

Desolate 971

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 35: A Clash

“I’m not finished talking!” The muscular man was rather irritated.

The azure-armored man and the white-robed man exchanged a glance, then the azure-armored man said, “Big brother, what are you saying? I thought you didn’t care about this Darknorth kid. Are you seriously going to fight with us over him?”

“Big brother, I’ve memorized every single word you said just now,” the white-robed man said.

It had been far too long. They had been waiting here per the orders of their respective masters for far, far too long. Ji Ning was the first one to truly drive them wild with excitement. Although there had been one person who had perfectly joined an offensive Supreme Dao with a defensive one, that was just two Daos. Moreover, that man’s path wasn’t really a good fit for the path their masters had chosen.

Ji Ning’s Dao of the Sword, however, was a path which literally included everything. It included techniques meant for slaughter, such as the techniques of the azure-armored man’s master. It included ephemeral and inscrutable techniques, such as those of the white-robed man’s master. And it even included straightforward attacks of overwhelming power, such as the ones used by the muscular man’s master, the greatsword-wielding Hegemon. Ning’s Dao included everything and joined it all together perfectly! He was able to study any of their Daos!

“All I said was, don’t be overly infatuated with him.” The muscular man said coldly, “In addition, I’m not the one who will decide whether or not he’ll be allowed to become my master’s personal disciple. In the end, it will be up to the greatsword as to whether or not it accepts him as its master.”

The azure-armored man and the white-robed man were both stunned. The greatsword... it held truly incalculable amounts of might within it. It was a Universe treasure! Even Eternal Emperors dreamed of acquiring such treasures, but alas, Universe treasures chose their wielders, not the other way around. If the treasure refused to acknowledge you, there was no way for you to bind it by force whatsoever.

“The only decision I can make is whether or not he qualifies to become my master’s honorary disciple,” the muscular man said. “The decision of who qualifies to become a personal disciple is up to the greatsword.”

“What? You are planning to let him become an honorary disciple?” The azure-armored man and the white-robed man both ground their teeth in frustration.

“Big brother, weren’t you saying how unworthy he...” The azure-armored man couldn’t help but start muttering under his breath.

“Whether or not he can become an honorary disciple will depend on if he can survive my sword or not.” As soon as the muscular man spoke these words... BOOM! He manifested a total of six arms, all six of which assumed a tightened grip over that single deep blue greatsword! But of course, this greatsword wasn’t actually a Universe treasure, just a Dao weapon facsimile.

Swish!

The muscular man transformed into a streak of sword-light that tore through the skies, moving at an incredible pace of nearly five times the speed of light. It must be understood that normally speaking, only Daolords of the Fourth Step were able to attain such incredible speeds. But of course, different people with different Daos would have different areas of specialty. Ning's Blood Drop sword-art also allowed him to move at incredible speeds by using himself as a sword while using the Blood Drop sword-intent. This was the so-called Blood Drop evasion skill.

The Blood Drop evasion skill was Ning's fastest evasion skill. The Shadowless evasion skill was more unpredictable, but it was slightly slower. Ever since Ning had perfectly joined together his five Supreme Daos, his Blood Drop evasion skill had undergone a fundamental transformation, making it even faster and more explosive. In the past, he was roughly able to move at three times the speed of light. Now, he would be able to force his speed to a new limit of four times the speed of light.

"The five sword-intents of my Dao of the Sword have been joined together in a perfect manner, but my evasion skill is still inferior to his?" Ning had been utterly dominating those three volcano titans, but when he saw the muscular man fly towards him from afar he no longer dared to act complacently. He immediately used rope-type magic treasures to separately tie up all three volcano titans, ensuring that they wouldn't be able to disturb him.

"Receive a blow from my sword!" The muscular man's voice thundered through the skies, as did his distant sword-light. It transformed into a straight line that chopped downwards towards Ning with furious power. The entire world seemed to turn dark, leaving behind only that single terrifying sword-strike as it chopped downwards. Ning was actually completely unable to dodge this attack. His only choice was to defend against it.

Whoosh.

A black hole of sword-light spun out like a lotus flower in the darkness. It swiveled outwards and unleashed layers of power. For an instant, its swiveling movements became as explosively powerful as the Heavenbreaker stance; in the next instant, it would become as soft and ephemeral as the Shadowless stance.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! The deep blue greatsword chopped straight down upon the black hole of sword-light, and the layers of swiveling 'petals' sought to transform into other sword-arts while furiously ablating the power of the oncoming attack.

"What a formidable defensive technique." The muscular man could sense that the offensive power of his deep blue greatsword was being slowly ablated, ground away, and deflected. It was as though it had been trapped within the cycle of Samsara, never to escape again.

"Break! Break! Break!" The muscular man remained quite calm. He held absolute faith in his master's Dao of the Sword.

No matter how tough you are, I'll break through with overwhelming power!

This was a Dao of overwhelming force!

BOOM!

Ning was knocked flying backwards. Even when he landed, he had to stumble five steps back before recovering his footing. He stared rather cautiously at the distant, muscular man.

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“He blocked it! Ahaha! Just like that, he blocked our big brother’s attack in a head-on collision. Absolutely incredible! That other poor bastard... he might’ve had a perfect fusion of his two Supreme Daos, but our big brother’s sword smashed him straight into the ground.” The distant azure-armored man couldn’t help but sigh in amazement when he saw this.

The white-robed man said, “Darknorth has mastered five Supreme Daos, and he’s joined them together in a Samsara-like cycle. His sword-arts have absolutely no flaws at all, and he’s reached an incredibly high level in all five of his Supreme Daos. In terms of tenacity and toughness, Darknorth’s Sword Dao is definitely the most tenacious and toughest Sword Dao there is.”

“There are other geniuses whose Sword Daos involve the perfect fusions of Supreme Daos, but they all have flaws. Darknorth, however, is skilled in every area. If he was to battle against one of them, he would be able to attack their weaknesses.” The azure-armored man sighed in approval. “Incredibly, absolutely incredible. He actually came up with five Supreme Sword Daos! If in the future he can become a Verge-level Daolord, he’ll definitely stand a good chance of becoming the most powerful Daolord there is.”

There was actually a ranking of monstrously powerful Daolords. In the Endless Territories, Palace Lord Dawnstar of the Twelve Palaces was one such Daolord. The major powers of the Brightshore Kingdom all believed that if Bertulu became a Verge-level Daolord, he would probably be comparable to Lord Dawnstar in power. Lord Dawnstar had once slain an Eternal Emperor with just three strikes of his saber... but despite that, he was only ranked as the second most powerful Daolord of the Endless Territories.

All of the most monstrously powerful Daolords had fused Supreme Daos together... but despite that, there were still differences in power amongst them!

“Mm.” The white-robed man let out an approving sigh. “Very true. Unfortunately, we won’t live to see that day.”

The azure-armored man suddenly fell silent as well.

Strictly speaking, they weren’t really living creatures. They also had to stay here perpetually for the sake of choosing suitable disciples for their masters. Although they were very willing to do this, they couldn’t help but feel at least a little bit of yearning towards the vast world outside.

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The muscular man’s six hands were clenched around the hilt of that single greatsword. When he attacked, his savagery filled the skies. When he defended, he was as unshakable as a mountain.

Facing him in battle was like facing an enormous boulder that was crashing towards you. As it rolled down towards you, it would only increase in power. If you wanted to survive, you’d have to disrupt and shatter the terrifying momentum of his attacks! Fortunately, Ning had many varied techniques, and his ghostly, inscrutable Shadowless stance was able to repeatedly tie down the muscular man’s movements.

“Enough.” The muscular man suddenly came to a halt. Startled, Ning did the same thing.

This lengthy battle had been quite beneficial for him. The terrifying amount of pressure the muscular man had placed upon Ning had helped him learn how to use his sword-arts in a more effective and natural manner. The muscular man eclipsed Ning in both speed and strength. Although Ning’s Dao of the Sword had many different techniques hidden within it, he was only just barely able to fight the man to a standstill.

“When my master was at the World level, he was probably slightly weaker than you are right now.” The muscular man looked at Ning, then nodded slightly. “You are qualified to become my master’s honorary disciple.”

“SHUT YOUR MOUTH!”

“BIG BROTHER!”

Two furious howls rent the air.

The explosive howl of ‘shut your mouth’ had come from the azure-armored figure, while the one who had called out ‘big brother’ had come from the graceful, refined-looking white-robed man. The two immediately transformed into streaks of light that flew towards Ning. They had been keeping a close watch on this fight and had kept themselves carefully attuned to every little ripple. As soon as they heard their big brother speak to Ning, they became instantly enraged.

“Big brother, you go too far!” The white-robed man was a bit faster and as such was the first to arrive. After descending, he said angrily, “Didn’t you say you weren’t interested in Darknorth?”

“Darknorth.” When the azure-armored figure landed, he stared intently at Ning. “Don’t go be someone else’s ‘honorary’ disciple. What’s the point of being an ‘honorary’ disciple? The nine swords which my master left behind are all incredibly powerful. When they join together, they are all but invincible. Aside from the nine swords, I also have many other treasures which my master left behind for his personal disciple. As I see it, you are perfectly suited for becoming my master’s personal disciple.”

“Oh yeah? In terms of treasures, my master has even more treasures than yours!” The white-robed man said, “Darknorth, why don’t you become my master’s personal disciple instead? Our respective masters loved each other as brothers. The reason my master was ranked as the second brother was because he was second only to the Hegemon in power.”

“YOU...!” The azure-armored figure was infuriated. Who would’ve thought that at a critical moment like this, when they were supposed to be working together against their elder brother, the white-robed man would’ve suddenly ‘backstabbed’ him?

“Don’t blame me. I’ve waited far, far too long to help my master find a suitable disciple,” the white-robed man said in an innocent, ‘helpless’ manner.

“Shut your faces!” The muscular man had an icy look on his face as he finally snapped out at them, unable to keep silent any longer. He then turned to look at Ning. “It’ll be Darknorth’s decision as to who he chooses.”

To become the Hegemon's honorary disciple, or to become the personal disciple of one of the other two Eternal Emperors of the Sword? Who should he choose?

The Desolate Era

Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 36: The Hegemon's Treasures

Ji Ning couldn't help but feel his chest tighten as the three stared at him.

When both the white-robed man and the azure-armored man had attempted to stop him from progressing any further, Ning had already decided that he would need to be extremely careful in the thirty-sixth level of the Abyss of Fiends. Even those more powerful than him had perished here, after all. However, Ning was very confident in his defensive skills, and it wasn't like him to back down without a fight. He was willing to use this main clone of his to take on the risk of challenging the final level.

If he won, he would gain a tremendous fortune. And in the end... things had been much simpler than he had anticipated. Not only had he mastered his Heavenbreaker stance, he had almost automatically joined together the five sword-intents into a Samsara sword-intent!

In truth, it all made perfect sense. Ning had reached the bottleneck in all five stances of [Brightmoon] long ago. He had first broke through in the Yin-Yang stance back in the Sword Palace of the Brightshore Kingdom, then had broken through in the other four stances with increasing fluidity! The more he trained, the faster the breakthroughs came until finally, they all came together in a perfect whole – the Yin-Yang stance, the Blood Drop stance, the Shadowless stance, the Soleheart stance, and the Heavenbreaker stance!

"Senior." Ning looked at the muscular man. "I wonder if this junior qualifies to become the Hegemon's personal disciple?"

If he was going to choose, he would choose the best!

"Personal disciple?" The muscular man was startled, then let out a rare chuckle. "Quite ambitious, aren't we? However, if you wish to become the Hegemon's personal disciple you have to be acknowledged by his Universe treasure!"

"Has it refused to acknowledge me?" Ning asked.

"It hasn't said anything yet. Mm... how about this? I'll help you ask." The muscular man suddenly shut his eyes.

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Back in the outside world of the inner reaches. The 540,000 meter tall corpse of the Hegemon had been silently standing there for countless years without moving. His two hands remained perpetually clenched around the hilt of that deep blue greatsword. Suddenly, a flicker of light appeared on the surface of the greatsword as the sword let out a keening sound.

Swoosh. A figure suddenly appeared in front of the three corpses of the grandmasters of the Dao of the Sword.

“What’s going on? I’m sure I wasn’t just imagining things. I’m sure I felt a ripple just now.” A white-robed, silver-eyed man stared at the three corpses with a solemn look on his face. “Did something strange just happen?”

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The thirty-sixth level of the Abyss of Fiends.

The three volcano titans had been released by Ning long ago and had returned to their respective positions, transforming into a trio of towering volcanos once more. Ji Ning, the white-robed man, and the azure-armored man stood there upon the devastated earth, staring at the muscular man. All three of them were rather nervous. If the Universe treasure was willing to accept Ning as its master, then there was no question what Ning’s choice would be.

“I’ve asked it.” The muscular man opened his eyes.

“And? How’d it go?” Ning asked. However, he had a bad feeling about what the answer would be. If the Universe treasure had truly accepted him as its master, there would probably be some certain, special signs that would appear.

The muscular man sighed. “Your understanding of the Dao of the Sword truly is perfect, and it does indeed include the path of cultivation which the Hegemon had walked! You have the most perfect Dao of the Sword that I have ever encountered. But... that sword told me that it doesn’t like you.”

“Doesn’t... like me?” Ning was flabbergasted.

“Right. It just doesn’t like you,” the muscular man said. “It followed our master for countless years, and it likes people like Master himself; as vast and bold as the seas, and as deep and steady as the mountains. It doesn’t like your type.”

Ning was speechless.

So this was the reason the sword had no interest in him. Much like how a man might fall for a woman or vice versa, the Universe sword was only willing to accompany someone who it took a fancy towards! Clearly, the Hegemon had left a tremendous impact on it, making it strongly prefer cultivators who had the same type of personality as the Hegemon had.

“It seems that there are no ties of destiny between myself and that sword.” Ning smiled and shook his head. If it didn’t like him, there was nothing he could do. Although he was rather disappointed, he wasn’t crushed by the refusal! It was extremely difficult to convince a Universe treasure to submit to you, after all. Even Eternal Emperors dreamed of acquiring Universe treasures. Ning had mentally prepared himself to be rejected by it.

Still... despite his mental preparations, deep within his heart he couldn’t help but feel a sense of strong disappointment. “You don’t like my type, eh? Don’t like my type? I don’t like you either!”

Still, Ning himself knew that these were nothing more than words of self-consolation. This was the closest he had ever gotten to acquiring an Universe treasure, after all.

“Don’t be too disappointed, Darknorth,” the white-robed man consoled.

