

Desolate 951

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Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 15: The Secret of the Sacred Immortal Realm

Heartlord Solewind stared at the black-robed Daolord's corpse, then said, "This Daolord was quite extraordinary. He was most likely the second and final Daolord here in the Sacred Immortal Realm. Now that he's dead, we'll probably be able to leave this place soon! It is possible that his master, Emperor Trisilk, might have some unique methods which would alert him of his disciple's death. He might be heading towards this place right now. Once he arrives, we'll truly be doomed. We need to get out of here as soon as possible."

Ning and the others all nodded.

The Palace of the Heart might've given Solewind a powerful protective Dao-seal, but it wouldn't be enough to kill an Eternal Emperor; at most, it would just tie him down for a period of time. Even if the Palace Lord was personally present, it would be quite difficult for him to actually slay an Eternal Emperor.

"I'll collect the corpse for now. After we escape from the Sacred Immortal Realm, we can bind his storage treasures and split those things up," Solewind said.

"No!" Prince Greatjoy immediately argued, "Solewind, you used a life-saving Dao-seal to kill him. All the treasures will naturally belong to you. You used up a Dao-seal that represented 30% of a maximum-power strike from the Palace Lord of the Heartforce Palace! I imagine we could sell off all of this Daolord's items, and it still wouldn't be worth as much as that Dao-seal was. Even if you took everything, you are still coming out behind."

Solewind was speechless.

"Right, Solewind." Skyfire Brightshore said the same thing. "We're certainly not going to take advantage of you like this. We can split up the treasures we earned from killing that weak Daolord of the First Step, but that golem and this black-robed Daolord's treasures shall belong to Darknorth and yourself, respectively. You used up an extremely powerful Dao-seal, while brother Darknorth had to use up that favor from his helper."

"These two affairs aren't comparable. Brother Darknorth captured that golem, but there's no way we could possibly split it up. The Daolord's treasures, however, are useful for everyone," Solewind argued.

"Unnecessary."

"Stop quibbling."

"We're not taking it, and there's nothing you can do to convince us otherwise."

Ning and the others all laughed as they rejected Solewind's suggestions. They had known each other for thousands of years by now, and all of them were quite friendly with each other. Of the find, Solewind was the most logical and the most trustworthy.

Solewind shook his head, then said with resignation, "Fine, then. I'll be shameless and accept it all. Oh, right. This Prismatic Kiloleaf Flower is pretty much at full maturity as well. Let's harvest it. I'll take all of the black-robed Daolord's treasures, but we can split up the value of the flower later."

"Agreed."

"Harvest it first."

Waterlord Firesurge waved his hand. Instantly, a stream of water surged out and formed a giant hand that gently cupped the distant, beautiful flower, then plucked it all at once.

"Come, let us keep on exploring," Prince Greatjoy said. "We still have yet to find the core of this formation."

"We have to breach the formation. Only then will we be able to leave this Sacred Immortal Realm."

Ning and the other five quickly began to advance once more. There would be plenty of time for them to split up the treasures later. Right now, every extra second they spent in this Sacred Immortal Realm was another second of danger for them! Who knew when Emperor Trisilk would come back? Although logically speaking the Sacred Immortal Realm had that enormous formation which completely separated it from the outside world, which meant Emperor Trisilk shouldn't be aware of the black-robed Daolord's death, in the end it was the Eternal Emperor himself who had set up this formation. He might've put in certain mechanisms that would let him know about what was happening in the Sacred Immortal Realm.

He was an Eternal Emperor. Even if he was very far away, it probably wouldn't take him that long to hasten to the Sacred Immortal Realm. If the five of them were caught here, they really would be finished.

"Hurry up."

"Let's move."

There were no further barriers in front of them. The planting grounds for the flower had essentially been the most important place in the entire estate, after all. They pushed open the enormous stone door in front of them, only to see a circular hallway behind it. The hallway was filled with complicated formations made from divine runes, and Immortal energy flowed through the runes with incredible power. More than ten thousand strange types of stones were present as well.

Some of the stones were jewel-like, some were white and slick, some were dark and gloomy, while some emanated auras of incredible cold. All sorts of different, strange stones were scattered throughout this place.

"We're rich!" Prince Greatjoy's eyes bulged out.

"So many treasures?!" Solewind swept the room with his gaze.

"All combined, these stones have to be worth at least ten million cubes!" Ning was shocked by the implications of this.

Good heavens. Ten million cubes? This was an absolutely enormous sum of money, even for a Verge-level Daolord... but these stones were merely being used to power this formation.

“We’ll split up these treasures into five portions. Each of us will get a portion,” Solewind said.

“Ahaha, alright! We’ll be shameless enough to accept that suggestion.”

“Right, right.”

Greatjoy and Ji Ning didn’t decline either.

In truth, all of them felt rather puzzled and suspicious. From what the black-robed Daolord had said, this formation was personally set up by that Eternal Emperor, who had ordered the black-robed Daolord to protect this place! What secrets did this place hold, for the Eternal Emperor to order such a powerful Daolord to stay here permanently? Why did he pay such an enormous price and personally set up such a complicated formation here?

“No one is in command of the formation, and the formation’s core is the weakest part of any formation. It’ll be easy to break it apart. Don’t move, everyone. Let me deal with it,” Solewind said.

Although no one was in command of the formation, it still took someone at the Daolord level of power to break it.

Solewind carefully picked up one precious stone after another. After carefully picking up a total of twelve stones, the power of the formation began to fade. Solewind grinned. “Next... you can do whatever you like. This formation is no longer able to fight back against us.”

“Right.”

“Let’s do this.”

Ning and the others all worked in concert, each of them collecting roughly a fifth of the total number of treasures present. With the treasures all collected, the formation naturally broke apart.

“The formation is done for. We can leave now.” Prince Greatjoy revealed a look of delight. “However... we still haven’t discovered what secrets this place is holding, for an Eternal Emperor to set both formations and guards over this place.”

“There are no other passageways from this estate,” Solewind said. “The mysteries don’t matter. Let’s leave first.”

“Agreed.”

There really were no other passageways for them to take. They had gone as deep as they could into the estate, and they had already discovered the core of formation at the bottommost layer of the estate.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Ning and the others moved incredibly fast. In just a single breath’s worth of time, they flew out of the estate. There were no longer any barriers here to slow them down.

“Eh?” Ning and the others raised their heads to stare at the skies. Their faces all turned pale. “Not good.” All of them felt shocked.

The formation-barrier covering the entire Sacred Immortal Realm had already broken down, revealing the world beyond. Outside the Sacred Immortal Realm was an endless sea of blazing, roiling energy. There were also enormous blazing stones that were flying through the skies. In short, it was an absolutely apocalyptic hell of fire.

The barrier had completely blocked off the outside world, but it had also protected the Sacred Immortal Realm. Now that the formation had been cancelled out, the borders of the Sacred Immortal Realm actually began to collapse as the blazing flames of the inferno surrounding it descended.

“The Sacred Immortal Realm is about to break apart.”

“Let us give those mortals a hand.”

Ning and the others could immediately tell that there was no way they could save the Sacred Immortal Realm. They immediately began to teleport to the places where the cultivators were gathered.

Just a short while ago, the cultivators had been released from their nightmare and regained their freedom. They were planning out how to establish a home for themselves when all of a sudden, something terrifying had appeared in the skies. Endless, flowing streams of blazing energy began to sweep downwards towards them. All of them knew that they were going to die.

They could only watch as the fires of hell began to descend towards them. There was no way they could fight back at all.

“Get in here.” Ning appeared out of nowhere, then waved his hand and caused more than ten million cultivators to be drawn into his estate-treasure.

“Come here.” Heartlord Solewind appeared in another part of the world, rescuing the utterly terrified and despairing cultivators.

In just two breath’s worth of time, all of the cultivators in the entire continent had been rescued by Ning’s group of five.

Rumble...

The blazing streams of fire and the flaming boulders came crashing downwards. Each time they struck against the Sacred Immortal Realm, the entire continent would tremble and shake. The entire continent began to break and crumble apart into multiple pieces. It was completely disintegrating.

Ning and the others were all extraordinarily powerful. The power of the apocalyptic flames was enough to ruin this realm, but it wasn’t enough to harm them.

They just stood there in the air, surrounded by the Yin-Yang Sword Domain which stretched off ten thousand kilometers. The blazing streams of energy and the flaming boulders were immediately destroyed once they moved close to the group.

“The continent is finished.” After rescuing the mortal cultivators, Ning and the others just watched and sighed.

“Quick, over there!” Prince Greatjoy’s face changed as he pointed towards part of the Daolord’s estate. Now that the entire continent had broken apart, they were able to see something which had been

hidden at the very bottom of the continent. There, they could see an enormous levitating mountain that was formed out of fiery rocks. The peak of the mountain was roughly a million kilometers in size, and there were strange spatial ripples covering it.

“An entire mountain of darkspace flamestone?” Ning and the others were completely stunned.

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Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 16: Emperor Trisilk

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Ji Ning and the rest of the five all immediately teleported closer towards that fiery-red mountain.

The entire place was filled with blazing streams of energy, but they weren't nearly as dangerous to Ning and the others as the spatial tempests around the Mortal Realm had been. Despite the harsh environment, Ning and the others were actually able to engage in spatial teleportation here.

“Am I seeing this? Is this actually an entire mountain of darkspace flamestone?” Prince Greatjoy raised his head to stare at the towering mountain, unable to maintain his usual calm. A stunned look was on his face. “Am I asleep? Am I dreaming...?”

“An entire freaking mountain? Completely comprised of darkspace flamestone?” Solewind was dazed as well.

“By my calculations... every ten thousand kilograms of that mountain can be refined into one kilogram of pure darkspace flamestone.” Ning mumbled to himself, “The entire mountain stretches out to cover more than a million kilometers. How much darkspace flamestone is that? How much is it worth? I can't... I can't even calculate...”

“Insane. Absolutely insane!” Firesurge and Skyfire were both stunned as well.

This was an incalculably valuable treasury, one which Eternal Emperors go berserk over!

Darkspace flamestone was an extremely valuable type of mineral which could be used in many different ways. It could be used to forge golems and magic treasures, and there were even certain secret arts and divine abilities that made use of it. Generally speaking, it could be discovered in certain unique environments, but it was generally discovered in meter-sized amounts or even less.

An entire mountain that was over a million kilometers in size? This was a veritable quarry of darkspace flamestone! In fact, Ning and the others suspected this of being the largest deposit of darkspace flamestone in this entire alternate universe!

But of course, the primordial chaos often gave birth to many types of unique treasures. In the Endless Territories, the Brightshore Kingdom had taken sole ownership over Hydragon Mountain. Although the quality of ore was inferior to the darkspace flamestone here, the total amount of ore it possessed was a million times greater, making Hydragon Mountain far more valuable than this one.

Still... no matter what, this was an enormous mountain with more than a million kilometers of darkspace flamestone. Most likely, only Hegemon-level figures would be qualified to own such a place without

fearing that others would seek to seize it. Generally speaking, Eternal Emperors who discovered such a fortune would mine in secret. They simply weren't strong enough to openly claim sole ownership over such a fortune.

"No wonder. No wonder Emperor Trisilk sent his disciple to stand guard over this place," Solewind mumbled. "No wonder he was willing to attack us, even though he knew that we all had extraordinary backgrounds. They really can't risk letting the secret of this mountain get out."

Bang! Bang! Bang! A deep sound rang out. Skyfire Brightshore had picked up an axe-shaped treasure and was using it to hack away at the mountain in front of him. Alas, he was only able to leave a few white marks behind on the fiery ore.

"Can't hack it apart." Skyfire blinked a few times as he muttered softly to himself.

"Wake up, guys! Wake up!" When Ning heard Skyfire mumble those words, he shivered then began to call out to them.

The other four stared at Ning.

"Stop daydreaming. This is an entire mountain of darkspace flamestone. We can't even cut into it, much less mine it." Ning shook his head. "I'd imagine only Daolords of the Third Step would be strong enough to just barely excavate some of the ore, and only at a very slow speed at that. This entire mountain is a million kilometers in size, and there's no way for us to teleport it away. There's nothing we can do at all."

