

## Desolate 981

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### Book 29: Daolord Chapter 2: Star Map

Ji Ning led Su Youji to follow Lord Woodflower into the Sword Palace. The Sword Palace had quite a few cultivators within it, but of course most were black-armored Daolords.

“Swordlord Darknorth has arrived.”

“It’s Swordlord Darknorth.”

“That’s Flamefairy Su Youji standing next to him.”

“He’s been gone for roughly eighty thousand years, right? I’m surprised that Lord Woodflower is actually welcoming him back personally.”

“Eighty thousand years ago, all of the World-level geniuses of the Twelve Palaces who were acknowledged by the ancient pagodas were ordered to return, then challenged the Daolord Cloudworld. After that, Swordlord Darknorth, Prince Greatjoy, Heartlord Solewind, and Waterlord Firesurge all suddenly disappeared. I heard that they had all gained an incredible stroke of good fortune. Prince Greatjoy, Heartlord Solewind, and the others all returned together tens of thousands of years ago, as did Flamefairy Su Youji. I thought that Swordlord Darknorth must’ve died.”

The black-armored Daolords all chatted amongst themselves, while the ones closer to Ning all called out in very modest manners, “Swordlord Darknorth.”

Virtually all of the black-armored Daolords had reached that level through using Pseudo Samsara Pills. It was all but guaranteed that they would forever remain Daolords of the First Step. They thus didn’t spend much time or effort on cultivation, and instead were filled with curiosity about the latest news and going ons.

When the almighty Hegemon had chosen Ning and the others, they were quickly able to deduce what was really happening. In truth, the Hegemon didn’t really care that they knew some of the details; so long as the secret of the alternate universe was kept hidden, that was enough.

“Come on.” Lord Woodflower led Ning towards an ancient pagoda. “Su Youji, you can wait outside.”

“Understood.” Su Youji obediently stood outside the pagoda, while Ji Ning entered.

The interior of the pagoda was simple and unadorned. Deep within it, atop a stone dais, there were a series of heartlamps that were lit. Heartlamps looked quite similar to lotus flowers in shape, and they contained sparks of truesoul flames. So long as the master remained alive, these flames would never die.

There were five levels to the stone dais. There were many heartlamps on the first level, well over two thousand. The second level had far fewer lamps, just sixteen in total. The third level only had eighty-two heartlamps, the fourth level had merely thirty-five heartlamps, and the fifth level only had two heartlamps.

“This stone dais has five levels. The first level is for Daolords of the First Step, the second is for Daolords of the Second Step, and so on and so forth. The fifth level is reserved for Eternal Emperors.” Lord Woodflower looked at the two heartlamps on the fifth level, then let out a sigh. “Our Sword Palace has only given birth to a total of three Eternal Emperors. One has perished, while the other two are out adventuring...”

Ning nodded. The Sword Palace only had around a hundred ‘real’ Daolords. The reason why there were so many on the first level, with over two thousand heartlamps present, was because almost all of them were black-armored Daolords.

“Senior apprentice-brother, our Sword Palace actually has thirty-five Daolords of the Fourth Step?” Ning asked. The fourth step represented Verge-level Daolords; they definitely would be considered incredibly strong major powers.

“Think about Daolord Everstarter, who has been missing for countless chaos cycles. Do you think he is alive, or do you think he is dead?” Lord Woodflower looked at Ning. “The heartlamp remains lit because it cannot sense him, but whether or not he is actually still alive is hard to say.”

Ning nodded. For example, if he had died in an alternate universe, there would’ve been no way to sense it.

“As for Daolords of the Fourth Step who we are certain are still alive, there are twenty-two of them,” Lord Woodflower said. “The others, we simply cannot tell. Daolords of the Fourth Step are all searching for opportunities and fortunes that will assist them in their Daomerge. For the sake of their Daomerge, they will risk their lives and plunge into some truly deadly regions... and some of them will never return.”

Ning couldn’t help but sigh as well. Daolord Solesky was another example; for the sake of his Daomerge, he had chosen to brave the dangers of the Waveshift world.

“Alright. Come, set a heartlamp alight,” Lord Woodflower said. “The normal rule is that only Daolords can leave. However, you are capable of becoming a Daolord whenever you choose, and so we won’t force things. For now, we’ll temporarily keep your heartlamp on the first level.”

