

## Desolate 977

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#### Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 47: Kindness and Gratitude

"I'm still missing something." Ji Ning frowned as he sat there atop the wave, the sword silhouette in the air continuing to execute sword-arts.

"It doesn't make sense. I've clearly mastered all five Supreme Daos and joined them together perfectly." Ning tested his sword-arts out repeatedly. "So why is it that I feel like I'm lacking something?"

"What exactly am I missing?"

Again and again and again, Ning used his sword to execute his various sword-arts.

"BAH!" He spent five nights and five days testing things out, only to make no improvements at all. Ning couldn't help but let out a rather frustrated howl, his voice reverberating within the skies of this estate-world. The wavy waters of the entire sea suddenly fell flat and turned completely still, almost as if it had been frozen in place. Not a single wave could be seen.

"Whew." Ning drew a long breath, allowing the frozen seas to return to normal and the waves to arise once more.

"Perhaps I'm being a bit too impatient," Ning murmured softly.

In truth, Ning was not to be blamed. He had felt certain that he had already found his strongest Supreme Daos, but now he suddenly had the feeling that his Sword Dao was still lacking in something. This meant his Supreme Dao wasn't actually 'supreme'. Of course he was irritated by this!

"To be able to notice flaws in my Sword Dao is a good thing. It's certainly better than not even realizing my own imperfection." Ning regained his normal calm. "I should focus on calmly meditating on my sword-arts again. Perhaps when enough time, I'll be able to naturally break through to the next level."

"My five Supreme Daos are already joined together perfectly. If I can make another breakthrough..." Ning was puzzled. "I've never even heard of something like this."

Bertulu, Eastcult, and the other monstrously talented geniuses all generally mastered multiple Supreme Daos, then fitted them together perfectly. This represented the utmost apex of power. This was what many major powers all believed to be true! Previously, Ning had believed it to be true as well... but now, he suddenly discovered that it wasn't necessarily the apex.

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Soon, more than fifty thousand years had gone past since his initial entry into the Trileaf Realm.

"I've finally mastered it. How truly inconceivable! At the World level, I've actually managed to master the quadressence thunder."

Ning stood there at the peak of a mountain, his eyes flashing. Instantly, a streak of golden lightning shot out of him.

“Daolord Allgod once said that a Daolord of the First Step would have a chance at mastering the tri-essence thunder.” Ning laughed. “I’m at the World level, but I’ve actually mastered the quadressence thunder. Haha...”

His azureflower mist energy was comparable to a Daolord’s energy, and his pill-making arts were absolutely unearthly as well. This was why he was able to produce such miraculous results.

“Now, I have quadressence thunder and quadressence water.” Ning willed them all to come out.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

A dazzling bolt of golden lightning and a crystalline stream of jade green water instantly filled the skies, transforming into an incomparably terrifying domain of sword-intent! The Yin-Yang Sword Domain was now definitely Ning’s most powerful killer attack. The quadressence thunder and the quadressence water could unleash ruinously powerful attacks that would heavily injure even Daolords of the Second Step. When they were used in this domain of sword-intent... they could actually wipe those second step Daolords out!

For now, Ning truly had reached his limit in terms of controlling lightning and water. He had no chance at all of completing pentessence water; most likely, he would have to first become a Daolord.

Roughly a thousand years passed after Ning had mastered his quadressence thunder.

“Master! Master! I’ve succeeded. I’ve succeeded!” World God Pillsaint came flying in search of Ning.

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“Come in.”

Ning couldn’t help but shiver when he saw that dark, icy-cold estate. He couldn’t help but sigh as well. Why did the Paragon have to live by herself in a place like this? Why?

As Ning lamented silently, he led Pillsaint into the estate.

The Paragon of Pills was seated in the lotus position before the enormous pill cauldron, her black gauzy robes spread across her and over the ground.

“Darknorth.” The Paragon glanced at Ning, her gaze turning much gentler than before.