They all understood. There was literally nothing they could do.

Forget about them; not even Eternal Emperors or the almighty Hegemon would be able to do anything to such a vast mountain of precious minerals! Thus, Emperor Trisilk had elected to send a powerful Daolord and golems here to slowly mine away at the ore.

Every single piece of ore was a priceless treasure. A mountain of ore which was a million kilometers in size naturally was filled with certain arcane powers. In fact, it was being reinforced by some of the prime essences of this entire alternate universe. If you wished to move it by just a few kilometers... most likely, there were incredibly few figures in this entire alternate universe who would be capable of such a thing. To store it away into an estate-world? Completely impossible.

Think about Hydragon Mountain. The almighty Hegemon was incredibly skilled in the Dao of Spacetime, but even he was forced to resort to sending subordinates to slowly mine away at the ore.

"What should we do?" Skyfire Brightshore stared at Ning and the other three.

"We can only look, not touch." Ning shook his head.

"There really is nothing we can do." Solewind shook his head as well.

"All we can do is stare. And drool." Firesurge licked his lips.

"At least we had the chance to see such a mountain of ore," Prince Greatjoy said.

The five of them just stared at that mountain, their gazes blazing with lust. They were like five ordinary mortals who encountered an enormous mountain that was completely made out of gold. Although there was no way to move it, just staring at it was still a stunning experience.

“Let’s go,” Greatjoy said. “If we waste too much time and end up being caught by Emperor Trisilk, we’ll be in trouble.”

“Let’s go.”

“In the end, this isn’t something which we are qualified to own.”

Ning and the others were all men of talent. Although they were temporarily stunned by this sight for a time, they quickly came to the decision to leave.

Whoosh. Prince Greatjoy took control over their flying vessel, and they left this place at high speed.

If you wanted to take possession over such an inconceivably valuable place, you had to have the corresponding level of power! If you weren’t strong enough, then you would have to do what Emperor Trisilk did; secretly mine away without anyone knowing about it.

The almighty Hegemon was a good example. The first to discover Hydragon Mountain wasn’t actually him, it was a group of adventuring World-level cultivators. In the end, there had been a grand battle, resulting in the almighty Hegemon taking sole ownership over Hydragon Mountain.

The Church of Annihilation, in turn, had taken completely control over this entire alternate universe, becoming its paramount power.

In the end, power was what mattered the most!

Ning and the others advanced at maximum speed, relying on Prince Greatjoy’s mastery over spacetime to flee as fast as they could.

However... this time, their guess was wrong. Right now, Emperor Trisilk was in no mood to search for them.

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Deep within another part of the Archaeus region.

Rumble...

Space was in chaos here, and spacetime itself trembled.

This was an extremely inhospitable environment. Not even major powers would come here, but a translucent, virtually invisible drop of water was floating through this region of chaotic spacetime.

Within that drop of water, there was an estate.

“Shit, shit.” A sinister-looking youth with nine malignant tumors on the top of his head was seated in the lotus position, grinding his teeth. “That old bastard Fubo really is like a ghost that just won’t go away. It’s been nearly nineteen chaos cycles, but he’s still chasing after me. Is he never going to get tired of this? Shit, shit, shit! I really regret pissing him off. Who would’ve imagined that the silent old fellow would be

this powerful? If I knew, I would never have pissed him off. If it wasn't for the fact that I, Trisilk, am skilled at staying alive, I would've died by his hands long ago."

He truly felt regret.

Emperor Trisilk was consumed with regret. He was a lawless figure who had committed countless sins. He was willing to do anything if it meant growing more powerful!

Emperor Fubo was an extremely low-key Eternal Emperor. He was known as a very good man who spent all his time training his disciples within his own territory. He was often taken advantage of by others in the Church of Annihilation, but he didn't really care too much. Emperor Trisilk had thought Emperor Fubo to be a complete pushover, and so when he heard that Emperor Fubo had bestowed an incredibly valuable treasure known as the Violetbolt of Icy Flames to his second disciple, Trisilk had decided to take it. He had slain Emperor Fubo's beloved second disciple, then stolen the Violetbolt of Icy Flames.

This was a treasure that was used to meditate on the Dao. When you kept it by your side, your heart and mind would become extremely calm, making it much easier and faster for you to comprehend the Dao.

One of the reasons why Emperor Fubo had been able to succeed in his Daomerge was because of this treasure! His second disciple was a Verge-level Daolord as well, and so he had chosen to give his disciple this treasure. Who would've thought that it would end up in that disciple being killed?

He had been enraged. For the first time in many years, Emperor Fubo had been truly enraged!

His second disciple was the disciple he loved the most. His eldest disciple had long ago perished while adventuring, which meant his second disciple had been by his side the longest. He treated this second disciple as he would a son. Emperor Fubo spared no expense to investigate the matter, in the end discovering that it had been Emperor Trisilk who had been the culprit! Emperor Trisilk had been too arrogant, feeling that Emperor Fubo would not pose any threat to him. Otherwise, he wouldn't have been discovered to be the culprit with such ease.

Once Emperor Fubo discovered who the murderer was, he left his home and began to chase after Emperor Trisilk.

This chase...

Stunned this entire alternate universe! Only now did they understand how terrifyingly strong Emperor Fubo was. He was close to being on par with the sixteen Starkings! If he was just a tiny bit stronger, he probably would've been bestowed with the formal title of 'Starking' by the Church of Annihilation.

With such a powerful figure pursuing him, Emperor Trisilk was forced to use up two of his most valuable life-saving treasures. He had even tossed the Violetbolt of Icy Flames over to Emperor Fubo and asked other major powers to intercede on his behalf, but it was all to no avail. The kindly, good-natured Emperor Fubo had been truly enraged. He had chased after Emperor Trisilk for nineteen entire chaos cycles, and he still continued the chase without relenting in the slightest.

"Ten chaos cycles, a hundred chaos cycles, or a thousand chaos cycles... so long as I, Fubo, am still alive, I swear I shall one day slay Trisilk." These were the words which Emperor Fubo had said long ago.

All Emperor Trisilk could do was hide as best he could.

The universe was a vast place. If an Eternal Emperor wished to hide, it would be very difficult for anyone to find him. However... by the same principle, for a major power like Emperor Fubo to unrelentingly search for and chase after you was an utter nightmare.

“What horrible luck. Even my mountain of darkspace flamestone was discovered?” Emperor Trisilk muttered angrily to himself. He could sense his disciple’s death, but he didn’t dare to go and investigate what had happened. “My disciple had the power of a peak Daolord of the Third Step. With my formation supporting him, not even Verge-level Daolords would be a match for him. I wonder who killed him? Maybe that old bastard Fubo knows about it as well.”

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Ning and the others, however, didn’t know any of this. Terrified of being discovered, they quickly moved towards the core parts of the Archaeus region.

“Do you think Emperor Trisilk will be able to invert the flows of spacetime to find our tracks?”

“Don’t worry. The Archaeus region is huge! It won’t be that easy for him to find us.” Ning and the others didn’t dare to relax in the slightest... but they had no idea that Emperor Trisilk was in no position to worry about anything besides keeping himself alive.

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Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 17: A Group of Eight

After leaving the Sacred Immortal Realm, Ji Ning and the others spent three hundred years in flight. Only after they felt that had fled a sufficiently long distance did they begin to divide up their loot.

A flying vessel was lazily drifting through the void of the Archaeus region. Ning and the rest of the five were seated within the vessel, counting their earnings.

“That weak Daolord actually had quite a few treasures, including two Prismatic Kiloleaf Flowers. If we add those two to the one which we harvested, that means we have three! He also had an Archaeus medallion as well as these other treasures...” Heartlord Solewind had placed the many treasures he had found across the deck of the vessel.

“That’s quite a lot.”

“Ahaha! That weak Daolord certainly had quite a lot of treasures.” Ning and the others were all pleasantly surprised by this. What they didn’t realize was that the stooped, green-robed Daolord had been assigned all of the more taxing tasks, such as tormenting the cultivators and taking care of the flowers. The actual planting and nurturing of a Prismatic Kiloleaf Flower was an extremely exhausting job, and each time a flower grew to maturity he would head over and harvest it. Although the harvested flowers were temporarily left with him, once their group left the Sacred Immortal Realm he would’ve had to hand it over to the black-robed Daolord.

“How should we split these things up?” Skyfire Brightshore asked hurriedly.

“You are an honorable prince of the Brightshore Imperials. Why are you trying to haggle over treasures with commoners like us?” Firesurge teased him.

“How about this? Let’s consider the three flowers as three ‘portions’ of treasures, an Archaeus medallion as one portion, and all of those other treasures as a fifth portion. Each of us will get one portion, and we can choose as we please,” Heartlord Solewind said.

Ning and the others all nodded.

The stooped Daolord truly did have quite a collection of treasures, including a bit of darkspace flamestone. Although he didn’t have that much of the flamestone, the amount he did have was still worth close to a million cubes of chaos nectar.

“I want the Archaeus medallion,” Prince Greatjoy said.

“I want...” Ning spoke out at the same time, then paused, slightly stunned. He wanted the Archaeus medallion as well! Su Youji had been a master-class Chaos Immortal when she first acquired the legacy of Feixian the Exalted. Feixian the Exalted had been an extremely powerful Daolord, and his legacy was very well-suited for Su Youji. As a result, she now had the power of a supreme Chaos Immortal. This opportunity in the Archaeus region wasn’t to be missed!

If she was given an Archaeus medallion, she would be able to journey alongside the five. She might grow a bit more stronger, in which case she could very well be able to break through to become a Samsara Daolord herself! A Samsara Daolord who knew the secrets arts of Feixian the Exalted would be a terrifyingly strong assistant, and Su Youji herself was actually an extremely talented individual as well.

She had relied on techniques she herself had come up with to reach the apex of the Ancestral Immortal level. She had needed only one further step to reach the World level, and after she joined Ning she had indeed broken through to that level during their adventures within the Allgod Estate! She had been improving at an incredibly fast rate. Although she was inferior to Ning, she was still quite dazzling. Ning naturally was willing to spend time and effort on helping build her up.

“Brother Darknorth, you want it as well?” Prince Greatjoy was startled.

“The two of you really are generous. We’re valuing these medallions at around a million cubes each.” Firesurge chuckled as he picked up a Prismatic Kiloleaf Flower. “I’ll simply choose this pretty little flower.”

“I have no retainers. I’ll choose one of the flowers as well.” Skyfire Brightshore also choose to acquire one of the flowers.

“Darknorth, if you also want an Archaeus medallion, the answer is simple. Give me your portion of the spoils and I’ll give you one of my medallions.” Solewind smiled. “After the black-robed Daolord died, I found two of the medallions on his corpse.”

The black-robed Daolord himself had a medallion, and he had kept another one of them stored inside his storage treasure.

“Alright.” Ning nodded. “Thank you.”

“No need for thanks. I’m not giving it to you, I’m selling it to you for a million cubes,” Solewind said. “Although I have quite a few retainers, there is only one worth me spending time on.”

Ning, Solewind, and Greatjoy each had a few retainers. Firesurge actually did as well, but he didn't feel any of them had that much potential and so he wasn't willing to spend much effort on them. As for Skyfire Brightshore... he had originally been a lone wanderer before he was abducted to the Brightshore Kingdom. Even in the kingdom, he was a lonely and solitary figure who had no retainers at all.

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After splitting up the loot, Ning's group once more continued on their journey.

Within Ning's estate-world. Su Youji and World God Pillsaint, along with the other World-level retainers, were sparring against each other.

Whoosh. A pair of dazzlingly beautiful wings of fire suddenly appeared behind Su Youji. Light shone from her eyes, causing the muscular World God facing her to grow rather dazed. An indecisive look of struggle appeared on his face, and quite some time passed before he was able to come back to his senses.

"The Flamefairy's mastery over the arts of charm is growing more and more formidable. I, Qiyang, am full of admiration for you." The muscular World God hurriedly spoke out in praise.