A dark, gloomy lotus-shaped heartlamp hovered before Ning. Ning stretched out a finger, sending out a stream of his soul into the heartlamp. Poof! The wick within the flower petals of the heartlamp instantly lit up. Ning could sense the strong connection which now existed between his truesoul and the blazing flames. It almost felt like one of his clones.

With but a thought, Ning sent the heartlamp flying to the borders of the first level of the stone dais, then set it down.

“After you become a Daolord, training will speed up significantly at first. It shouldn’t take you too long to reach the second step! Reaching the third step will take a bit more time, while reaching the fourth step will be the most difficult of all.” Lord Woodflower had a complicated look on his face as he said softly, “As for the Daomerge... it’ll be up to luck.”

Countless monstrously powerful Daolords had perished. Only a miniscule number became Eternal Emperors.

“However... failing in the Daomerge doesn’t mean that much. To be able to roam the universe freely for 108,000 chaos cycles is enough.” Lord Woodflower laughed. “If you stifle yourself and choose a weak Dao... even if you are lucky enough to become an Eternal Emperor, you’ll live in perpetual fear of being killed by one of the powerful Daolords. Even if you live forever, that just means you’ll be pitiful bug forever!”

Ning stared at the ancient, dispirited Lord Woodflower. Suddenly, he could sense a terrifying sword-intent emanate from the man’s body. Ning couldn’t help but nod.

To mortals, cultivators seemed to have unlimited lifespans; upon becoming a Celestial Immortal, it was said that your lifespan would be as long as that of the heavens themselves. However, in reality there was still a limit! Even entire chaosworlds and the heavens within them would eventually perish and be born anew. As for World-level cultivators and Daolords, they could at most live for 108,000 chaos cycles! They had to succeed in the Daomerge within this allotted time span.

If they did not complete their Daomerge, then when the time came they would perish. Thus... even the most powerful of Daolords could only live for 108,000 chaos cycles. This was why the Sword Palace had more than 80,000 powerful Daolords in its records, but only a hundred who were still alive.

Only by succeeding in the Daomerge would they gain true eternity. For the most powerful, such as the Hegemon, time flowed on in an endless stream but they remained at the very apex of the universe. The almighty Brightshore Hegemon had been alive for far longer than even the Twelve Palaces.

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With the heartlamp lit, Ning left the pagoda.

Su Youji was waiting for him outside. There was actually a green-robed creature with hundreds of tentacles that served as hair and a pair of golden eyes.

“Greetings, Master.” The green-robed creature immediately knelt down and called out with respect when he saw Ning emerge.

“And you are...?” Ning was puzzled.

“This is your servant,” Lord Woodflower said. “A servant which the Brightshore Kingdom has prepared for you.”

“The Brightshore Kingdom is giving me a servant? A World-level servant?” Ning was puzzled. What was the point of giving him a World-level servant?

Lord Woodflower said, “Don’t underestimate his usefulness. He will be extremely important to you! Normally, only real Daolords of the Twelve Palaces will be given access to servants like him. Those black-armored Daolords never will. Every one of them is raised here within the Brightshore Kingdom and possesses both self-cloning abilities as well as incredibly powerful souls. Just one of his clones will accompany you, with another one remaining in the Brightshore Kingdom.”

“Senior apprentice-brother, are you saying...?” Ning was starting to understand.

“Exactly so. He’ll be used to send messages.” Lord Woodflower looked at Ning. “If you run into trouble and need to ask for rescue, you can tell him and his clone in the Brightshore Kingdom will be

able to immediately report it to us! The Brightshore Kingdom will immediately spread the word to all of the Daolords and Eternal Emperors of the kingdom who are in the Endless Territories. The ones closest to you will head to you as quickly as possible!" Lord Woodflower laughed.

Ning's eyes lit up. Absolutely incredible. To use a messenger relay of clones to ensure that the Daolords and Eternal Emperors of the Brightshore Kingdom were in constant contact was an effective way of maintaining communication.

