what could be described as an ‘ultimate’, perfect sword-art.

Perfection was not so easily achieved.

Ning had chosen an extremely difficult path. In truth, Ning could’ve chosen to walk a simpler path. For example, right now Ning was extremely skilled in defensive techniques. If he focused all his efforts on defense, things would be much easier for him.

“Why should cultivators fear difficulties?” Ning laughed. “Even if you choose the simpler path, perhaps less than one in a hundred thousand Samsara Daolords shall gain eternity. It is best to follow your own heart and embark upon a path which is hard but glorious. That way, if you do become an Eternal Emperor, you’ll be truly invincible and will have nothing and no one to be afraid of.”

“Right!” Lord Woodflower laughed loudly. “In the Endless Territories, there are three almighty Hegemons. All three were freakishly powerful Daolords who were capable of slaying Eternal Emperors, and they eventually were successful in breaking through to become Eternal Emperors. After they made their breakthroughs, no one has ever been able to shake them and their positions. To show our respect for them and in order to differentiate them from ordinary Emperors, we revere with them the title of ‘Hegemon’. The almighty Hegemony of our own Brightshore Kingdom is one of the three, and he has been alive for far longer than our Twelve Palaces have existed.”

Ning nodded. A thought suddenly flashed through his mind, causing him to take a deep breath before asking the question which he cared about more than all other questions. "Senior apprentice-brother Woodflower... if a truesoul is destroyed, is the almighty Hegemon capable of reversing time to save it?"

In terms of mastery over spacetime, it was possible that the almighty Hegemon was second to none in all the Endless Territories. Would it be possible for him to reverse the flow of spacetime and rescue Yu Wei?

Lord Woodflower was startled. He gave Ning a hard look. "In the Endless Territories, there is indeed a legend that says it is possible to invert spacetime itself, allowing you to reach out into the distant past and bring back to life a person whose truesoul has already been destroyed in the present day. However, I've heard that the person who uses this technique would have to pay an utterly ruinous price. I don't know if the almighty Hegemon can accomplish this task, but even if he truly can he wouldn't make it public. To invert spacetime and rescue a truesoul from the distant past is something which would probably cause him to suffer heavy injuries. There's no way he would make something like this public."

Lord Woodflower continued to look at Ning. "Still... it is indeed true that if you can reach a profound enough level of insight, you can invert spacetime and bring someone back to life. However, it will be so difficult that very few of the ancient powers capable of doing it would actually be willing to carry it out."

"Understood." Ning felt excited.

Hope.

He finally saw some hope!

Ning had always clung onto a dream which even he knew was unlikely. He had felt that theoretically, someone who had reached certain incredible heights in the manipulation of spacetime should be able to invert it and reach into the past to save a deceased truesoul. However, there was no proof backing up this theory of his... but today, Lord Woodflower had personally verified that this was indeed possible. And in fact, the almighty Hegemon might be someone who was capable of such a thing.

But of course, if Ning wasn't able to offer enough of an incentive and pay enough of a price, there was no way he would be able to convince the almighty Hegemon to do such a thing.

"Senior apprentice-sister. We will definitely be able to meet each other once again. I don't care how long it takes. I'm going to work hard until the day I see you again."

Ning closed his eyes. When he imagined that day in the distant future, he felt as though he could see Yu Wei smiling at him from afar. Ning felt a warmth spread into his heart, filling him with strength and resolve.

Ning opened his eyes. "Thank you, senior apprentice-brother Woodflower."

Lord Woodflower nodded. "Take some time and consider your choices. If you have any questions regarding the Dao of the Sword, you can go find me in my estate."

"Thank you, senior apprentice-brother Woodflower." Ning could sense Lord Woodflower's goodwill and felt quite grateful towards the man.

Lord Woodflower left, allowing Ning to search through the Pavilion of Mysteries by himself.

“The Windsmoke secret art. The normal price is five hundred thousand cubes of chaos nectar, and it involves...

“The Endless Dark divine ability. The normal price is three hundred thousand cubes of chaos nectar...”

These divine abilities and secret arts all had a simple explanation regarding how much one had to pay in chaos nectar in order to purchase them. The cheapest started off at a hundred thousand cubes, while the most expensive was as high as three million cubes. Even for Daolords, these techniques were truly consummate, killer techniques. Only in a place like the Sword Palace could one easily gain access to them. In the outside world? Acquiring such techniques would be far more difficult.

“Eh?” Ning was stunned.

“Novessence Fire, a million cubes of chaos nectar. This secret art was developed by Daolord Allgod...

“Novessence Water, a million cubes of chaos nectar...”

Ning found five consecutive secret arts which had been developed by Daolord Allgod.

“They even have Daolord Allgod’s techniques?” Ning was rather surprised. The five secret arts he found were the [Novessence Fire], [Novessence Water], [Novessence Earth], [Novessence Wood], and [Novessence Metal] techniques.

Ning carefully read through the other secrets arts following them, only to find nothing else.

Curious, Ning hurriedly ran over to the entrance to the Pavilion of Mysteries.

“Have you chosen, Darknorth?” The guardian golem, Swordthree, looked at Ning.

“I saw five of the secret arts left behind by Daolord Allgod,” Ning said. “But I heard that Daolord Allgod actually had nine in total?”

“Right. Daolord Allgod was an astonishingly talented man who was skilled in alchemy, artificing, rearing bugbeasts, and more. He was a master of many different skills, and so he was an exceptional developer of secret arts as well. He created nine mighty secret arts, and when those nine secret arts came together they were able to unleash utterly shocking levels of power. Unfortunately, the Dao Alliance completely refuses to give us the entire thing.” Swordthree shook his head. “The almighty Hegemon made a personal appearance and paid a considerable price, but was still only able to convince the Dao Alliance to give us five of the secret arts belonging to Daolord Allgod. The four remaining secret arts were even more powerful, but we weren’t able to acquire them.”

Now Ning understood.

Ning had already come to a decision, but to be careful he still reviewed the basic descriptions of all the divine abilities and secret arts in the entire Pavilion of Mysteries.

Each of the five secret arts of Daolord Allgod cost a million cubes of chaos nectar, and every single one of those secret arts was enough to slay weak Daolords of the Fourth Step. These were terrifying killer techniques.

“Aside from the Dao of the Sword, I have some affinity for lightning, water, and space. Lightning and water resonate with each other and can support each other.” These were two naturally aligned elements.

“The nine secret arts of Daolord Allgod were meant to be used together in a combination. I shall choose the [Novessence Water] secret art.” Ning quickly made up his mind.

“Are you certain you wish to choose the [Novessence Water] secret art?” Swordthree looked at Ning. “To tell you the truth, legacies are more important for World-level cultivators.”

“I am certain.” Ning nodded.

“Alright.” Swordthree easily dispersed the restrictive spell covering the jade slip. “Go ahead and learn it.”

Ning sent his senses into the slip, immediately swearing the relevant lifeblood oath and beginning to study the technique.

Although the [Novessence Water] was very powerful, it was more of a soft, subtle technique. By contrast, the [Novessence Thunder] was a more dominating, destructive technique.

Of the nine secret arts, the five pertaining to metal, wood, water, fire, and earth were slightly weaker, whereas the [Novessence Thunder], [Novessence Light], and the other two were slightly stronger.

“Time to go to the Armaments Gorge.” After learning the secret art, Ning departed from the Pavilion of Mysteries and headed towards the Armaments Gorge. He had to acquire the fourth Mirrorsnow Painting as soon as possible.

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Book 27: Twelve Palaces Chapter 6: Broken Sword?

Ji Ning hovered there in midair, staring downwards at the Armaments Gorge. He then immediately flew downwards and landed in front of an icy building that was erected within the gorge. This was the true Armaments Gorge.

There were two golems guarding the gates to the building.

“Darknorth greets you,” Ning said courteously.

“Swordfive.”

“Swordsix.”

The two golems introduced themselves. They both had stately, solemn auras of tremendous power.

Ning walked past the gates, and the two golems let him enter unimpeded. Although there were many weapons and treasures stored here, not even Eternal Emperors were strong enough to seize them by force. The formations surrounding the most important parts of the Twelve Palaces had been personally established long ago by the almighty Hegemon himself, and the successive generations of geniuses in the Twelve Palaces had repeatedly strengthened them and reinforced them. By now, there were few to none in all the Endless Territories capable of breaking inside.

“What a treasure trove.” As soon as Ning entered, he saw the divine swords that had been firmly planted into the ground. They were clustered tightly next to each other, and they all emanated auras of terrifying sword-intent. Even the weakest sword was at least an Eternal weapon.

There was a stone stele next to every single sword, and each stone stele had a simple line of characters on them: “Thirty thousand cubes.” “Ninety thousand cubes.” “Fifty thousand cubes.” These were the prices of the swords, and the prices were actually quite low. Still, it hadn’t been easy for the Sword Palaces to collect these wondrous weapons, and there was no way Ning and the others could simply take the swords away without paying anything at all.

“What is...”

Ning’s gaze suddenly turned towards the distance, where he sensed an incredibly terrifying sword-intent radiating from afar. Although it was quite a distance off, and although there were thousands of other swords there, Ning could sense that none of them were able to shake that terrifying sword-intent in the slightest. It was a broken sword that was emanating that aura, and it was placed atop a table.

This was the only sword in the entire Armaments Gorge which was placed on a table.

“A broken sword?” Puzzled, Ning walked towards it to give it a careful look.

“Eh? It was broken in such a clean, natural way. It seems as though it was actually forged this way and meant to be this way.” Ning quickly was able to tell that this sword wasn’t actually ‘broken’; it was created this way.

Rumble...

Sword-intent billowed out from the sword. Ning felt as though he was a tiny ship facing the wild waves of the ocean, about to be capsized at any moment. The incomparably ancient sword-intent... it was the most terrifying sword-intent Ning had ever sensed. The [Nameless] sword-art, Violetjewel, the Forest of Sword Pagodas... none of these things had ever given Ning such a sensation before.

It was vast, it was awe-inspiring, and it was unfathomably ancient. It made Ning feel like he was back on Earth, staring into the endless sea of stars.

“Eh?” When Ning reached within thirty meters of the broken sword, a surge of invisible force suddenly stopped him from moving any farther. No matter how Ning tried, he was unable to take so much as a single extra step.

“I actually can’t go any closer to it?” By now, Ning realized that there were no other swords within thirty meters of the broken sword. “And it doesn’t have a price tag on it?”

The other swords all had clearly labeled prices on the stone steles. Only this broken sword was different. There was nothing within thirty meters of it, not even a stone stele.

Ning gave it a long, deep look, firmly engraving it into his memory.

Roughly a third of the Armaments Gorge was set aside for swords. The rest was used to hold many other types of treasures and unique artifacts, and they too had prices listed next to them.