"Its just a Universe treasure. Our big brother is very exacting, but that Universe treasure is even more exacting. It also has a weird temper," the azure-armored man said hurriedly. "I really think you should be my master's personal disciple instead."

"Darknorth, have you decided yet?" The muscular man asked.

Ning pondered for a moment. It seemed as though he would have to choose between being the Hegemon's honorary disciple or a personal disciple of one of the two retainer Eternal Emperors.

"Seniors, can you explain to me as to which treasures I'll be able to acquire if I become the Hegemon's honorary disciple or a personal disciple of your respective masters? What techniques I'll gain? If you can tell me a bit more, I'll be better equipped to make the right decision," Ning said.

"Makes sense."

"Alright, let me explain."

"Take a look first."

All three waved their hands. Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! The formerly empty and devastated ground before them became be filled with images of magic treasures, all of which looked to be quite extraordinarily.

"I'll go first." The azure-armored figure pointed at the levitating images of the nine blood-colored swords. "First of all, you'll gain these nine precious swords. They are incomparably mighty, and it is almost impossible to buy them under normal circumstances. You'll also gain this suit of armor, this gourd, and this banner. And of course, you'll also gain Master's sword-arts legacy as well as his secret arts, divine abilities, etc."

The majority of an Eternal Emperor's treasure trove lay before Ning. Ning couldn't help but be filled with many thoughts as he stared at them.

"My turn." The white-robed man began to narrate the treasures he had to offer as he pointed at the illusions of the violet-hilted, gold-hilted, and white-hilted swords, as well as the many other treasures he had.

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The muscular man stood silently there in the rubble. Only after his second brother and third brother finished speaking did he say calmly, "I have two sets of treasures here for the two honorary disciples which Master is willing to accept. You can choose one of your liking."

"The first set includes fifty million cubes of chaos nectar! It also includes two Dao-seals which the Hegemon personally forged! It also has the sword which the Hegemon used prior to him acquiring his Universe treasure. This sword alone is worth just as much as the armaments which my second brother and my third brother have offered you. In addition, you'll also gain access to the complete sword-arts legacy which Master left behind, as well as his divine abilities and secret arts.

"The second set also includes fifty million cubes of chaos nectar, two Dao-seals which the Hegemon personally forged, and the suit of armor which the Hegemon wore when he was alive. This suit of armor has many marvelous properties, and it too is worth just as much as the armaments of his two retainers.

In addition, you'll also gain access to the complete sword-arts legacy which Master left behind, as well as his divine abilities and secret arts."

After finishing his explanation, the muscular man fell silent.

The white-robed man and the azure-armored man both looked at Ning expectantly.

As for Ning, he carefully examined each of the levitating illusions. The white-robed man and the azure-armored man had treated him very well, but this involved a tremendous fortune for him. He absolutely could not treat this decision lightly.

The other two Eternal Emperors had left virtually all of their treasures to their personal disciples. The treasures were staggering in both number and value.

In terms of valuable treasures, the two Eternal Emperors had more. But! What the Hegemon had left behind would be more of use to him! It was highly likely that no one in all the Endless Territories was a match for the deceased Hegemon with regards to the Dao of the Sword. His sword-arts legacy was something which Ning would never have a chance to learn again. The Hegemon had successfully completed his Daomerge... his sword-arts would definitely be of enormous assistance to Ning as a valuable reference.

"The best treasures are the ones which suit you the best. In addition... I'd have to find a way to sell off the treasures of the other two Eternal Emperors. The Dao-seals and chaos nectar which the Hegemon left behind are of more immediate use to me." Ning nodded.

"Forgive me, seniors," Ning said apologetically.

The white-robed man and the azure-armored man both let out sighs, looking rather forlorn. The white-robed man shook his head and smiled. "The two of us suspected that this would be your answer. The complete sword-arts legacy of a Hegemon... both of us know exactly how alluring such a thing is to a cultivator of the Dao of the Sword."

The complete sword-arts legacy of a Hegemon of the Dao of the Sword was absolutely priceless.

You might be able to find a few grandmasters of the Dao of the Sword who were on the general level of Emperor Mirrorsnow, but where would you even begin to start a search for a Hegemon-level figure? Even after Ning became a Verge-level Daolord, no sum of money would be enough for him to locate such a complete sword-arts legacy.

"Congratulations, big brother."

"Big brother, you've finally found an honorary disciple for your master." The other two both expressed congratulations. They couldn't help but secretly sigh to themselves. The two of them and their big brother had waited for far too long for a successor. The only difference was that their big brother was even more exacting than they were.

It had been countless years, but their big brother had finally chosen an honorary disciple for the Hegemon! The Hegemon would only accept a total of two honorary disciples, which meant that his honorary disciples would be treated many times better than the personal disciples of Emperor Mirrorsnow were.

The sword which the Hegemon had once wielded, the suit of armor he had once worn... both were truly priceless.

“Darknorth.” The muscular man’s lips parted as he finally revealed a rare smile. “Follow me.” He transformed into a streak of light and flew towards the distant shrine.

The Desolate Era

Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 37: The Paragon of Pills

Swoosh! Swoosh!

The muscular man and Ji Ning advanced together into the shrine.

“Eh?” Inside the shrine, Ning saw lakes of flowing lava, next to which were strange trees that seemed to be made out of fine jade. Ning couldn’t recognize where these trees came from.

Next to the lava lakes there was an ordinary-looking stone house, and there was a figure seated in the lotus position within the house. The figure sat there without moving, and from the looks of it had been there for countless chaos cycles already.

“Master.” The muscular man walked over, then said respectfully, “I’ve chosen an honorary disciple for you.”

Ning instantly realized that the figure seated in the lotus position within the stone house was most likely a fragment of the Hegemon’s will and memories which the Hegemon had left behind prior to passing.

The seated figure suddenly opened his eyes, and his eyes shone in the darkness of the stone house like a pair of two vast transversal conduits. Ning was instantly lost within his gaze.

“My disciple... if in the future you succeed in the Daomerge and gain eternity, it is my wish that you repay the grace I shall show you today you unto the Paragon of Pills.” A voice filled with complex emotions and frustration rang out from within the stone room.

Whoosh.

A streak of light instantly shot out of the seated figure and flew straight towards Ning. As soon as it touched Ning, it was instantly drawn straight into his body. As for the seated figure, it now seemed a bit dimmer and paler. Moments later, the door to the stone house rumbled shut.

Ning stood there, a series of images playing within his mind.

These images were of a muscular man who was training in sword-arts in his youth. It also included images of him becoming an Elder God, then a World God, then a Daolord, and finally an Eternal Emperor, as well as the many sword-arts involved...

The sword-arts started off weak, became stronger, and then completely surpassed Ning’s imagination. This Hegemon had reached his level after perfectly joining together two Supreme Daos. Although this wasn’t quite as impressive as what Ning had done, it wasn’t that far off either.

He became a dazzling figure that gained true eternity, and was then given the respectful title of ‘Hegemon’! Not even the most monstrously powerful of Daolords would dare to challenge an Eternal

Emperor of such power. This was because he himself was already one of the most monstrously powerful of Daolords in his era. Now that he was an Eternal Emperor, he only became even more powerful than before.

“What a powerful sword.” Ning’s eyes were unfocused and intoxicated, and his thoughts were completely filled with images of inconceivably powerful sword-arts. Some possessed such incredible magic power that they seemed to surpass the limitations of the Dao itself.

A single strike of that sword could pass through the boundaries of spacetime and slay a foe who was a hundred territories away.

A single strike of that sword could cause spacetime itself to flow backwards, allowing the wielder to go back in time. Alas, it wasn’t able to allow individuals who had perished in the past to be brought back to life.

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The Prime Reaches of the Genesis Lands of the Archaeus region of the alternate universe. This was an incredibly mysterious place, and the thirty-five Eternal Emperors who had perished here weren’t even the most important or most mysterious aspects to it.

The living Eternal Emperors didn’t care too much about the deceased ones. At most, they’d display a bit of interest in the Universe treasures. What the living Eternal Emperors truly cared about were certain mysteries that were hidden within the prime essences of the universe! They were what had allowed the master of the Church of Annihilation to rise to power, becoming the number one expert of this entire universe and unifying it under his banner.

Whoosh.

A black gauzy figure flew through the skies, moving past the primessence chains that led from the outer reaches, then flying directly into the world of the inner reaches.

“What?!”

“How is that even possible?!”

“Isn’t the only way into the inner reaches through traversing the primessence chains on foot?”

There were eighteen World-level cultivators and three Daolords standing at the outer reaches end of the primessence chains. One of those World-level cultivators was Waterlord Firesurge. Firesurge had also spent quite a bit of time wandering the outer reaches, and had also benefited greatly as a result of it. He felt that he had improved significantly, and so he wanted to once more test himself against the primessence chains. Alas, although this time he made it to the nine hundred kilometer mark, he still ended up failing.

“How can someone just fly across?” Waterlord Firesurge stared in disbelief at the gauze-clad figure that had just flown past them.

When the black, gauzy figure flew past them, it was as though spacetime itself had no hold over her whatsoever. She seemed to be drifting slowly, but in reality she moved so quickly that she almost instantly disappeared from the field of vision of the Daolords and the World-level cultivators.

“World-level cultivators and Daolords must tread the primessence chains. If not, they will be drawn into the abyss below and devoured. Only Eternal Emperors would dare to ignore the primessence chains and fly straight into the world of the inner reaches.”

“Right. That had to have been an Eternal Emperor.”

“Who was that Eternal Emperor?”

The Daolords and World-level cultivators quickly were able to guess at the status of that person. Eternal Emperors were incredibly rare and few in number. It must be understood that only two of them resided within the Genesis Lands, with one being Emperor Maniseal and the other being Emperor Northtree. That lithe figure that had flown past clearly belonged to neither of them.

“Which Eternal Emperor is it, then?”

“I’ve seen many people and many things, but I truly have no idea who that was. Could it be that a Daolord has recently completed his Daomerge and become a new Eternal Emperor? But once that happens, the news would quickly spread to the entirety of the Church of Annihilation.” The Daolords and World-level cultivators continued to make their guesses, puzzled at what had just happened, but they all memorized the appearance of that black figure. They wanted to make sure that they remembered this was a person for them to never, ever offend.

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The inner reaches. The thirty-five ancient corpses still lay scattered around this world.

The white-robed, silver-eyed man continued to stand there, silently inspecting the corpses of the three grandmasters of the sword. “I’m sure I sensed a special ripple just now... could it be that some of the legendary secrets of the prime essences are hidden here?”

The white-robed man carefully searched through every inch of the region. Anything involving the secrets of the prime essences was enough to drive any major power wild with lust. The Church of Annihilation was the perfect example of what it could bring. Who wouldn’t go crazy for something like that?

Whoosh.

A gentle wind blew, and a figure appeared.

“What?!” The white-robed man was so badly shocked that even his face turned pale. “How could someone have appeared right next to me without me sensing anything at all?”

He was a Daolord of the Fourth Step, and an extremely famous one. He had once battled an Eternal Emperor for an extremely long period of time before fleeing. He was definitely strong enough to cause many other Daolords to sigh in amazement.

He slowly turned his head to stare at the nearby figure. Roughly thirty meters away stood a slender figure who was dressed in black gauzy clothes. She emanated an aura of endless coldness and purity, and she stood there as though she herself was the genesis source of this world. Everything around her seemed to naturally submit to her will! Here, she reigned supreme.

“Primordial Starqueen... the Paragon of Pills?” The white-robed man was so horrified that his heart shuddered with fear. He hurriedly fell to his knees with respect. “This junior greets you, Starqueen.”

The highest ranking member in the Church of Annihilation was its leader and master, the one who had unified this entire universe. Second to him were the sixteen Starkings.

The sixteen Starkings were all unfathomably profound individuals, but the most powerful and mysterious members amongst their ranks were the ones known as the three Primordial Starkings! The reason why they were different from the other thirteen and were titled as ‘primordial’ was because they had been alive since the very birth of this universe.

The White Emperor was the teacher of the leader of the Church of Annihilation, and he was one of the three Primordial Starkings. As for the Paragon of Pills, she was also one of the three. She was an extremely mysterious figure who moved in mysterious ways and rarely revealed herself. It was very difficult for even Eternal Emperors to have a chance to meet with her. However, most of the high-status members of this universe all knew what she looked like.

She always dressed in black gauze and had a look of perpetual iciness about her. As for her features, they were forever be masked by a formless barrier of fog. There was no way to see her true features at all.

“What just happened here...” The black-garbed figure stared at the distant corpse of the greatsword-wielding man, complex emotions in her eyes. “Why did I suddenly feel as though something momentous happened?”

“Big brother... don’t grow too impatient. Big brother, second brother, third brother... I’ll reverse the flows of spacetime and bring all of you back to life...” The black-garbed figure murmured softly to herself. She had said these words far, far too many times. Her gaze was completely focused upon the muscular, greatsword-wielding man.

Suddenly, the look on her face changed. The aura around her began to ripple and rumble as well.

It must be understood that this place was the Prime Reaches of the Genesis Lands. This was no ordinary place! Ji Ning and the various Daolords weren’t even able to fly about here, a testament to how powerful the various restrictive forces here were. And yet... just the slightest hint of startlement from the black-garbed figure was enough to cause the aura of the surrounding area to shake and rumble. All Daos were shaking, as though wishing to retreat from her.

Where I stand, all other Daos must bend the knee!

The white-robed man’s heart shook with cold fear as he saw this. She lived up to her reputation as one of the three Primordial Starkings! In fact, according to the legends the only reason why the leader of the Church of Annihilation was able to rise to power was because the three Primordial Starkings had no interest in battle or power. The legends said that in reality, the three Primordial Starkings were just as powerful as their ‘leader’.

Of course, those were just legends! The three Primordial Starkings, however, had indeed existed since the birth of this universe. This was why everyone believed that they knew the secrets held within it.

“What’s going on? Everything was fine earlier. Nothing like this was happening.” The white-robed man was puzzled.

As for the black-garbed figure, the Paragon of Pills, she stared at the treasures placed in front of the muscular man. Others, such as Daolords, might not be able to see anything, but her gaze easily pierced through the restrictive spells and allowed her to realize that a treasure was now missing from the pile.

“A treasure has disappeared? Who took it?” The Paragon turned to scan her surroundings, causing everything within the inner reaches to fall under her gaze.

“Tell me, what happened here?” The Paragon of Pills stared intently at the white-robed man.

“I...” The white-robed man truly had no idea as to what he should say.

Whoosh.

A handsome, white-robed youth who had a longsword on his back suddenly appeared out of nowhere.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 38: The Trileaf Realm

Ji Ning had left the Abyss of Fiends and returned to the inner reaches in a wonderful mood. But then...