"However, given how truly vast the Endless Territories are, generally speaking it would be difficult for an ordinary World God's clone to be able to sense past a thousand or so territories. Thus, the Brightshore Kingdom has arranged for this one to work with you. His soul is incredibly powerful," Lord Woodflower said.

Ning nodded in understanding. There was a limit to the distance at which a clone would be able to sense the presence of another clone. Elder God and Ancestral Immortal clones could only sense each other up to ten territories apart, whereas World-level clones would only function up to a thousand territories apart.

The so-called 'sensing' method was actually a type of soul resonance. Thus, the stronger the soul, the greater the distance at which the connection could be maintained! Take Ning as an example. Although he was merely at the World level, his soul was comparable to a Daolord's! As for these World-level cultivators who had been trained by the Brightshore Kingdom, they all had clones and souls which were far more powerful than that of ordinary World-level cultivators, allowing them to sense at a great distance as well.

"It is quite rare for World-level cultivators to have clones." Ning sighed with emotion. "Ones with such powerful souls are even more rare."

"The Brightshore Kingdom doesn't have that many Daolords. That's why we can afford to do this," Lord Woodflower said. "There's no way the Dao Alliance, for example, could do such a thing. Still, they have methods of their own... but of course, those methods are far slower than ours."

Ning nodded. The Brightshore Kingdom was able to transmit information at truly shocking speeds.

"When you wander through the outside world, the Brightshore Kingdom shall be the strongest shield available to you." Lord Woodflower smiled at Ning. "And all of the Daolords of the Brightshore Kingdom have sworn oaths from the day they joined to never engage in battle against each other."

Ning chuckled. When he had received the Sword Palace's medallion, he had also sworn a lifeblood oath. No members of any of the Twelve Palaces could kill each other.

"The major powers of the Brightshore Kingdom are extremely unified when wandering the outside world. If you encounter other Daolords of the Brightshore Kingdom who are in danger, you should help them as well." Lord Woodflower looked at Ning.

"Understood." Ning nodded.

"Right. This is the star map of all territories which are known to the Brightshore Kingdom." Lord Woodflower handed a rolled-up golden star map scroll to Ning.

Ning accepted it. Upon opening it, a look of shock instantly filled his face.

“Amazed, right? The Endless Territories are truly vast, and some of its danger zones are also truly massive. Many cannot even be fully mapped out.” Lord Woodflower let out a sigh.

Ning stared, stunned, at the star map. Good heavens. This... this was far larger than the entire star map of the alternate universe!

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### **Book 29: Daolord Chapter 3: The Journey**

The territories occupied by cultivators in the Endless Territories roughly made up around sixty to seventy percent the size of the alternate universe. However, there were many ‘danger zones’.

For example, the region marked down as the ‘Starsea of Worries’ was considered the most dangerous location in all the Endless Territories. It had yet to be fully mapped out, but its known area alone already surpassed the entirety of the rest of the Endless Territories. It was incredibly dangerous, and less than one in ten thousand Daolords would survive a trip into it! Generally speaking, only incredibly powerful Daolords would be lucky enough to survive, and even the majority of Eternal Emperors who entered that place would perish.

The Starsea of Worries, in and of itself, was nearly comparable to the entire alternate universe in size. It was without a doubt the most dangerous place in the Endless Territories. The Endless Territories also had some other similar danger zones which were quite terrifying. Chances of entering and surviving were very slim.

“If we factor in those danger zones, the Endless Territories is far larger than the alternate universe.” Ji Ning was rather stunned as he carefully read through the information the star map contained regarding the Endless Territories.

“Is that...” Ning’s eyes narrowed as he saw an explanation of the six major forces within the Endless Territories.

The Dao Alliance was comprised of virtually all cultivators. It was an enormous behemoth that was also far-flung and dispersed. It had the most Daolords and Eternal Emperors, but it also had so many internecine disputes and took up so much territory that it had always operated under the principle of non-governance.

The Brightshore Kingdom was created by the almighty Hegemon Brightshore, one of the three mighty Hegemons of the Endless Territories!

The Aeonians consumed cultivators, using them as food. They were extremely unified and were incredibly powerful after being Awakened.

The ‘special lifeforms’. They were the hundreds and thousands of strange, unique creatures who had been birthed by the primordial chaos. After Hegemon Windrain rose to power and established the Windrain Kingdom, it became a holy land for all special lifeforms and countless special lifeforms congregated there.