“Fifty thousand cubes.” “Two million cubes.” “Ten million cubes.” “A hundred and ten thousand cubes.”

The treasures and artifacts all had different prices.

Ning wanted to acquire Dao lightning. Things like Watersmoke Lightning, Firecloud Lightning, or Azurewood Lightning represented the Five Elements and thus were fairly cheap, requiring roughly two hundred thousand cubes. Other types of Dao lightning, however, were much more expensive. The 'Felworld Lightning' cost 1.9 million cubes, and it was the most expensive of the nine types of Dao lightning which Ning needed.

Ning was able to acquire all nine types of Dao lightning here in the Armaments Gorge, but the price was quite steep.

The Armaments Gorge even had a tenth type of Dao lightning that was naturally formed. This lightning was known as the 'Allheaven Lightning' and cost ten million cubes, and it could only be used if one was willing to swear a lifeblood oath! The Allheaven Lightning could only be harvested by the almighty Hegemon himself, and it was unique to the Brightshore Kingdom.

If any of the other supreme organizations wished to acquire the Allheaven Lightning, they would have to pay an utterly shocking fee to the Brightshore Kingdom. Only for actual members of the Brightshore Kingdom would such a 'low' price of ten million cubes be accepted.

"Daolord Allgod himself was only able to acquire nine suitable types of Dao lightning, at which point he created his [Novessence Thunder]." Ning couldn't help but sigh. "But the Brightshore Kingdom actually has ten types..."

Ning's horizons truly were broadened after he spent some time wandering through the Armaments Gorge. He finally began to realize how many treasures existed in the primordial chaos.

"Darknorth, done already?" Swordfive, one of the two golems guarding outside, asked Ning curiously, "What treasure have you chosen?"

"I was looking for but unable to find nine types of divine water, including Netherstring Water and Wormwind Water," Ning said. He was going to train in the [Novessence Water] secret art and needed nine types of water.

Fire could be classified into Elder fire (such as Golden Solarfire), Chaos fire, and Dao fire. The same was true for water. When Elder Gods or Ancestral Immortals were touched by Wormwind Water, they would find their bodies riddled with holes. Even their truesoul would begin to collapse.

"Oh, Chaos water?" The nearby Swordsix said in a low voice, "The Sword Palace doesn't have low-level water like that. One of the other palaces, the Palace of Kindwater, definitely has it. If you really need it, we can have the Kindwater Palace deliver it to you."

"I need nine types of Chaos water." Ning carefully listed out the number types of Chaos water he needed.

The [Novessence Water] was also divided into two parts. The upper part involved using nine types of Chaos water, while the lower part involved using nine types of Dao water.

This was a technique which was on par with the [Novessence Lightning]. However, because of certain innate properties of lightning, the [Novessence Thunder] was slightly more powerful. Once these two

techniques were used in unison then they would become much more powerful, especially considering that water and lightning were mutually complimentary elements. It must be understood that when Daolord Allgod used all nine secret arts together, he had been able to suppress even Eternal Emperors.

“Right. In the Armaments Gorge, I was only able to find a copy of the third Mirrorsnow Painting?” Ning looked at Swordfive and Swordsix.

“That’s the only one we have,” Swordfive said. “Emperor Mirrorsnow was a rather dissolute and wanton figure, but his sword-arts were exceedingly profound. Countless World-level cultivators were driven mad with lust for his paintings. If it wasn’t for the fact that only World-level cultivators are permitted to study from his legacies, they would probably be much more expensive.”

Ning agreed with this assessment. Emperor Mirrorsnow’s legacies actually provided even Daolords with good experience. If Daolords could learn from them, the price would become astonishingly high.

The only reason why the price was fairly low was because Emperor Mirrorsnow had decreed that only World-level cultivators could study his legacy. How much money could a World-level cultivator possibly have? Still, every single painting was usually worth around a hundred thousand cubes of chaos nectar.

“I need the fourth Mirrorsnow Painting,” Ning said.

“The fourth?” Swordfive and Swordsix exchanged a glance.

“It isn’t present within the Brightshore Kingdom. We’ll need to rely on the strength and reach of the Twelve Palaces in order to find it somewhere else in the primordial chaos,” Swordfive said. “If you want us to do that... before we begin, you’ll have to pay a certain amount of chaos nectar as a deposit. Also, if you search for one specific painting, it’ll probably end up costing you much more money.

“I can accept any price under half a million cubes,” Ning said.

“That’s fine, then.” Swordfive nodded. “Generally speaking, it costs us around two hundred thousand cubes when we purchase one from the outside world. It’ll just take us a bit of time. Three hundred thousand cubes is usually the maximum. Just wait for me to send word. Once the Twelve Palaces find the fourth Mirrorsnow Painting, I’ll immediately inform you.”

“How long will it take, roughly?” Ning asked.

“Anywhere from ten years to a thousand years.” Swordfive was rather smug. “The Twelve Palaces are quite influential in the Endless Territories.”

Ning was speechless.

Many of the Daolords of the Twelve Palaces had been abducted from other places when they were at the World level. Ning himself was a good example of this. He had been a member of Vastheaven Palace, which was under the Dao Alliance. He was now here in the Brightshore Kingdom, but it was guaranteed that there was no way he would separate himself from the Dao Alliance. This was the reason why the Twelve Palaces had such influence throughout the Endless Territories.

“Within the gorge, I found a broken sword that I couldn’t even get close to,” Ning suddenly said.

“Couldn’t get close to?” Swordfive was startled for a moment, then nodded. “That means you two aren’t destined to be together.”

“Not destined?” Ning was puzzled.

“What, did you think that it was some sort of a formation preventing you from moving closer to it?” Swordfive asked.

“Wasn’t it?” Ning was even more puzzled now.

The nearby Swordsix said, “Of course not! The formations within the Armaments Gorge are only there to prevent you from taking away the treasures without paying the price. Generally speaking, you can get close to and touch the weapons. You were able to do so with the other weapons, right? But that broken sword is so innately powerful that it can actually prevent you from going too close to it.”

“Only one with the right karmic destiny will be permitted to move close to it. If it refuses to acknowledge you, there is nothing you can do.” Swordfive glanced at Ning. “Not even the two Palace Lords of our Sword Palace were acknowledged by it. After its previous master perished, it has stayed by itself in the Armaments Gorge. It has been silent for a long, long time.”

Ning blinked.

Alright, then. If even the Palace Lords, the Vice Palace Lords, and the countless generations of Daolords had failed to receive its approval, it only made sense that Ning himself was unable to receive its approval as well.

The Desolate Era

Book 27: Twelve Palaces Chapter 7: The Blazing Beast

Ji Ning knew very well that the Endless Territories was a place filled with countless marvelous treasures. It wasn’t surprising for this particular treasure to have no affinity for him. It was already lucky enough for him to have gained the Nine Chaos Seals.

“Master.” After leaving Armaments Gorge, Ning once more reunited with Su Youji.

“Let’s find a place to live first.” Ning and Su Youji flew through the skies. Suddenly, they saw a solitary mountain peak that jutted high up into the skies, surrounded by clouds and mist. This was one of the taller mountains in the Sword Palace. There were only so many ‘formal’ members of the Sword Palace, after all. Most people could easily find a place of their choosing within the Sword Palace, so long as there was no one else already there.

Ning waved a finger from afar. Whoosh! An estate suddenly appeared in midair, then descended upon the top of the mountain.

“From this day forth, this estate shall be our residence in the Sword Palace.” Ning looked at Su Youji.

“Right, Youji. The Twelve Palaces all have spacetime transfer arrays connecting them together. You can give the Palace of Fire a shot. Perhaps you’ll be granted entry into it.” He wasn’t going to be able to give her much advice in the Dao of Fire. She’d have to rely on herself for everything.

“I have to say, now that I’ve wandered through the Sword Palace I do feel a bit jealous.” Su Youji grinned. “Although I know my chances aren’t that great, I’ll still give it a shot.”

“Mm.” Ning nodded.

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The Sword Pagodas towered around everything around them. It was as though countless ancient powers were standing there in front of Ning. As Ning walked through the Forest of Sword Pagodas, his heart was filled with amazement and regret. So many major powers who had been the dominant forces of their time, who had been able to defeat even Eternal Emperors, had all passed away. The number of Daolords in the Sword Palace who were able to live for more than a hundred thousand chaos cycles could be counted on two hands.

This was the unstoppable, ruinous power of time.

“If I am to become an Eternal Emperor, then I wish to become one who is akin to the almighty Hegemon. Otherwise... I would rather become one of those Daolords capable of slaying Emperors. I have to become powerful enough to convince the almighty Hegemon or someone on his level to rescue and revive my wife!”

A dreamy look was in Ning’s eyes. “If I could bring her back... me, her, and Brightmoon would be together once more. Our family of three would be together again. Even if I eventually fail my Daomerge and perish, it will all have been worth it.” Although Daolords walked a fine line between life and death with each step, even those who failed their Daomerge would be able to live extremely long lives. If their family of three was able to live together in peace for some time, Ning would be satisfied.

Ning’s greatest regret was... his wife Yu Wei had perished shortly after giving birth to Brightmoon.

Whoosh. Ning waved his hand, causing a thatched cottage to suddenly appear next to him. This thatched cottage was actually Ning’s temporal acceleration treasure. Ning had made a few cosmetic alterations to it.

Ning entered the thatched cottage, then sat down in the lotus position. He set the flow of time to a hundred times the normal rate, then turned his gaze towards the distant Sword Pagodas.

“So many supreme sword-arts for me to analyze... and in fact, every single sword-art is filled with the sword-intent of its creator.” Ning couldn’t help but sigh at this. For most cultivators, greed was not a good thing. In fact, if you learned too many techniques, you might end up losing yourself or your own way. However, Ning’s path was a path that began from understanding the fundamental essence of the sword, and it was a path he would walk by analyzing and dissecting all other sword-arts, absorbing their best parts into his own [Brightmoon] sword-art.

The [Brightmoon] sword-art was still quite young and incomplete, but Ning had chosen a path where he would use it to embody all the mysteries of the Dao of the Sword.

This path Ning had chosen was a very difficult path. It had been a blurry, unclear path for Ning back when he was in the Three Realms, but the guidance Daolord Solesky had given Ning had made everything clear! He had analyzed thousands of sword-arts in the Allgod Estate, and now he had arrived in the most sacred part of the Sword Palace, the Forest of Sword Pagodas.

“There are 83612 Sword Pagodas here, many of which are comparable to my [Nameless] sword-art. I have to treasure this opportunity.” Having come from the Three Realms, Ning knew exactly how precious this opportunity was. It must be understood that the reason why none of the others had been able to reach the World level was because they had no access to good techniques. This was true for Ning’s own master, Suhbuti, as well as the martyrs such as Houyi or Three Purities. It was only in recent years that Ning’s Primaltwin had begun to transmit more information regarding the Dao back home.