“Eh?” Ning stared at the two figures in front of him. Although the white-robed, silver-eyed man had an extraordinary demeanor, Ning wasn’t too surprised by his presence; the inner reaches of the Genesis Lands held quite a few Daolords of renown and power. But when he saw that slender, black-garbed figure... Ning couldn’t help but feel a sense of shock in his heart.

He wasn’t too far away from her, but Ning felt like a blind man groping for a flower within the mists. He couldn’t see what she looked like; all he could sense was an aura of incredible coldness radiating from her, so cold that it burrowed deep into his soul and caused him to quiver.

“Who is this person?” Ning was shocked. “Not even Lord Woodflower of our Sword Palace is a match for her.”

The black-garbed figure was staring at Ning as well, weighing him with a judging gaze. Her eyes seemed to see right through him and all of his secrets! Ning could sense that she was staring at him. It was a strange feeling; she was staring at him, but he couldn’t see her at all.

“So it was you.” The black-garbed figure suddenly spoke out, and her voice was just as cold and crisp as he had imagined it to be. Suddenly, she waved her sleeve.

Whoosh. Ning disappeared into thin air.

According to the rules of the Church of Annihilation, all violence was forbidden within the Genesis Lands. To forcibly abduct or teleport someone away was similarly forbidden. The nearby Daolord just stared blankly, not daring to make a sound. “Even if the leader of the Church of Annihilation found out about this, he probably wouldn’t say anything.”

The Paragon of Pills, one of the three Primordial Starkings... even if she chose to massacre everyone in the Genesis Lands, what of it?

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After making Ning disappear, the Paragon of Pills said calmly, "You may leave now."

"Yes." The silver-eyed man immediately assented respectfully, then fled at high speeds.

The Paragon of Pills raised her head, staring at the corpse of the muscular, greatsword-wielding man with an almost dazed look in her eyes. She seemed to forget about time itself as she just stared at him silently.

He had died. Died a long, long time ago. But his corpse looked just like it did when he was alive.

"Paragon of Pills." Suddenly, a voice rang out.

"Mm?" The black-garbed Paragon turned gracefully, sweeping the area behind her with her dazzling, bewitchingly beautiful eyes. Off in the distance stood a Daoist dressed in deep blue robes and a high crown. He was walking straight towards her.

"Maniseal." The Paragon's voice remained as cool as ever. "I hear you are quite talented. You've even managed to devise something known as a 'Lifeblood Dao-seal'?"

Emperor Maniseal was startled. Indeed, his greatest accomplishment in the Dao of Seals was the Lifeblood Dao-seal, but very few people knew of this. In the Church of Annihilation, the only Eternal Emperors who knew of this should've been the church's leader and the White Emperor. How was it that another one of the three Primordial Starkings, the Paragon of Pills, had found out as well?

"It seems you keep a close watch on things, Paragon." Emperor Maniseal nodded. "Then I imagine you also know why I have come here?"

"You wish to reverse the flows of spacetime to resurrect that disciple of yours?" The Paragon said.

"In terms of mastery over reversing spacetime, you are probably more skilled than anyone else in our universe," Emperor Maniseal said. "The leader of the Church and the White Emperor have made excessive demands of me. I have no other options, which is why I have come to speak to you and ask if you can consider reviving my disciple."

"I cannot save your disciple, but the leader of the Church can," the Paragon said coolly.

"Cannot save him?" Emperor Maniseal was stunned.

"To reverse the flows of spacetime and to bring back to life a being whose truesoul was extinguished... this is a violation of one of the grand Daos that sustains the entire universe," the Paragon said slowly.

"The universe continues to advance towards the future, and so to reverse the flows of spacetime is to go against the will and destiny of the universe."

"The lord of the Church of Annihilation can borrow some of the power of the prime essences of our universe and so would be able to resist the backlash from the universe. I, however, cannot," the Paragon said.

A look of disappointment appeared on Emperor Maniseal's face.

“Didn’t you say long ago that it was much easier to reverse spacetime and bring back to life those who were below the Eternal Emperor level?” Emperor Maniseal felt both impatient and heartbroken.

The Paragon of Pills gave him a cold glance. Emperor Maniseal’s heart shook.

Long, long ago, the Paragon of Pills had already risen to stand at the very apex of this universe. Back then, the leader of the Church of Annihilation had yet to rise to power, and the mightiest figures in the universe were the three Primordial Starkings.

Back then, the Paragon of Pills had done everything she could, paid every price she could pay, to try and reverse the flows of spacetime so as to bring back her big brother. Alas... in the end, she had failed. She had suffered such an incredible backlash from the universe that she herself had nearly perished as well.

Gripped by despair, she had said to the other two Primordial Starkings, “It would be much simpler if I was trying to reverse the flows of spacetime for someone below the Eternal Emperor level. But to revive someone who has gained eternity... it is far, far too hard...”

After that, the Paragon of Pills had left by herself and disappeared for a long period of time. Later on, when the lord of the Church of Annihilation had risen to power and unified the universe, he had invited the sixteen Starkings to join his organization. It was only then that the Paragon of Pills had appeared once more.

“Do not try to reverse the flows of spacetime to revive your disciple. Aside from the lord of the Church of Annihilation, no one can accomplish this task.” The Paragon’s voice was chilly. “I... I cannot bring anyone back at all.”

Emperor Fubo knew that he could no longer ask any more questions. This was the only female member of the three Primordial Starkings, and she was unfathomably strong. All three of the Primordial Starkings were on very good terms with each other. When the Paragon of Pills had sought to revive her brothers, the other two had sacrificed quite a bit in their attempts to help her succeed.

As a matter of face, reversing spacetime to revive someone was something of a taboo topic for the Paragon of Pills. The only reason she had been willing to tell Emperor Maniseal so much was because pitied him as someone who shared the same desires as her, due to his wish to bring his disciple back to life.

“Just now, I sensed that after you came here you abducted a young fellow,” Emperor Maniseal said with a smile. “Is that young fellow your big brother’s successor?”

“Maniseal.” The Paragon gave Emperor Maniseal a hard glance. “I’m warning you right now that you are not to get involved in the affairs of juniors.”

“I know that, of course! If there’s anything you need, Paragon, you can just let me know. I’ll do everything I can to assist.” Emperor Maniseal smiled as he produced a strange jade seal that was a mixture of black and white colors. “Consider this Dao-seal as my gift to that young fellow.”

The Paragon glanced at it, the corners of her lips curving upwards slightly. She waved her hand, accepting the talisman.

“No need to send me off.” The Paragon of Pills turned and gracefully departed.

Emperor Maniseal watched as the Paragon disappeared off into the distance, then revealed a hint of a smile. "The Hegemon of the Dao of the Sword... it has been countless years since he passed away. This should be his very first successor."

When the Hegemon had perished, he had set down certain restrictive spells around himself. No one from the outside would be able to see any changes, but those who were able to see through the restrictive spells would be able to see just how many treasures lay hidden behind them.

Long, long ago, the Paragon of Pills had first risen to fame due to her mastery over alchemy. This was why she was respectfully titled the Paragon of Pills. In this universe, she was publicly acclaimed as the number one alchemist, and no one had ever surpassed her in this regard. She was naturally far superior to her big brother in terms of restrictive spells, and so she was able to see through it with ease.

As for Emperor Maniseal, he was the undisputed number one master of the Dao of Seals. As a result, in mastery over restrictive spells at least, he was somewhat superior to the deceased Hegemon.

Both of them were able to see through the restrictive spells and note the number of remaining treasures. However, neither of them dared to take the treasures by force. If they did, they would suffer an attack from the power of the entire Prime Reaches... and the Prime Reaches was where the prime essences of the entire universe lay. This would represent a strike from the entire universe, a strike of incalculable power.

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Ning was now within an estate-world. This world was merely a few hundred kilometers in size, and there was no way out of it.

"Why was I captured and brought to this place? That woman... did she act with malice in mind, or was she motivated by good intentions?" This had been completely unexpected. He hadn't even had the chance to celebrate the fact that he had become the Hegemon's honorary disciple and gained his treasures. Instead, he had almost instantly been abducted by this new power.

Someone actually dared to attack him within the inner reaches? That had to mean she was at least at the Eternal Emperor level.

"What will be, will be. Not like there's any way for me to avoid it." Ning understood that given how this major power had been able to abduct him without him being able to put up any resistance at all... there was no way he could fight back against her.

Whoosh.

Ning could sense himself being surrounded by an enormous surge of power. Moments later, the world around him changed.

"Where am I?" Ning stared up ahead. He was in an area of endless darkness. The only thing within this region was a strange, five-colored space bridge. Aside from this five-colored space bridge, there was nothing but darkness. As for Ning himself, he was standing atop the bridge. Next to him was that slender, black-garbed figure.

“We’ve already left the Archaeus region. Soon, we’ll reach the Trileaf Realm.” The black-garbed figure spoke out, and the five-colored space bridge beneath their feet was advancing through the darkness at incredible speeds.

They were travelling countless trillions of kilometers with every moment. They were moving far faster than Prince Greatjoy’s teleporting abilities could handle.

“Left the Archaeus region?” Ning was flabbergasted. Weren’t they in the Genesis Lands just now? He spent nearly ten thousand freaking years travelling through the Archaeus region and into the Genesis Lands. How the hell did they suddenly leave it in an instant? He felt as though it hadn’t even been enough time to boil a kettle of tea. This level of speed was ridiculous.

“Senior, dare I ask... what exactly is this Trileaf Realm?” Ning asked.

“My place.” The Paragon of Pills gave a calm response.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 39: A Half-Month Loan

The five-colored space bridge continued to stretch off into the distance, easily traversing the boundaries of both space and time. Just a short while later, a world that looked like an Immortal’s abode appeared before them, vast and beautiful.

“This place is the Trileaf Realm. Long ago, I chose a location within the Sea of Bitter Darkness and established a world within it. Ever since then, I have been living here.” The Paragon of Pills said in a cold voice, “The Trileaf Realm is a fairly well-hidden place. You probably have never heard of it before today. In the future, you may visit whenever you so desire.”

Ji Ning relaxed slightly. It seemed as though this mysterious major power was treating him quite well. “Senior, are you planning to let me leave this place?”

“Of course. Do you think you’ll be able to succeed in your Daomerge and gain eternity just by sitting here instead of going out adventuring?” The Paragon glanced sideways at Ning. “Don’t worry. I’ve brought you here for certain reasons. Once I’m finished, I’ll naturally let you go on your way. In the future, you can enter and exit this place freely! Although it’s quite difficult for outsiders to enter my Trileaf Realm, things are different for you. You are the disciple of my old friend, and you can thus be considered one of the juniors in my lineage.”

Ji Ning said, “Thank you, senior.” Only then was Ning in the mood to spend some time inspecting this Trileaf Realm. From the outside, it looked like an enormous world that was being held up by a trio of blooming leaves. This world was so vast that it was countless times greater than most of the land masses Ning had encountered thus far.

“Do you know why it is named the Trileaf Realm?” The Paragon of Pills suddenly asked.

“Is it because of those three enormous leaves that are holding up the world? Is that why it is named the Trileaf Realm?” Ning guessed.

The Paragon slowly shook her head, but she didn’t explain.

Swoosh!

The Paragon led Ning to fly downwards into the beautiful fairyland world below them.

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The Archaeus region. The Genesis Lands. The outer reaches.

A streak of fire suddenly flew out of a secret region. Su Youji was dressed in her usual fiery red robes, and her entire body was bathed in flames that were shaped like a bird of some sort.

"I can't sense Master's aura any longer. Why can't I sense his aura? I could sense that he was in the inner reaches just a short while ago." Su Youji stared towards the inner reaches, a look of restless unease in her eyes. In the moment that the Paragon pulled Ning away, Su Youji had lost her ability to sense Ning's location.

Ning had given her a message-talisman, and she had given him one of hers. Theoretically speaking, the two would be able to constantly sense where the other was located and could meet up whenever they chose.

"Why have I suddenly lost all contact with him? What should I do. What should I do?" Su Youji felt extremely uneasy. This uneasy feeling had actually caused her to give up adventuring through the secret region she had been in, and give up on her chances to acquire the treasures within that region.

Su Youji transformed into a streak of light, repeatedly teleporting forwards as she moved towards the inner reaches at high speeds.

A short while later.

"Firesurge!" A group of cultivators was clustered together at the outer reaches end of the primessence chains, and Waterlord Firesurge was with them.

"Fellow Daoist Firesurge." Su Youji immediately landed, then called out to him respectfully.

"Flamefairy?" Seeing her, Firesurge immediately rose to his feet and asked curiously, "Flamefairy, why have you come here? Judging from the worried look on your face... what exactly has happened?"

"It's my master." Su Youji said worriedly, "I can sense that Master vanished. I feel very uneasy, which is why I immediately came over here. Have you seen my master, fellow Daoist Firesurge?"

Firesurge shook his head. "I haven't seen Darknorth since he entered the inner reaches. Did you just say that you lost contact with him, all of a sudden?"

"Right." Su Youji nodded hurriedly. "But his message-talisman is still with me, and it's completely undamaged."

If Ning had died, then the message-talisman should've sensed it and then shattered apart.

"So the talisman isn't damaged, right?" Firesurge asked.

"It did not." Su Youji nodded.

"The world of the inner reaches is filled with many different dangers," Firesurge said. "This is, after all, the place where this entire universe was birthed. It is highly possible that Darknorth might have found

himself trapped in some location which prevents anyone outside of it from contacting him. It is highly likely that your master is still alive. But of course, for it to be able to sever all contact means it is definitely an extraordinary location. It's also possible that your master..."

Su Youji's heart trembled. This was exactly what she was afraid of. Ji Ning had been in the inner reaches for many years now, and she had been able to sense his presence this entire time! The same was true for Heartlord Solewind and his own retainer, Chaos Immortal Swallowback. Now, even Prince Greatjoy had gone into the inner reaches, with his retainer World Goddess Skywolf able to sense his presence.

But now... all of a sudden, she could no longer sense where Ji Ning was! Something must've gone wrong!

"Wait a bit longer. From what I've heard, World-level cultivators generally won't spend too much time in the inner reaches," Firesurge said. "Let's just wait a few thousand more years and see if he ends up coming out."

"Alright." Su Youji nodded slowly. There was nothing else she could do. "Thank you, fellow Daoist Firesurge." Su Youji immediately chose a quiet corner and then sat down in the lotus position. Her mind was now restless, and she was in no mood to continue adventuring. Still... she had already made shockingly great gains during her previous adventures in the outer reaches.