"You were dazed long enough for her to kill you a hundred times over."

"The Flamefairy really is incredible."

The World-level retainers were the ones who Ning had captured during his invasion of their branch of the Bluegrace Sect. They all knew that Flamefairy Su Youji had gained the legacy of Feixian the Exalted, and ever since then she had only become more and more mesmerizing. The charm which she naturally extruded was now so dazzling that weaker World-level cultivators would be uncontrollably smitten by her. Even the stronger cultivators would be dazed for a while then they saw her.

It must be understood that in a life-and-death battle, a single instant of befuddlement which came at a critical moment could result in immediate death.

None of the other supreme World-level cultivators under Ning were a match for Su Youji at all. This was how formidable a powerful legacy could be! But of course, it was also partially due to the fact that Su Youji's Dao was quite a good match for the Dao of Feixian the Exalted, making it easy for Su Youji to train in her skills.

Because of her alluring charm, all of these World-level cultivators couldn't help but flock around her. In fact, some of them secretly fantasized about one day becoming Dao-companions with her. Alas, Su Youji was not interested in them at all.

"Youji." A voice suddenly rang out.

"Master." A look of pleased surprise appeared on Su Youji's face as she turned to look, only to see a white-robed Ning appear off in the distance. This was a divine power incarnation of Ning's.

"Master." The other World-level retainers all called out respectfully as well, looks of dread appearing on some of their faces. They had seen Ning attack before, and they knew that he was only a completely different level compared to them.

"Follow me," Ning instructed.

“Yes.” The Flamefairy immediately moved towards Ning, following right behind him. Soon, the two moved into a copse of trees.

“A great opportunity has come,” Ning said, looking at Su Youji. “If you can grasp it... it could propel you to become a Samsara Daolord.”

“A Samsara Daolord?” Su Youji was stunned. Although she had been improving rapidly in the arts of charm, illusion, and control, she wasn’t even close to becoming a Daolord just yet.

“This opportunity is something which people like us can only hope for, not count on.” Ning waved his hand, causing a dark-red circular disc to within it. “This is an Archaeus medallion. Bind it and carry it with you. If you don’t keep it with you, you won’t be able to leave this estate-world. If you tried, you would be crushed to death by the power of the Archaeus region.”

“An Archaeus medallion?” Although Su Youji was puzzled, she felt absolute faith in Ji Ning. She obediently bound the Archaeus medallion, then took it into her possession.

She had no idea what an enormous opportunity this was.

In this alternate universe or in their own universe, even the most talented of geniuses, the ones who could become Samsara Daolords whenever they chose, all dreamed of being able to acquire one of these medallions.

“Alright. Now follow me out,” Ning instructed.

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Ning’s group of five had just become a group of eight! Ji Ning, Greatjoy, and Solewind had each arranged for one retainer to join their group. They were Su Youji the Flamefairy, World Goddess Skywolf, and Chaos Immortal Swallowback.

World Goddess Skywolf was the retainer of Prince Greatjoy. Although her Daoist title was ‘Skywolf’, she was actually an icy, grim woman of incredible beauty who was surrounded by a strong aura of death.

Chaos Immortal Swallowback was the retainer of Solewind and looked like a young child.

World Goddess Skywolf and Chaos Immortal Swallowback had both reached extremely high levels of insight into the Dao. Both of them could become Daolords whenever they chose, and both were formal members of the Twelve Palaces! Although they hadn’t been acknowledged by their respective pagodas, they were still extraordinary figures.

Su Youji was the weakest of the eight, but just like Ning she had only been training for a very brief period of time. She was also the personal disciple of Feixian the Exalted and had tremendous potential.

After the three ‘newcomers’ joined the squad of five, they all swore oaths not to divulge any information regarding their own universe.

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The estate-world within the Mirrorsnow Painting.

Ning’s divine power incarnation descended upon this world, then turned to stare at the muscular golem.

The golem stared at Ning with its blazing eyes as it growled, "You killed Master?"

The black-robed Daolord was its master. As soon as the Daolord had died, the golem had regained its freedom. It naturally understood what this meant.

"Yes." Ning nodded. "Now... are you willing to submit?"

The towering golem gritted its teeth, then knelt down and said respectfully, "Moksha pays his respects to you, Master. Please don't wipe out my mind."

The reason why he previously hadn't been willing to submit was because he felt certain that his master, the black-robed Daolord, would be able to defeat Ji Ning and the others. Now, his original master had perished... and this white-robed youth before him was unquestionably an incredible genius who could easily become a Daolord in the future. By then, the youth could use his Daolord-level energy to bind him by force. In fact, if Ning was irritated enough he could wipe the golem's mind clean.

Anything which possessed intelligence and sentience, be it a golem or a magic treasure, would not wish for its mind to be wiped clean.

"Alright." Ning revealed a smile. Just like that, he had gained an obedient golem that was the equal of a Daolord of the Third Step.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 18: The Genesis Lands

Moksha acted very obediently, actively assisting Ji Ning in binding him. Ning couldn't help but secretly sigh to himself. *He certainly changed his attitude quite quickly.*

When he had been first captured, he had been boastful and held Ning in no regard at all, feeling certain that Ning's group was going to die soon. Now that he realized that his former master had died, he had immediately knelt down and begged, 'Please do not kill me.'

"Master." After being bound, Moksha immediately smiled ingratiatingly at Ning. "There is something I must tell you."

"Speak," Ning said.

"I was instructed by Emperor Trisilk to assist my master in mining ore," Moksha said smugly. "Darkspace flamestone is extremely difficult to mine, but I am extremely strong. Over the course of thirty chaos cycles, I managed to mine quite a bit of ore. For convenience's sake, I stored it all within an estate-treasure which I carried with me as I mined."

Ning's eyes lit up. "Do you still have the darkspace flamestone?" He had been mining for thirty chaos cycles. How much had he mined?!

"I do." Moksha nodded. "However, a good deal of it was taken away by my previous master. I only have on me the ore which I mined in the last nine chaos cycles. Take a look, Master." As Moksha spoke, he waved his hand and caused fist-sized chunks of fiery-red rocks to appear on the ground. Strange spatial ripples began to fill the surrounding area as well.

He waved his hand three times in total, causing the fiery-red rocks to pile up into a small mountain that was three thousand meters tall. By this point in time, space had begun to completely twist and distort, causing shimmering 'curtains' of folded space to appear in the surrounding area. Because the chunks of stone were all fist-sized, it wasn't too hard to store them away in that estate-treasure. If this had been a single massive slab of darkspace flamestone, most likely only an Eternal Emperor would've been able to store it away.

"You mined that much?" Ning's eyes nearly popped out.

Although golems that were as strong as Daolords of the Third Step were valuable, the amount of ore this particular golem was carrying was even more valuable.

"So much darkspace flamestone..." Ning swept it with his godsense, carefully calculating how much was present. "This has to be worth nearly ten million cubes of chaos nectar!"

"My former master had roughly twice as much as this," Moksha said. "Early on, I wasn't that skilled in using axes and so was rather slow in my mining. It took about twenty chaos cycles before I got better, and all of the ore I mined during that period of time I gave to my previous master. This pile here consists of the ore I mined during the past nine chaos cycles."

"I'm more than satisfied with this." Ning grinned.

This ore had to be worth nearly ten million cubes of chaos nectar. As for the twenty million cubes which the black-robed Daolord had, that all belonged to Solewind. In order to save them, Solewind had used up a powerful Dao-seal that was so valuable, it would be almost impossible to find on the open market. Ning naturally didn't feel any jealousy or envy whatsoever. For him to suddenly earn so much darkspace flamestone was already a stroke of tremendous fortune.

"What do you know about Emperor Trisilk?" Ning asked. The five of them still felt worried about this matter.

"Emperor Trisilk has an odd temper and is incredibly savage," Moksha said. "You must be careful, Master. Based on what I know of the Emperor, he's the type to avenge every single slight, no matter how petty. Once he locates the five of you... I guarantee he won't let you off easily."

"Oh?" A solemn look appeared on Ning's face as he nodded.

But of course, the two of them had no idea that Emperor Trisilk was currently in a far more miserable situation than they were.

"What about the Genesis Lands? What do you know about that place?" Ning asked.

"The Genesis Lands is where this entire universe sprang from. All combat is forbidden there," Moksha said. "When I served the Emperor, I once spent a very long period of time in the Genesis Lands."

Ning asked, "Who issued the order forbidding all combat in that location?"

"The order came from the Church of Annihilation," Moksha said. "Daolords generally do not dare to violate the commands of the Church. But of course, if someone really does go crazy, they can still choose to break this law. I once saw it happen with my own eyes. A Daolord, for the sake of evading an enemy, chose to hide within the Genesis Lands. However, his enemy was so enraged that he ignored the rules

and chased the Daolord into the Genesis Lands, then killed him there! But of course... later on, the killer was wiped out by the Church of Annihilation!"

Ning nodded.

"Still... the Paladins of the Church of Annihilation aren't afraid to violate this law. They are members of the Church itself, after all. Even when they break this law, they will at most suffer some non-lethal punishments," Moksha said. "I once heard Master say that if the sixteen Starkings were to violate this law, no punishment would be given. Not even the ruler of the Church of Annihilation would choose to offend and act against his Starkings without a very good reason."

"Oh." Ning chuckled. This golem knew quite a bit!

Actually, the almighty Hegemon had given them some information regarding this alternate universe before sending them into it, but the amount of information was pitifully small. All Ning knew was that the Archaeus region was filled with danger, but once they reached the Genesis Lands in the center they would be fairly safe. Although the Genesis Lands held its own dangers, all violence was supposedly prohibited there. Supposedly, there was no need to worry about any World-level cultivators or Daolords you encountered within the Genesis Lands.

Upon hearing the golem speak at length, Ning couldn't help but sigh.

A 'prohibition' against violence?

In the end, there was a limit to how far that prohibition would stretch. Suicidally fearless cultivators would violate that prohibition, as would the Paladins and Starkings of the Church of Annihilation, thanks to the extremely high positions they held within the Church.

"Still... Paladins will be punished if they violate this prohibition. They won't attack us without a good reason." Ning nodded slowly. "As for Starkings... I imagine we aren't even qualified to attract the attention of a Starking, much less offend one."

"Our entire universe only holds sixteen Starkings, and almost none of them are in the Archaeus region," Moksha said. "I heard Emperor Trisilk once say that even he himself has only met three Starkings in his lifetime."

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Moksha had been Emperor Trisilk's golem for quite some time, and thus knew many of the Emperor's secrets. He had even been in the Genesis Lands, and thus he was able to give Ning a good deal of information regarding that place.

Time slowly flowed on, and Ning's group of eight continued their careful advance. The rest of their journey was fairly uneventful, and they did not encounter any more Daolords! In truth, the odds of encountering a Daolord in the Archaeus region were incredibly low to begin with.

By now, they had spent over 8922 years in the Archaeus region, and they had encountered many dangerous situations and locales. Still, in the end they were able to safely reach the Genesis Lands. All eight of them survived this journey.

"The Genesis Lands."

A flying vessel was soaring through the emptiness of space.

Ning and the rest of the eight were aboard the vessel, and their heads were raised as they stared at an utterly enormous floating world which was in front of them. This was the Genesis Lands! This was the wellspring of this entire alternate universe, from which all things originally arose.

“That aura of power...” Ning and the others were all quite shaken.

An invisible field of power covered the entire Archaeus region. Without an Archaeus medallion, even the likes of Eternal Emperors would be instantly crushed to death! The Archaeus region was almost as large as their homeland, the ‘Endless Territories’. It was incredibly vast, and that field of power stretched out to cover every inch of the region.

And yet... the incredibly vast world in front of them was the source of that field of power. One could imagine how much might it contained! Not even someone as powerful as the almighty Hegemon could compare to the might of the Genesis Lands of the Archaeus region.

“Come. Let us enter the Genesis Lands,” Ning said.