However, this opportunity in the Sword Palace was truly priceless, and Ning valued it immensely. He was the second person to leave the Three Realms, with Mother Nuwa being the first. He didn’t know what had happened to Mother Nuwa, but he was determined to seize this opportunity to make himself as strong as he possibly could.

Su Youji stood outside the Forest of Sword Pagodas, staring at that distant form which was seated in that thatched cottage. The white-robed youth was completely absorbed with meditating on his sword-arts, and countless streams of swordforce began to naturally manifest in the area around him, followed by one sword-stance after another. These things manifested whenever Ning had a new insight.

“Master has never had a truly excellent teacher who was able to give him any good guidance. Now, after so long, he has finally reached a truly holy place for cultivation. I imagine this will result in his power skyrocketing. He’ll be even more dazzling than before,” Su Youji murmured silently to herself.

“I have to work hard as well. Now that I have the legacy of Feixian the Exalted, I should be able to provide him with some assistance.” All this time, it had been Ning helping Su Youji rather than vice versa. She felt grateful, but she also wanted to be able to do something for him.

“Time to go to the Palace of Fire.” Su Youji turned her head and departed.

The Twelve Palaces were all linked together by spacetime transfer arrays.

“So many World-level cultivators here?” When Su Youji arrived at the Palace of Fire, she saw numerous World-level cultivators on the path before her seated in the lotus position. She walked forwards, quickly reaching the end of the path.

“Halt!” Suddenly, a black-armored Daolord barked out at Su Youji.

“I wish to join the Palace of Fire,” Su Youji said.

“You’ll have to wait. In about half a month, the next batch of World-level cultivators will be permitted to take part in the trials.” The black-armored Daolord gave her a cold look. “You World-level cultivators are only permitted to remain on this path. You are not permitted to go into other parts of the palace without prior permission. If you do, the restrictive spells here will automatically activate and burn you to a crisp.”

“Understood.” Su Youji immediately nodded.

When she had entered the Sword Palace, she had been alongside Ji Ning and so the black-armored Daolord had been fairly courteous to her. Normally, however, the black-armored Daolords were quite cold and indifferent to these applicants. There were simply too many of them, after all.

“Another half month.” Su Youji found an empty spot and sat down in the lotus position.

“Another newcomer. There really are a lot of people who wish to join the Palace of Fire.” Just a few hundred meters away from Su Youji was a chubby youth dressed in fiery robes. The chubby youth mumbled to himself, “I’m a venerable grandmaster of alchemy, but I not only was rejected by the Palace of Spacetime, I even failed the trials of the Palace of Fire. Ugh. What should I do? Why the hell isn’t there a Palace of Alchemy?”

The chubby youth shook his head. “I’m skilled in alchemy, spacetime, and fire, but I wasn’t able to pass the trials of either the Palace of Spacetime or the Palace of Fire...” The chubby youth sighed. “It seems I’ll have to seek out brother Darknorth and ask him to help. He definitely entered one of the Twelve Palaces. If I follow him, things will be a bit easier for me.”

This chubby youth was World God Pillsaint.

He truly was an unlucky fellow. He himself was an extremely skilled, grandmaster-level alchemist and pillmaker. Why would a person like him be forced to engage in combat? In the past, he had to simply wave his hand and whatever he wished would be carried out, and his master would often give him advice with regards to alchemy. Who would’ve thought that he would suddenly be abducted to the Astral Islands. In the Astral Islands, combat was all that mattered. Who cared about you being an alchemist? He had started off with an Eternal weapon, but as soon as he arrived he had been robbed of it. Thankfully, alchemy required high levels of insight into both fire and spacetime, and he was quite skilled in both. This was why he had been able to survive for so long... but accumulating a complete legacy and being able to escape was incredibly difficult.

It was all thanks to Ji Ning’s assistance that he had been lucky enough to survive.

His skill in alchemy made his life in the Brightshore Kingdom an easy one, which was why he was able to reach the Twelve Palaces. Alas, his skills weren’t enough for him to enter the Twelve Palaces.

“I’ll keep trying. The trials for the Spacetime Palace were too difficult, but if I improve a bit in the Dao of Fire I might be able to make it into the Fire Palace.” World God Pillsaint gritted his teeth. He was determined to make something of this.. He knew that entering the Palace of Fire would be a tremendous boon, and he deeply desired to succeed.

Although Su Youji and Pillsaint were just a few hundred meters from each other, neither knew each other.

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The imperial palace of the Brightshore Kingdom.

Whoooooosh.

A blazing beast of fire was racing through the void of space. There were a few chaos stars in this vast region, which was part of the Brightshore Kingdom’s even vaster imperial palace. This was the place where the almighty Hegemon usually rested and resided.

The blazing beast was racing happily through it. Ever since it had been captured, it had been living a terrifying life of danger and adventure. Although a powerful member of his race known as ‘King Wu’ had been keeping eyes on it, it had still been worried that it might die at any moment. Thus, it had never dared to relax in the slightest. But now, it had finally survived and succeeded.

“Child.” An enormous behemoth appeared within the emptiness of space. When the behemoth stared at the blazing beast, its eyes were filled with warmth.

“Hegemon.” The blazing beast was so frightened that it immediately came to a halt and stood there obediently. It already knew that the almighty Hegemon was the most powerful member of their race.

“Ever since you were born, you have been training by yourself. You are still too young. Most of your time has been spent in slumber. Although you didn’t spend too much time in the abyss of the Astral Islands, you have still improved significantly. You are now qualified to enter the Archaeus region.” The giant behemoth’s head spoke out.

“The Archaeus region?” The blazing beast was puzzled. “Where, exactly?”

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 27: Twelve Palaces Chapter 8: The Archaeus Region

As the almighty Hegemon used his true form to chat with the blazing beast, something else was happening at another part of the imperial palace, a place where there were thirteen royal thrones.

One of the thrones was as white as snow. The other twelve were golden in color.

A white-bearded, snowy-robed old man with six horns was seated atop the snowy-white throne. The other twelve golden thrones were occupied by twelve golden-armored figures, and Daolord Woodflower was one of them.

“I have summoned you all because there is something I wish to discuss with you.” The six-horned, white-bearded old man smiled. “As you all know, my race just gained a new member. This kid was born with exceptional innate gifts, and in a thousand short years he’s managed to escape the abyss below the Astral Islands. Even amongst my Imperials, he is a rare breed who stands at the very top.”

“Congratulations, Hegemon.”

“I am confident that this child shall soon reach the ‘King’ level of power in your clan.”

“The Brightshore Imperials have gained yet another expert.”

The twelve golden-armored figures belonged to the Twelve Palaces, and they all spoke some words of flattery. Still, these words were also words of truth. The dark abyss below the Astral Islands was reserved for tempering and training new members of the imperial race. Generally speaking, the new members of the race had been wandering the outside world alone and didn’t really have any good teachers. Most of them needed to spend a long period of time in the abyss before overcoming its trials. In addition, the Imperials were so few in number that every new addition to their race was a cause for celebration. A new Imperial who was exceptionally talented was even more precious.

The almighty Hegemon beamed merrily. Clearly, he was in an excellent mood. “This young fellow is so talented that I wish to send him into one of the alternate universes.”

“Alternate universe?”

“An alternate universe?”

The faces of the twelve golden-armored figures turned pale.

“Hegemon, none of us have ever been to that place before.” They all began to worry.

“Don’t worry,” the Hegemon said. “As you know, when I was meditating on the Dao of Spacetime, I once discovered traces of a completely different universe within the flows of spacetime and opened up a transversal conduit to it. Our two universes have different essences, which has an impact on my transversal conduit. Only those below the Daolord level of power are able to enter... but I was able to let my will slowly seep into that alternate universe and seduce some of its local lifeforms to come to our universe. Quite a few World-level cultivators from that universe have passed through my transversal conduit to come to our universe. I’ve gone through their memories and have learned quite a bit regarding that universe.”

The Hegemon had discovered an alternate universe, had opened a transversal conduit to it, and then had been able to force his will through the conduit, even though he himself wasn’t able to pass through it.

The almighty Hegemon’s powers truly were quite terrifying!

“But... that’s still an alternate universe.” The twelve golden-armored powers were all quite wary.

The ‘Endless Territories’...

It was a place that was so incredibly vast that it was still filled with many places which no one had ever explored. Many who broke through to become Eternal Emperors eventually left to wander the territories, only to never be heard from again. However, in the eyes of the greatest powers this infinitely vast region known as the ‘Endless Territories’ was actually merely just a single ‘universe’.

Each universe had its own prime essences. An ‘alternate universe’ referred to a region which seemed similar but which had its own set of prime essences. For example, the prime essence of the Dao of the Sword in this universe would be different from that of the alternate universe. Thus, one could easily sense when one was in an alternate universe, as even the prime essences would be different.

“When I sent my will into that alternate universe, I was able to scan quite a few chaosworlds close to the exit of my conduit,” the almighty Hegemon said. “I’ve been watching this universe for many years, and now know quite a few things about it. There aren’t that many differences between our two universes. The main difference is that cultivators in the Endless Territories are spread out across many different organizations, but the alternate universe has a single unified power ruling over it.”

The Hegemon continued, “In the alternate universe, there is a place known as the Archaeus region. Countless cultivators in that universe deeply desire to enter the Archaeus region, and even many Daolords dream of having a chance to enter it. However, only a tiny number are able to enter it... but those who enter and then come out alive again are all strengthened dramatically.” The almighty Hegemon let out a sigh. “Although it might be a bit dangerous, cultivators who live in perfect safety will get soft. They won’t be able to make it far on their paths.”

“When you live on the edge between life and death, you’ll encounter many dangers but also encounter many miracles. The young fellow’s level of talent is so great that it is rare even amongst members of my race. I’ve prepared quite a few dangerous regions for him to test himself against, and the Archaeus

region of the alternate universe is the first place and an extremely important place. If he can survive it, he'll definitely have undergone utterly earthshaking transformations. In addition, once he is able to unify the mysteries of both our universe and the alternate universe, his future potential will be truly unlimited," the almighty Hegemon said.

The twelve golden-armored experts grew increasingly interested as they listened to the Hegemon speak.

It was true that the path of cultivation had to be a path filled with danger. Only by experiencing more things and seeing more wonders would one be able to walk farther along one's path. For example, if Ji Ning had always trained by himself without going out adventuring, how strong could he possibly become? It was due to his adventures that he had first gone to the Allgod Estate, then to the Brightshore Kingdom. This was why he had grown so strong, so quickly.

This alternate universe... it was a place which most likely no one in all the Endless Territories had ever visited!