"Master, you have to live." Su Youji's feelings towards Ning were very complex. Ning was extremely powerful, and he had also saved her on numerous occasions. She couldn't help but feel a sense of love and admiration for him, but she could also sense that he had someone else in his heart. As a result, Su Youji had always been hesitant and unable to voice her feelings for him.

.....

Deep within the Sea of Bitter Darkness, there lay the Trileaf Realm.

A few ripples appeared in front of an ancient, pitch-black building. From the ripples emerged a pair of figures; the Paragon of Pills and Ji Ning.

"This is my estate." The Paragon of Pills spoke calmly as she advanced.

Ji Ning followed her from behind. Rather curious, he asked, "Senior, why is it that I don't see any other cultivators within this estate?" There wasn't even so much as a gateguard. This truly was quite odd.

"I prefer the peace and quiet. I dislike being disturbed by others," the Paragon said coolly.

"Oh." Ning nodded.

If any of the other major powers of the Trileaf Realm saw how their exalted, transcendent leader, the Paragon of Pills, was casually carrying on a conversation with a mere World-level cultivator, they would almost certainly be stupefied by this. The Paragon of Pills was famous for her cold indifference! She generally wouldn't even pay any attention to most Eternal Emperors.

The reason she chatted a bit with Emperor Maniseal was because he was very powerful as well as a person who was struggling hard to revive his beloved disciple. This was why the Paragon of Pills treated him differently.

Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh.

In front of them was an enormous pill cauldron. Next to the pill cauldron there was a vast lake that was a hundred kilometers in size, and above the lake there was a waterfall that thundered downwards towards it.

“Is that...” Ning stared at the lakes in utter astonishment. “Is th-th-th-that all chaos nectar?”

A hundred kilometer lake that was completely composed of chaos nectar? Ning was rather dazed. How much chaos nectar was that?!

“Do you understand alchemy?” The Paragon of Pills looked at Ning.

“I do not.” Ning shook his head.

“If you did, you would understand. Chaos nectar is incredibly important to the creation of pills, and it is chaos nectar which gives our pills their various magical properties. Chaos nectar can give birth to life itself; in fact, it can give birth to all things. It is an indispensable part of alchemy,” the Paragon said. “An exceedingly vast amount of chaos nectar is used up with the creation of every highly valuable pill. That’s why I just went ahead and set up an entire lake of it here. It makes it easier for me to withdraw as much as I need when I engage in my alchemy.”

Ning was secretly speechless. Although the deceased Hegemon had prepared fifty million cubes of chaos nectar for his honorary disciples, that sum couldn’t even come close to the amount of chaos nectar in this hundred kilometer lake.

The Paragon of Pills continued to walk forwards. They quickly arrived at a stone dais before the enormous pill cauldron, whereupon she sat down in the lotus position and turned her gaze towards Ning.

“There’s something I would ask of you,” the Paragon of Pills said.

“Pray tell, senior.” Ning nodded respectfully.

“I know that you have gained a legacy from the Hegemon. The Hegemon’s suit of armor should be with you,” the Paragon said.

Ning felt a great sense of shock. Even this was known to her?

“Yes.” Ning didn’t try to play any games with her at all. He immediately nodded.

“That suit of armor...” The Paragon hesitated for a moment, then continued, “Loan it to me for a month.”

“Loan?” Ning was secretly speechless. If she wanted to take it from him, there would’ve been nothing he could do.

Ning willed it, and a streak of light immediately flew out from his body and coalesced within his hands into the form of an ancient, unadorned suit of armor. This suit of armor had an aura that was as deep and profound as that of a fathomless abyss. It was as though an enormous mountain was lying within Ning’s palms.

When the Paragon of Pills saw that ancient suit of armor appear within Ning's palms, she couldn't help but tremble.

"Senior." Ning stretched his hand out, causing the ancient suit of armor to fly out towards her.

The Paragon of Pills slowly accepted the armor, placing it across her lap. She gently stroked it with her hands, her fingers shaking uncontrollably. She murmured something softly to herself, but Ning wasn't able to hear what she was saying at all.

"Can you tell me if the Hegemon told you anything when he transferred this legacy to you? Did he mention anyone?" The Paragon of Pills asked softly.

"The Hegemon did not say much to me. He only said a single thing." Ning didn't try to hide it at all. "He said: 'My disciple... if in the future you succeed in the Daomerge and gain eternity, it is my wish that you repay the grace I shall show you today you unto the Paragon of Pills.'"

Ning still had no idea that this black-garbed woman was the Paragon of Pills.

The Paragon's heart shook.

Two crystalline tears suddenly dripped down from her face. They landed on the suit of armor, then broke apart into many tiny fragments. However, the mist surrounding her made it impossible for Ning to see this at all.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 40: [Seven Leafpill

The Paragon of Pills was silent for a long moment. She then said, "I'm borrowing this suit of armor for half a month, but I will compensate you for it. I can agree to one request of yours, so long as it isn't too excessive. Think it over. Even if you ask for a golem as strong as a Daolord of the Fourth Step, I can make it happen. Once you decide, simply tell me what you desire."

Ji Ning felt a surge of joy in his heart. Loaning out the suit of armor brought with it such a high 'interest'? *Senior, why don't you borrow it for nine or ten years instead?* But of course, he didn't say that aloud.

"You'll only have a single opportunity to make such a request of me. Choose wisely," the Paragon said.

"Right." Ning nodded, lost in thought. What should he ask for? Treasures? But he already had the Hegemon's armor, fifty million cubes of chaos nectar, and the Hegemon's Dao-seals... asking for more treasure really wouldn't make that much of a difference to him. The only thing which really mattered would be something which would have a significant effect on his future growth.

"Senior." Ning's eyes suddenly lit up as he stared at the enormous nearby cauldron. "Given the enormous cauldron and this enormous custom-made lake of chaos nectar, I imagine you are highly skilled in the art of alchemy, right?"

"Right." The Paragon nodded. "In terms of alchemy... there is no one in this entire universe who is a match for me. Even in the art of creating golems, I would definitely rank in the top three."

Ning was badly startled by this. What a tremendous claim to make! Only someone who felt completely confident in their skills would dare to claim that no one else in the entire universe would be a match for them.

“Senior, if you are skilled in alchemy...” Ning nodded. “Can you transmit some alchemy techniques to me?”

“Alchemy techniques?” The Paragon looked at Ning. “In the world of alchemy, such techniques are generally considered secret and are never taught to outsiders. You wish to study alchemy?”

Ning shook his head, willing his Dao lightning and his Dao water to fly out from his body. “Please take a look at them, senior. This junior has learned a certain secret art that can allow Dao lightning to join together in a marvelous fashion, almost like the formation of a new pill. When mastered, it will allow me to perfectly merge together nine types of Dao lightning into my ‘Novessence Thunder’! It’ll be so incredibly strong that I will be able to slay even Daolords of the Fourth Step with it. However, actually training in this secret art is incredibly difficult, and my understanding of the art of alchemy is too lacking.”

“To use divine lightning as the ingredients for this secret art... the person who created this secret art can be considered as having gained a basic level of insight into the true art of alchemy.” The Paragon of Pills nodded.

Ning was speechless. Daolord Allgod had only gained a ‘basic level of insight’ into alchemy? And the scary thing was... compared to this woman, who proclaimed herself to be the most talented alchemist in this entire universe, Daolord Allgod probably truly had indeed only gained a ‘basic’ understanding of alchemy.

“I almost never teach my alchemy techniques to others.” The Paragon of Pills hesitated momentarily. She once more gently brushed her fingers against the armor in her lap, then said, “And to date, I’ve only taught it to my three disciples. Today, you shall be the fourth to receive my alchemy techniques. Remember – without my permission, you are not to teach it to outsiders. Anyone who spends even a little bit of time training in this technique will become an expert in alchemy, and will be at least as skilled as the person who created this secret art of yours. If you were to spend a bit of time and effort on my technique, you would be able to easily surpass him.”

Ning was speechless once again. Surpass Daolord Allgod in the Dao of Alchemy?

“Memorize this.” The Paragon of Pills waved her hand. Instantly, a deep-green rune that was shaped almost like a bamboo leaf flew out of her and towards Ning. As soon as it touched Ning, it instantly began to burrow its way into Ning’s memories.

A long time later, the process finally came to an end. Everything was memorized.

A new technique was now present within Ning’s mind. Its name was the [Seven Leafpill Chapters], and when Ning looked at it he felt as though he had been enlightened with perfect wisdom. The purest truths and the greatest of Daos could be described very simply. Just by reading through the technique once, Ning’s insights into the Dao of Alchemy began to skyrocket. Most likely, he was now already comparable to World God Pillsaint in alchemy!

The reason for this was mainly because the [Seven Leafpill Chapters] were simply incredible. But of course, it was also because Ning himself had reached a high level of comprehension in his own Daos.

“B-but...” Ning stared at the Paragon of Pills, somewhat at a loss for words. “All this junior wished for was a few pill-making techniques.”

“Just accept what you have been given,” the Paragon instructed. “If you wish, you can spend the free time you have training in alchemy. It might help inspire you with regards to your swordplay as well.”

“Understood,” Ning said respectfully.

The [Seven Leafpill Chapters] constituted a very complete and perfect alchemy system. It included detailed explanations regarding countless marvelous objects, as well as many different ways by which one could concoct alchemical medicines. Pills like the Pseudo Samsara Pill were actually considered fairly common, low-level pills. The types of pill-making techniques which Ning had wanted for his [Novessence Thunder] technique merely constituted a small portion of what the [Seven Leafpill Chapters] contained.

The Paragon of Pills continued, “Now that you have accepted my techniques... in the future, if you meet people who are extremely skilled in alchemy, if you so choose you may transmit the very first chapter of the [Seven Leafpill Chapters] to them on my behalf! If they are able to completely master the first chapter, you may then transmit the second chapter. If this person is able to master all three of the first chapters, send that person here to me. Remember – when you help me choose future disciples, you are only permitted to teach them the first three chapters. Although the first three chapters are profound and abstruse, they aren’t as valuable as the other four. I have to meet any potential disciple in person and be the one to decide whether or not I will teach them those chapters.”

“Understood,” Ning said respectfully. “This junior has already sworn a lifeblood oath on it.”

The Paragon of Pills slowly shook her head. Due to her connection to the deceased Hegemon, she treated Ning very differently from the way she treated anyone else. She didn’t want to force Ning to swear any lifeblood oaths.

However... although she hadn’t requested it of him, Ning knew what was the proper way to act. This was a truly shocking, earth-shaking technique. If he one day was to encounter a powerful foe who was able to forcibly soulscour him and steal this technique, then Ning truly would have done wrong by her! But of course, Ning also believed that there weren’t many who would be capable of soulscouring him, especially since he would quickly break through to become a Daolord once he returned to the Endless Territories. By then, he would become even more powerful than he was now.

“Take this Dao-seal. This seal was gifted to you by Emperor Maniseal.” The Paragon of Pills tossed a black-white seal made from jade over to him.

Ning accepted it, rather startled. “Emperor Maniseal asked you to give it to me? B-but... I don’t even know him...” Ning was so startled that he forgot to respectfully address her as ‘senior’.

“He doesn’t know you, but he does know me,” the Paragon of Pills said calmly. “This Dao-seal is fairly valuable. It is of no use to me, but it will be of great use to you. By giving you this Dao-seal, he has sown the seeds of good karma with me.”

Ning felt even more puzzled. *If he wanted to sow the seeds of good karma with you, why would he give a Dao-seal to me?* What exactly was the connection between himself and this mysterious alchemist? Still... for even this woman to refer to this Dao-seal as 'fairly valuable' meant that it had to be truly extraordinary.

"Once you send your senses into this Dao-seal, you will know how it is used," the Paragon said.

"Oh. OH!. T-this..." Ning was shocked by what he uncovered. What a terrifying Dao-seal!

This Dao-seal was named the 'Lifeblood' Dao-seal. All one had to do was store a drop of blood within it, then hide it in a safe place. Once you perished, you would instantly be reborn from the Dao-seal and the drop of blood within it, no matter what how far away you had died! This... this was equivalent to an extra life!

Right now, Ning had multiple clones of his true body, true, but once he became a Daolord all of his true body's clones would have to merge together. By then, he would only have his true body and his Primaltwin. If his true body died after that, it would truly be dead. There would be no way to bring it back at all.

This Dao-seal represented a second life for a Daolord. If you died, you would be able to immediately come back to life. However, the inconceivable power hidden within this Dao-seal would be completely consumed after a single usage.

"This Dao-seal is simply incredible. It can actually offer a Daolord a second life!" Ning couldn't help but sigh in amazement.

What he didn't realize was that this was merely one of the early prototypes which Emperor Maniseal had created. Emperor Maniseal himself had Lifeblood Dao-seals which could give even Eternal Emperors a second chance at life! However, those Dao-seals were incredibly valuable; there was no way Emperor Maniseal would simply hand them out as gifts! All he wanted to do this time was to give Ning a gift and thus befriend the Paragon of Pills.

In the future, if he needed to ask her for help, it would be a bit easier for him. It must be understood that the Paragon of Pills truly had poured tremendous amounts of effort into learning the intricacies of reversing spacetime. In this respect, she truly was one of the most skilled experts of all.

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"Whoosh." Suddenly, a golden-robed figure flew over towards them.

"Master." The golden-robed figure called out respectfully.

"This is my retainer." The Paragon glanced at Ning, then instructed, "Yuhong, lead Darknorth in finding a residence for himself. Also – you are not to reveal to anyone the relationship between the two of us!"

"Understood," the golden-robed elder said respectfully.

"Darknorth." The Paragon looked at Ning. "The Trileaf Realm has a total of five Eternal Emperors within it, and all five of them are my retainers. Spend some time exploring this realm. I trust it will be of some benefit to you! When you wish to leave, simply let Yuhong know and he will escort you away from here. As for the armor, I'll return it to you within half a month."

“Understood,” Ning said, but he couldn’t help but feel secretly stunned. Five Eternal Emperor retainers? Even the almighty Hegemon of the Brightshore Kingdom only had a few Eternal Emperors under his command, right? Was this person before him someone who was on the same level of power as the almighty Hegemon himself?

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 41: Rapid Improvements

“Go,” the Paragon of Pills instructed.

The golden-robed elder and Ji Ning both bowed respectfully, then departed.

As for the Paragon, she simply sat there in the lotus position, head lowered as she stared at the ancient armor. She murmured softly to herself, “Big brother...”

Long, long ago, the Paragon of Pills had personally fashioned this suit of armor, then given it to the person whom she loved the most, her ‘big brother’. The Hegemon had worn it his entire life. Now, as she gently caressed the armor, she felt as though she could sense his presence.