“Brother Darknorth, you told us earlier that the elementary trial we need to pass in order to enter the Genesis Lands is a trial of resolve, correct?” Greatjoy asked.

“That is what my golem told me. I think he was telling the truth,” Ning said.

Not just anyone was permitted to enter the Genesis Lands.

For weaker cultivators, entering the Genesis Lands was an almost impossible task. Any creature which sought to enter the Genesis Lands would first have to pass a trial of resolve. If they were able to endure it, they would be able to freely enter and wander the Genesis Lands. If they failed, they would be knocked unconscious and be teleported away. They would not be qualified to enter this sacred place.

“The trial isn’t that tough. Daolords and major schools often send their elite disciples to this place. Almost all of the more talented ones are able to gain entry.” Ning could tell that Su Youji, Chaos Immortal Swallowback, and World Goddess Skywolf all looked rather nervous. The three of them were just retainers, after all. Compared to the original five, they were still quite a bit weaker. As a result, they possessed less confidence in their own abilities as well.

“Alright.” The Flamefairy nodded.

Whoosh.

The flying vessel advanced at high speeds, flying towards that utterly massive levitating world. Finally, it began to slow down as it drew closer.

A web of venerable, almost sacred power descended from on high, covering Ning and the other eight within its grasp. This web of power was grim and unfeeling, and it possessed no intelligence whatsoever. It was a type of power which the Genesis Lands itself naturally possessed. This place was the Genesis Lands. It was not a place for weak creatures to live in.

Rumble...

Ning could feel something furiously hammer at his soul. However, Ning's soul had been nurtured and strengthened by his azureflower mist energy, making it comparable to the soul of a Daolord of the First Step. He was able to resist the pressure with ease.

Ning turned to glance at the others.

Prince Greatjoy, Solewind, and Firesurge all seemed to be handling the trial with ease, and they all glanced back at him as well, smiles on their faces.

"Eh?" Ning and the others all noticed at the same time that Skyfire Brightshore had an ugly look on his face, and his body was trembling slightly. Although he was blessed with incredible natural gifts and had an extraordinary bloodline, he had experienced very few dangerous encounters in his early life. As a result, his soul and his willpower were all somewhat lacking when compared to that of Ning and the others.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 19: Universe Treasure

Ji Ning and the other three began to grow nervous. The entire point of this journey was for them to accompany Skyfire Brightshore in an adventure within the Archaeus region. The journey wasn't going to come to a crashing halt because this Brightshore Imperial wasn't even able to enter the Genesis Lands, right? That would be an absolute joke.

"Hm." Ning turned to glance at the other three retainers. Chaos Immortal Swallowback, World Goddess Skywolf, and Flamefairy Su Youji all had fairly relaxed looks on their faces. It seemed as though Swallowback was the most relaxed; he even grinned at Ning and the others. Skywolf and Su Youji, the two women, had fairly unpleasant looks on their faces, and their bodies were shaking slightly. Still, it seemed as though they would be able to endure it.

A long period of time passed.

That exalted web of power continued to fill every inch of this world, but it no longer launched any attacks against them.

"Whew." Skyfire Brightshore let out a sigh of relief, and World Goddess Skywolf and Su Youji all looked slightly more relaxed as well.

"That was embarrassing. I was damn near flattened." Skyfire Brightshore shook his head and laughed. He was born at the World God level of power, and he had been a solitary figure for much of his early life. In fact, shortly after he was born he had been abducted by the almighty Hegemon. As a result, his soul and his willpower were both very weak compared to that of the other five. The only reason he had been able to survive this trial was because of his innate gifts.

Every single member of his race was blessed with extraordinary powers from birth. His soul was already as strong as that of a Daolord's, and so although he possessed much weaker willpower than Ning and the others, he was still able to endure the trial and overcome in.

"All eight of us will be granted entry. This is something to celebrate." Prince Greatjoy smiled.

“Not bad.” Ning glanced at Su Youji and offered her a few words of praise.

“Master, I feel fortunate that I’ve spent these past few years meditating on the techniques of my master, Feixian the Exalted, within your estate-world. I’ve improved quite a bit with regards to my willpower and my mental strength. Otherwise, I wouldn’t have been able to survive that,” Su Youji sent mentally.

Ning nodded. Su Youji’s path was a path of charm and control. This was naturally a path that required an extremely powerful mind.

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The flying vessel flew deeper into the world of the Genesis Lands.

This was a world of truly incredible proportions. It was trillions of kilometers in size, and it seemed almost endless.

“How vast.” Su Youji sighed in amazement as she stared at the world.

“This is the place which gave birth to this entire universe.” Ning stared at their surroundings as well. He could sense that certain locations within this world were filled with auras of incredible power that only strengthened as they flew closer.

“Quick, look over there!” Prince Greatjoy pointed off into the distance.

“Eh?!” Ning and the others looked towards the direction in which he was pointing, only to see a powerful expert seated in the lotus position atop a golden carpet. This expert had a single horn on his head and was covered with dark-red scales, while the golden carpet was covered with many delicacies and wine. The man was drinking wine and devouring his food while casually glancing at his surroundings.

“Hey there, kiddos!” The horned expert suddenly noticed Ning’s group, and he immediately called out to them while flying towards them.

Ning’s group didn’t try to avoid him, as they knew that all combat was forbidden within the Genesis Lands. Many of the disciples of the mightiest major powers of this alternate universe had all gathered here within this place! It might be rare for them to encounter their peers in the other parts of the Archaeus region, but that was because they were all gathered here within the Genesis Lands. There were quite a few Daolords in seclusion here as well!

As a result, the Genesis Lands held many Daolords as well as quite a few World-level cultivators. If it wasn’t for the law against combat, the World-level cultivators would’ve been wiped out long ago.

“New arrivals?” The horned expert grinned merrily as he landed aboard their flying vessel.

“Greetings, senior.” Ning and the others bowed respectfully.

“Able to enter the Genesis Lands despite merely being at the World level. Not bad at all!” The horned expert grinned as he praised them. “I was only able to come to this place after I became a Daolord. Come, come! Bring me your finest wine and your best food and let me have a taste. In exchange, I, Owl bath, shall impart unto you some of the rules and secrets regarding the Genesis Lands.”

“Please be welcome, senior.”

“Please have a taste, senior.”

Ning and the others all hurriedly took out all sorts of fine food and wine.

“Not bad at all. Glug, glug. Hey, this wine is pretty good too. Can I have some more?” The horned expert didn’t just eat and drink, he even stashed some of the food away for later without seeming to feel the slightest bit embarrassed.

The horned expert burped, then chortled merrily with half-lidded eyes. “Don’t worry, I’m not going to eat all of your food for nothing. The Genesis Lands is an enormous place. If you just run around randomly, you may very well end up dying here.”

Ning and the others listened silently, the very picture of innocent obedience.

“The Genesis Lands can be roughly divided into two parts; the ‘outer reaches’ and the ‘inner reaches’. The true name of the ‘inner region’ is actually the Prime Reaches, and it holds the innermost core and prime essences of this entire universe. There are many deceased ancient powers located within the Prime Reaches, and it is the most important location in our entire universe.” The horned expert said casually, “Every single cultivator would dream of being able to enter the Prime Reaches of the Genesis Lands. The Prime Reaches are located at the very center, and you’ll be able to recognize it as soon as you see it.” Glug, glug, glug. He raised his head and drank several more mouthfuls of wine.

Ning and the others all nodded. Actually, they knew all of this already! Moksha the golem had told Ning long ago about this.

“Every single World-level cultivator capable of entering the Genesis Lands is a genius,” the horned expert said. “But perhaps just one in a hundred of them are capable of entering the inner reaches!”

Ning and the others were stunned. Just one in a hundred? This was their first time hearing this number. Generally speaking, the World-level cultivators who were able to enter this place were all capable of becoming Daolords whenever they chose! Who would’ve thought that entering the inner reaches would be this difficult?

“But the outer reaches aren’t a bad place to be either. The outer reaches were formed when the universe itself was born, and it contains many mysterious places and many hidden fortunes,” the horned expert said. “I myself stay out here in the outer reaches. Alas... while one in a hundred World-level cultivators are able to enter the inner reaches, things are much worse for us Daolords. Perhaps just one in ten thousand Daolords are able to enter the inner reaches!”

“The outer reaches are filled with treasures, but the inner reaches are absolutely incredible. Almost all of the Eternal Emperors will venture into the inner reaches in search of treasures.” A mysterious look suddenly flashed through the horned expert’s eyes. “Have you heard? Shortly after the master of the Church of Annihilation became an Eternal Emperor, he entered the inner reaches... and then, for some reason, he became terrifyingly strong, strong enough to unify our entire universe and force all the major powers in it to submit to him.”

“Oh?” Ning and the others were growing increasingly curious.

Almost all the Eternal Emperors would enter the place? It was the Prime Reaches which gave the master of the Church of Annihilation his incredible power, allowing him to unify this universe?

“Everyone says that the Prime Reaches are filled with endless possibilities. Just three chaos cycles ago, a Daolord managed to acquire a Universe treasure within the Prime Reaches,” the horned expert said in a mysterious manner.

“A Universe treasure?” Solewind and Skyfire were both shocked. As for Greatjoy and Ning, they revealed puzzled looks.

What exactly was a Universe treasure?

Upon seeing this, the horned expert grinned. “It seems as though some of you, my young friends, haven’t heard this phrase before. Actually, even I only heard of these treasures after entering the Genesis Lands. Eternal treasures are powerful, but above them... there is a legendary rank of supremely powerful treasures which are known as Universe treasures. They are often also referred to as Supreme treasures. These are truly incredible treasures which even Eternal Emperors would go wild over. They are incredibly powerful, and they are incredibly mysterious.”

“Alas.” The horned expert shook his head. “Universe treasures are truly supreme treasures; there’s no way you can bind them by force! You can only bind a Universe treasure if the treasure itself acknowledges you.”

Ning, Greatjoy, and the others were all rather stunned.

At this moment, Heartlord Solewind sent mentally to them, “Darknorth, Greatjoy, Firesurge... Universe treasures are legendary things that are filled with inconceivable amounts of power. They truly are the most supreme of treasures, and they are both incredibly rare and incredibly valuable. Even Eternal Emperors would drool over the chance to acquire such treasures! Treasures like them can only be hoped for, not actively sought out. Right... Darknorth, your Sword Palace actually holds a Universe treasure known as the ‘Shardsword’.”

“Shardsword?” Ning was stunned. He remembered now; the first time he entered the Sword Palace, when he entered the Armaments Gorge he had encountered a ‘broken’ shard of a sword that had no price tag and which he couldn’t even move towards.

Ning still remembered how he had asked the overseers of the Armaments Groge, Swordfive and Swordsix, about that strange sword. Their response had been to tell them that it was clear the sword and Ning were not fated to be together, and that even the two previous Palace Lords of the Sword Palace had not been able to receive the acknowledgment of that sword. Ever since the Shardsword’s original owner had died, the Shardsword had been silent and accepted no others.

“So that ‘broken’ sword was actually a Universe treasure. No wonder not even the two Palace Lords of the Sword Palace were able to receive its acknowledgment,” Ning mused to himself.

“Senior, are there Universe treasures within the Prime Reaches?” Solewind couldn’t help but ask.

“There are.” But the horned expert then shook his head. “According to the history books, over the course of countless years there has been a total of eight Universe treasures who acknowledged the major powers who found them and were willing to follow them out of the Genesis Lands! Supposedly,

even more Universe treasures are hidden within the Prime Reaches. To be honest, though... Universe treasures don't really matter that much. The thing which really drives all the cultivators crazy is the mystery behind the process by which the master of the Church of Annihilation gained such incredible power... but of course, those are the affairs of the most supreme cultivators of our universe. You World-level cultivators don't need to worry too much about those matters. You aren't strong enough to get involved just yet."

"Still. The Prime Reaches truly are a mysterious place. I've never been there before myself, and I imagine none of the eight of you will be able to enter either," the horned expert said.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 20: Emperor Maniseal

"The eight of you will probably stay in the outer reaches as well," the horned cultivator said. "I'll tell you a bit about some of the taboos in the outer reaches. The danger in the outer reaches primarily comes from certain mysterious locations."