When the almighty Hegemon had created his transversal conduit, it had been limited by the differences in the laws between the two universes. As a result, only those below the Daolord level of power could use it.

"Hegemon, will members of the Twelve Palaces also be permitted to go?" Daolord Thousand Waves suddenly asked.

"Right, Hegemon. The Twelve Palaces have quite a few talented World-level cultivators as well." Daolord Puregood of the Palace of Fire was a man with a full red beard, and his face was red with excitement right now.

If the Hegemon was going to send one of his own clansmen into that alternate universe, it meant that he probably felt confident in his clansman's chances. It must be understood that the Hegemon was extremely protective of his clansmen. The entire reason he had founded the Brightshore Kingdom and developed the Twelve Palaces was so that there would be more protectors for his race! Given that the blazing beast was an incredibly talented member of his race... although the Daolords didn't know much about this 'Archaeus region', they felt certain that it would be a good place. They naturally had to try and win a chance for their people to enter it as well.

"I've invited you all to come here precisely because of this matter. Over the course of countless years, I've managed to seduce many World-level cultivators into entering our universe, and I managed to acquire a number of Archaeus medallions from them. You must have an Archaeus medallion in order to enter the Archaeus region... but of course, that'll only be enough to gain entry. You will still have to face and overcome all the dangers inside the region itself," the almighty Hegemon said. "I'm not completely confident in the young fellow's chances, which is why I've come to ask you for your help. I would like for the Twelve Palaces to choose four other World-level cultivators to accompany him."

"I have five Archaeus medallions. That means a total of five World-level cultivators," the almighty Hegemon said. "Choose four from the Twelve Palaces. They shall work together with that young fellow of my race, and they'll all stand a better chance as a result."

"Agreed."

“Absolutely.”

They all nodded.

The Brightshore Kingdom was one of the supreme organizations of the Endless Territories, after all. If they were only permitted to choose four World-level cultivators, they would most assuredly choose freaks that were strong enough to defeat ordinary Daolords of the First Step. If they went into the alternate universe, they most likely would stand a good chance of overcoming the Archaeus region.

“Just four, Hegemon? Can’t we bring a few more?” Daolord Thousand Waves immediately said.

“Hegemon, just four... it’ll be a bit hard to choose.”

“Just four for all twelve of our palaces? Our Palace of the Saber alone has more than eight Saberlords at the World level.” Everyone present began to feel a bit frustrated.

The almighty Hegemon simply said, “Bertulu and Eastcult are peerless geniuses, the likes of which even our Brightshore Kingdom only sees once in countless eons. In addition, both of them are most likely preparing to become Daolords soon. There’s no need for them to go.”

The twelve golden-armored figures all nodded in agreement.

Bertulu and Eastcult could be said to have reached the true apex of power for World-level cultivators. There was no point to them tempering themselves at the World level any longer, especially Bertulu. Even prior to joining the Twelve Palaces, Bertulu had already reached the utmost peak of what even geniuses could reach. Eastcult, at least, had only reached that level after joining the Palace of the Saber and training in it for a period of time.

“The two of them are exempted. Aside from them, any member of the Twelve Palaces who have been acknowledged by their respective pagodas shall be considered,” the Hegemon said.

The Twelve Palaces each had a forest of pagodas. The one in the Sword Palace was known as the Forest of Sword Pagodas, whereas the one in the Fire Palace was known as the Forest of Fire Pagodas. The names were all fairly similar, and the concepts were the same; the World-level cultivators in the Twelve Palaces had to reach extremely high levels of mastery in a relevant Dao in order to be acknowledged by the pagodas.

The Sword Palace only had six Swordlords. As for the Saber Palace, it had eight Saberlords. However, since Eastcult was excluded, it only had seven.

“Aside from Bertulu and Eastcult, the Twelve Palaces have a total of sixty-six World-level cultivators who have been acknowledged by their respective pagodas,” Daolord Thousand Waves said. “How are we supposed to choose? Four out of sixty-six! I imagine all of them would badly desire to enter this Archaeus region.”

A chance to enter an alternate universe... it truly was a chance which, once missed, might never come again.

“No rush. That young fellow has just recently returned from the Astral Islands’ abyss. I need to teach him quite a few techniques first,” the almighty Hegemon said. “I’ll keep a close eye on him. When he is fully prepared, I’ll choose the four strongest cultivators.”

The almighty Hegemon waved his hand, causing a series of images to appear in the empty air around him. A total of sixty-six scenes appeared, with the sixty-six candidates having appeared within them. These were all candidates who had been acknowledged by their respective pagodas.

And of course... Ji Ning wasn't one of them.

The Desolate Era

Book 27: Twelve Palaces Chapter 9: The Full Mirrorsnow Set

"The Saber Palace won't push for too much. Two slots is enough."

"Yinwind, there's only four slots total. Your Saber Palace wishes to take half of them?"

"We might even take three."

The twelve golden-armored powers began to chat amongst themselves while they evaluated the sixty-six figures that had appeared in midair. They were actually quite familiar with most of the stronger World-level cultivators in every palace... and it was true that the Saber Palace held the most outstanding World-level cultivators of this generation! Prior to Bertulu's arrival, Eastcult of the Saber Palace had been the indisputably most powerful World-level cultivator in the Twelve Palaces. As for the other Saberlords, they were all shockingly powerful as well.

When the Vice Palace Lord of the Saber Palace, Daolord Yinwind, spoke of possibly taking three slots... he wasn't exaggerating!

There was a reason why this generation of World-level cultivators in the Saber Palace were all so strong. It was because the current Palace Lord of the Saber Palace... was Palace Lord Dawnstar! Lord Dawnstar was indisputably the most powerful expert amongst all the Daolords of the Twelve Palaces. In fact, even if you looked at all of the Daolords belonging to the various organizations of the Endless Territories, Lord Dawnstar would rank in the top three.

He was such a freakishly strong figure that he had needed just three strokes of his saber to slay an Eternal Emperor. He was also a Verge-level Daolord, and one could imagine how difficult the Dao he had chosen was. To successfully Daomerge would be incredibly difficult, and so he focused almost all of his efforts on it. However, for a period of time he had actually chosen to teach the World-level disciples of the Saber Palace in an extremely earnest, diligent manner.

Those World-level cultivators had all received the personal, attentive guidance of Lord Dawnstar! He had spent ten million years educating them, then had left the Brightshore Kingdom and gone off to adventure through other places.

To teach others was also a form of training, in and of itself. To Lord Dawnstar, it was just one of many things he was doing to prepare for his Daomerge, but to those World-level cultivators it had been a stroke of tremendous karmic fortune. Lord Dawnstar was definitely one of the top three experts of the Dao of the Saber in all the Endless Territories, even if one factored in the various Eternal Emperors.

And thus...

This generation of World-level experts in the Palace of the Saber all became incredibly strong, and the geniuses among their ranks became even more dazzling.

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The Palace of the Sword.

“Palace Lord.” Three World-level cultivators bowed respectfully.

Lord Woodflower was seated in the lotus position as he looked back at the three of them. His true body was here in the Sword Palace; the one which had been in the imperial palace was merely an incarnation.

“A great opportunity has come before you,” Lord Woodflower said.

“Oh?” Swordlord Wildfire, Swordlord Yicheng, and Swordlord Graceless’s eyes all lit up.

“The other three Swordlords are returning from elsewhere in the Brightshore Kingdom. The six of you will need to make some immediately preparations,” Lord Woodflower said. “Bertulu and Eastcult aside, all of the World-level cultivators acknowledged by the pagodas shall have a chance to win this chance. However... in the end, only four will succeed.”

Swordlord Wildfire and the others were all surprised upon hearing this.

Those acknowledged by the pagodas were all capable of breaking through to become Daolords at any time... and they would all become extraordinary Daolords! If only four were to be chosen... what sort of opportunity was this?!

“Make your preparations. I hope that at least one of the four will be from our Palace of the Sword.” Lord Woodflower sighed.

“Don’t worry, Palace Lord.”

“We will all work hard.”

The three Swordlords present were all filled with resolve and determination.

However, Lord Woodflower knew that determination alone wasn’t enough. Everyone acknowledged by the pagodas was filled with determination. In the end, strength was what would matter. Alas, this generation of World-level experts from the Palace of the Saber were simply too strong.

In the following days, those who had been acknowledged by the pagodas were all secretly summoned back from throughout the adventuring areas within the Brightshore Kingdom by the various leaders of the Twelve Palaces.

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The Palace of the Sword. The Daolord Cloudworld.

Whoosh.

A white-robed youth appeared out of nowhere within the skies of the Daolord Cloudworld. He looked quite bedraggled, and his body was covered with bloody scars. However, he quickly became clean once more after a bit of light flashed over his body. Ji Ning hadn’t even heard the news about this exciting opportunity. As a result, he continued to live a relaxed and happy life.

Life really was quite relaxed and exciting. The reason why Ning had focused on the Dao of the Sword for so long was because he truly did love training with the sword. This was a love that came from the bottom of his heart, and the feeling of continuing to improve with the sword was absolutely intoxicating for him.

As for the Sword Palace, it was a holy land for sword practitioners.

“This is absolutely wonderful. I can spend a few hundred years meditating in the Forest of Sword Pagodas and gain many new ideas, then enter the Daolord Cloudworld and use them in actual battle to further verify and refine my sword-arts.” Ning flew through the skies in a very pleased manner. It had been twenty years since he had entered the Sword Palace, but his temporal acceleration treasure made it so that he had actually engaged in two thousand years of cultivation. He had already tried out the Daolord Cloudworld on numerous occasions by now.

“Youji still isn’t back?” Ning glanced sideways at his distant estate at the peak of the mountain. Su Youji still had yet to return. “It seems she has completely set her mind upon entering the Palace of Fire.”

Suddenly...

“Junior apprentice-brother Darknoth! Junior apprentice-brother Darknoth!” Shouts rang out from afar.

Ning turned his head, only to see a tall, muscular, heavily-bearded Daolord dressed in black armor fly towards him.

“Senior apprentice-brother, you are...?” Ning truly didn’t recognize this person. The Sword Palace had quite a few black-armored Daolords, and Ning had spent most of his time training and very little time in making friends. He truly didn’t know many people in the Sword Palace.

“My name is Jiwang,” the black-armored Daolord said. “Swordfive of Armaments Gorge asked me to send word for you to go meet him.”

“Swordfive?” Ning’s eyes lit up. Swordfive was a golem. Golems focused exclusively on their duty, which meant Swordfive wouldn’t summon him without a reason. Ning had long ago purchased the [Novessence Water], which meant the only thing still pending at the Armaments Gorge was his request for them to help him purchase the fourth Mirrorsnow Painting.