The Paragon shut her eyes, then casually lay down on the ground and nestled her head against the ancient armor. Just like that... she fell asleep.

She was the only person in that entire ancient estate. It was deathly silent here. Without her permission, not even her retainers would dare to enter this place. Long, long ago, she had lived here alongside the Hegemon. Back then, their second brother and third brother had often teased the two of them for being such a pair of lovebird Dao-companions.

And now... she was the only one left.

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After departing from the Paragon’s estate, Ning was led away by Yuhong and the two teleported to an estate that was at the top of a mountain.

“This is my own residence.” Daolord Yuhong smiled. “There are quite a few empty manors around here. Choose whichever one you like, Darknorth. Those three over there, the five over there, and also those two over there... all of them are empty.”

Ning swept the area with his gaze, then pointed at a distant manor which was located halfway up a mountain. “That one.”

“I’ll arrange for some servants to go there. Just let me know if there’s anything you need.” Daolord Yuhong smiled. “I’m quite familiar with the Trileaf Realm.”

“Dare I ask...” Ning suddenly asked something which had been puzzling him. “Who was that lady who brought me here to this place?”

“You don’t even know what my master is named?” Daolord Yuhong was quite shocked. His master was an incredibly exalted figure. For her to personally bring a World-level cultivator like Darknorth to her

residence meant that she viewed him in a very special way. How was it that this kid didn't even know what her name was?

"No idea. I didn't dare ask," Ning said.

"If you stay here in the Trileaf Realm long enough, you'll find out. It's not really a secret. Master was the one who created the entire Trileaf Realm," Daolord Yuhong said. "My master is one of the three Primordial Starkings of the Church of Annihilation, the Paragon of Pills."

Ning's eyes instantly bulged out. "P-P-Paragon of Pills?"

When the deceased Hegemon had transmitted his legacy to Ning, he had said: "My disciple... if in the future you succeed in the Daomerge and gain eternity, it is my wish that you repay the grace I shall show you today you unto the Paragon of Pills."

So the mysterious, powerful woman was actually the Paragon of Pills!

"No wonder she treated me in such a special manner," Ning mused. "The dead Hegemon and the Paragon of Pills clearly had a very special relationship! Both he and the other thirty-five Eternal Emperors all perished in the Prime Reaches of the Genesis Lands... I imagine the Paragon of Pills knows all the secrets behind their deaths."

"My master is extremely skilled in alchemy. In the Dao of Alchemy, she is the undisputed number one expert of our entire universe. The second-ranked figure has perhaps a tenth of Master's skills in alchemy. The ten most dazzlingly famous pills and medicines in this entire universe were all forged by Master," Daolord Yuhong said smugly. "You can imagine for yourself how incredibly talented my master is in the Dao of Alchemy."

"And that's not her only skill. Although she hasn't spent as much effort in artificing and golem-making, she still ranks as one of the top three experts in this universe." Daolord Yuhong suddenly added smugly, "Her retainer, 'Emperor Gonflame,' once studied the art of artificing under her. He has now surpassed her in this regard, and is considered the number one expert in artificing within our universe. When Master told you to go explore the Trileaf Realm, I'm sure that her true goal was for you to go pay a visit to Emperor Gonflame. Cultivators need to be able to acquire suitable weapons, after all. The weapons of others will never be a perfect fit for you; only a custom-forged weapon that was made for you personally will be an ideal fit."

Ning was secretly speechless. Clearly, the Trileaf Realm had a truly transcendent status within this universe.

The Paragon of Pills was this universe's foremost expert in alchemy. Her retainer, Emperor Gonflame, was its foremost expert in artificing.

But of course, although it had a transcendent status, what really mattered in the world of major powers was power itself! The lord of the Church of Annihilation had been able to unify his universe thanks to his overwhelmingly great power. Emperor Gonflame might be the number one artificer and weaponsmith, but he was still just a retainer. The reason why he and the other four Eternal Emperors were all willing to be retainers to the Paragon was because of her incredible strength! Similarly, the reason why

Emperor Maniseal had gifted Ning a Dao-seal via the Paragon in order to befriend her was because of how strong she was.

“Where does Emperor Gonflame live?” Ning asked.

“Take a look over there.” Daolord Yuhong pointed towards a distant inferno that towered through the heavens. The skies themselves were bathed a fiery red color. “That right there is Emperor Gonflame’s residence. Go pay a visit when you have some free time.”

Ning nodded. “Then I’ll go back to my own residence for now.”

“Come find me if there’s anything you need.” Daolord Yuhong smiled warmly. He certainly wouldn’t dare to treat Ning in a negligent manner.

Ning immediately transformed into a streak of light as he flew towards his own estate.

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The estate already had a number of servants within it. When they saw Ning descend from the skies, they all bowed respectfully. “Greetings, Master.”

Ning nodded and smiled at them. “Carry on with your normal tasks. Do not disturb me unless I call for you.”

“Yes, Master,” they all acknowledged.

Ning immediately entered the estate. As he had descended, he had instantly sent out a stream of Immortal energy and bound the estate to him. Cultivators would only feel at ease if they were in complete control of the estate they were residing in! But of course, when Ning left he would naturally disperse the binding seal he had laid upon the estate.

Ning strode forwards through his estate.

Rumble... a stone door within the estate swung open.

Ning entered the room. Past the stone door was a circular stone disc that was covered with many divine runes. Ning immediately walked forwards, then sat down in the lotus position atop the stone disc. He could sense ripples of power emanate out from the disc to cover him and his heart, causing him to completely calm down. Moments later, the giant stone door swung shut once more.

This was the estate’s meditation room.

Ning shut his eyes and began to visualize his body.

Within his Jindan chaos region.

A towering Dao-tree that was 108,000 meters high was here. This tree symbolized Ning’s insights into the Dao of the Sword. In truth, he could break through to the Daolord level whenever he wanted, allowing his Dao-tree to surpass that limit! Ning had actually already reached the World level in many different Daos, such as wind, fire, lightning, and space, but he hadn’t been able to cause new Dao-trees to form for them within his Jindan chaos region.

Crackle! Boom!

The region was filled with flickering lightning essences and gushing water essences that bubbled with power.

“Arise.” The azureflower mist energy spread out, easily taking control over two streaks of Dao lightning. These were the two easiest types of Dao lightning to control; Watersmoke Lightning and Firecloud Lightning.

Slowly, the two streaks of Dao lightning began to transform. The fire and the water merged together, producing a single stream of deep azure lightning.

He had succeeded in merging two types of Dao lightning!

“Too easy.” Ning himself was shocked at how easy it had felt. It had been as easy as breathing.

“I’ll go straight to three types.” Ning was brimming with confidence. Logically speaking, he should’ve first left behind a ‘seed’ for the dual-essence thunder, but he was so confident that he couldn’t even be bothered to do so. He went straight to a tri-essence thunder.

One of the giant golden hands was gripping the bi-essence thunder, while the other golden hand picked up a strand of Earthfiend Lightning. The two quickly began to merge together...

Completing the tri-essence thunder was more than ten times as difficult as completing the bi-essence thunder.

Still... step by step, Ning managed to use the [Novessence Thunder] technique to finalize his tri-essence thunder! The tri-essence thunder was a streak of deep yellow lightning. When the lightning spread out, it contained so much power that it was clearly significantly than the seven types of Dao lightning and Dao water added together.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 42: Quadressence Water

A full day passed in the blink of an eye.

For now, Ji Ning resided within a side pavilion within the estate. He just sat there, staring past the railing towards the beautiful scene of the Trileaf Realm outside.

Whoosh. Ning stretched out a finger, causing a strand of deep yellow lightning to jump out from his fingertip. It looked absolutely beautiful, but it contained terrifying amounts of power.

Ning then stretched out a second finger. From this finger, a thin stream of water came pouring out, swirling around his fingertip. The water emanated a beautiful, gemlike aura of green light, but its power was on a slightly lower level than that of the lightning. And yet, a powerful Daolord of the First Step who was touched by this stream of water would be instantly frozen into an ice statue. Even his truesoul would be frozen solid, then crumble into tiny bits.

This was the quadressence Dao water Ning had been able to create.

“Lightning is brutal and wild. To tame and control lightning is more difficult than taming and controlling water.” Ning nodded slowly. “For now, creating tri-essence thunder is my limit. To master quadressence thunder is far too difficult.”

Both the lightning and the water could go up to the ‘novessence’ level. However, the difficulty level would skyrocket with each additional essence. According to what Daolord Allgod had said, a Daolord of the First Step would be able to just barely master the tri-essence thunder. A Daolord of the Second Step had a chance to master the pentessence thunder, a Daolord of the Third Step might be able to master the heptessence thunder, while a Daolord of the Fourth Step would be able to master the complete Novessence Thunder! Ning was still merely at the World level. It was all thanks to the azureflower mist energy and the [Seven Leafpill Chapters] that he was able to master the tri-essence thunder.

“For now, my most powerful killing attack is once more the ‘Yin-Yang Sword Domain’.” Ning couldn’t help but let out a laugh. This was clearly a defensive technique, but because of his upgrade powerful multi-essence Dao water and Dao lightning it was now his most powerful killing technique as well!

“Oh, right.” Ning waved his hand, causing a figure to appear out of nowhere. It was World God Pillsaint, and he had a rather blank look on his face. He was dressed in loose red robes. A smear of grease could be seen on his red lips and his white teeth.

“Oh, Master.” World God Pillsaint started to laugh when he saw Ning. “I was wondering what was going on. I was in the middle of a meal when the world around me suddenly changed.”

“You might’ve been having fun stuffing your face with food, but I’ve been freaking out for quite some time now.” Ning laughed. When he had been abducted by the Paragon of Pills, he truly had felt quite nervous. Thankfully, it had been a good thing in the end.

“What happened?” World God Pillsaint was rather puzzled as he scanned his surroundings. “And where are we? And right, where is Youji? Didn’t you have a number of comrades travelling with you, Master? Why are you sitting here by yourself? Heeeeey... and it seems as though you have some servants here as well.”

Ning shook his head. “Good lord, you talk a lot. Just shut your mouth for a moment.”

World God Pillsaint immediately fell silent.

“I asked you to come out because I wanted to bestow some good fortune upon you,” Ning said.

“Good fortune?” World God Pillsaint was puzzled.

“Right. Don’t fight back.” As Ning spoke, he reached out with a finger and tapped Pillsaint on his forehead.

Ning directly transmitted the first chapter of the [Seven Leafpill Chapters] directly into Pillsaint’s mind. According to what the Paragon of Pills had said, Ning was at most permitted to transmit the first three chapters to certain people of his choosing! If Pillsaint was able to learn the first three chapters in a fairly short period of time, Ning would be permitted to bring Pillsaint before the Paragon, at which point he might earn a truly great opportunity for himself.

Ning had to do this right away. Once they went back to their own universe, it would most likely be close to impossible for them to return to this universe again.

A long while later...

“Wow. T-t-this is... this is absolutely inconceivable. Inconceivable! This is TRUE alchemy! Absolutely incredible! Compared to this, the crap I learned in the past can’t even be called alchemy!” World God Pillsaint began to scream with excitement.

Ning couldn’t help but start to laugh upon seeing this.

“This is simply marvelous! You can actually use alchemy like this?! A completely new world, a completely new Dao of Alchemy, has opened up before my eyes!” Pillsaint only grew increasingly excited as he spoke. He stared at Ning, his eyes blazing with excitement. “But Master... it seems as though you only transmitted part of a complete technique to me?”

“Yes, this is just the first chapter,” Ning said.

“And the rest?” Pillsaint was extremely excited. Alchemy and pill-making was his area of specialty. He was already delirious with joy upon having received the first chapter of the [Seven Leafpill Chapters], a supreme, sacred manual for the Dao of Alchemy.

“After you fully master the first chapter, I’ll naturally transmit the second chapter to you,” Ning said.

“Second chapter? Does that mean there’s also a third chapter? And a fourth chapter?” Pillsaint was so excited that his face had turned beet-red. “Who created this alchemy technique? My master was a Daolord who was extremely skilled in alchemy and quite famous, but compared to what you just transmitted to me... he is way, way, waaaay inferior! I insist on becoming apprenticed to the person who created this technique!”

Ning shook his head. “You might want to become that person’s apprentice, but that person might not want to accept you. Calm down and focus on learning the technique I just transmitted to you, and you might have a chance in the future.”

“Right, right!” Pillsaint nodded repeatedly.

“Master.” Pillsaint suddenly fell to his knees, intending to kowtow.

Ning was stunned. He hurriedly lifted Pillsaint back up to his feet. “Pillsaint, what are you doing?!”

“Master, you might not understand what this alchemy technique represents. To me... this is a new path, a new Dao that leads to the greatest heights of my profession. This... this is the true Dao of Alchemy. I’ll be able use it to become a Daolord... and perhaps rise to even greater heights.” Pillsaint said gratefully, “I, Pillsaint, have no way of repaying you for your gift of the Dao...”

Ning nodded. “All you have to do is study hard.”

This Dao of Alchemy led all the way to the Eternal Emperor level! By using this Dao, Pillsaint might very well become an Eternal Emperor himself.

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Now that he saw a chance to become a Daolord, Pillsaint began to spend all of his time in frenzied study and training. Ning had merely memorized some of the pill-making techniques, but Pillsaint was thoroughly analyzing and studying every aspect of the technique. He even went as far as to try them out in actual pill-making. Pillsaint truly was quite talented in alchemy, but he never had a teacher as good as this. Although his previous master was quite talented, he was still significantly inferior to even the likes of Daolord Allgod, to say nothing of the Paragon of Pills.

Now that this opportunity had come before him, Pillsaint truly had a chance to soar into the heavens.

Ning knew very well that his foundation was still the Dao of the Sword! He was mainly going to make use of the [Seven Leafpill Chapters] to learn more about alchemy. Pillsaint was his retainer; it would be of tremendous help to Ning if Pillsaint was to become an incredible grandmaster alchemist.

The day after transmitting the first chapter to Pillsaint, Ning departed from his estate and transformed into a streak of light which flew off into the distance.

“My name is Darknorth. Greetings, fellow Daoist.”

“Greetings, fellow Daoist Darknorth.”

Ning encountered quite a few World-level cultivators on his journey. On occasion, he even met a few Daolords.

The Trileaf Realm was an incredibly vast world, much like how the Brightshore Kingdom itself also contained countless living beings and cultivators.

“Emperor Gonflame?” Ning spent more than six hours flying and teleporting at top speed before finally reaching Emperor Gonflame’s residence.