“Greetings, Paragon,” Ning said respectfully. As for Pillsaint, he obediently fell to his knees and kowtowed.

“Sit,” the Paragon instructed.

Although she told them to sit, in reality they merely sat on the ground in the lotus position as well. Pillsaint snuck a glance at the Paragon, but didn’t dare to stare directly at her. He simply felt rather puzzled... he could clearly see her, but why was it that he kept on feeling as though he couldn’t make out her features?

“Paragon,” Ning said.

“If you don’t mind, you can simply address me as ‘Mistress’,” the Paragon of Pills said.

“Mistress,” Ning called out obediently. He already had a vague understanding of what the relationship between the Paragon and the deceased Hegemon had been like, and also understood how the Paragon felt about him as a result.

“Then refine a cauldron of Thousand Songs pills.” The Paragon glanced at Pillsaint, her eyes quite calm. She didn’t really care that much about so-called ‘alchemy geniuses’; Hegemons rarely were very eager to take on new disciples. They themselves could live for countless years; why would they have to find people to teach their skills to?

Only truly exceptional geniuses that they also took a personal liking to would be accepted as disciples. She treated Ning in a very special manner, and as a result she held a certain fondness for those connected to him. This was why she was willing to give Pillsaint a chance.

“Yes.” Pillsaint understood that this moment was a moment which could change his destiny. In truth, as soon as he saw that enormous lake of chaos nectar he had been rather stunned. He immediately began to work on refining pills.

Pillsaint was extremely careful, and his cauldron of pills was quite good.

“He’s been in my estate-world this entire time, where time moves a hundred times faster than normal. Thus... he should’ve spent more than five million ‘accelerated’ years,” Ning answered honestly. Lying in front of a major power like her would be utterly stupid.

The Paragon bestowed a golden medallion upon him, and it immediately merged into his body once he touched it, filling his mind with certain memories as well as forcing him to involuntarily swear a lifeblood oath. Clearly, the Paragon wasn’t being nearly as gentle with him as she had been with Ning.

“Thank you, Master.” After fully memorizing the technique, Pillsaint was absolutely delighted. He immediately kowtowed respectfully to express his gratitude.

“You are Darknorth’s retainer, yes? Make sure you serve him loyally. If you betray him, do not blame me for showing you no mercy,” the Paragon said.

“Your disciple understands,” Pillsaint said respectfully. In truth, he could tell that this opportunity was most likely all thanks to the Paragon’s relationship with Ji Ning.

“Thank you, Mistress.” Ning felt gratitude as well. The Paragon of Pills truly did treat him well.

“Gonflame should be able to complete your lifeblood weapons within another ten thousand years.” The Paragon looked at Ning. “My divinations are whispering to me that you probably leave upon acquiring those weapons.”

“Yes.” Ning nodded respectfully.

“My divinations indicate that once you leave, it will be a long, long time before the two of us ever meet again!” The Paragon said. “Thus... you must be very careful on your path of cultivation. If you encounter any serious issues, you can use my name to warn those who would harm you. It might be of some use. Also... true major powers have all types of abilities. Don’t rely too much on any single type of life-saving measure.”

“For example... my calculations indicate that you have a Primaltwin. However, certain major powers who wish to kill you can use certain karma techniques to completely annihilate your truesoul, be it that of your true body or your Primaltwin,” the Paragon said. “Karma techniques are extremely formidable, and have effects similar to that of lifeblood oaths. They can follow those secret, hidden connections and wipe out the truesouls of all of your clones and bodies.”

Ning couldn't help but feel speechless and amazed upon hearing this. Once a lifeblood oath was violated, all bodies would be annihilated, true... but there were actually attack techniques that could achieve the same results? This was utterly terrifying.

“In the future, you shall understand how powerful the ‘major powers’ truly are,” the Paragon said. “Thus, you absolutely must be careful in your path of cultivation. That way, the two of us might have a chance to meet again in the future. You may go now. It won't be necessary for you to come and say farewell to me when you leave.”