The horned expert began to introduce various things they had to look out for as well as describe some of the more famous danger zones. Generally speaking, the places with the most opportunities were also the places with the most danger!

His narration went on for two full hours.

"Now, let's speak of cultivators," the horned expert said. "In the outer reaches, there are many Daolords who reside in seclusion, as well as quite a few World-level cultivators like yourselves who are seeking great fortunes. There's no need for you to worry too much about these people, so long as you avoid offending the most powerful Daolords. Generally speaking, no one will dare to attack in this place."

Ning and the others all nodded.

"The ones you really need to look out for are the two Eternal Emperors who live in seclusion in the outer reaches," the horned expert said. "If you irritate them, you'll be in serious trouble. Even if they kill you, at most they will be given some light punishment by the Church of Annihilation."

"One of the two Eternal Emperors is named Emperor Northtree," the horned expert said. "The other is named Emperor Maniseal."

"Emperor Northtree isn't that worrisome. He probably won't attack for no reason. Emperor Maniseal, though... you really don't want to piss him off." A look of worry could be seen in the horned expert's eyes. "These days, Emperor Maniseal might start a massacre at the drop of a hat, and even if he did the Church of Annihilation wouldn't really do anything to him. I've heard that even the master of the church is trying to befriend him."

"Befriend him?" Ning and the others were puzzled.

"Emperor Maniseal used to be a very low-key Eternal Emperor, but that arrogant madman Emperor Trisk killed his beloved disciple. This truly enraged him... eheh." The horned expert shook his head and sighed.

Ning, Greatjoy, Solewind, Firesurge, and Skyfire felt their hearts clench.

Emperor Trisilk? They had been worrying about him attacking them for quite some time now.

“Enraged, Emperor Maniseal began to chase after and hunt down Emperor Trisilk.” The horned expert sighed in true amazement. “The power he displayed was enough to shock everyone in this universe. He was far more powerful than most Eternal Emperors, while Emperor Trisilk had a terrible reputation and had offended many major powers but had been able to survive due to his top-notch survival skills. And yet... Emperor Maniseal has been chasing after him relentlessly, forcing him to flee nonstop. Emperor Trisilk no longer dares to show his face anywhere.”

Ning and the others all secretly let out sighs of relief. Wonderful. Well done! The more difficult Emperor Trisilk’s straits were, the safer they would be.

“Emperor Maniseal is most skilled in the Dao of Seals,” the horned expert is. Right now, a Dao-seal clone of his currently lives within the outer reaches.”

“A Dao-seal clone?” Ning and the others were puzzled.

“A clone created from a single Dao-seal,” the horned expert said. “Supposedly, it has 80% of the power of his true body! And he has nine of these Dao-seal clones!”

‘What?!’ Ning and the others could hardly believe it. How could Dao-seal clones be this strong?

It must be understood that the likes of Daolord Badlands or Daolord Solesky had to spend enormous amounts of treasure and effort in order to create a powerful avatar, and they could only really have one at a time! This was true in both the Endless Territories and in this universe.

The Dao-seal clones which Emperor Maniseal had created were simply ridiculous.

“This is a special secret art which only he possesses and only he can use. Not even his disciples have been taught this technique,” the horned expert said. “It is probably a secret art he came up with after he became an Eternal Emperor. He’s reached an unfathomably deep level of skill in his Dao of Seals, and has been publicly acknowledged as the number one master of this Dao in the Church of Annihilation! It is precisely due to his unfathomable mastery of this Dao that the master of the Church of Annihilation supposedly wants to befriend him.”

“He’s currently boiling with rage and the desire to kill right now, and the leaders of the Church of Annihilation are all trying to befriend him. Thus... even if he does kill a few World-level cultivators, no one will be willing to offend him over it.” The horned expert pointed off into the distance. “Look. That place over there? The tallest peak on that levitating mountain? That’s where one of his Dao-seal bodies currently resides.”

Ning and the others all turned to stare. Roughly ten billion kilometers away from them, there was indeed a levitating mountain peak that emanated ripples of tremendous power. Ning and the others all felt reverence towards this man. He had reached such a level of skill in his craft that he was acknowledged as being the ultimate expert in this entire universe in the Dao of Seals. Most likely, the reason he had been such a low-key figure in the past was precisely because he was completely focused on analyzing Dao-seals.

Ning and the others felt gratitude towards him. His pursuit of Emperor Trisilk ensured that they would have nothing more to worry about.

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Within a floating mountain. Inside an ordinary estate.

“Hmph.”

Emperor Maniseal was dressed in deep blue Daoist robes and wore a crown on his head. His face was thin and long, while his eyes were quite narrow. He looked very unpleasant right now.

A youth was kneeling before him. “Master, I went to beg the White Emperor for assistance. The White Emperor said that if you were willing to hand over eight of your ‘Lifeblood’ Dao-seals, he would guarantee that he would be able to convince the master of the Church of Annihilation to bring our second apprentice-brother back to life.”

“Eight Lifeblood Dao-seals? Hmph. These two... ugh.” Emperor Maniseal might have been a good-tempered man, but he was quaking with rage right now.

The most highly ranked members in the Church of Annihilation were its master and the sixteen Starkings, but there were differences amongst the Starkings as well. Of the sixteen, there were three known as the Primal Starkings who were very special. Supposedly, they had existed ever since this universe had been created.

The White Emperor was one of the three Primal Starkings, and was the teacher of the leader of the Church of Annihilation! However, the leader of the Church of Annihilation had eventually become the most powerful figure in the entire universe, overtaking his master and unifying this entire universe.

“The leader of the Church of Annihilation asked for nine Lifeblood Dao-seals to revive my disciple. As for his master, he asked for just a bit less; ‘just’ eight!” Emperor Maniseal ground his teeth. “These two must have come to a private agreement to rob me blind.”

Lifeblood Dao-seals represented the highest level of expertise which Emperor Maniseal had reached in the Dao of Seals. They possessed inconceivable amounts of power. If you were slain by a foe, you could rely on it to instantly come back to life!

A single Lifeblood Dao-seal represented an extra life!

Over the course of countless years, Emperor Maniseal had used up many treasures via many failed attempts to create these Dao-seals. After all that, he had still created just two of those Lifeblood Dao-seals. Even someone like him, the inventor of these Dao-seals, had a very high chance of failure when creating them. The creation process was simply far too difficult.

He had asked the master of the Church of Annihilation to reverse the flow of spacetime and revive his beloved disciple. He had loved his second disciple as he would a son. He was willing to pay any price!

Alas, the leader of the Church of Annihilation had rejected him outright. “Reverse the flows of spacetime and revive a Verge-level Daolord? Impossible. I’ve never even revived one of my retainers or disciples.”

It had been a clear-cut refusal.

However, Emperor Maniseal had brought out a half-finished version of his Lifeblood Dao-seal. The leader of the Church had been stunned upon seeing it! Given his exalted status, he immediately

recognized how valuable this seal was. He immediately changed his tone. "Given how strong I am, only some of the most ancient powers in other universes might pose a threat to me. If you can give me nine of these Lifeblood Dao-seals, I'll be willing to bear the price necessary to reverse spacetime and save your disciple."

Nine?

Not only did the creation of these Lifeblood Dao-seals require an enormous amount of treasure, they also took at least three full chaos cycles of time! And... once you made a single mistake, all of the time and wealth you had spent would have gone to waste! Worst of all, creating these Dao-seals required tremendous focus and was extremely tiresome. To stay in such a state for three full chaos cycle, with the results generally being failure... this was just a staggeringly exhausting process.

It had been countless years since he had come up with this idea, but he had only been able to create two of these seals.

"My Lifeblood Dao-seals are equivalent to an extra life. Hmph. The leader of the Church truly is greedy." Emperor Maniseal ground his teeth. "Let's wait and see. Sooner or later, he'll seek me out."

Emperor Maniseal felt that his Dao-seals were too difficult to create.

As for the leader of the Church, the leader similarly felt that reversing spacetime to revive a Verge-level Daolord was far too difficult. As for simply killing Emperor Maniseal? That never even came up as a possibility, as the Lifeblood Dao-seal meant that Emperor Maniseal was most likely the toughest person to kill in this universe.

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The flying vessel continued to advance. As for Daolord Owlbat, he continued to eat, drink, and boast. Ning's group simply listened.

"Any art, when improved to the ultimate level, will possess inconceivable power. Emperor Maniseal has reached incredible heights in the Dao of Seals," Daolord Owlbat said. "I heard that of the sixteen Starkings, the White Emperor has reached such heights in the Dao of Metal that you can't even comprehend it."

Ning and the others were happy to hear him talk on and on, and the flying vessel continued to teleport forwards and advance towards the center of the Genesis Lands.

"See that?" Daolord Owlbat pointed off into the distance.

Ning and the others were stunned by what they saw. An incredibly terrifying abyss was in the earth in front of them, and above that abyss hovered a world that was roughly a billion kilometers in size. This world radiated a towering pillar of light that was filled with countless terrifying auras, many of which were comparable to the auras of Eternal Emperors.

Many chains were attached to that levitating world, and the chains themselves were rooted firmly into the land of the outer reaches.

"That right there is the inner reaches! The world which gave birth to the entire universe, and which holds all of its prime essences," Daolord Owlbat said. "There are eight primessence chains which

connect it to the outer reaches. What you need to do is walk onto those chains and stride into the inner reaches.”

“But of course... if you aren’t careful and end up falling into that abyss? Even Daolords of the Fourth Step will be devoured and killed by the abyss, to say nothing of the likes of you!” Daolord Owl bath said.

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Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 21: The Chains

The flying vessel flew towards one of the primessence chains. There were twelve World-level cultivators seated there in the lotus position. Clearly, they also wished to attempt to pass the primessence chains.

Whoosh. The flying vessel landed.

“Eight more have joined the fray.”

“Looks like we’re making new friends.” The other twelve World-level cultivators who were already present grinned as they got up and moved forward to welcome Ji Ning’s group.

“Fuzhou greets you, fellow Daoists.”

“Warpflame greets you, fellow Daoists.”

The World-level cultivators all came over to greet them, and Ning’s group exchanged a few words of pleasantries with them.

It was quite common for people in the Genesis Lands to chat up unfamiliar faces, as all World-level cultivators who were able to make it into the Genesis Lands of this universe were extraordinary figures with limitless future prospects! In addition, all violence was forbidden here, making it so that they didn’t have to worry about ambushes or sneak attacks. This encouraged people to befriend each other, as perhaps one of these new friends might one day become an unearthly Daolord or perhaps even an Eternal Emperor.

Ning and his group all introduced themselves, making just slight alterations to their true story.

“Fellow Daoists, why haven’t you passed through these chains and entered the Prime Reaches?” Solewind laughed.

“You think we don’t want to? It’s that we aren’t able to.” A withered-looking World-level cultivator immediately shook his head. “The only way to enter the inner reaches from the outer reaches is by passing through one of those primessence chains. If you try to fly over, you’ll be swallowed up and devoured by the abyss. However, the chains themselves are also quite dangerous. There are special trials for World-level cultivators, and even more difficult trials for Samsara Daolords. Both trials are extremely dangerous, and the closer you get to the inner reaches the more dangerous it shall become.”

“Oh?” Ning and the other seven were quite curious.

“Ah, I forgot to tell you!” Daolord Owl bath was still seated next to them, drinking some wine. He let out a laugh and said, “When you step onto the primessence chains, there will be some wraiths that will begin to attack you. The farther along you go, the more powerful and numerous the wraiths shall be.

Right... the primessence chains themselves are also capable of affecting your mind. If you aren't careful, you might go crazy. If that happens, you'll be dead for sure."

"Just so. This senior speaks the truth. Thus... fellow Daoists, once you attempt to traverse the primessence chains, you need to immediately retreat as soon as you feel as though you've reached your limit. If you retreat, you'll still be alive. If you try to force your way through, you'll probably encounter a sudden danger that you can't handle which will knock you off the chains. The abyss will swallow you, and your truesoul will be wiped out. You'll definitely die!"