“Thank you, Daolord Jiwang,” Ning said, then immediately flew away from his estate.

Ning descended upon the Armaments Gorge, then immediately turned to look at Swordfive and Swordsix. They each stood to one side of the entranceway.

“Darknoth.” Swordfive nodded at him.

“Is it the Mirrorsnow Painting?” Ning couldn’t help but blurt out.

“Aren’t you the impatient one.” Swordfive chuckled.

Ning grinned as well. “How can I not be? When I joined the Sword Palace, I didn’t choose a legacy.” Because Ning already had access to Emperor Mirrorsnow’s legacy, the other legacies in the Sword Palace really weren’t of interest to Ning. Although the Sword Palace did have legacies left behind by Eternal Emperors, they could only be chosen after Ning was acknowledged by the Sword Pagodas and passed

the trials the Eternal Emperors had left behind. Ning clearly didn't fulfill these requirements at present... and the other legacies were clearly inferior to Emperor Mirrorsnow's.

"You were wise not to choose," Swordfive said. "Your luck wasn't bad. We didn't need to spend too much effort in finding this fourth painting. However... the other party probably was able to guess that you care deeply about this painting, and so he gave a rather high price. You have to pay three hundred thousand cubes."

Ning nodded. The Twelve Palaces had certain rules governing them. If you sent out word through the Twelve Palaces that you wished for the Daolords to help you find a certain item, there would be many Daolords who would help out. However, only the person who successfully located the treasure you wanted would be given a commission in thanks, as well as the Daolord who helped escort the treasure back to the palaces. The total commission given would be 10%. The other Daolords would have done all their work for nothing.

"Here are the three hundred and thirty thousand cubes." Ning handed a gourd over to Swordfive, who accepted and inspected it.

Whoosh. Swordfive waved his hand, causing a painting which emanated sword-ki to fly out from deep within the Armaments Gorge. This painting depicted an image of an icy, snowy land.

"Take it." Swordfive handed it over to Ning.

Ning couldn't disguise his excitement as he accepted this painting of an icy snowland. Finally. He finally found it! Emperor Mirrorsnow had never accepted any true disciples, and so before he decided to go off adventuring he had produced these ten sets of paintings and spread them out into the universe. Those World-level cultivators who collected a full set of four and overcame his trials would become his personal disciples!

"A personal disciple of an Eternal Emperor? Since he dared make the claim that those who acquired a full set would become his personal disciple, I imagine I won't be disappointed by the legacy he left behind." Ning was filled with eagerness.

Some legacies merely involved individual techniques or abilities. Others had more thought put into them, such as World God Northrest who had worked hard to set up those ninety-eight stone steles to guide Ning.

As for the best ones... they included divine abilities, treasures, secret arts, and more. Daoist Threelives was a classic example. He had left behind everything for his successor.

"I wonder what Emperor Mirrorsnow left behind. Now that I have the full set, all I need to do is pass the fourth and final trial. I've already passed the first three trials; only the last one remains." Ning immediately picked up the painting and put it away.

"Thank you." Ning expressed his thanks to Swordfive and Swordsix, then transformed into a streak of light and disappeared.

Ning quickly returned to his own Immortal estate.

Swoosh! He flew into his estate, then shut the gates with a loud bang! No one would be able to bother him now. Even if Su Youji returned, she would have to stay outside and wait for him. Ning absolutely would not let anyone disturb him at all right now.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 27: Twelve Palaces Chapter 10: The Personal Disciple of an Eternal Emperor

The world within the fourth painting.

Whoooooosh. A cold wind howled through as snow drifted through the skies. This was a world of ice and snow.

Ji Ning appeared out of nowhere. He swept the area with his gaze, then began to walk towards a distant thatched hut. A white-haired, grim-looking man was seated in the lotus position within the thatched hut. In front of him was a flagon of wine that was surrounded by flames. Also on the table, next to the wine, was an ordinary sword.

“Mm?” Ning looked at the white-haired man.

“What, has Daolord Flylead gained yet another disciple in his Snowsword Sect?” The white-haired man looked at Ning.

“Daolord Flylead? I don’t know him.” Ning shook his head.

“Oh?” The white-haired man glanced at Ning in surprise. “In this chaos cycle, Daolord Flylead has sent more than ten World-level cultivators to duel with me in swordplay. Although he himself isn’t that strong, he’s still a Daolord of the Third Step. Are you actually strong enough to seize the fourth painting from him by force?”

Ning instantly understood. This painting had been in the hands of a Daolord, and one who often sent different disciples into this place to duel in swordplay. It made sense. The first Mirrorsnow Painting had been in the hands of Daolord Windsourc, after all.

“I’m not currently capable of seizing treasures from a Daolord of the Third Step. I bought it,” Ning said. “I have already defeated the emperor, the fisherman, and the assassin. Now, the only one left is you.”

“You’ve already defeated the other three?” Light flashed through the eyes of the previously calm-looking man, and a desire to do battle began to radiate from him. He stretched his hand out, picking up the sword from the table as he rose to his feet. He slowly walked out of his thatched hut, his gaze focused on Ning. “You can address me as... swordsman!”

“Swordsman?” Ning was stunned. The man asked him to address him as ‘swordsman’. Ning had the sense that this person wasn’t going to be easy to deal with.

“I am the final trial for you.” The white-haired man stood there atop the snow, staring at Ning. “Draw your sword.”

“Alright.” With a flash, a Frostice sword appeared in Ning’s eyes.

The two were merely competing in swordplay, and so they would refrain from using divine abilities or special treasures.

Swish.

Ning was the first to strike. His sword-light flashed, causing his power to condense so tightly that it didn't even have any impact at all on the snowflakes falling around it. It wasn't necessarily true that a loud commotion and grand display of might meant that a person was strong. Dao lightning was a good example of this. When its power was unchained and flailed out randomly, its power was somewhat weakened. Only by focusing it tightly and using it against a single opponent would it unleash its maximum power.

The same was true for sword-arts!

Clang! The white-haired man struck out as well.

The swords of both moved vastly faster than the limits of the Heavenly Daos, vastly faster than the speed of light. If ordinary mortals were watching... in fact, if Celestial Immortals or Empyrean Gods were watching... they would only see two blurs flickering. They wouldn't even see any sword-light, because the swords were moving faster than they could see.

The two constantly flashed and flickered through the falling snow, their sword-light clashing repeatedly.

"What a powerful and pure sword-art." Ning was secretly shocked. This white-haired man's sword-arts definitely were strong enough for him to be addressed as 'swordsman', and he lived up to his reputation as the final trial. If the emperor, the fisherman, and the assassin all belonged to different schools of swordplay, then this swordsman's sword-arts encompassed all schools.

His sword-arts could be explosive, could be ephemeral, but could also be cold and sharp...

Technically, his sword-arts were 'merely' on the same level of unpredictability as the assassin's and the same level of ephemerality as the fisherman's. However, because he had reached such a high level in every aspect, his sword-arts became incredibly terrifying to deal with. When a person reached a level where he had no flaws at all, his attacks could easily transform into defensive movements, which could easily translate into deceptive openings, which could easily transform into such assassination strikes. All the changes and transformations were very fluid and natural.

It was like an endless cycle that had inexhaustible moves. Ning had reached a very high level of sword-arts. His sword-arts were significantly better than that of the emperor, the fisherman, and the assassin, making it easy for him to defeat them, but for a time he was completely unable to do anything to this 'swordsman'.

Slash!

Clang!

Sword-light continued to clash repeatedly.

Ning was filled with a strong desire to win, causing him to constantly try new tactics for gaining victory. Slowly, the insights he had gained in the Forest of Sword Pagodas began to merge into his Unicorn's Domain. In truth, Ning had been steadily improving in the Unicorn's Domain during his years in the Sword Palace, as it represented a path in sword cultivation to begin with.

This was a path that could be continuously perfected. It would even allow him to become a Daolord of the First Step, a Daolord of the Second Step, or even a Daolord of the Third Step...

However, this path wasn't the most difficult path. It was merely a path on par with the fisherman's path, and it represented the sixth stance of the [Nameless] sword-art. The seventh stance of the [Nameless] sword-art represented a path that was even more difficult to take.

Without Ning even realizing it, the two ended up battling for more than six hours. As the fight progressed, Ning's advantage became increasingly apparent.

It made sense. He had already been able to defeat the first three trials while he had been in the Astral Islands. Although he hadn't spent too much time in the Sword Palace, two thousand years of accelerated time had resulted in him improving significantly.

Clang!

An ephemeral streak of sword-light brushed past the white-haired man's sword, then stabbed him in the throat.

Ning then withdrew his sword and stepped back.

"You won." The white-haired man smiled.

Ning, however, had a rather distant look in his gaze. Victory in this battle had taught Ning what choosing a path truly meant.

The Unicorn's Domain was a comparatively easier path. The white-haired man's path was a path that perfectly fused together multiple different paths of the sword. This was a path that was more than ten times harder to traverse, but it was also more powerful.

But of course...

A Daolord of the Fourth Step could easily defeat the white-haired man's sword-arts using the Unicorn's Domain. Ji Ning had similarly reached an incredibly high level of expertise in the Unicorn's Domain, and he could sense that he was just a hair away from becoming a Daolord. If he made some more breakthroughs, he would probably be able to reach the Daolord level whenever he wished... but that would mean that he would have become a Daolord through the Unicorn's Domain.

"However... in the end, the Unicorn's Domain is not my path. Nor is the white-haired man's sword-art my path."

Ning's path was a path that would lead him to the very essence of the sword itself. He would infuse all of the essence of the sword and countless sword-arts into his own [Brightmoon] sword-art, which represented his truest path.

The white-haired man had merely fused a few different sword-arts in a perfect manner. It was more profound than the Unicorn's Domain, but it couldn't really be said to point to the true essence of the sword itself. The latter path was the purest and most difficult path to take... but this was what Ning wished to obtain from his sword cultivation. He had to take this path. Only by taking the path you wished to take would you be on the most suitable path.

Rumble...

Ning was seated in the lotus position within his Immortal estate. It had merely been a divine power clone which he had sent into the fourth world.

After defeating the overseer of the fourth painting, Ning called out with his will and summoned all four Mirrorsnow Paintings. The four paintings hung there in the air, slowly drawing closer to each other before they completely merged into one. After the four paintings completely merged together, they actually transformed into a single painting. This painting looked quite ordinary, and it didn't have any sword-intent within it. It did, however, depict a man.

This man carried a sword on his back and was staring off into the distance. He looked extremely handsome and suave.

"Disciple, this is the painting of myself, your master. Kowtow three times first." A voice rang out from within the painting.

Ning was badly startled by this. In the next moment, he felt completely speechless.