“Yes, Mistress.” Ning respectfully fell to his knees, expressing his gratitude.

Although they had only met each other a few times, Ning could sense that the Paragon of Pills truly held nothing back from him and did not plot against him at all. She truly was doing what she thought was best for him.

In his mind, Ning viewed her as he would a close friend or a beloved senior. He silently memorized the kindnesses she had shown him. For now, though, he was still very weak. Repay her kindness? That was something for the distant future.

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### **Book 28: Archaeus Region Chapter 48: The Return**

After bidding the Paragon farewell, Ji Ning couldn't help but feel slightly emotional. After this parting, who knew how long it would be for them to meet again? The Paragon of Pills lived in a different universe, after all. Ning would be living in the Endless Territories! Alas, he had to go back.

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More than sixty thousand years after he had arrived in the Trileaf Realm, Emperor Gonflame sent a servant to carry a message to him.

“Emperor Gonflame wishes to meet me?” Ning revealed a look of joy.

“As soon as the Emperor left his estate-world, he immediately ordered me to come meet you, fellow Daoist.” The extremely muscular azure-garbed Daolord continued, “Fellow Daoist, please follow me over right away.”

“Yes, let's go right away.” Ning had been waiting impatiently for some time now. He had spent more than sixty thousand years for the sake of this lifeblood weapon.

Swoosh. Swoosh.

Two streaks of light shot through the skies, heading straight towards Emperor Gonflame's palace.

Emperor Gonflame's estate was at the margins of the Trileaf Realm. However, there were many cultivators here. Emperor Gonflame's treasures were simply too alluring; even though most of the cultivators couldn't afford to actually buy them, just having the chance to look at them was a chance for them to expand their horizons.

"Please come this way." The azure-garbed Daolord led Ning straight into the estate, and they soon arrived in a private courtyard.

"Master, I've brought Darknorth to you," the azure-robed Daolord said respectfully.

"You can go. Darknorth, come, sit." Emperor Gonflame was seated, a proud smile on his face. Each time he forged some treasures he particularly liked, he would always feel a bit smug. He always did enjoy forging treasures, and it was that genuine affection for his art, combined with his incredible talent as well as the guidance of the Paragon of Pills, which led him to become the number one artificer of this entire universe.

Ning suppressed his excitement and sat down.

"Look at you. I bet the only thing you care about right now are those swords." Emperor Gonflame started to laugh. "Alright, I'll stop teasing you. Look. These are your six lifeblood weapons." As he spoke, he waved his hand and caused a pitch-black scabbard to appear next to him, with six swords 'folded' together inside of it.

"One scabbard, six swords." Emperor Gonflame smiled. "You can carry all of them at the same time. Lifeblood weapons are unlike other weapons. These are freshly forged, and they don't even have Sword Dao quintessences within them. They are completely fresh and blank slates; they don't even have sword-spirits yet. Thus, they'll be relying on you to pour your own Sword Dao into them to form their quintessences and give birth to their sword-spirits. How far they will be able to develop will be completely up to you."

Ning stared at the pitch-black scabbard hovering before him and the six swords within them. Ning waved his hand. Whoosh! Instantly, the six swords all flew out.

Every single sword seemed quite ordinary. The blades were very thin but also incredibly sharp.

"Bind them first." Emperor Gonflame looked at Ning. "You do know how to bind lifeblood swords, right?"

"Fill them with my own blood and nourish them with my own spirit, right?" Ning asked. He was a sword cultivator, after all. Although acquiring lifeblood weapons was quite difficult, he did know how one should bind one if one was lucky enough to acquire one.

"Right." Emperor Gonflame nodded. "Work hard and take care of those swords. As for the scabbard, you don't need to spend any effort on it. It's nothing more than an ordinary top-grade Eternal treasure, with no special properties. I just casually made it into a shape that fits the swords."