"Better to retreat than to try and force things."

The twelve all expressed similar sentiments, trying to dissuade the newcomers from rashness.

Daolord Owlbath nodded as well. "If you move slowly and carefully gauge your chances, you'll have a shot of staying alive. If you try to force things, you'll be doomed."

"Thank you, everyone."

"We understand." Ning and the others all nodded.

Ning's group exchanged a round of glances. It seemed they absolutely could not underestimate the deadliness of these primessence chains. Every World-level cultivator able to reach the Genesis Lands was a figure of extraordinary ability, but less than one in a hundred were able to enter the Prime Reaches. The difficulty of this trial spoke for itself. If you overestimated yourself, you would probably die.

"We'll give it a shot first. The three of you should wait for now," Solewind sent mentally. "Greatjoy, Darknorth, Firesurge, Skyfire... I recommend you let me be the first to give it a try. They said that these primessence chains can affect one's mind, and I feel quite confident in my abilities in this area. As for those so-called wraiths... I'll definitely move slowly and cautiously."

"Mm."

"Alright." Ning, Greatjoy, and the others all nodded.

Less than one in a hundred World-level cultivators were able to succeed, but Heartlord Solewind was a Heartforce Cultivator who had been acknowledged by the ancient pagodas of the Palace of the Heart. He definitely stood far above the vast majority of cultivators with regards to the power of his mind and heart. Even proud figures like Ning and Greatjoy knew that they were significantly inferior to Solewind in this respect.

.....

The twelve World-level cultivators, Daolord Owlbath, and the other seven all watched as Heartlord Solewind advanced onto the primessence chains.

The primessence chains were a thousand kilometers long and fifteen meters wide. Although they were described as 'chains', they were really more like bridges! Still, people like Ning could stably traverse even a miniscule thin steel wire without swaying in the slightest, to say nothing of a bridge.

"Eh?"

As Solewind advanced through the enormous steel chains, he couldn't help but frown and say, "Everyone, these chains truly are rather bizarre. Make sure you don't let your mind and heart be swayed by it."

"GRAAAH!"

"GRAAAH!"

Two illusory figures suddenly swooped up from the infinitely deep abyss of darkness below the chains. The two moved incredibly fast, traversing a thousand kilometers in a single flicker as they charged towards Heartlord Solewind. One phantom was of a grim-faced man who wielded a warblade, while the other was of an ugly alien creature who wielded nine whips in its nine arms.

Solewind's gaze grew cold as he saw those two phantoms strike towards him. A series of magic treasures that looked like fiery lotuses began to bloom behind him, and as they bloomed they immediately began to transform into blazing firebirds. There was a total of 391 firebirds in the skies, and they all radiated with blazing auras that easily dissipated the attacks coming from those two phantoms.

Ning and the others frowned upon seeing this. Were these the 'wraiths'? Why did they seem like cultivators?

"Those are all cultivators who died long, long ago." Daolord Owlbath explained, "After they died their truesouls were destroyed, but their power was transformed into these strange wraiths. Because you are at the World level, World-level wraiths shall be sent to attack you. If a Daolord attempted to pass... things would be far more frightening."

Ning and the others nodded.

"Many of them failed while attempting to pass through the primessence chains, and some of them were truly dazzling figures of their time. Later on, these wraiths will group together and attack en masse." Daolord Owlbath sighed. "To go through the primessence chains and reach the Prime Reaches. Oh, that's gonna be tough, tough, tough."

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Heartlord Solewind continuously advanced while controlling his magic treasures, using it to break apart all impediments.

Boom! Boom! Boom! The primessence chains themselves were trembling slightly, sending out multiple strange ripples of power. Ning was able to physically see those ripples emanating out, each expanding to become thirty meters in size. Heartlord Solewind had to rely on the power of the chains to fight back against the devouring power of the abyss, but by doing so he ended up being restricted by the power as well.

"Hmph."

Heartlord Solewind advanced with cool calmness, using his magic treasures to slaughter all of the attacking wraiths. As he continued to advance, more and more wraiths of increasingly greater power began to charge out of the abyss below the Prime Reaches.

As a Heartforce Cultivator, he was naturally quite skilled in controlling magic treasures from afar. These wraiths, as of right now, were not able to force him into close combat.

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“Five hundred kilometers. He’s made it pretty far, pretty fast.” Daolord Owlbath stared in boggled amazement. “This young fellow is way too powerful, and he has an incredibly strong mind and heart.”

“He isn’t even swaying a bit?”

“He’s completely ignoring the effects of the primessence chains?”

The twelve World-level cultivators who had already tried and failed in the past also stared in amazement. The mental influence of the primessence chains would grow increasingly strong, and at five hundred kilometers the influence was now incredibly strong. Generally speaking, even those who were able to endure the mental attacks would feel quite miserable. Heartlord Solewind, however, had an extremely calm look on his face. He looked as though he was simply strolling through the streets. He made it look easy.

Ning and the others all revealed smiles.

“Only one in a hundred can succeed? Hmph. Let them compete with us,” Prince Greatjoy sent to Ning and the others in an extremely smug manner.

“Right.”

“Brother Solewind is making it look easy.”

Although Ning and the others weren’t the arrogant type, they agreed with what Greatjoy said. In terms of all-around ability, the five of them truly did surpass the vast majority of the other World-level cultivators in the Genesis Lands. These were the most elite geniuses of the geniuses of the Brightshore Kingdom, after all!

Heartlord Solewind continued to advance. Six hundred kilometers. Seven hundred. Eight. Nine...

Daolord Owlbath and the others watched with slack jaws as this happened. However, towards the end Heartlord Solewind was also forced into close combat, and a look of seriousness appeared on his face for the first time as his movements noticeably slowed down. Still, he gritted his teeth and continued to advance.

Whoosh. Over a thousand wraiths were attacking him now. Heartlord Solewind fought his way through them, then reached the end of this primessence chain and entered the Prime Reaches.

“Ahahah!”

“Excellent.”

“Congratulations, brother Solewind.”

“We’ll join you in a bit, Solewind!”

Greatjoy, Ning, Skyfire, and Firesurge were in superb moods. For the first person from their side to challenge this trial and succeed naturally pleased them greatly.

“How is this possible?”

“He succeeded, just like that?”

Daolord Owlbath and the others couldn't even believe it. Passing through the primessence chains was supposed to be incredibly difficult, right? But just now, that bald red-robed kid seemed to have breezed right through it.

“Darknorth, Greatjoy, Skyfire, Firesurge.” Solewind stood at the other end of the chains, staring at them from afar as he called out loudly, “The mental influence of the primessence chains is terrifyingly strong, far more so than the attacks of the wraiths. You must be careful!”

“Understood!” Ning and the others grinned back at him in response.

“Which of the three of us shall be the next to give it a try?” Greatjoy turned his gaze towards Ning and Firesurge.

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Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 22: Heaven's Moat

According to what JiNing and the others had planned, the four 'protectors' would first make their attempts, followed by Skyfire Brightshore. Only then would the retainers Su Youji, World Goddess Skywolf, and Chaos Immortal Swallowback make their attempts.

“I'll go next. I'm still quite confident in my chances.” Firesurge revealed a smile. Because he had a cold and forbidding aura to begin with, his smile looked rather sinister.

“Alright.” Ning and Greatjoy nodded, then watched as Firesurge walked over towards the chains, then stepped onto them.

The gazes of Ji Ning, Greatjoy, Skyfire, the retainers, Daolord Owlbath, and the twelve other World-level cultivators were all focused on this youth dressed in deep blue robes as he advanced through the chains.

“The Prime Reaches. I have to enter them.” A terrifying, baleful aura could be seen in Firesurge's eyes. “Nothing and no one will stop me.”

Firesurge's path of cultivation had been a path filled with many setbacks and pitfalls. When he had been a weak mortal cultivator, he had lived in a world that had been controlled by ten mighty demonic sects! The demonic sects were filled with guile, treachery, and internecine murder. Every single powerful expert rose to power by trampling across the corpses of others... and Firesurge became the most powerful cultivator of this entire mortal world.

He had continued his path without remorse, eventually entering the greater primordial chaos and then being recruited into the Palace of Kindwater of the Twelve Palaces of Brightshore.

And now, he had been given the chance to join Ning and the others and adventure through the Genesis Lands of this Archaeus region in this alternate universe.

“I had to use every scrap of power I had, but was just barely able to claw my way into fourth place.” Firesurge strode forwards as waves buffeted the area around him. “Solewind, Greatjoy, Darknorth... all three of them are somewhat stronger than me, to say nothing of the most dazzling figures of the Brightshore Kingdom, Bertulu and Eastcult!”

“I’m going to surpass them. I’m going to surpass all cultivators!”

Firesurge felt a certain degree of urgency in this regard. Prince Greatjoy was the strongest of the four, Solewind was the most unfathomable and mysterious, and Darknorth’s sword-intent domain was incredibly tough to deal with. Even worse, Darknorth’s offensive sword-arts had become so powerful that even Firesurge shivered when he saw them.

Why had the gap between him and his colleagues grown so large?

“Kill!”

“Break!”

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Firesurge advanced through the thousand kilometer long primessence chains, crushing his way through all of the wraiths that tried to oppose him.

“How dominating.”

“Incredible.”

“He’s plowing through them in an even more brutal manner than Solewind did.”

Ning, Greatjoy, and the others all smiled as they praised him. As for Daolord Owlbath and the other twelve, they just stared intently.

Four hundred kilometers. Five hundred. Six hundred...

Firesurge had experienced numerous setbacks in life in order to reach his current level, and he thus possessed an incredible mind and heart. He was also very close to the others in combat power, and thus he was able to forcibly disperse the wraiths with his attacks.

“Eh?”

Just past the seven hundred kilometer mark, Firesurge suddenly slowed down dramatically. The smiles quickly disappeared from the faces of Ji Ning and Greatjoy.

“Not good!” Ning was rather worried.

The distant Waterlord Firesurge was now moving slower and slower. He was still wiping out the attacking wraiths, but Ning and the others could clearly tell that something was hampering his combat performance. It seemed as though he was struggling to maintain focus.

“AAARGH!” Waterlord Firesurge let out a frustrated yell, then turned and left. He retreated at high speeds, needing only a few seconds to escape the chains.

He had an ugly, savage look on his face, and his eyes were filled with rage and resentment.

“Brother Firesurge,” Ning called out.

“Firesurge, if we fail the first time, we can try a second or a third time,” Greatjoy said consolingly.

Firesurge took a deep breath, taking control of his emotions. He nodded towards Ning and the others.

In truth, Ning and Greatjoy understand why Firesurge was so unhappy right now. If you failed the first time, you would probably fail the next hundred times as well unless you made significant gains in power or in mental fortitude. Firesurge hadn’t even been able to make it to the eight hundred kilometer mark! He had more than two hundred kilometers to go if he wished to make it to the Prime Reaches. His chances were extremely low.

“Be careful, the two of you. The primessence chains are extremely difficult to deal with,” Firesurge said.

“I’m amazed at how nettlesome they are.”

“Mm.”

Ning and Greatjoy both felt a great sense of pressure. Firesurge was still the fourth strongest World-level cultivator of the Twelve Kingdoms of Brightshore, if one excluded Bertulu and Eastcult; he definitely was a monstrously talented man! For him to have failed meant the primessence chains were far more difficult to deal with than any of them had expected.

“Your performance was incredible, my young friend Firesurge.” Daolord Owlbath was still eating and drinking in a leisurely fashion, and he grinned as he called out, “To be able to make it nearly eight hundred kilometers on the primessence chains is an absolutely incredible feat. Although all of the World-level cultivators here in the Genesis Lands are quite formidable, the vast majority are stymied at the five hundred kilometer mark.”

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Firesurge’s failure worried not just Ning and Greatjoy, it worried Skyfire Brightshore even more. This prince of the Brightshore Kingdom was comparable to Firesurge in power, but as for his heart and his willpower? He was probably a bit inferior to even those three retainers. Even the invisible willpower trial which was applied to all entrants into the Genesis Lands had made him feel quite miserable.