The Ancient cultivators comprised the most mysterious, secretive organization in all the Endless Territories. They were extremely few in number, but each and every one of them possessed incredible power. Their divine abilities and secret arts were powerful beyond measure, and they were led by Hegemon Netherlily.

The Dark Kingdom was comprised of cultivators who had migrated from outside the Endless Territories, and they ruled over the border territories.

“Much more complex than the alternate universe,” Ning mused to himself.

“Junior apprentice-brother.” Lord Woodflower smiled as he looked at Ning. “Surprised?”

“I never realized our many danger zones our Endless Territories possess, or that we actually have six major forces here,” Ning said.

“There’s no need for most World-level cultivators to know such things. The Endless Territories are simply too vast and filled with so many dangers that they would never make it far enough to find out,” Lord Woodflower said. “You, however, are different. This is all information you’ll need to know after you become a Daolord.”

Ning nodded.

“As for the danger zones... some are almost infinitely large, especially the Starsea of Worries. Not even the almighty Hegemon has been able to fully explore them,” Lord Woodflower said. “Honestly, the main things you need to keep in mind are those six major powers. The Brightshore Kingdom is rather aloof, and we are on fairly good terms with the Dao Alliance, the Aeonians, and the special lifeforms. We can be considered enemies of the Dark Kingdom, as they are foreigners, after all. But remember... we are mortal foes of the Ancient cultivators!”

“Mortal foes?” Ning was startled.

“Right.” Lord Woodflower nodded somberly. “Thus, you need to be wary of them! But of course, you need to keep an eye out for the other organizations as well. The Dao Alliance, for example. It is so large and filled with so much internal struggles that it wouldn’t surprise me if some of their major powers suddenly assaulted you. Same with the Aeonians; you are a cultivator, after all! Aeonians love eating Samsara Daolord cultivators.”

“Alright. You know everything you need to know.” Lord Woodflower looked at Ning. “In short... have a safe trip.”

“Alright.” Ning nodded heavily.

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After accepting the servant, Ning led Su Youji in leaving the Sword Palace.

The Brightshore Kingdom was quite similar to the Trileaf Realm, in that it also had three spacetime tunnels.

“These three spacetime tunnels lead to three different parts of the Endless Territories, allowing our cultivators to waste as little time as possible when travelling.” A black-lord Daolord guard who stood outside the tunnel smiled as he explained to Ning.

“Mm.” Ning led Su Youji straight into the spacetime tunnel. In his heart, he couldn’t help but muse that the Paragon of Pills and Hegemon Brightshore apparently were quite similar in their mastery over spacetime.

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The Badlands Territory and Vastheaven Palace had originally seemed quite distant from one another, but if you looked at the star map of the Endless Territories you would realize that they actually belonged to the same general neighborhood! Given Ning’s strength, a few hundred years would suffice for his clone to go from the Badlands Territory to Vastheaven Palace.

“We should be able to make it in around three or so centuries.” Ning’s true body would be able to move even faster; the spacetime tunnel would save him quite some time.

Swoosh.

A flying shuttle was hurtling through the void, with Ning, Su Youji, and World God Pillsaint within it.

“Master, what sort of a place is Vastheaven Palace?” Pillsaint asked curiously.

“A place I have to go. In fact, I’m technically a member of Vastheaven Palace as well,” Ning said with a smile. Indeed. He had to reach that place before he could fulfill his lifeblood oath and return to the Three Realms. His Primaltwin had been protecting the Three Realms for quite some time now, but it had to remain physically outside within the primordial chaos just beyond it, unable to actually re-enter.

“Youji, Pillsaint, both of you have made tremendous gains. I imagine both of you can become Daolords now,” Ning said.

“Yes.” Su Youji nodded. “After I received the legacy of Feixian the Exalted but prior to visiting the Genesis Lands, I was already comparable to a supreme Chaos Immortal. Thanks to the opportunities the Genesis Lands gave me... even if I don’t use any treasures at all, I am a transcendent Chaos Immortal.”