The scabbard and the six swords hovered in front of Ning. Ning stretched out his hand, a wound suddenly appearing within his palm. Blood immediately spurted out. Under Ning's control, the blood flew out in six streams and covered all six of those swords.

The six swords were all pitch-black in color. Like nursing babies, they absorbed Ning's fresh blood. The blood spread out over them like a spider web as more and more of it was absorbed into the swords.

To Ning, blood was nothing more than a manifestation of his divine power. After using up more than half of his divine power, his six swords were finally 'full'.

Whoosh. Ning sent out strands of his divine will towards those six swords. The six swords had absorbed much of Ning's blood, which contained both his divine power as well as tiny parts of his truesoul. As a result, the swords naturally wouldn't resist Ning's will, allowing it burrow deep within their 'bodies'.

Ning's divine will completely surrounded the six swords, almost like the embrace of a mother.

Slowly... the six swords began to change internally in a dramatic fashion, almost like how Pangu had been born from the primordial chaos. The six swords were already filled with Ning's blood. Now, under the guidance and nurturing power of Ning's soul and will, they began to gain sentience. In truth, this sentience was akin to that of a living being's; they would be intelligent, grow, and even cultivate independently. This was what the giant bear of Daoist Threelives' Starseizing Manor had done.

"Whoah."

"Wow."

"Ah."

One voice after another cried out as child-like figures began to appear from the surfaces of the six swords. Because of Ning's own soul and truesoul having influenced their creation, they were born looking like human children.

All of them seemed quite puzzled. As 'newborns' who had just come into existence, they didn't even know how to speak.

"Hello, kids." When Ning saw those six sword-spirits arise, he suddenly sensed a powerful sense of kinship towards them. In the past, whenever he had bound magic treasures he would be connected to them as well, but those were just ordinary connections. This time...

It was a feeling almost akin to when he had first seen his daughter Brightmoon. It was a connection that came from the deepest parts of his truesoul, a true connection on the most basic of levels. He felt almost like a father towards them! This was another reason why these weapons were referred to as 'lifeblood' weapons.

"Be good now." Ning smiled as he looked at the six of them. They all looked like babies, and all of them were completely naked. Ning laughed as he used his divine will to convey some information to them. In the end, they weren't mortal children; they grew and learned quite quickly. As soon as Ning sent them some information, they almost immediately learned how to speak.

"Master."

"Master!"

"Hey, so you are our master?"

The six young fellows all began to call out simultaneously.

Ning couldn't help but feel a bit helpless. Although they had quickly mastered the concept of language, it would take time for them to grow more intelligent. Right now, they were too young and too innocent.

"From this day forth, you will be ranked in accordance with how quickly you woke up. So you'll be number one, you'll be number two, you'll be number three..." Ning gave all of them rankings.

"Haha." Emperor Gonflame started to laugh. "Darknorth, have you started to view them as your own children?"

Ning was startled. They were just swords, right? But indeed, he had given them a 'birth order' as he might've given actual children.

"Many major powers will treat their lifeblood weapons as their own children." Emperor Gonflame sighed. "It isn't surprising at all. In the future, it'll be up to you to help them grow and become stronger. The relationship between you and your swords will only strengthen and deepen. A tiny number of incredible lifeblood weapons will break through to the Universe level, but those Universe treasures will still feel tremendous love and affection for their first master. This is why."

Ning nodded slowly. The Universe sword belonging to the deceased Hegemon of the sword refused to accept Ning, precisely because it wanted to choose someone whose personality was more similar to the Hegemon's.

"From this day forth, the six of them shall forever be by your side. They shall venture into battle by your side and brave danger with you," Emperor Gonflame said. "Treat them well."

"Understood." Ning looked at his six swords. This was the first time he truly felt as though his magic treasures were his family members.

"The six of you... you shall be called the Northbow swords," Ning said.