“Darknorth, let me give it a try next.” Greatjoy’s eyes were filled with a terrifying desire to do battle. He walked straight towards the primessence chains then began to advance forwards. Ning and the others simply watched silently from behind.

Solewind had drifted through the chains like a calm, unflappable spring breeze.

Firesurge had fought his way through the chains while radiating a powerful aura of murder.

As for Greatjoy, he crushed his way through with absolute power as he advanced in a truly imposing fashion.

“These young fellows are all quite incredible.” Daolord Owlbath blinked. “This Greatjoy guy has already made it past the eight hundred kilometer mark. Uh... and that’s the nine hundred kilometer mark.”

Prince Greatjoy was clearly performing better than Firesurge had as he cruised through the first nine hundred kilometers. However, at this point he gradually began to slow down as well, and a solemn look appeared on his face. His entire body began to radiate with golden light as he continued to advance in a stable manner.

Ning and the others began to grow nervous as they watched.

“Master.” The armor-clad World Goddess Skywolf normally had a perpetually icy look on her fair features, but now a look of worry had appeared.

Although the wraiths were quite powerful, Prince Greatjoy still found it quite easy to deal with them. And yet... his movements were growing slower and slower.

Finally, at the nine hundred and twenty kilometer mark, he came to a halt. He stood there, easily deflecting the wraiths but unable to advance any further.

“Ugh.” A soft sigh... then Prince Greatjoy also turned and left, not hesitating in the slightest.

Peerless geniuses like them knew when they had to go all-out and when they had to be cautious! If you tried to force yourself past your limits in a place like this, you would most likely fall into that abyss and be destroyed in body and truesoul alike.

Prince Greatjoy walked back with a slight frown on his forehead, as though he was lost in thought.

“Heh heh.” Prince Greatjoy glanced at the cultivators in front of him, then began to chuckle. “When Solewind made it across, I figured the the primessence chains couldn’t be that tough. Who would’ve thought that the next two would both fail, myself included?”

“Brother Greatjoy, you made it much farther than I did,” Firesurge said.

“A failure is still just a failure.” Prince Greatjoy shook his head, then looked at Ning. “Darknorth, these primessence chains are incredibly strange. You have to be careful not to let yourself be ensnared in those illusions. The reason why I didn’t dare to advance any further was because I realized that I had already reached my limits. If I advanced any further, I would’ve been ensnared by those illusions and would’ve been completely unable to deal with the other dangers facing me.”

Ning nodded.

Solewind was a Heartforce Cultivator and thus was the best-equipped to deal with this issue. That was why he had been able to cruise through with ease. Alas, Firesurge and Greatjoy had both failed despite being incredibly talented figures.

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As for Daolord Owlbath and the other twelve World-level cultivators, they sighed with amazement. Although Greatjoy and Firesurge had both failed, they had both made it incredibly far.

“Firesurge and I will probably wander through the various places in the outer reaches of the Genesis Lands. We’ll only come back here if we are able to grow significantly more powerful.” Greatjoy looked at Ning. “Darknorth, I wouldn’t mind having you by my side as we wander through the outer reaches.”

“You might not mind, but I sure as hell would.” Ning laughed. “I still want to wander the Prime Reaches alongside Solewind. The poor guy will be lonely if he has to go through that place by himself.”

Laughing, Ning strode confidently towards the primessence chains.

“Be careful, Master.” The Flamefairy Su Youji was quite worried. She knew her own limits and knew that she probably stood no chance of making it into the inner reaches, but she truly hoped that Ji Ning would.

The Prime Reaches was a place which even the Eternal Emperors of this universe wished to enter, and it was also the place which had completely transformed the master of the Church of Annihilation.

Rumble...

Ning advanced through the primessence chains as electric light and watery light surged out of his body. The seven types of Dao lightning and Dao water formed an awe-inspiring Yin-Yang Sword Domain around him which furiously repelled and slew all enemies in range of him. The attacking wraiths were all ground to dust before even getting close to him.

The way in which Ning was advancing through the chains was even more lofty and imposing than Solewind’s. His Yin-Yang Sword Domain truly was the perfect weapon for dealing with group attacks!

“The Prime Reaches...” Ning stared forwards at the other end of the chains, where the inner reaches lay.

He had fought so hard for this chance, and in the end he had been able to make it into the Genesis Lands of this alternate universe. Was he going to fail now, at the very last moment?

There was a huge difference between the outer reaches and the inner reaches!

“Brother Solewind, just wait a moment for me,” Ning called out, his eyes brimming with the intent to do battle. His Yin-Yang Sword Domain swirled around him as he continuously advanced through the long primessence chains.

The Desolate Era

Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 23: The Inner Reaches

As soon as Ji Ning stepped onto the primessence chains, he could sense an invisible web of power wash over him. He felt as though a strange melody was playing nonstop within his sea of consciousness. Still, Ning was no ordinary World-level cultivator. He was able to easily ignore a disruptive influence on this level.

He walked forward through the chains, moving tremendously fast, and as he did the various ghosts began to flicker towards him from afar, throwing themselves at Ning. Alas, Ning’s Yin-Yang Sword Domain stretched out to encompass an area of eight hundred kilometers. As soon as the wraiths charged into his domain, they were instantly ground into nothingness. Ning’s Yin-Yang Sword Domain was capable of slaying even Daolords of the First Step, much less mere wraiths!

“Eh? The invisible power covering the primessence chains seems to be growing stronger and stronger.” Ning continuously advanced towards the inner reaches, and the sound of the melody grew increasingly loud as well. The melody was constantly distracting him, despite his best efforts. It sang of a peerlessly beautiful maiden, of endless treasures, of the ineffable Hegemon, of the warmth of family, of the

undying ardor of love, of the deep, warm-blooded feelings which friends and brothers shared with each other...

It was an absolute delight. It told him that if he truly fell into the song and allowed himself to be intoxicated by it, that he would have all of these things and more.

The alluring power of the song grew stronger and stronger.

“Eight hundred kilometers. Nine hundred kilometers! He’s hit the nine hundred kilometer mark. Darknorth is way too strong.” Daolord Owlbat stared wide-eyed in shock. “He’s merely using a domain, but he’s still able to crush all of those wraiths. He hasn’t even used any actual techniques at all.”

Su Youji and the others watched nervously as well.

“He hit the nine hundred mark?” Firesurge watched quietly. Of the four geniuses of the Twelve Palaces, both Ji Ning and Greatjoy had made it past the nine hundred kilometer mark. Firesurge, however, hadn’t even made it to the eight hundred mark!

“Brother Darknorth’s sword-intent domain truly is formidable.” Prince Greatjoy smiled. “His domain alone is enough for him to defeat all of the attacking wraiths.”

The Yin-Yang Sword Domain was a Supreme Dao, after all, and this one in particular was terrifyingly strong due to it having been formed by seven types of Dao lightning and Dao water. In terms of raw power, it was only slightly weaker than the killer attacks of Greatjoy and Solewind!

In addition, the wraiths focused on attacking en masse. The Yin-Yang Sword Domain was literally developed for the express purpose of defeating massed attackers! In addition, it had been easy for all four of them to deal with the wraiths; none of them had been forced to show their true power. All four of them were comparable to Daolords of the Second Step. Clearing the trial of the primessence chains didn’t place too heavy an emphasis on raw power; so long as you were comparable to a strong Daolord of the First Step, you’d be able to handle the wraiths.

“Nine hundred twenty. Nine hundred thirty. Nine hundred forty. Nine hundred fifty...” Su Youji counted softly to herself.

Everyone was watching with bated breath. Was yet another member of the group about to pass through the primessence chains?

Prince Greatjoy fell silent. He simply watched as Ning advanced farther than he did.

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The invisible power covering the primessence chains weren’t completely focused on Ji Ning in specific. It would be more accurate to say that the primessence chains were innately filled with a mysterious power which naturally emanated outwards, resulting in them affecting Ning.

The closer Ning moved to the inner reaches, the stronger the power released by the primessence chains became.

The melody grew more and more drifting and abstruse as it sought to seduce Ning into its flows. In fact, Ning could almost see a series of illusory worlds appear before him. If he stopped fighting back against

them for just a single instant, he would instantly be drawn into those illusory worlds and lose himself within them.

Nine hundred eighty. Nine hundred ninety...

Ning continued to advance. Although the illusory melody was taking a firmer and firmer grip over his mind and soul, he still continued to steadfastly defend against its intrusions. He had just a single thought in his mind – he wanted to keep focused on his goal of making it to the end of the primessence chains.

“Ah?!”

“Is he really going to make it into the inner reaches?”

“So close. So close!”

Daolord Owlbath and the others stared in astonishment, as did Prince Greatjoy and Firesurge. As for Su Youji, she was the most nervous of them all as she stared unblinkingly at the domain-ensconced white-robed youth.

Finally...

Ning took one final step and broke past the bewildering force covering the primessence chains. The furious wraiths did their best to try to stop him, but they were completely unable to go through the Yin-Yang Sword Domain and touch Ning in the slightest.

“Whew.” Ning couldn’t help but let out a sigh of relief when he took that final step and entered the inner reaches. He then dismissed his Yin-Yang Sword Domain.

“The Prime Reaches...” As soon as Ning stepped onto the other side, he could sense a surge of invisible power rush towards him from the ground. The surge of power warmed him, feeling almost like the embrace of a mother.

Ning was secretly speechless. Then again, the Prime Reaches was the most central location of the Genesis Lands. Even the prime essences of this universe were located here. Even the strangest of phenomena were to be expected of here.

“Congratulations, Darknorth.” Heartlord Solewind had stepped backwards to avoid the Yin-Yang Sword Domain, but he now grinned as he advanced to move next to Ning.

“That was far too close for comfort. But, I made it.” Ning smiled.

“It is incredible that you were able to make it this far, brother Darknorth. The primessence chains truly do have an incredibly strong mental alluring affect,” Solewind sighed.

Ning nodded.

The effect was indeed quite strong. Still, Ning knew that he had one particular advantage over all three of the others! Greatjoy, Solewind, and Firesurge were fairly ‘normal’ World-level cultivators. In battle, they could instantly unleash a level of power comparable to that of Daolords of the Second Step, but it was all thanks to their secret arts, divine abilities, and insights into the Dao.

In the end, their power was built off of World-level divine power and Immortal energy.

Ning, however, was different!

He had the power of the azureflower mist energy, which was equivalent to Daolord-level energy. It had nourished his soul, making it comparable to the soul of a Daolord of the First Step! As a result, it was incredibly difficult to shake Ning's soul and cause him to be trapped within an illusion. Ning's mental fortitude was actually merely on par with Prince Greatjoy's, but his soul was far stronger. As a result, he was naturally able to do what Greatjoy could not.

Skyfire Brightshore was a prince of the Brightshore Kingdom, a living being on the same level of power as the Ancient cultivators, Bertulu, or Waterwalker. They were amongst the most elite races of living creatures, giving them souls that were incredibly strong and essentially on par with Ning's azureflower-reinforced soul.

Kilostar was another example. He had trained in the [Thousand Bodies Sutra], and so his divine body was comparable to a Daolord's, as was his soul.

It was incredibly rare for a World-level cultivator to have a Daolord-level soul. Solewind was a Heartforce Cultivator, and so he had certain special techniques which could be used to strengthen the soul, but in the end he was still not nearly as strong in this regard as Ning and Bertulu were. As for Greatjoy and Firesurge, they were somewhat weaker in this regard as well.

"The only reason I made it through was because I have the azureflower mist energy sustaining and strengthening my soul. Heartlord Solewind, however, made it through with ease. He really lives up to his reputation as the one and only Heartlord of the Heartforce Palace," Ning mused to himself in praise.

Ning's gaze shifted towards the inner reaches. Previously, when he had been in the outer reaches, he could see that there was an enormous world here but was unable to make out any details at all. Now, however...