Jeeze, Emperor Mirrorsnow... why are you such a narcissist? After the four paintings merged together, they actually formed a self-portrait of yourself? And you actually drew yourself in such a perfect, flawless manner?

The other paintings were all quite terrible, but his portrait was quite well-done. The strange thing was, there was almost no sword-intent radiating from this image. Ning strongly suspected that this probably wasn't actually drawn by Emperor Mirrorsnow himself.

There was no way the man could paint such a nice portrait.

"I wonder what this master of mine has left behind. I had best kowtow first." Ning immediately knelt down, kowtowing three times to the levitating painting of Emperor Mirrorsnow.

Whoosh.

As soon as he finished kowtowing, the painting emanated a blinding light that completely surrounded Ning. Ning didn't resist, and with a swoosh he was drawn directly inside of it.

Within the Eternal Emperor's painting.

This was an incredibly vast and ancient world. A man carrying a sword on his back was standing there atop the desolate earth, and there were four retainers who were standing by his side in a respectful manner. These four retainers were the emperor, the assassin, the fisherman, and the swordsman.

Whoosh.

Ning appeared out of nowhere next to them.

"Disciple." The man carrying the longsword on his back looked at Ning.

Ning immediately understood that this person was most likely Emperor Mirrorsnow. Still... it most likely wasn't the Eternal Emperor's true form. Actually, the Eternal Emperor really did look quite handsome. The painting apparently had been an accurate one, and the sword-intent which naturally radiated from

his eyes caused Ning to feel a sense of alarm in his heart. Although this sword-intent seemed quite calm, it had a hidden sharpness that was far more terrifying than the sensation which Daolord Woodflower had emanated.

“Master,” Ning called out respectfully.

“This is a world which will only appear after all four paintings merge together.” The Eternal Emperor looked at Ning. “I’ve left a strand of my will in this place, all for the sake of waiting for you, my dear apprentice.”

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 27: Twelve Palaces Chapter 11: A Memory Fragment

The Eternal Emperor looked at Ji Ning, extremely moved. “I delight in exploring, in visiting one beautiful new world after another. I truly don’t have the patience necessary to teach a disciple. However... if I keep adventuring like this, I’ll probably die one day. If I die, I die, but I’m afraid that after enough years pass, even my name shall be forgotten by the vast majority of cultivators.”

“It will be you, my dear disciples, who shall ensure that my name and reputation shall exist unto perpetuity. Once you become my personal disciple, you must accept ten more disciples on my behalf before you attempt your Daomerge. They can be considered honorary disciples of mine,” the Eternal Emperor said. “The skills I impart unto you, you can only impart unto those ten honorary disciples.”

“Your disciple understands.” Ning nodded.

Accept ten disciples before his Daomerge? This was a fairly easy oath.

“Then swear the oath,” the Eternal Emperor said.

Ning immediately swore a lifeblood oath. If he wanted to transmit certain legacies to his future disciples or to Subhuti and the others in the Three Realms, he could simply transmit his own insights. He would have a Dao that was completely his own, after all! The Eternal Emperor’s legacy primarily served as a guidepost for him, a way to show him how he should walk his future path and avoid certain wrong choices.

If a person walked forward blindly without any guideposts, it would be easy to get lost and make the wrong decisions. Every step taken by a Samsara Daolord was a step which straddled the line between life and death. There were no ways to take back a misstep! Once you made that misstep, you would die and your Dao would dissipate.

“Mm.” The Eternal Emperor watched Ning swear the oath, nodding in satisfaction. He transformed into a streak of light that flew straight into Ning’s body. Ning wasn’t able to resist him in the slightest.

Rumble...

Ning just stood there in the middle of the wilderness, surrounded by the four retainers of the Emperor. The swordsman, the fisherman, the assassin, and the emperor all stared at him as ripples of power began to emanate from the area around him. Clearly, the many memories and abilities which the Eternal Emperor’s strand of will contained were merging into Ning’s own memories. That strand of

divine will held simply too much power and memories, making it physically painful for even someone as mighty as Ning to absorb.

Within Ning's sea of consciousness. A large amount of information was flooding into this place.

"Before I succeeded in my Daomerge, I obtained an Eternal sword-art known as the [Heartseal] sword-art. This sword-art has a total of fifteen stances. This is the first stance, the Flysword stance..." A memory fragment entered Ning's mind. The speaker was Emperor Mirrorsnow, and in the memory he wielded a single sword and began to display the first stance of the [Heartseal] sword-art."

Emperor Mirrorsnow's will was in complete control of these many memory fragments. He made it so that Ning was able to personally watch his memories.

"This is second stance, the Mountainsword stance." Emperor Mirrorsnow put this stance on display as well. This was a far more effective method than simply meditating on sword-intent, as the Eternal Emperor was putting on a personal display. Not only was his sword-intent clear and obvious, he executed every movement in perfect detail and clarity. For the sake of being able to teach better, the Emperor Mirrorsnow displayed every single stance three times. The first time, he went through every single movement extremely slowly. The second time, he would display it without using any divine power or Immortal energy. The third time, he would use it with true, full power."

"This is the fifteenth stance, the Heartseal stance. Once the Heartseal forms, eternity shall be gained."

This final memory fragment was of Emperor Mirrorsnow executing sword-arts in a vast region of primordial chaos. When his sword struck out, an utterly titanic seal suddenly manifested which completely extinguished everything in the primordial chaos in the area. One chaos star after another was wiped out by the force of this strike. Ning was able to count over a hundred million chaos stars that were shattered and splintered by the force of this strike.

Ning was truly speechless when he saw this. When Emperor Mirrorsnow had unleashed a full-strength attack with this stance, just how wide an area had it covered? His sword was so fast that it had surpassed the concept of speed itself. In fact, it had surpassed even the very concept of spacetime itself. Otherwise, how could it have wiped out that many chaos stars? Even if his sword moved thousands of times faster than the speed of light, how could it possibly fly out that far, that fast?

And yet, it was an undisputable fact that Emperor Mirrorsnow's sword had wiped out everything in an infinitely vast region, leaving nothing behind.

Fortunately, the region which Emperor Mirrorsnow had chosen to display this stance was a region that was completely devoid of life. Otherwise, the number of casualties that would've been caused would be incalculable.

"I've completely displayed the [Heartseal] sword-art for you. This was the sword-art I trained in as I progressed, step by step, to gain eternity for myself. It is extremely difficult to train in this sword-art, but it can be separated into four different sets of sword-arts."

Emperor Mirrorsnow began to display a new set of sword-arts, and Ning instantly understood.

These four separate sword-arts could be described as the fisherman's sword, the assassin's sword, the emperor's sword, and the killer's sword. The fisherman, the assassin, and the emperor each used one of

these three sets of sword-arts, while the final challenger, the swordsman, used a sword-art that could be considered the most basic, elementary version of the [Heartseal] sword-art.

“These four sets of sword-arts each represent a separate path. Although they seem quite ordinary, it won’t be hard for you to become a Daolord of the Fourth Step through using one of these sword-arts. However, even if you do reach that level, your accomplishments will be mediocre,” Emperor Mirrorsnow said.

“Now, these four sword-arts can actually be separated into ninety-six sword-arts.” Emperor Mirrorsnow once again began to carefully display and describe every single sword-art.

The reason why this transmission had been such a painful and arduous one to accept was primarily because each and every memory fragment contained scenes of the Eternel Emperor personally displaying his sword-arts. A large amount of stances were included, as were various types of sword-intent.

“The [Heartseal] sword-art can be separated into four fairly average sword-arts, which can then be separated into ninety-six low-class sword-arts. If you have sufficiently high insights into the sword, it will be easy for you to learn them.

“I have finished transmitting my sword-arts to you. Now, I shall transmit a divine ability to you, an extremely powerful divine ability that will allow your attacks to explode with power. You will be able to instantly unleash a extreme level of power with it. This divine ability is known as the [Five Seals Sword Dao]...” The transmission of a divine ability was much simpler. It mainly included basic information in how to train in that divine ability, and Ning was able to instantly memorize it all.

“Oh, right. I left behind four golem servants. They shall follow you, my personal disciple, and protect you. That way, I can guarantee you won’t die too quickly.

“Mm. I’ve taught you everything I should teach, and I’ve said everything that needs to be said. Train hard and make sure you don’t besmirch my mighty name, dear disciple. If fate wills it, perhaps we shall truly meet in the flesh one day.”

The transmission came to an end.

Back within the desolate wilderness.

The four retainers continued to watch Ning. While Ning had been accepting the transmission, he had been rippling with waves of power. This state had persisted for two full days before he came to a halt and took a rest. The main reason it had taken this long was because it truly was difficult for Ning to completely absorb all of the information in the memory fragments.

In truth...

If Ning had personally watched Emperor Mirrorsnow display his sword-arts, he wouldn’t have been able to understand or memorize the truly profound parts. However, Emperor Mirrorsnow had completely transmitted his memories directly into Ning’s mind. Once the process was complete, Ning would never forget those memories unless he personally wiped them away.

“Eh? Why hasn’t Darknorth woken up yet?”

“Right. There are no more ripples; the transmission should’ve concluded.”

“He’s probably training.”

The four retainers chatted amongst themselves.

Their guesses were correct. Ning was indeed training. In the Forest of Sword Pagodas, he had only been able to visualize and sense the sword-intents radiating from the pagodas. There was obviously no way he could see or visualize those ancient powers actually displaying their various sword-arts, much less have their memories be directly infused into his mind! The [Heartseal] sword-art was also an incredibly profound sword-art, and one which could be broken down into multiple different sword-arts. This made it extremely easy for Ning to train in.

Many of the questions he had regarding the Dao of the Sword were wiped clean. He was continuously gaining a deeper and deeper understanding as his sword-arts dramatically improved.

This explosively effective training session persisted for more than half a month before it finally came to an end.

“Whew.” Ning opened his eyes.

“Having a master versus not having one... it really is completely different.” Ning glanced at the world around him in a jubilant mood. He knew that he had just completely changed compared to a month ago.

Ning now knew how he should advance from the World level all the way to the Eternal Emperor level. In the past, he knew nothing. Now, he knew.

“I wonder who is stronger? My master Emperor Mirrorsnow, Violetjewel creator Emperor Violetmount, or the creator of the [Nameless] sword-art,” Ning mused. “Still... the Violetjewels are merely middle-grade Eternal weapons. Once I become a Daolord of the First Step, I’ll probably need to switch them out for something else. As for the [Nameless] sword-art, I only have the first seven stances to them.”

Ning understood that in the future, he would spend much of his time meditating on the [Heartseal] sword-art and learning from it, infusing its mysteries into his own Dao of the Sword.