Northbow. North, because his own Daoist title was Darknorth. Bow, because 'Rainbowflame Fairy' was Yu Wei's Daoist title. His greatest ambition, his purpose behind wanting to become stronger and reach the apex, was in large part because he wanted to bring her back to life. If it hadn't been for her... even though he would still pursue the path of a cultivator, he wouldn't be as frenzied as he currently was.

With Northbow swords in hand, he would carve a grand path for himself through the thistles and thorns that filled the path of cultivation.

"Northbow swords? Then I'll be Boss Northbow."

"I like that name!"

"I'll be Northbow Three."

"I'll be Northbow Four!"

They all called out, one after the other. However... the final sword, 'Northbow Six', just shook his head and let out a disdainful snort.

Ning blinked, then started to laugh. He then sent out his will, causing his sword-intent to pour into the six swords. Ning's five Supreme Daos began to link together once more as his sword-intents joined together, coiling into the six swords and transforming into their quintessence cores.

Instantly, the auras of the six swords expanded dramatically. Their auras exploded outwards in an awe-inspiring fashion, and the six young fellows revealed looks of delight as well.

"Come in." Ning willed it, instantly causing all six swords to fly into the scabbard on his back.

"Right now, in terms of quality they are already comparable to top-grade Eternal weapons," Emperor Gonflame said. "However, they will continue to grow and advance towards the Universe level. Although it is incredibly difficult for lifeblood treasures to grow to become Universe treasures, they'll continue to strengthen as they grow. Thus, they'll need to consume various types of materials and ingredients. It'll be up to you to provide them."

"Understood." Ning smiled and nodded. "Helping raise them is part of my responsibilities."

"Haha, right. 'Raise' them well." Emperor Gonflame smiled as well.

"Emperor, I won't thank you because mere words will not suffice. I bid you farewell," Ning said gratefully.

"Mm." Emperor Gonflame nodded.

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That very day, Ning had Daolord Yuhong guide him out of the Trileaf Realm.

"Here is a star map of our universe. Our Trileaf Realm has three spacetime tunnels that lead to three different parts of this universe," Daolord Yuhong explained.

Ning chose the tunnel that led to an exit closest to the place he had to go.

"Here's the spacetime tunnel which Master constructed. She is the only one capable of creating spacetime tunnels which traverse virtually the entirety of our universe." Daolord Yuhong pointed at the enormous, pitch-black vortex up ahead.

"Alright." Ning turned his head to stare off into the distance, then stepped into the black vortex.

At that very moment, a cold, black-garbed figure was standing outside the Paragon's estate. The black-garbed Paragon of Pills stared off into the distance. She was able to see the white-robed youth with the black scabbard on his back, and she watched as he stepped into the spacetime tunnel and departed her Trileaf Realm.

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### **Book 29: Daolord Chapter 1: Spacetime Disc**

Rumble...

A streak of sword-light was flying through the transversal conduit.



Ji Ning flew incredibly fast when using the Blood Drop evasion skill, but the transversal conduit was simply too long. It had taken their group over three years to fly from the Brightshore Kingdom to the alternate universe. Still, by now Ning flew twice as fast as he had in the past.

“Here I am.” When Ning saw the light up ahead, he couldn’t help but reveal a look of delight as he darted towards it.

In the instant that he flew through, Ning could sense... Su Youji! He could also sense his other true body clone! He could also sense the Primaltwin which was safeguarding the Three Realms.

“I’m back.” Ning laughed. He was home.

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The Endless Territories. The Badlands Territory. An unremarkable chaos planet.

Whoosh.

A figure suddenly appeared on the surface of this chaos planet. It was yet another white-robed Ji Ning.

“I’ve benefited tremendously from this trip to the alternate universe. I’ve now perfectly joined five Supreme Daos together! Although I can sense that this isn’t the true apex of the Dao of the Sword, I trust I’ll soon be able to break through to that level.” Ning had the feeling for some time now that he was very, very close to the true apex.