“This is the Emperor’s residence. Outsiders are not permitted to enter.” Two novices were guarding the gates to the estate. They immediately barked at Ning upon seeing him fly over.

“This junior has heard of the Emperor’s skill in artificing and thus has come to greet him. I wonder if I might be fortunate enough as to have an audience with him?” Ning asked.

“So you’ve come to purchase treasures?” One of the novices pointed off into the distance. “Enter from the side entrance. Someone will help take care of you. Don’t you even know which door you are supposed to enter through? This here is the main entrance. Generally speaking, major powers who have come to meet with our Emperor will wait here as we send the message to him.”

“Pardon me for my rudeness.” Ning didn’t really mind. He immediately flew towards the side entrance.

As for the two novices, they continued to stand there in front of the estate in a smug manner. Their master was the number one artificer in their entire universe. Quite a few people came to ask to meet him. Even Eternal Emperors came to request a meeting, to say nothing of Daolords. All of them had to first go through the novices. This naturally made them arrogant and dismissive towards a mere World-level cultivator.

“Gah? Are there so many treasures here that they stack them up in front of the entrance?” As Ning flew towards the side entrance, he couldn’t help but feel shocked upon moving closer.

Although it was just the side entrance, it was still dozens of meters wide. There were quite a few servants there, as well as three treasures which hovered above the entrance. One was a pearl that glimmered with fiery light and which emanated faint ripples of might. The second was a white flower that emanated waves of white light, bringing a sense of peace and harmony to those who were bathed in it. The final treasure was a painting depicted a world of mountains and rivers.

“Fellow Daoist, have you come to purchase treasures?” In front of the door stood a female servant with unbound hair who emanated the aura of a Daolord. Most likely, she was a Daolord of the First Step, and she smiled at Ning as she spoke.

“I am.” Ning nodded.

“Please enter, fellow Daoist. Any of the treasures you see inside are for sale.” Although Ning was at the World level, the female servant didn’t show discourtesy as a result of it. The treasures they had here were all for sale, and they were all items which Emperor Gonflame made in a casual manner when testing out certain ideas. Despite that, they were still items which would drive Daolords in the outside world utterly mad with desire.

Ning stepped into the residence, and things immediately changed. As soon as he passed through the doorway, it was as though he entered a vast expanse in outer space, filled with countless twinkling stars.

There were cultivators walking through this region of void-like space, as well as servants and attendants who were waiting on them. They strolled through the void, gesturing at the various stars. Every single ‘star’ was actually a treasure.

“This treasure costs three million? That’s a bit too expensive, right? Can you lower the price a bit?”

“I’ll buy this one!”

The Daolords here all acted in a very humble manner. Emperor Gonflame’s store didn’t hold any treasures which were less than a million cubes of chaos nectar, but what it did have drove countless cultivators mad with desire. As for the World-level cultivators... almost all of them only came for window shopping. They’d browse through the items but not buy them. They were really here just to expand their horizons.

When Ning entered this region of void-like space, the attendants all glanced at him. Although they all had courteous looks on their faces, in their hearts they muttered to themselves, “Ugh, another World-level cultivator, here to look but not to buy.”

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 43: Ji Ning’s Sword

There were only so many attendants in the store, and the majority of them were busy accompanying the Daolords. As a result, Ji Ning was by himself after entering the place.

“Damned impressive.” Ning stared at the many treasures in the void, all of which gleamed like shining stars. The very first treasure he took a close look at gave him a bad shock.

Every single treasure was protected by restrictive spells, which was why they glittered like stars from afar. By sending your senses out, you would be able to gain some detailed information regarding each treasure. As for this first one, it was a shuttle-type magic treasure.

“Woodfire Azuresun Shuttle. It takes three thousand years and ten thousand cubes of chaos nectar for it to be charged up. After it is charged up, it can be used a single time and unleash the power of a Daolord of the Fourth Step. The cost is eight million cubes of chaos nectar!”

“It can only be used once each time?” Ning was secretly speechless. “It seems you really can’t predict the power of a Daolord just by looking at him. He might look weak, but have a ridiculous treasure like this. Thank goodness that treasures like this are ridiculously expensive.”

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Ji Ning went through one magic treasure after another. Ordinary Eternal weapons filled with sword-intent and saber-intent were fairly cheap; few of them could breach the million cube price range. The ones which Emperor Gonflame had put out for display all had certain special properties.

All the magic treasures here were special in some way, which was why they exceeded a million cubes in price.

“A Hearteater Clock. It contains a secret art of a Heartforce Cultivator Daolord of the Fourth Step. When activated, it can attack the enemy’s mind and cause weaker enemy’s to completely lose control. The price is fifty million cubes.”

“This is insane.” Ning was truly frightened by this treasure. He knew very well that in a life-and-death battle, to lose focus for even an instant could result in you dying and your Dao vanishing! This item was clearly described as having a secret art of a Daolord of the Fourth Step who was a Heartforce Cultivator. The power of the attack had to be extraordinary! For a non-Heartforce Cultivator to be able to suddenly unleash a heartforce attack of such power... this treasure was truly insane in power.

But the price was insane as well. Fifty million cubes? Very few Verge-level Daolords would be willing or able to buy such a thing.

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There were evasive-type magic treasures that would allow you to instantly flee at a hundred times the speed of light.

There were formation-type treasures which, when used, would trap the opponent so thoroughly that it would be almost impossible for him to escape.

There was even a sword-formation formed from a total of 216 high-grade Eternal swords of extraordinary power. It was perfect for a Ki Refining Daolord of the Fourth Step, and the more powerful the Daolord was the more power the sword-formation could unleash.

There was also a particularly priceless sin-treasure which contained a total of 999 sinfiends. Every single sinfiend was comparable to a Daolord of the Third Step in might, and once this treasure was unleashed it could decimate ordinary Daolords of the Fourth Step. However, this treasure truly was ‘priceless’, in

that you could only barter for it with Emperor Gonflame by using incredibly valuable treasures of your own.

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After Ning saw this treasure, he mumbled to himself, "Once I merge my nine types of Dao lightning into my Novessence Thunder, I'll be able to wipe out Daolords of the Fourth Step as well. Even if thousands of sinfiends attack me, my lightning will be able to wipe them all out."

After finishing his viewings, he felt rather speechless. Still, the majority of these treasures weren't really useful to him, because he already had those five powerful golems! In addition, he would quickly become a Daolord upon returning to the Endless Territories. When that happened, his [Novessence Thunder] and his [Novessence Water] would rapidly grow in power. There really weren't that many treasures which would attract Ji Ning's interest.

The ones that did were way too expensive!

The cheapest of evasive treasures, for example, started at ten million cubes... and those only moved nine times faster than the speed of light. As for the ones which allowed you to flee at a hundred times the speed of light, they were similarly priceless and could only be procured through trading treasures of your own.

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Ning stared at a distant treasure, his gaze rather distant. He murmured to himself, "This is what I really need."

It was exactly what he needed, and it was also something he could afford.

Off in the distance, a snow-white sword that emanated an aura of endless coldness could be seen hovering in the air. He sent out a slight strand of mental power and was able to immediately know what this sword did.

"A lifeblood weapon. The cultivator can pour all of his insights regarding his Sword Dao into this weapon to charge it with a Sword Dao quintessence. When you use a weapon which is perfectly aligned with your own Sword Dao, it will be able to unleash the most amount of power! You can use it to continuously perfect and upgrade your Sword Dao! In addition, lifeblood weapons are all created from incredibly precious materials and can grow alongside you. If your Sword Dao is strong enough and you feed it enough precious materials, then with a bit of luck you might very well give birth to a Universe weapon in the future. The price is thirty million cubes."

"So this is a lifeblood weapon," Ning murmured to himself. He had heard of them long ago, but not even the Sword Palace's Armaments Valley held any. lifeblood weapons were simply too rare; whenever a grandmaster artificer managed to finally produce one after an enormous amount of effort, other cultivators would immediately charge forwards to purchase it.

Lifeblood weapons were given that name because they truly became one with the cultivators who wielded them, and the quintessence within them would be created and formed by their wielders. But more importantly than that, they could also grow and become increasingly powerful!

They were the perfect weapons for cultivators, the weapons which could truly unleash a cultivator's maximum potential! If Ning used an 'ordinary' weapon, he would probably only be able to unleash 30% to 40% of the amount of power he could unleash if he was using his own lifeblood weapon! This was what made lifeblood weapons so powerful... and they could grow without any limitations.

Generally speaking, top-grade Eternal swords were the best weapons you could buy. But lifeblood weapons could continuously grow alongside you, growing more powerful as you yourself did. In the hands of others, it would perhaps merely be an ordinary top-grade Eternal weapon, but in the hands its true master, it would be countless times more powerful.

Almost all Eternal Emperors used lifeblood weapons... and if evolved and empowered to a sufficient degree, lifeblood weapons had a chance of transforming into Universe weapons!

"The Palace of the Sword is filled with sword cultivators, and whenever any of them discover a lifeblood weapon they will go crazy for it." Ning's gaze was blazing with eagerness. "Who would've thought I'd run into one such weapon here in this alternate universe?"

Lifeblood weapons could only truly fuse with their very first master. Once that first master perished, they would become nothing more than ordinary weapons.

"This is what I really need. My Sword Dao encompasses all aspects of all sword-arts. It is extremely difficult for me to find a sword which suits my Dao," Ning mused. "I need a lifeblood sword that will become as powerful as I myself will!"

"Fellow Daoist." Ning glanced at a nearby attendant and sent him a mental message. The Daolord attendant glanced back at him, puzzled. What did this World-level cultivator want?

"I need this lifeblood weapon," Ning sent.

"Lifeblood weapon?!" The distant attendant was badly shocked by this request. He hurriedly walked over, stepping through the void of space as he quickly arrived next to Ning. "Fellow Daoist." The attendant hurriedly smiled at Ning.

"Can you lower the price of this lifeblood weapon a bit?" Ning asked.

"If you are friends with the Emperor or perhaps know his senior disciples, they might cut you a deal. I'm just a lowly attendant; I don't have that authority," the attendant said. "This sword is a lifeblood weapon that was forged just a short while ago. If you wait just a bit longer, I imagine other sword cultivators would appear and immediately snatch it up."

Ning nodded. Sword cultivators were devoted to the sword. All you needed was one sword to be completely devoted to, then use it to destroy all other arts. Foes might use all sorts of strange techniques and spells, but when my sword emerges it shall shatter the heavens and crush the earth, wiping out all in its path! Ning's own Sword Dao was already quite terrifying. When matched with a suitable lifeblood weapon... that would be adding strength atop of strength.

Any sword cultivator would be willing to sacrifice all of his other treasures for the chance to acquire a lifeblood sword.

“Thirty million cubes...” Ning stared at that snow-white sword, emanating that aura of freezing cold. This truly was a painful price, as the deceased Hegemon had only given him fifty million cubes. His darkspace flamestone hoard was only worth ten million cubes.

“I’ll buy it.” Ning nodded.

“Please wait a moment. I’ll go make a report,” the attendant said. “I don’t have the power to release the restrictive spells binding this lifeblood sword.”

“Alright.” Ning nodded in understanding. One couldn’t be too careful with lifeblood swords. If someone was able to so much as touch them, the sword would be ruined for anyone else and become nothing more than an ordinary weapon. The first binding performed on a lifeblood weapon was critical, as only the first binding could be a true, complete one.

The attendant left to make his report. As for Ning, he just stared at the sword, murmuring to himself, “It’d be wonderful if I could acquire six lifeblood swords. I’d be even stronger.” But of course, if anyone heard Ning’s secret wish, they would probably laugh themselves to death. A single lifeblood sword was already a treasure of incalculable value. SIX of them? Who would even dare think of such a thing?

Just a short while later, the attendant reappeared. Only, he had a rather strange look on his face when he looked at Ning, almost as though he was looking at some sort of monster.

“Uh, Fellow Daoist.” The attendant was noticeably more humble and respectful than he was previously. “Can you please follow me this way?”

“Eh?” Ning glanced at him.

The attendant sent mentally, “The Emperor has ordered for you to go meet him.”

“The Emperor?” Ning was stunned.

“My Emperor, of course... which is to say, Emperor Gonflame,” the attendant sent back. He was truly puzzled. Normally, it was other major powers who would attempt to request a meeting with Emperor Gonflame. Why was Emperor Gonflame actively inviting this young World-level cultivator?

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Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 44: Emperor Gonflame

Emperor Gonflame wished to meet him? Ji Ning hesitated for a moment. He was nothing more than a World-level cultivator. There was probably only one possible reason why Emperor Gonflame wished to meet him in person...

The Paragon of Pills!

Emperor Gonflame was one of the retainers of the Paragon of Pills, while the Paragon had an extraordinarily close relationship with Ning’s deceased Hegemon master. Most likely, she could be considered his master’s wife, almost like a godmother.

“Lead the way,” Ning said.

“Follow me.” The attendant immediately led the way forwards, but in his heart he couldn’t help but feel puzzled at what the relationship was between this young World-level cultivator and his Emperor was.

The attendant led Ning forwards. A short while later, it was an Emperor-level retainer who personally led the way for Ning.

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A short while later, they reached an enormous, peaceful courtyard. There were two lakes within the courtyard, one of which was filled with a blazing, lava-like liquid. As for the second lake, it was filled with a freezing liquid that was so cold as to cause the surrounding area to be blanketed in frost. Between that blazing lake and the freezing lake was an ancient, stunted-looking tree that was nonetheless large in size.

Beneath the tree, there was a table, a chair, and a man.

The fiery-haired man’s upper body was uncovered, and he sat there while weighing Ning with a judging look in his eyes.

“Emperor,” the retainer said respectfully, “Darknorth has arrived.”

“You may leave,” Emperor Gonflame instructed. The retainer immediately withdrew, leaving behind only Ning and Emperor Gonflame.

“This junior greets you, Emperor.” Ning bowed respectfully.

“No need to stand on ceremony with me, Darknorth. Come, sit.” Emperor Gonflame smiled and gestured towards the seat opposite him. Seeing this, Ning followed his gesture and sat down.

“Have a taste. The wine here was delivered to me by the various Daolords who have asked me to help them create various treasures. I don’t even know the names of half of the wine here, nor do I care. I’ve already spent countless amounts of effort researching and analyzing the properties of various materials and ingredients. I have no interest in doing the same for my food and wine as well,” Emperor Gonflame said.

Ning nodded. “I can imagine how much effort it took for you to rise to the level of being the number one artificer of this entire universe.”