“If I could gain the complete [Nameless] sword-art legacy and the complete legacy of Emperor Violetmount, then I would now have three complete legacies. I could simultaneously absorb the teachings and mysteries of all three legacies, then go learn from the Forest of Sword Pagodas. I’ll definitely improve even more quickly then.” When this thought flickered through Ning’s mind, he couldn’t help but grin.

“Darknorth, was that helpful to you?”

“It seems you’ve gained quite a bit from it.”

“Given how strong Darknorth is already, he’ll soon be able to break through to become a Daolord whenever he wishes.” The four retainers all spoke out when Ning woke up.

Ning smiled and nodded. “I indeed can break through to become a Daolord. However, that path is not my path.”

The Unicorn's Domain had indeed been dramatically improved.

The Unicorn's Domain was a path akin to the fisherman's path. Emperor Mirrorsnow's [Heartseal] sword-art could be divided into four sword-arts, one of which was the [Fisherman's Sword]. Ning's highest level of attainment in recent years was in the Unicorn's Domain, which was his Unicorn's Domain had dramatically improved just half a month after Ning had received the legacy. Ning could already sense that his accomplishments in the Unicorn's Domain were enough for him to use it as his core foundation to rebuild his divine body and become a Daolord of the First Step.

Samsara Daolords. Each step they took resulted in their divine bodies being completely reconstituted! If you took a single wrong step, you would cause your body to crumble. You would die and your Dao would vanish.

"Just as Emperor Mirrorsnow said, although all four sword-arts which make up the [Heartseal] sword-art can allow a person to become a Daolord of the Fourth Step, they will result in mediocrity." Ning secretly shook his head. Just becoming a Daolord was not enough.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 27: Twelve Palaces Chapter 12: The Twelve Scrolls of the Sutra of Eternity

"The four of you." Ji Ning looked at the four surrounding him. "According to what my master told me, you four shall follow me in the future, right?"

"Right." The four all nodded.

"Might I ask how strong the four of you are?" Ning asked.

"The four of us are roughly comparable to peak-level Daolords of the Third Step. But of course, the swordsman's sword-arts are a bit better, making him slightly more powerful," the golden-robed emperor said.

Ning couldn't help but feel stunned. All four golems were comparable to peak Daolords of the Third Step?

This was the legacy which his master had left behind for him? The more masters like this, the better!

"Golems comparable to Verge-level Daolords are too expensive. The Eternal Emperor did have one such golem, but he ended up selling it to procure forty golems comparable to peak Daolords of the Third Step for his personal disciples like you," the golden-robed emperor said.

Ning was speechless.

Alright, fine. Maybe he had gone a bit too far in mentally praising his master. Still, Ning did know that golems with the strength of Verge-level Daolords were indeed quite expensive, and forging them was no easy task. After all, true Verge-level Daolords not only had considerable Immortal energy and divine power, they also had mighty magic treasures and high insights into the Dao. To have a mere golem be a match for one of them was extremely difficult. Daolord Allgod was an incredibly skilled artificer, but even he had been only able to painstakingly forge a single Verge-level golem.

The Sword Palace had collected many golems over the course of countless years, but even it had only acquire a total of nine Verge-level golems. Those golems were the ones titled Swordone through Swordnine.

Although the Daolord Cloudworld had many golems within it, those were all fairly weak. The strongest were probably just on par with the four standing right in front of Ning.

“If you are to follow me, should I bind you all?” Ning asked. He was too weak right now; there was no way for him to forcibly bind them.

“Unacceptable.”

“Per the Eternal Emperor’s instructions, we can each only help you out a single time prior to you defeating us in battle. Once you are able to defeat us, we’ll permit you to bind us and be your eternal servants.” The emperor, the swordsman, the fisherman, and the assassin all refused in solemn fashion.

Ning was instantly speechless.

Fine.

Most likely, Emperor Mirrorsnow was afraid that he would rely on the golems too much and so had restricted him to using them a single time. He probably just wanted to ensure that his disciples wouldn’t be killed while they were weak if they were unlucky enough to be trapped in a dangerous situation.

“Just one time each. Still, that’ll keep me alive in dangerous situations.” Ning was in quite a good mood.

“The divine ability my master taught me makes it so that someone with the body of a half-step Daolord is able to match a full Daolord of the First Step. Unfortunately, my azureflower mist energy ensures that I already am comparable to a Daolord of the First Step, and it lasts for a very long period of time.” Ning shook his head. This divine ability really was somewhat useless to him.

If he used it, his divine power would probably run dry after a short battle. How could it possibly last as long as the azureflower mist energy in battle?

“The most valuable part of the legacy were those memory fragments which Master transmitted to me.” Ning couldn’t help but feel excited. Although there had been legacies in the Astral Islands, those legacies consisted of simple information which any cultivator could learn and make use of. Those legacies within the Astral Islands would be transmitted to countless cultivators over the course of aeons, and they weren’t truly valuable.

These memory fragments of Emperor Mirrorsnow could only be transmitted a single time, and their creation had involved the Eternal Emperor infusing his own divine will into them.

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The Brightshore Kingdom. The imperial palace.

Rumble...

The blazing beast stood there in a region of empty space, staring at the distant, towering behemoth. Golden light began to radiate from the behemoth's giant eyes, and the light completely swallowed the blazing beast.

Within that barrier of golden light, many mysteries and secrets were being transmitted to the blazing beast in an endless stream.

"GRWAAAR!" The blazing beast's body trembled from the pain. Every so often, flames would flicker and burst out in the area around him.

Finally, the golden light dissipated.

"Hegemon." The blazing beast revealed a look of delight as he stared at the distant, towering behemoth.

"After twelve separate transmissions, you have completely memorized the twelve scrolls of the [Sutra of Eternity]. Our race has very few members, and those who are suitable for my legacies are even fewer. Long, long ago, our race was forcibly enslaved by the Ancient cultivators. The Ancients are on par with us in terms of innate gifts, but they have many legacies. I was once fortunate enough to acquire a legacy left behind by a senior of our race, a set of ten scrolls called the [Ten Scrolls of Eternity]. It was thanks to that legacy that I was able to train to my present level, and I perfected them and supplemented them, transforming them into the [Twelve Scrolls of Eternity].

"In this era, our race is on an equal footing with the Ancients, precisely because of the [Twelve Scrolls of Eternity]. These twelve scrolls include all things with them. No matter what path you choose, it will be of assistance to you, which is why I will transmit this legacy to every single member of our race.

"Child... as of right now, I am the only member of our race who has broken through to become an Eternal Emperor. I hope you will be the second one of our race," the towering behemoth concluded.

"Yes, Hegemon." The blazing beast was incomparably excited. In recent years, he had come to learn much of the history of his race from the time he had spent in the imperial palace. He naturally now felt a tremendous sense of kinship and belonging! As for these [Twelve Scrolls of Eternity], they included virtually all Daos. This caused him to feel even more awe towards the almighty Hegemon.

"Choose an imperial name for yourself," the towering behemoth instructed.

"When I was born and gained consciousness, I gave myself a name, 'God of Sky and Fire'. Let my name be Skyfire of the Brightshore Imperials," the blazing beast said.

A look of amusement appeared in the towering behemoth's eyes. 'God of Sky and Fire'?

The members of his race were only born from the primordial chaos under certain, very unique situations. They were incredibly few in number, and if it wasn't for the fact that the Hegemon went out of his way to hunt for them, many would probably wander the primordial chaos for countless years by themselves. Generally speaking, they would choose rather odd names for themselves. 'God of Sky and Fire' was a fairly amusing one.

"Spend some time training in the [Twelve Scrolls of Eternity]. I will give you a thousand years. A thousand years later, I'll send you into an alternate universe, which will be your first training grounds," the towering behemoth said.

“Yes, Hegemon.” The blazing beast was very excited, and he knew he needed time to study the [Twelve Scrolls of Eternity]. Actually, after he learnt this precious technique he would continue to rise in power even as he roamed the outside world.

This was how the Brightshore Kingdom worked. After the most powerful World-level cultivators were selected and recruited, they would receive endless legacies and secret arts from the Twelve Palaces. The same was true for the imperial clan. New entrants to the imperial clan would also be forced to undergo certain tempering experiences, after which they would be transmitted the [Twelve Scrolls of Eternity].

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The imperial palace. There were thirteen royal thrones here hanging high in the skies.

The white-haired, six-horned old man dressed in snowy robes spoke out. “A thousand years from now, I will select the four most powerful World-level cultivators and have them accompany Skyfire Brightshore to the alternate universe. It will be up to them to make the most out of it.”

“A thousand years?”

“So we have another thousand years.”

Now that the twelve golden-armored powers knew exactly how long they had, they began to be filled with anticipation.

Time flowed on. More and more of the cultivators who had been acknowledged by the pagodas and who had been out adventuring within the Brightshore Kingdom began to return, responding to the summons of the Twelve Palaces.

“Senior apprentice-brother Wildfire, I heard from Lord Woodflower that a great opportunity awaits us?”

“Yes. Everyone acknowledged by the pagodas will have a chance at it. However, only the four most powerful members of the Twelve Palaces will be granted it.”

“Just four?”

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The Palace of the Sword.

Two youngsters were striding within it. One was the red-haired Wildfire, whereas the other was an icy-faced child who was wielding a shortspear.

“We don’t have much time left, just nine hundred years,” Wildfire warned.

“I plan to spend the next nine hundred years in the Forest of Sword Pagodas,” the icy child said.

“I’m planning to do the same. I’m going to spend my time in meditation.” Wildfire agreed with this idea. The Forest of Sword Pagodas was the most sacred place within the entire Sword Palace. It had many sword-arts which had been personally left behind by the mighty Daolords from a previous era. If you chose to learn from sword-arts that were similar to your own, you would benefit greatly from it.

The icy child swept the area with his gaze. He saw a distant thatched cottage, and within that cottage sat the white-robed Ji Ning.

“Who is that?” The icy child asked curiously.

“His name is Darknorth. He’s a newly arrived junior apprentice-brother,” Wildfire said.

“Why is he using a temporal acceleration treasure? Has he been acknowledged by the Sword Pagodas as well? Is he also trying to seize every moment to train?” The icy child asked.

“No.” Wildfire shook his head. “He’s new, and as soon as he came here he began to use a temporal acceleration treasure. He’s probably trying to finish something as fast as he can.”

The icy child nodded.

Normally, cultivators wouldn’t go out of their way to use temporal acceleration treasures, as they didn’t make much of a difference. The more one trained, the more those moments of epiphany mattered. Only when there was a pressing need would people use temporal acceleration treasures.

“Our opponents shall be all the World-level cultivators who were acknowledged by their respective pagodas. Senior apprentice-brother Wildfire, you’ll be one of my opponents as well.” The icy child looked at Wildfire.

“I won’t take it easy on you.” Wildfire chuckled as well.