He had spent over six million accelerated years in the Trileaf Realm, and during that period of time this feeling had only grown stronger and stronger. It looked as though he hadn’t improved at all, but in reality he had been slowly accumulating experience in his Sword Dao. When it reached a certain level, it would burst forth!

“If I wish to become a Daolord, I must become one with my clone first. It is time for my clone to head off to Vastheaven Palace.” Ning smiled, then strode forwards. Whoosh! He instantly tore a hole in the space around him. By now, Ning’s sword-intent alone was completely capable of tearing a spatial tunnel open for him, allowing him to enter a different spatial continuum and move even faster through space.

His true body and its clone would reunite at Vastheaven Palace!

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The Brightshore Kingdom. The Sword Palace of the Twelve Palaces. Within an estate located at the very peak of one of the many awe-inspiring mountains in the Sword Palace.

This estate belonged to Ji Ning. Because Ning had yet to return, the gates to the estate remained barred firmly shut. Next to the estate there was a wooden house, with Flamefairy Su Youji having taken up temporary residence here.

Ever since she had returned from the alternate universe she had lived here, waiting for Ning.

“Master!” Su Youji had been meditating in the lotus position, but she suddenly opened her eyes, revealing a look of joy with them.

She could sense that Ji Ning had returned!

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The lofty peak of a mountain. This was the other end of the transversal conduit. When Ning exited the conduit, he appeared here. Moments later, a snow-robed old man with six horns and a white beard suddenly appeared out of nowhere.

“Hegemon.” Ning was in an extremely good mood due to having returned. When he saw the Hegemon suddenly appear, he couldn’t help but be badly startled and hurriedly bow.

“You are back.” The white-bearded elder had a smile on his face. “It is good that you are back. You were the last one to return from the alternate universe.”

Ning was stunned. So Greatjoy, Solewind, and the others both returned as well.

“First, return the Archaeus medallion to me,” the white-bearded elder said.

“Yes.” Ning hurriedly produced the Archaeus medallion. It was now of no use to him, but the almighty Hegemon would be able to use it to allow other World-level cultivators to venture through the alternate universe in the future.

“Greatjoy, Solewind, and the others have already narrated what happened in the alternate universe to me. You once saved their lives, which is no small thing. As I said long ago, the better you perform, the heavier I shall reward you.” The white-bearded man smiled. “And I heard that you even managed to enter the inner reaches of the Genesis Lands...”

“It was luck,” Ning said.

“It wasn’t luck. Solewind, you, and Greatjoy all managed to make it inside. In the future, I imagine that the three of you will be every bit the equal of Eastcult and Bertulu,” the white-bearded elder said.

Ning was secretly surprised. So Greatjoy had made it into the inner reaches as well?

“This is a spacetime disc I created myself.” The white-bearded elder produced a strange disc of mixed white and black colors. “Through using this spacetime disk, you can flee through spacetime in a dangerous situation. It contains the power of a secret art which I personally infused into it. However, it can only be used once. After you use it the energy within will be consumed, making it unusable.”

As he spoke, he sent the strange disc towards Ning.

Ning was rather excited. Before going to the alternate universe, the almighty Hegemon had indeed said that if he provided assistance to Skyfire Brightshore, he would be richly rewarded upon his return. Still, he hadn’t expected the reward to be so ample.

“Given my mastery over the Dao of Spacetime, there won’t be many who can chase after you once you activate this spacetime disc.” The almighty Hegemon was completely confident in his abilities. “Still, you have to be careful. Major powers have countless abilities at their disposal, and some are so strong that you won’t even have a chance to use the disc. Thus, you still have to be careful.”

“Understood,” Ning said respectfully. Given how much Emperor Maniseal had doted on his disciple, he had most certainly provided his disciple with life-saving treasures. And yet, his disciple had still died by the hands of Emperor Trisilk.

“Hegemon, I wish to leave the Brightshore Kingdom for a time, but...” Ning said. Per the rules of the Brightshore Kingdom, one was generally permitted to leave only upon becoming a Daolord.