“I actually happen to like being an artificer. When I followed Master, I was nothing more than one of her many disciples and retainers. I was a completely unremarkable figure.” A reminiscent look was in Emperor Gonflame’s eyes. “I was fairly slow in improving as a cultivator, but I really did like working as an artificer, and so I poured all of my efforts into this field instead. Who would’ve thought that I would end up becoming a Daolord of the Fourth Step, and then just naturally break through to become an Eternal Emperor? Only later did I realize that Master had been paying close attention to me in secret. She had helped guide me and assist me on numerous occasions without me even realizing it.”

Ning couldn’t help but secretly sigh. For Emperor Gonflame to have gained eternity was proof that if you truly devoted yourself to a particular trade or craft, you could make miracles happen! But of course, that was also only if you had a major power like the Paragon of Pills guiding your path. The Paragon was one of the three ancient Primordial Starkings who had existed since the birth of this universe, after all. Even

though she didn't spend much time or effort on artificing, she still ranked as one of the top three in this universe. For her to help guide Emperor Gonflame in this was naturally quite simple for her.

If he had just blindly studied without having such a wise teacher, it was unlikely that he would've been able to gain eternity!

"I noticed you as soon as you arrived here." Emperor Gonflame looked at Ning.

"Huh?" Ning was startled.

"Mm. You weren't overwhelmed with desire despite seeing so many treasures placed before you. In the end, you chose a lifeblood weapon." Emperor Gonflame smiled and nodded. "Not bad. It seems you understand that in order to become a truly powerful figure, you still have to rely on your own power. To rely on strange curios and ancient artifacts... that path is a path which rarely leads to becoming truly unstoppable."

"You are a sword cultivator. The sword cultivators who truly were the dominant forces of their era all relied on the nothing more than the sword in their hands, or perhaps the powerful secret arts they might've come up with," Emperor Gonflame said.

Ning nodded, understanding what was being imparted. In the ancient library of the Sword Palace, he had seen quite a few secret arts and thus understood that many of the more powerful Daolords relied on mighty secrets arts they had developed. This was true for virtually all of the monstrously talented ones!

"The most terrifyingly powerful Daolords and Emperors all have their own unique techniques." Emperor Gonflame sighed. "Some Daolords have such powerful abilities that even I would rather keep my distance from them. For example, there is a Daolord I know named Daolord Otherpath who used his own Dao to create a truly unearthly secret art. He managed to completely merge himself into the Wugang Sea of Glass, something which naturally formed from the primordial chaos. After mastering the Wugang Glass Form, with but a thought he can transform into the vast sea of glass and sent it surging towards you. Upon being trapped by it... even someone like me would probably perish."

Ning was secretly speechless. Still, it made sense. Shortly after leaving the Three Realms, he had encountered Daolord Badlands. Although he was merely a Daolord of the Third Step, his Numerancy divination powers were simply too incredible. Whenever he divined that danger was near, he would immediately slink away, making it almost impossible to kill him. Even worse – if you offended him but were unable to kill him, he would be able to divine all sorts of ways to deal with you or act against your interests. This was why Daolord Badlands was actually quite a dangerous person.

"Those unearthly Daolords have all trained their own Daos to an absolute apex, giving them inconceivable amounts of power. Even worse, they all but seek out excuses to try and kill an Emperor so as to establish their reputations." Emperor Gonflame shook his head and sighed. "Gaining eternity is no easy feat, and yet the weaker Eternal Emperors are hunted down so mercilessly that they don't even dare to show their faces in the world."

Ning couldn't help but grin. The same was true in the Endless Territories. Daolord Allgod had chased Emperor Melobo across the entire universe, while Lord Dawnstar of the Saber Palace had once slain an Eternal Emperor with three blows of his saber! This was why there were so few Eternal Emperors

around, with the surviving ones all figures of incredible strength. The three Hegemons of the Endless Territories were good examples, as was Emperor Mirrorsnow who was extremely skilled at staying alive. Emperor Trisilk was another figure who was also skilled at survival.

“Magic treasures, bah... one or two is enough. If you spend all your efforts on collecting magic treasures, you’ll never make it too far!” Emperor Gonflame looked at Ning. “Although I am very wary of those monstrously strong Daolords, I have to say that they have chosen the correct path. If they succeed and gain eternity, they shall become Hegemons amongst emperors. They’ll immediately be granted the position of ‘Starking’ within the Church of Annihilation, and they’ll be incredibly strong ones at that.”

Ning couldn’t help but ask curiously, “Aren’t all the Starkings of the Church of Annihilation at the Hegemon level?”

“No way. Impossible!” Emperor Gonflame shook his head. “They are simply strong Eternal Emperors who were chosen to become Starkings. If they were Hegemons, they wouldn’t be ‘chosen’ as Starkings; they simply would BE Starkings. Take Emperor Maniseal for example; I heard he’s ridiculously powerful in the Dao of Seals, but he’s still a ways off from the Hegemon level.”

“Or consider the three Primordial Starkings. They always had transcendent statuses, precisely because all three of them were Hegemons,” Emperor Gonflame said.

“Oh.” Ning nodded. So as he had expected, the Paragon of Pills was indeed a Hegemon.

“The Paragon of Pills is a truly incredible figure,” Emperor Gonflame said. “According to the legends, she was a monster even back when she was merely a Daolord, capable of killing Eternal Emperors with ease. Only after gaining eternity did she become a Hegemon! However... there are no absolutes. The legends supposedly say that a long, long time ago, she wasn’t a Hegemon. Only after training for many years as an Eternal Emperor did she reach the Hegemon level of power.”

“Emperor Maniseal, in turn, was once an unremarkable Emperor who completely focused on his Dao of Seals. By now, he’s become incredibly powerful.” Emperor Gonflame chuckled. “After you become an Emperor, you can still slowly train your way up and become increasingly powerful, and you’ll even have a shot at the Hegemon level. However... actually succeeding in this endeavor is far too difficult. Countless years have gone by, but the only person to succeed in doing so was the Paragon of Pills.”

Ning was shocked. Back in the Brightshore Kingdom, he had heard that Hegemons were only created when the most powerful of Daolords gained eternity! He never would’ve imagined that the Paragon was actually an exception to the rule. It really was an axiom that the path of cultivation was a path where there would always be a ‘final chance’ given.

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Emperor Gonflame chatted with Ning for quite some time, broadening Ning’s horizons.

“Now, you want a lifeblood weapon, right?” Emperor Gonflame looked at Ning, then laughed. “That’ll be easy. This is our very first meeting, and so I’ll gift you with a lifeblood weapon as my first meeting gift to you.”

“Wonderful.” Ning revealed a look of delight.

He knew that there were differences amongst freshly-forged lifeblood weapons. Some might be incredibly heavy and would be suitable for ferocious stances such as his Heavenbreaker stance. Others might be a better fit for his Blood Drop stance or his Shadowless stance. But of course, lifeblood weapons could be continuously improved and altered. Even if the weapon didn't start off as a good fit, as more time passed it would become a better and better fit for its master!

But a lifeblood treasure which started off as a perfect fit would naturally grow powerful even faster. For the number one grandmaster artificer in this universe to personally forge a lifeblood weapon for himself... this truly was a rare opportunity.

"Emperor, please take a look at this." Ning immediately began to put his sword-arts on display. "My Sword Dao is composed of five separate Supreme Daos."

As Ning put his sword-arts on display, the watching Emperor Gonflame felt a sense of tremendous shock.

"W-what... you've even linked them together perfectly? This is something which includes all aspects of the entire Dao of the Sword!" Emperor Gonflame stared at Ning. If this kid continues to grow and develop, he'll definitely become not just a powerful Daolord, but one of the most monstrously powerful Daolords. He'll probably be able to kill some weaker Eternal Emperors with just one blow from his sword.

"Emperor." After finishing displaying his sword-arts, Ning looked towards Emperor Gonflame.

"Um..." Emperor Gonflame rubbed his chin. "Your lifeblood weapon would have to reach the apex of perfection in every single aspect. It won't be easy to make, and it'll require a lot of materials."

It would only cost him around ten million cubes of chaos nectar if he wished to make a lifeblood sword for an ordinary sword cultivator, and if he wished to sell it on the open market it would probably go for around twenty or thirty million cubes. But Darknorth's Sword Dao was a Dao which covered all types of sword-arts, a Dao which pursued true perfection. The materials alone would probably cost him thirty million cubes!

"Haha. Well, since I promised I'd forge you one, I'll forge you one." Emperor Gonflame laughed. "I won't go broke from just one weapon."

"Emperor," Ning suddenly said, "This junior has a rather... outrageous request."

"An outrageous request?" Emperor Gonflame laughed. "Don't be shy. Speak." He had just promised to give away thirty million cubes worth of precious materials. Right now, he was feeling quite generous and magnanimous.

"You've already seen this junior's sword-arts. To be honest... it'd be perfect if I had six lifeblood swords. In that case, my power would multiply many times over." Ning said hurriedly, "But of course, this junior wouldn't dare to ask you to gift me with six... if there's anything you need, just tell me and I will do my utmost to accomplish it. I also have some precious treasures and some chaos nectar. I definitely would never ask you to operate at a loss."

Ning truly did deeply desire six lifeblood weapons. He wanted six, no matter what it had to cost him. Given how much face Emperor Gonflame was giving him, he'd probably offer those six weapons at a very low cost. Logically speaking, Ning felt he should be able to afford it.

"SIX?!?" Emperor Gonflame's eyes bulged out. "Six LIFE BLOOD weapons? Your request really is outrageous!"

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Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 45: Some Interesting Information

"Just tell me how much you need, Emperor," Ji Ning said shamelessly. For a young World-level cultivator like himself to be shameless in front of an Eternal Emperor didn't really matter that much. If it meant acquiring six lifeblood weapons, a bit of thick-skinned shamelessness was nothing.

Emperor Gonflame was speechless. "Six lifeblood weapons. Let's put aside the amount of exhausting work that I'd have to put into it. Six lifeblood weapons... do you even know how much the materials alone would cost? Do you have any idea? You actually dare make the wild claim that you'd cover it?"

"How much would it cost, exactly?" Ning asked.

"To make customized swords for you? Your swords would be different from all other lifeblood weapons. Your Sword Dao encompasses all directions, which means that the lifeblood weapon also has to be truly perfect in every single aspect! The materials alone will probably cost at least three times as much as the materials needed for an 'ordinary' lifeblood weapon. It would take a total of thirty million cubes of chaos nectar. Six swords would cost a hundred and eighty million cubes!"

Emperor Gonflame suddenly started to laugh uncontrollably as he looked at Ning. "Fine, I promised to give you one for free, so you'll only have to compensate me a hundred and fifty million cubes. As for all of my time, effort, and labor... we'll just consider it as being on the house. Heh. Heh heh. You said you will make sure I'm not operating at a loss, right? Can you give me that much?"

Ning was speechless. He truly wasn't able to say a single word.

A hundred and fifty million cubes?

This was way, way...

Daolord Solesky of Vastheaven Palace was an extremely powerful Verge-level Daolord. In order to procure the assistance of Daolord Badlands, he had put together a collection of nearly twenty million cubes worth of chaos nectar, which represented virtually his entire treasure hoard. But of course, the treasures and weapons which he used in battle and which was part of his own 'true strength', he naturally didn't sell.

For most major powers, even if they sold off all of their most valuable treasures they still probably wouldn't be able to come up with a hundred million cubes!

"Weeeell?" Emperor Gonflame looked at Ning, then said teasingly, "Weren't you talking big, just now, about how you'd make it up to me?"

Ning was furiously racking his brain for ideas. What should he do? He had quite a few treasures, but he wasn't even close to a hundred and fifty million cubes worth of treasure. Emperor Gonflame wished to

give the Paragon of Pills face and so was willing to gift him thirty million cubes of ingredients; this was already beyond generous. It must be remembered that when Emperor Gonflame had made that offer, he had only been planning on making an ordinary lifeblood weapon that would cost him around ten million cubes. Who would've thought that Ning's Sword Dao was this incredible? Emperor Gonflame couldn't go back on his words, and so had been so generous as to promise Ning an appropriate and even more expensive weapon.

But six? Even Ning himself felt that such a request went too far, and the Emperor probably wouldn't agree. Such a sum of wealth would cause even someone like Emperor Gonflame to feel heartache.

"Eh?!" A thought suddenly flashed through Ning's mind. "Emperor," Ning called out.

Emperor Gonflame had been enjoying the intensely awkward look on Ning's face. He couldn't help but feel curious upon hearing Ning call out to him. "What is it? Do you actually have enough treasure to make up for it?"

Ning did, of course, have enough treasure. The deceased Hegemon's suit of ancient armor alone was worth vastly more than six lifeblood weapons. That suit of armor had been labored over by the Paragon of Pills herself, and it truly was of inestimable value. There was nowhere and no way to buy a treasure like that! As for the two Dao-seals which the deceased Hegemon had given him, the deceased Hegemon had poured all of his effort into the creation of each Dao-seal. They similarly could not be found anywhere on any market, and they would indeed more than make up for the lifeblood weapons as well.

But Ning would never sell them, not unless he truly lost his mind. Ultimate trump cards like this simply were not to be sold.

"This junior has a bit of information to trade," Ning said. "I think... this bit of information should be worth a hundred and fifty million cubes of chaos nectar."

"Information? What sort of information could possibly be worth that much?" Emperor Gonflame was intrigued.

"Emperor," Ning said, "When this junior first entered the Archaeus region, I once accidentally encountered a place where I discovered an enormous, mountain-sized vein of darkspace flamestone. This mountain was more than a million kilometers in size."

Emperor Gonflame had been quite calm, but upon hearing the words 'million kilometers' he was completely stunned. He shot to his feet, staring at Ning with round eyes. "What did you just say? A million kilometers in size? A mountain of darkspace flamestone?"

"Yes." Ning nodded immediately.

"How rich is the vein?" Emperor Gonflame asked.

A 'vein' could mean many things. A 'vein' of ore in which ten thousand kilograms of rock held roughly one kilogram of pure ore would be considered a 'vein', but so too would a 'vein' in which a billion kilograms of rock held a kilogram of pure ore! The difference between the two, however, was enormous.

“Please take a look, Emperor.” Ning waved his hand, causing a piece of ore to appear. This was one of the pieces of ore which the golem Moksha had mined.

“This ore...” Emperor Gonflame was instantly excited when he saw that piece of ore. He was a true grandmaster of artificing, and he could immediately tell right away that it came from an incredibly rich vein. “A million kilometers of this... I... I... I’m not strong enough to own such a mountain.”

This mountain of ore was so large and valuable that someone like him truly wasn’t qualified to claim ownership over it. In fact, Emperor Gonflame didn’t even consider trying. He was a retainer of the Paragon of Pills, after all. There was no way he could hide something like this from her. And a mine of this size... if the Paragon of Pills claimed it, there would be no one who would dare to do anything to it.