"Eh?" Ning frowned.

It was a scene of chaos and decay.

The ground was littered with enormous gouges, holes, and craters. Clearly, they had been left behind by ancient powers who had battled against each other! These were marks that had been left behind by swords and sabers.

Far off in the distance, he saw a series of badly damaged mountain ranges... as well as a series of towering, massive corpses that emanated ripples of terrifying power.

"These corpses...?" Ning stared at them. Every single corpse emanated ripples of incredible power that were just as strong as the aura which Lord Woodflower had emanated.

"Are these all Eternal Emperors?" Ning mused. "It seems this place, the birthplace of the universe, is actually a battlefield. But why the hell are there so many Eternal Emperors here?"

Eternal Emperors were incredibly rare and few in number. Based on what Ning and the others had learned, this was true even here in this alternate universe. In the Endless Territories, the Brightshore Kingdom only had a few Eternal Emperors total! But here in the Prime Reaches, Ning was able to see at

least twelve of these corpses which emanated auras of terrifying power. All of them had to be Eternal Emperor level corpses.

And these were only the ones he could see right now. Most likely, the Prime Reaches held far more corpses within it. No wonder so many Eternal Emperors of the Church of Annihilation had come here. No wonder the master of the Church of Annihilation had been able to skyrocket in power after entering this place.

"I, Ji Ning, am blessed to be able to enter a place like this." Ning felt a great surge of joy swell in his heart. Those ten thousand years of arduous travel and those multiple scrapes with death... right now, Ning felt as though everything was worth it.

"Skyfire is starting as well," Solewind said.

Ning calmed himself down, turning to stare at the other end of the primessence chains.

Skyfire Brightshore had moved onto the primessence chains as well. Although his soul was comparable to Ning's in strength, his mental fortitude was incredibly weak. In the end, he simply hadn't experienced enough. Most likely, even an average World-level cultivator who had risen to power in the mortal world and experienced all of its trials and tribulations would have a far stronger mind and heart than he did.

In the end, Skyfire Brightshore was brought to a quick halt. He managed to move close to the five hundred kilometer mark, but in the end was forced to retreat. A look of disappointment was on his face. He hadn't even been able to make it to the five hundred kilometer mark! Even if he was able to somehow become much mentally tougher, he probably still would have very little chance of traversing these primessence chains.

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Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 24: Thirty-Five Corpses

"I have zero chance. I'm not even close to meeting the mark." Skyfire Brightshore left the primessence chains, then shook his head ruefully.

"Don't let yourself feel too depressed about this. At least the two of us will keep you company, right?" Prince Greatjoy laughed.

"Solewind is a Heartforce Cultivator, remember?" Firesurge sent him a mental message of consolation. "As for Darknorth, he joined the Twelve Palaces just a short while ago but quickly rose to become the second-ranked expert in our trials. His rate of improvement is absolutely ridiculous. It's not surprising that the two of them were able to make it into the inner reaches."

Skyfire nodded. Moments later, Prince Greatjoy nodded as well. Although he was an incredibly proud man, he had to admit that Ji Ning's rate of improvement really was fast.

"If I fall one step behind, I'll always be behind." Firesurge frowned.

"Haha, let's not get depressed." Prince Greatjoy was in a fine mood. "In the end, lucky encounters and karmic blessings might be useful, but cultivation is ultimately up to yourself and your own efforts! They are in the inner reaches while we are in the outer reaches, but we won't necessarily fall behind them!"

“Right. In fact, we might actually overtake them.” Firesurge nodded as well.

However, they all knew that they were just pumping themselves up and encouraging themselves. They all understood that the inner reaches had far more opportunities hidden within them than the outer reaches did, and both Solewind and Darknorth were just as talented as the three of them. There was no way they wouldn't improve even further!

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Prince Greatjoy's retainer, 'World Goddess Skywolf', also gave the primessence chains a try. In the end, she was forced to come to a halt at around five hundred kilometers.

Flamefairy Su Youji actually managed to make it close to the six hundred kilometer mark. Clearly, she was quite skilled at defending against illusions, as that was her own path as well. Alas, in the end she simply hadn't reached a high enough level of skill in this Dao.

Solewind's retainer, Chaos Immortal Swallowback, actually managed to make it all the way to the nine hundred and ten kilometer mark! This badly shocked Ning and all the other spectators. Who would've thought that he would be able to make it this far?! This was almost as far as Prince Greatjoy himself had made it, and was a far stronger performance than Waterlord Firesurge's!

Of course, in an actual battle he was far from being a match for Prince Greatjoy, Firesurge, or Skyfire. In the field of resisting illusions, however, he was clearly a very strong contender.

“Solewind and Darknorth, the two of you can stay in the inner reaches. We'll wander the outer reaches. Don't end up weaker than us by the next time we meet!” Prince Greatjoy laughed from afar, his voice rippling through space and making it to the other side of the chains.

“We'll part ways here. The two of you better not disappoint me!” A stubborn, intense light gleamed in Firesurge's eyes.

As for Su Youji, she stared at Ji Ning from afar.

Chaos Immortal Swallowback did the same towards his own master, Heartlord Solewind.

The two parties separated, heading off in different directions.

Prince Greatjoy and the others depart, beginning their journey through the various mysterious regions of the outer reaches. There, they would search for their own karmic blessings and opportunities. As for Ning and Solewind, they began their true journey into the Prime Reaches.

“Incredible.”

“Crazy strong.”

“Where the hell did these World-level cultivators come from?” The twelve spectators and Daolord Owlbath were all utterly amazed. They had been wandering the outer reaches for many years now, and dreamed of being able to make it past the primessence chains. They knew exactly how hard it was for one to be able to actually overcome the chains... but just now, two of the eight World-level cultivators in that group, the ones named 'Solewind' and 'Darknorth', had actually succeeded. Two others had made it past the nine hundred kilometer mark!

“Absolutely amazing.”

“Given how extraordinarily strong their hearts and souls are, they must be under the tutelage of a truly extraordinary power.”

“No ordinary school could possibly hand over eight Archaeus medallions at once.” They couldn’t help but continue to chatter in amazement, having firmly engraved the names and faces of Ning and the others in their minds.

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Ning and Solewind gave the primessence chains a final glance. Prince Greatjoy and the others had already flown away.

“Let’s go,” Solewind said. “Once we leave the Prime Reaches, we’ll meet with them again.”

“Right.” Ning nodded. He had left a message-talisman with Su Youji. Once they left the inner reaches, he would be able to locate her with ease, thanks to his connection to that talisman. Most likely, Solewind had left behind something similar with his own retainer, Chaos Immortal Swallowback.

The world of the inner reaches was a world that was roughly a billion kilometers in size. This wasn’t exactly small, but for cultivators of their power it wasn’t exactly large either.

This place was filled with an aura of utterly immense power. All flight was impossible here, and it was impossible for one to scan the area using godsense or chaosense, much less engage in spatial teleportation! The only option was to rely on one’s two feet. Thankfully, the two of them were able to walk quite quickly, moving far faster than the limits of the Heavenly Daos.

“This place is an ancient battlefield.” As Ning and Solewind advanced through this world, they moved towards the peak of a mountain, then came to a halt and surveyed the entirety of the inner reaches.

As far as the eye could see, the earth was littered with trenches, gouges, canyons, crater, and rubble. This was a ruined, destroyed world. Look at that terrifying gorge over there, filled with an utterly terrifying sword-intent that was so strong that Ning could hardly breathe. The strength and intensity of that sword-intent was so great that it was definitely the most powerful sword-intent Ning had ever encountered.

Even the most powerful sword-strike of Emperor Mirrorsnow was significantly weaker compared to the sword-intent radiating from that great gorge.

Awe-inspiring sword-intent.

Bounding saber-intent.

Billowing plumes of watery light.

Chaotic fields of spacetime.

The entire world of the inner reaches was filled with the scars of battle. If you could recognize a leopard’s spots, you’d know you were looking at a leopard. Just by looking at the remaining scars, Ning was able to imagine how incredibly powerful the major powers who left the scars behind were.

“So many corpses... and almost all of them are 540,000 meters tall,” Solewind said in amazement.

“From our position atop this mountain, I can see at least twenty-six corpses.” Ning stared from afar as well. Due to the nearby mountains blocking off his vision as well as the tremendous power throbbing within this world, Ning wasn’t able to bend light and see far beyond the surrounding mountains. In a ‘normal’ place, he would be able to see everything for countless kilometers around him, even if he was inside a completely sealed-off edifice.

Alas... this place was different.

“They look like cultivators, but all of their corpses are 540,000 meters tall. Some of them are even larger! Those are probably the special lifeforms,” Ning said.

“All of them should be at the Eternal Emperor level,” Solewind evaluated.

A divinity’s height was one way to measure their power.

Ning and the others had reached the limits of power possible for World Gods, with a total of 36,000 godgems in their bodies. As for the Dao-tree within their Jindan chaos regions, the trees were 108,000 meters tall. Their true personal height was also roughly 108,000 meters tall! Many of the great powers were born as ordinary mortals who were merely a few meters tall, and thus they were accustomed to using those heights in their ‘normal’ form. As a result, in both the Endless Territories as well as this alternate universe, most people stayed at a ‘normal’ height of just a few meters.

Even the princes of the Brightshore Kingdom whose true bodies were the size of chaos stars would generally stay in a form where they were roughly on par with Ji Ning in size.

The absolute hard limit for World-level cultivators was 108,000 meters.

The absolute limit for Daolords was 540,000 meters.

Reaching this height meant that you had reached the Verge of the Daomerge. One you succeeded in your Daomerge, your divine body would remain 540,000 meters tall and be comprised of 540,000 godgems. The difference was... upon succeeding in the Daomerge, the ‘Dao’ within those godgems would gain true eternity, making your divine body both perfect and eternal as well.

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Ning and Solewind continued to advance through the Prime Eaches, carefully analyzing everything.

The two of them quickly discovered two Daolords and three World-level cultivators in the inner reaches! The world was just a billion kilometers in size, after all. They were able to quickly scan through the entire place, and they discovered a total of thirty-five corpses of incredible antiquity. Each corpse emanated an aura of tremendous power that carried a scent of eternity.

“Thirty-five Eternal Emperors died here?” Solewind and Ning both felt breathless.

It must be understood that even the Brightshore Kingdom only had a few Eternal Emperors, and the number of Eternal Emperors belonging to the Aeonian Kingdom could be counted on one hand. In general, Eternal Emperors were incredibly rare.

Thirty-five Eternal Emperors... this was an incredible, terrifying figure. And yet, such a powerful force of cultivators had silently died in this place, leaving behind few traces of their passing.

"Eternal Emperors are truly eternal existences. If they die, they die because others killed them. But in normal battles, a fatal end should result in their divine bodies being destroyed. Their bodies are in perfect shape, and all of them seem quite peaceful. Some were standing, some were sitting... it seems as though they welcomed death peacefully." Solewind had a solemn look on his face as he sent, "I can't even imagine what level of power is needed to cause thirty-five Eternal Emperors to silently, peacefully pass away into death."

Ning nodded. This truly was a terrifying thought.

"This place gave birth to the entire universe, after all," Ning sent mentally. "There will always be secrets which we will never know the answers to. We are still too weak and know too little."

"Mm." Solewind nodded.

"We've gone through this entire world. It really is filled with many opportunities, but all of them were left behind by these thirty-five ancient powers. We haven't found the prime essences of this universe at all," Ning sent.

"We are too weak. We probably aren't able to find or locate them," Solewind sent. "Let us do the same as those two Daolords and World-level cultivators are doing. Let us search for the legacies left behind by those thirty-five major powers."

"Alright." Ning nodded.

The thirty-five ancient corpses had prepared for and welcomed death in a very calm manner, and they had left behind all of their treasures.

Those who were bound to them by destiny would gain access to those treasures.

Every single one of the deceased major powers was terrifyingly strong. Three of them were particularly terrifying, and the aura emanating from their corpses was so strong that Ning felt certain that they were comparable to that of the almighty Hegemon, who Ning had met in person.