“Permission granted. Just go speak with Woodflower of your Sword Palace.” The white-robed elder nodded. “Be careful when voyaging through the outside world. You can easily die, given how weak you still are. Enough. You can go now.”

“Acknowledged.” Ning bowed respectfully, then used the nearby spacetime tunnel to first travel back to the imperial palace, then head to the Sword Palace.

The white-bearded old man nodded slightly as he watched Ning leave. “These young fellows have all benefited quite a bit, and Darknorth has undergone a truly earthshaking transformation. Now, even I can only barely sense what his destiny will be like.”

The Brightshore Kingdom’s grand strategy lay in the production of elites! The Daolords of the Brightshore Kingdom were, on average, much stronger than those of the Dao Alliance. However, they were also much fewer in number! As for Ji Ning, Bertulu, Greatjoy, and the others, they were the elites of the elites, the cream of the crop! The Brightshore Kingdom would naturally protect them carefully.

Giving Ning a spacetime disc as a form of ‘thanks’ was just an excuse! Even if he didn’t have this excuse, the Hegemon would’ve come up with another excuse to give this monstrously talented kid a protective treasure.

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Ning stood there at the front entrance to the Sword Palace, staring at the beautiful, fiery-robed woman who stood at the other side of the entrance.

“Youji.” Ning smiled.

“Master.” Su Youji’s eyes were brimming with tears. She had actually benefited greatly from her visit to the Genesis Lands, and she had improved significantly as well. She was at the point where she could become a Daolord whenever she wished. However, she was too worried about Ning. When she returned to the Sword Palace, she simply couldn’t calm down and so she didn’t make her breakthrough.

Now, at least, she saw Ji Ning once more.

“Look at yourself! Your master won’t die that easily, you know.” Ning grinned.

“I knew you had to believe. Firesurge and those other bastards said that you...” Su Youji revealed a brilliant smile.

Ning’s gaze suddenly turned to someone who stood behind Su Youji.

“Ah. It seems I’ve disturbed the two of you.” A figure emerged from behind Su Youji, a smile on his face.

“Senior apprentice-brother Woodflower,” Ning immediately called out. The newcomer was indeed Lord Woodflower.

Lord Woodflower smiled as he looked at Ning. "I just learned from the Hegemon that you've returned. Solewind, Greatjoy, and the others all returned some time ago. You were the only one left. You really gave me a bad scare."

When Ning hadn't returned with the others, Woodflower really had been worried for quite some time.

"I'm back now, right?" Ning laughed.

"I imagine this trip was quite fruitful for you," Lord Woodflower said.

"Not bad." Ning grinned.

As far as treasures went, the deceased Hegemon had bestowed upon him a pair of Dao-seals, a suit of armor, and chaos nectar. The most precious treasures, of course, were those six lifeblood swords which Emperor Gonflame had labored over. Still... weapons and treasures, upon being bound, could have their auras restrained, making it so that outsiders couldn't tell how powerful they were. Not even the almighty Hegemon had noticed how extraordinary Ning's six swords and suit of armor were.

"As long as you benefited from it. When are you planning to become a Daolord?" Lord Woodflower asked.

"Soon. I need to make some further preparations," Ning said. "Right. Senior apprentice-brother, I'm planning to leave the Brightshore Kingdom on a trip."

"No problem." Lord Woodflower nodded. "If you are going to leave, follow me. We'll go light a heartlamp first."

"Alright." Ning nodded.

Heartlamps were lit through one's own truesoul. Generally speaking, one would be able to sense right away when its master perished. Once its master perished, the heartlamp would be extinguished as well. But of course, if you entered an alternate universe or some particularly dangerous ruins, it was possible that the connection to the heartlamp would be severed.

Still, heartlamps and truesoul towers were amongst the best of life-sensing equipment. The connection was almost as perfect as the connection between a true body and a clone. The more casually created items like life-tablets had a much smaller area of effectiveness.