“But there is something I must tell you. This mine already has an owner,” Ning said.

“An owner?” Emperor Gonflame was stunned.

“Emperor Trisilk,” Ning said.

Emperor Gonflame started to roar with laughter. “Ahahaha! Him? That poor, stupid bastard?” Right now, Emperor Trisilk truly was the most unfortunate Eternal Emperor in this entire universe. Emperor Maniseal was hunting him so relentlessly that he didn’t dare to show his face anywhere.”

“Come, follow me. Let us go meet with my master.” Emperor Gonflame grabbed Ning, then stepped through the void and teleported out of his estate.

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This truly was a piece of earth-shaking information. Even the Paragon of Pills was shocked upon hearing it, and she immediately led Ning and Emperor Gonflame away from the Trileaf Realm and towards the Archaeus region.

Whoosh.

The five-colored space bridge continuously soared into the distance. The Paragon, Ning, and Emperor Gonflame all stood there atop the bridge. Since Ning had fled from the Sacred Immortal Realm after they had destroyed the formation protecting it, he knew exactly where it was located. This made finding it much easier.

Rumble...

“Here we are.”

The black-garbed Paragon put away her bridge, then stood there in the emptiness of space with Emperor Gonflame and Ji Ning by her side.

The blazing flames in this region weren’t able to even move close to them. The Paragon, Emperor Gonflame, and Ning all stared through the void towards the towering mountain formed from fiery red rock.

“What an enormous vein of ore.” Emperor Gonflame was truly stunned. “Although Darknorth told me about how large it is, actually seeing it is... wow. How could there be a mountain of darkspace flamestone as large as this?”

“It’s too large. There’s no way to teleport it away. Our only choice is to slowly mine it for its ore,” the Paragon said softly. A mountain of ore like this... in this entire universe, the number of people who would dare claim it for their own could be counted on one hand. The Paragon was one of them! But of course, if someone else had been the first to discover it, she wouldn’t have been in a good position to intervene either.

Whoever was the first to discover such a fortune would be the one to own it. This was a shared rule which the supreme powers all abided by.

But of course, if a puny Emperor like Emperor Trisilk was the first to find it, the supreme powers would’ve been in a position to take it away by force! This was much like how Hydragon Mountain of the Endless Territories had been forcibly occupied by the almighty Brightshore Hegemon.

“Trisilk, that idiot... he probably wanted to keep this mountain for himself.” Emperor Gonflame snickered. “He never would’ve expected that Emperor Maniseal would chase after him like this. Poor bastard.”

“Trisilk is a selfish, vicious person by nature. Of course he would want to keep this mountain for himself.” The Paragon of Pills slowly shook her head. “However... right now, there’s no one who can protect him. Maniseal has gone completely berserk. Even if the lord of the Church of Annihilation placed Trisilk under his personal protection, Trisilk would still have to perpetually stay within the lord’s headquarters. He would never be able to leave it ever again. If Trisilk was to ever come out... given how furious Maniseal is, he’ll definitely kill Trisilk.

Trisilk had been able to sense his disciple being killed and knew that the secret of his darkspace flamestone mine had been exposed. He was so terrified by this that he hid himself even more deeply! Right now, his nerves were completely frayed.

A berserk Maniseal truly was a terrifying person to behold. He had reached the true apex in the Dao of Seals. Although he was a bit weaker than the Paragon of Pills or the lord of the Church of Annihilation, neither of them would wish to make an enemy out of him! This was because neither of them felt confident that they would definitely be able to kill him.

“What an enormous mountain of ore. The Trileaf Realm will need to make good use of it and work hard to mine it.” The Paragon nodded. “The value of this ore is truly incalculable. Gonflame, go ahead and help Darknorth forge those six lifeblood weapons. I’ll provide all the materials you need! For us to gain such a mountain of ore at a cost of less than two hundred million cubes of chaos nectar... the more often something like this happens, the better.”

“Alright.” Emperor Gonflame laughed and nodded.

As for Ning, he couldn’t help but secretly sigh to himself. In truth, neither he nor any of his fellows such as Solewind or Greatjoy had any designs on this mountain! This was because not even most Eternal Emperors would dare to lay claim over it! In addition, Emperor Trisilk already knew about this place, which meant others would definitely find out as well.

Thus, the number of people in this universe who could fearlessly and openly lay claim to it truly could be counted on just one hand. Ning, Greatjoy, and the others were all from another universe, and were mere World-level cultivators; there was no way they would ever have a chance to meet such supremely powerful figures! Even if they had such a chance, they wouldn't dare to act on it for fear of their true identities being exposed! What's more... for a weak figure like them to try and bargain with such supremely powerful figures might simply result in them being forcibly soulscoured.

Due to their many concerns, none of them had ever dared to reveal this secret to anyone else upon leaving the Sacred Immortal Realm.

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Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 46: Only Ji Ning Remains

The Paragon of Pills, Emperor Gonflame, and Ji Ning all stared at that distant mountain of darkspace flamestone. This was one of the many marvels birthed from the primordial chaos in this universe!

"Darknorth." Emperor Gonflame suddenly said, "Six lifeblood weapons will take quite a bit of time. Even if I enter my estate and accelerate time, the smelting will still take tens of thousands of years. You'll have to wait."

Alchemy, artificing, seal-making, and other Daos all took enormous amounts of time. Major powers would generally carry out the process within estates that had temporal acceleration enchantments!

"Tens of thousands of years?" Ning laughed. "Then I'll just wait patiently for those six lifeblood weapons."

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Tens of thousands of years. This could be said to be a long period of time, but it could also be said to be a short period of time.

When Ji Ning's group had originally come to this alternate universe, their journey to the Archaeus region alone had taken over ten thousand years! Even if he was still in the Genesis Lands, it would take well over ten thousand years to depart the Archaeus region and then start to head home. Given he was in the Trileaf Realm, he wouldn't need to traverse the Archaeus region. In that respect, he had saved some time.

"I wonder when Solewind, Greatjoy, and the others will leave the Genesis Lands," Ning murmured to himself within his residence in the Trileaf Realm.

As for Su Youji, she remained at the outer reaches side of the primessence chains, quietly waiting for Ning to return. Alas, it was guaranteed that she would never see him there!

Roughly six thousand years after Ning's 'abduction', Heartlord Solewind emerged from the inner reaches and walked back to the outer reaches via the chains.

"Brother Solewind." Firesurge and the others went to greet him.

"Master." Immortal Swallowback greeted him as well.

"Heartlord Solewind, have you seen my master?" Su Youji immediately asked.

“Darknorth? He entered the inner reaches alongside me. Later on, we separated and didn’t meet again. What’s wrong?” The bald Heartlord Solewind was still dressed in the same loose, fiery-red robes he had been dressed in thousands of years ago. He couldn’t help but feel surprised by the question.

Su Youji immediately explained, “Six thousand years ago, I suddenly became unable to sense my master’s presence, but his message-talisman is still intact.”

“You can’t sense him?” Solewind’s face turned solemn as well. He had experienced many dangers within the world of the inner reaches and had nearly died as a result. In the end, though, he had survived and departed with a great fortune.

“The inner reaches are very difficult. It’s possible that brother Darknorth is trapped within one of its danger zones.” Heartlord Solewind was rather worried as well. “But... for there to be no news of him after six thousand years probably means that he really is in grave danger. Let’s wait for a while longer. He might still be alive.”

Another five thousand years went by.

By now, Prince Greatjoy had also returned from the inner reaches. He hadn’t seen Ji Ning either. This made Su Youji even more disappointed and worried.

More than three thousand years went by. Skyfire Brightshore finally rejoined the others as well. And so... everyone but Ji Ning had returned. Prince Greatjoy, Heartlord Solewind, Waterlord Firesurge, Skyfire Brightshore, Immortal Swallowback, World Goddess Skywolf, Flamefairy Su Youji... they were all present.

“We were all fairly lucky to make it out in one piece, but... brother Darknorth has gone missing.” Prince Greatjoy frowned.

“He’s been missing for quite some time...” Firesurge slowly shook his head.

“My master is definitely alive,” Su Youji said.

Skyfire Brightshore said, “But we can’t just wait for him. He’s already been missing for ten thousand years. If we just keep waiting like this, who knows how long we’ll be here for? I think we should go back. If he’s still alive, he’ll go back as well once he comes out and realizes that we aren’t here.”

Solewind and Greatjoy exchanged glances. Their mission was chiefly to escort and protect Skyfire Brightshore! If Skyfire wished to go back, they really couldn’t stop him.

“Flamefairy, what Skyfire says makes sense. If brother Darknorth is still alive, he’ll go back on his own.” Solewind looked at Su Youji.

“And there’s no point to you waiting here by yourself,” Greatjoy said. “And... given how Darknorth suddenly disappeared, it’s also possible that he’s already left the Genesis Lands. In fact, he might’ve already gone back.”

“Gone back?” Su Youji stared. That... actually was possible. The Genesis Lands were filled with mysteries. It was entirely possible that some sort of special place might’ve teleported Ji Ning to another place in the universe. If that had actually happened, it wouldn’t make sense for Ji Ning to slowly travel all the way through the Archaeus region a second time! The Archaeus region was simply too large. Even

someone as skilled in the Dao of Spacetime as Prince Greatjoy would need nearly ten thousand years to traverse it. If Ji Ning wished to traverse it, it would take him far longer.

“Perhaps brother Darknorth really did encounter a special situation, resulting in him going back to our universe,” Solewind said.

“Let’s go.”

“Let us return together. Darknorth is far stronger than you; he’s entirely capable of making it back on his own.”

“Flamefairy, we just might see Darknorth once we go back.”

They all urged her to return with them.

In all honesty, the many centuries of waiting had taken their toll on the Flamefairy as well, making her feel increasingly nervous. She also felt that it was entirely possible that Ji Ning really had encountered a special event that resulted in him being thrust out of the Archaeus region, and so she immediately nodded. “Alright. Let’s go back.”

All seven of them had reaped great rewards within the Genesis Lands! This was also the reason why they felt certain that Ji Ning had probably encountered something special as well. In the Genesis Lands, everything truly was possible.

Prince Greatjoy, Heartlord Solewind, and the others spent merely three thousand years before they were able to reach the transversal conduit and return to the Endless Territories. Clearly, Prince Greatjoy’s mastery over the Dao of Spacetime had increased dramatically, allowing them to travel much more quickly!

But upon returning to the Brightshore Kingdom, they found out that Ji Ning had yet to return! Su Youji was stunned by this news. She had no choice but to return to the Sword Palace of the Twelve Palaces and quietly wait there.

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The alternate universe. The Trileaf Realm.

There was no way for Ning to reach out to Greatjoy and the others. All he could do was patiently wait for those six lifeblood weapons to be forged. Only then could he leave the Trileaf Realm and return to the Endless Territories.

In the end, he did have to go back. His family and his friends were all back there, as was the Three Realms.

Within Ning’s estate-world.

Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. The waters of the ocean lapped against the sandy beaches, then receded again and again.

Ning sat there in the lotus position on the beach, his Immortal energy flowing as countless divine runes manifested around him. He was training in the pill-making techniques of the seventh chapter of the [Seven Leafpill Chapters].

Suddenly, a chubby figure flew over, a look of excitement on the man's face. "Master, I've already completely mastered the second chapter you bestowed upon me!" World God Pillsaint excitedly went straight towards Ning.

"Mm." Ning dispelled his Immortal energy, then looked at Pillsaint. "Then go ahead and produce a 'Thousand Songs' pill for me."

The Thousand Songs pill could be made very quickly, but it was a very complicated pill. It required fine control over a thousand different processes, each of which required tremendous skill and had exacting requirements. The first five chapters of the [Seven Leafpill Chapters] all used the 'Thousand Songs' pill as a way to test whether or not someone had successfully mastered a particular chapter.

This time, the pill-making process took a total of two days. Pillsaint had always been talented in the Dao of Alchemy, but he was now at least ten times better than he had been prior to coming to the Trileaf Realm.

"Very well. I'll bestow the third chapter upon you. Do your best to master it. If you can master it... a true fortune might very well be awaiting you," Ning said.

"A true fortune? What type of fortune?" Pillsaint was quite curious. In recent years, he had been completely focused on training in alchemy within Ning's estate-world. He had never wandered the Trileaf Realm, and so he had never heard of the Paragon of Pills.

"No point telling you just now." Ning shook his head. Even if Pillsaint did master the third chapter, it was up to the Paragon of Pills as to whether or not she wished to teach him more.

The Paragon of Pills was an exalted figure with incredibly high expectations. All Ning could do was recommend potential apprentices to her. As to whether or not Pillsaint would be able to grasp this opportunity, that was completely up to him.

Swish. Ning waved his finger, tapping Pillsaint on his forehead and imparting the third chapter of the [Seven Leafpill Chapters] to him.

"Absolutely incredible! The person who created this alchemy method is absolutely incredible. I've only been learning from it for a short period of time, but my improvements in the Dao of Alchemy have been ridiculously high. I can sense that if I make just a few more breakthroughs, I can become a Daolord whenever I choose." Pillsaint was extremely excited.

Ning warned softly, "Remember our oath!"

Pillsaint was stunned, then immediately nodded. Before returning to the Brightshore Kingdom, they absolutely could not afford to break through into the Daolord level.

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Life in the Trileaf Realm was quite relaxed. Ning had never been this relaxed before.

In the past, he had been wholly focused on the Dao of the Sword, but he had now completely mastered and linked together his five different Supreme Sword Daos. He could now completely relax, and in fact he had the vague feeling that relaxing was the correct decision. This was why he spent all his time within his estate-world, where the flow of time was a hundred times faster than the 'normal' rate of time. Thus, tens of thousands of years in 'real' time translated into millions of years of accelerated time.

Thirty thousand years of 'real' time went past in the blink of an eye within the Trileaf Realm.

A wild wind was blowing through the estate-world today. The waves of the sea were rolling forwards, with Ning seated leisurely atop the waves, watching as they rose and fell. In the stormy skies, the silhouette of a single sword could be seen flickering through various different sword-arts.

"Eh?" Ning suddenly frowned. "My sword arts... I feel as though..."

Ning had spent over three million years relaxing in his estate-world after mastering and linking together his five Supreme Daos. Now, all of a sudden, Ning felt as though his sword-arts were still lacking in some manner.

"This... this still isn't the ultimate Dao of the Sword!" This thought suddenly flashed through Ning's mind. After three million years of training in sword-arts, he suddenly had this premonition. For people who had trained to this level, these premonitions were usually highly accurate.