The two didn’t care about Ji Ning at all. Right now, all of the talented geniuses of the Twelve Palaces who had been acknowledged by their pagodas were trying to seize every moment to strengthen themselves as much as they could.

Ning, however, knew of none of this. He was still completely absorbed in his cultivation.

He had the memories of his master, Emperor Mirrorsnow, providing him with careful and detailed guidance. He also had the opportunity to analyze the Eternal Emperor’s sword-arts and compare them to the many sword-arts of the Forest of Sword Pagodas. His level of insight was continuously rising at a pace that was unspeakably faster than before he had acquired the Eternal Emperor’s legacy. Ning enjoyed this process very much, and was completely intoxicated by it.

And so, in the blink of an eye, more than eight hundred years passed with Ning consumed by his quiet meditations.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 27: Twelve Palaces Chapter 13: The Seventh Stance of [Nameless]

The Forest of Sword Pagodas was filled with tens of thousands of towering Sword Pagodas which stood silently erect. Numerous cultivators were scattered throughout the Forest of Sword Pagodas, quietly training with no one disturbing them.

There was a thatched cottage in the forest as well, and within the thatched cottage was a white-robed youth. Streams of sword-ki surged in the area around him, occasionally flicking out as sword-stances.

Suddenly, the youth opened his eyes. A look of delight could be seen in his gaze.

“I’ve finished mastering the seventh stance of the [Heartseal] sword-art, the ‘Reincarnation’ stance.” Ning was in a superb mood. “My master, Emperor Mirrorsnow, used the Reincarnation stance to break through to become a Samsara Daolord, and now I myself have learned this stance as well.

Whoooooosh.

Sword-light began to flood the area around Ning. Some of the sword-light was filled with an aura of murder, some of it was fluctuating and unpredictable, while the rest was dominating and savage. The different types of sword-arts cycled through in a perfect manner, and no flaws could be seen at all from any of the attacks. It truly was like the perfect cycle of reincarnation itself, and when any enemies made even the slightest of mistakes the Reincarnation stance would ensure that they would be trapped and buried.

“Emperor Mirrorsnow was a dissolute, adventurous man, but his sword-arts were extremely cautious and tight.” Ning sighed in amazement.

“Mm. Given my current level of insight into sword-arts, I should be able to train in the seventh stance of the [Nameless] sword-art.” Ning immediately began to ponder the [Nameless] sword-art.

Thanks to the Eternal Emperor’s legacy, Ning was able to learn the [Heartseal] sword-art incredibly fast! By comparison, training in the [Nameless] sword-art was considerably more taxing... and Ning had the feeling that the seventh stance of the [Nameless] sword-art was actually more difficult than the seventh stance of the [Heartseal] sword-art.

The spacetime acceleration cottage maintained a rate of a hundred times the normal flow of time. Ning’s mastery of his sword-arts had already skyrocketed, making the seventh stance of the [Nameless] sword-art much easier to understand as he continuously meditated upon it.

The seventh stance of the [Nameless] sword-art was named ‘Cosmic Heart’. It was far more complicated than the Unicorn’s Domain, and it was even more profound than the Reincarnation stance.

More than thirty years went by.

“Eh?” Ning opened his eyes. A distant look was in his gaze, as though everyone around him including the thatched cottage no longer existed. It was as though he was surrounded by an absolutely pristine, illusory world... and a single tear had appeared within it.

This single tear seemed to be a tear of love... but it also appeared to be the very heart of this world.

Slash!

Ning flicked out with his fingernail as if he was stabbing forward with a sword, piercing that tear with it.

In this moment, Ning’s heartforce burst out and completely meshed together with his finger.

Whoosh!

A shocking aura of sword-intent billowed out of the thatched cottage and into the surrounding area.

Ning was completely stunned and absorbed by the perfect beauty of this strike. He couldn’t help but close his eyes and savor the marvelousness of that sword-art. He had naturally, unconsciously infused

his sword-arts with his heartforce, but he didn't force it as other cultivators did. Rather, it had all happened in a very natural manner. He hadn't even intentionally tried to add heartforce into the mix. He had purely wished to execute this sword-art to its full potential. His subconscious mind merged his heartforce into it, causing him to unleash an utterly mystical and utterly terrifying strike.

Rumble...

Suddenly, a loud sound rang out from outside. The entire Forest of Sword Pagodas began to tremble.

"Eh?" Puzzled, Ning opened his eyes to stare outside. The ground outside was trembling as that enormous sound boomed from far away.

"What's going on? The Forest of Sword Pagodas is the most sacred place of the Sword Palace. Who would dare cause trouble here?" Puzzled, Ning walked out of his thatched cottage and stared off into the distance.

"What was that?"

"Was that...?"

"Look!"

Dozens of cultivators within the Forest of Sword Pagodas rose to their feet. Some were at the World level, some were Daolords. In this moment, all of them stared at the area from where the disturbance was coming. At a distant part of the Forest of Sword Pagodas, the ground was booming loudly as it began to split apart. The tip of a pagoda was slowly emerging from underground and climbing higher and higher.

"A Sword Pagoda."

"A new Sword Pagoda."

"A new pagoda? We just gained yet another pagoda? Who was just acknowledged by the Sword Pagodas?" Everyone was excited.

They all understood what was going on. Only once you were acknowledged by the Sword Pagodas would the Forest of Sword Pagodas give birth to a brand new pagoda of your own. Countless eons had gone by, but only around eighty thousand cultivators had ever been acknowledged by the Sword Pagodas, and in this day and age only six World-level cultivators had been acknowledged. They were, of course, the six exalted Swordlords.

Ning stared in astonishment as well. Although he had seen quite a few Sword Pagodas in the past, this was his first time seeing a new one rising.

That distant, newborn sword pagoda continued to rise upwards as the booming sounds rang out unabated. The entire Forest of Sword Pagodas was shuddering! Finally, the new Sword Pagoda came to a halt when it reached the same height as the other Sword Pagodas.

Whoosh.

Suddenly, countless sword-shadows began to fly out from throughout the Forest of Sword Pagodas. There had to be trillions of the things, and they all began to bow down in a certain direction.

“Uh?!” Ning was rather flabbergasted.

The countless sword-shadows from throughout the Forest were all bowing down towards Ning!

All of this had caused a great commotion, attracting the attention of quite a few Daolords and World-level cultivators of the Sword Palace, all of whom came flying over. As a result, many of the cultivators of the Sword Palace were able to personally bear witness as all of this happened.

“It is him?”

“Isn’t that junior apprentice-brother Darknorth?”

“His name is Darknorth?”

“Right, he’s a newcomer. He joined us less than a thousand years ago.”

“He’s still just at the World level, but he’s already received the acknowledgment of the Sword Pagodas?”

This stunning sight caused many of the cultivators present to begin to quietly chat amongst themselves. For a Daolord to be acknowledged by the Sword Pagodas was one thing, but for a World-level cultivator? This was extremely, extremely rare. The entire Sword Palace only had six Swordlords. Now, Ji Ning had become the seventh.

“Junior apprentice-brother Darknorth, congratulations.”

“Congratulations, senior apprentice-brother Darknorth.”

“Senior apprentice-brother Darknorth, congratulations.”

“Junior apprentice-brother Darknorth.”

Many cultivators came over to offer their congratulations. In the Sword Palace, there was a huge dividing line between those who were acknowledged by the Sword Pagodas and those who were not! If you weren’t acknowledged by the Sword Pagodas, you would always be viewed as slightly inferior, even if you were a Daolord. As for those who were acknowledged? All of them were venerated.

Ning finally realized what was happening. His sword-stance just now had been acknowledged by the Forest of Sword Pagodas!

“Darknorth.” A deep voice rumbled out in Ning’s mind. “That new Sword Pagoda belongs to you. Only you are permitted to leave behind your sword-arts within it.”

“You are...?” Ning asked.

“I am the spirit of the Sword Palace,” the deep voice said.

Ning understood. Even the Starseizing Manor had given birth to a manor-spirit such as the giant yellow bear. It made sense that the Sword Palace had given birth to a sentient spirit as well.

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The Brightshore Kingdom's imperial palace. The thirteen royal thrones.

A trace of emotion suddenly flickered through the face of the snowy-robed Hegemon. He smiled slightly, then looked at the nearby Lord Woodflower. "Woodflower, congratulations are in order for your Sword Palace. You just gained a new Swordlord."

"Haha, it seems as though I was right about him." Lord Woodflower laughed merrily.

"What's this?"

"A new Swordlord? Did yet another World-level cultivator of the Sword Palace receive the acknowledgment of the pagodas? Who is it?"

The other eleven golden-armored powers were all quite surprised.

Lord Woodflower said in a very smug manner, "It is Darknorth!"

"Darknorth? That kid who sparred against Bertulu?"

"When he battled against Bertulu, he specialized in defensive techniques and was quite good in that regard. However, he was quite a ways off from being at the level he would need to be to receive the acknowledgement of the Sword Pagodas."

"This rate of improvement is crazy. Even if he was accelerating time to train a thousand times faster than normal... it has been less than a million years!" There had been many major powers who had witnessed Ning's battle against Bertulu. Even the Hegemon had gone to watch! Although they had all been focusing on Bertulu, they naturally had also paid some attention to Bertulu's opponent, Ji Ning.

The stronger one was, the more difficult it would be to accelerate the rate of time for one's self. A thousand times the normal rate of time was already a ridiculously fast pace... but Ning had entered the Sword Palace less than a thousand years ago. That meant that even at a thousand times the normal rate of time, he would've been training for less than a million years.

In reality, Ning had only maintained a pace of a hundred times the normal rate of time.

"I said long ago that I had a good feeling about him. He truly is quite talented in sword-arts." Lord Woodflower said in a very smug manner, "My Sword Palace has gained yet another Swordlord, which means we've gained yet another chance to be the ones to go to the alternate universe."

"Yes, another candidate has appeared." The almighty Hegemon nodded as well.

Everyone acknowledged by the ancient pagodas were qualified to take part in the trials.

"Let's see what sort of sword-arts he came up with to be acknowledged by those ancient pagodas." The almighty Hegemon waved his finger. There had been sixty-six images in the air, and now a sixty-seventh image joined them. This image displayed the scene of a white-robed Ji Ning standing in front of a Sword Pagoda, staring at it curiosity.

"Rewind." The almighty Hegemon smiled as he watched, and the other twelve golden-armored figures watched closely as well. All of them were curious as to what type of sword-art this World-level cultivator had used to receive the acknowledgement of the Sword Pagodas.

Time began to reverse at high speed until the image returned to the time when Ning had just executed his sword-stance.

The image showed Ning seated in the lotus position within his thatched cottage. Ning gently flicked out a single finger in a seemingly simple manner, but the strike was indescribably profound. Slash! The strike shot out into the distant skies above him.