Ning nodded. To reach that level only through the usage of Eternal weapons wasn’t that impressive. If you were able to reach a transcendent level of power without needing to rely on magic treasures, you would probably be able to break through to the Daolord level whenever you wished.

“Thank you, Master, for that Archaeus medallion. Otherwise, I have no idea how long it would take for me to break through.” Su Youji felt rather excited. She had never imagined that she would become a Daolord as well.

“I have to thank you as well, Master. If it wasn’t for you, I can’t even imagine how long it would take before my Dao of Alchemy would have reached its current level.” Pillsaint was quite excited.

“Flamefairy, I can become a Daolord whenever I wish as well.”

Ning laughed. His two most worthy retainers were both able to become Daolords. This was truly pleasing to him.

“Right. Have Solewind, Greatjoy, and the others made their breakthroughs yet?” Ning asked.

“Ah! I was so happy to see you back that I forgot to tell you,” Su Youji said. “Prince Greatjoy broke through to become a Daolord roughly three thousand years after our return! Just two years after that, Waterlord Firesurge became a Daolord as well! Another twelve thousand years after that, Solewind also became a Daolord.”

Ning was startled. All of them became Daolords?

“Makes sense. They had reached their bottlenecks long ago; the only reason they held back was because they had made some gains in the Genesis Lands. Any further improvements would be incredibly difficult. I’m not surprised they broke through to become Daolords,” Ning said.

“Master, when will you become a Daolord?” Su Youji asked curiously.

“Right!” Pillsaint was curious as well.

“It won’t take too long,” Ning said. No matter what, he had to reunite with his clone first. In addition... he could also dimly sense that there was still a slight flaw with his Sword Dao. He had the feeling that he was close to breaking through, but just needed one final stimulus.

“Since the two of you are both ready to become Daolords... how about this. Let’s find a quiet, secluded place and have you two break through there,” Ning said. “Or would you prefer to train for a bit longer and further solidify your foundations?”

“I solidified my foundation long ago. I was just waiting for you to come back, Master. I can break through whenever I wish; there’s no need to wait any further.” The Flamefairy smiled.

“If that’s the case... hm. Let’s just go over there.” Ning willed it, and the flying ship quickly shifted into a different dimensional continuum, then landed on a quiet, desolate chaos planet. This chaos planet had no life on it at all, and its surface was a rocky one.

Ning waved his hand, causing an Immortal estate to descend upon the surface of this planet. With another thought, Ning activated the various layers of restrictive seals and spells on the estate, causing an aura of enormous yet subdued power to cover the entire planet. Anyone off in the distance would never be able to detect any hint of an aura from this chaos planet.

Breaking through to become a Daolord would cause an enormous disturbance. They had to do their best to dampen their auras and prevent themselves from being discovered, which would cause unnecessary trouble.

“Make your breakthroughs here. I’ll stand guard for you,” Ning said.

“Yes, Master.” Both Pillsaint and Su Youji were rather excited and nervous. Although they were confident in their chances, breaking through to become a Daolord was an incredibly important event in the life of any cultivator.

## [The Desolate Era](#)

### **Book 29: Daolord Chapter 4: The Brothers of Vastheaven Palace**



Ji Ning stood before the railings of the Immortal estate on this chaos planet, staring off into the starry void.

Boom!

Suddenly, a roiling aura of power rocketed into the skies, an aura which was powerful, vast, and utterly exalted. This was not an aura which a World-level cultivator could produce. Even for Ning, only the azureflower mist energy in his body could compare to this aura in power.

“A Daolord’s aura.” Ning smiled. “Pillsaint was the first to break through.”

Breaking through from the World level to become a Daolord required the complete rebuilding of the body, which meant that there was naturally no way to keep one’s aura hidden during the process. It would erupt with abandon. But of course, Ning had long ago set wards on this planet to prevent the Daolord ripples from spreading out.

Rumble...

A dense whirlpool of chaos energy began to form in the void above the planet. The enormous vortex of chaos energy centered around the planet, gathering in large amounts of chaos energy and then continuously transmitting it directly into Pillsaint and letting him make use of it.

A short while later, yet another Daolord aura erupted towards the heavens as the Flamefairy began to make her breakthrough as well. Soon, yet another vortex of chaos energy began to fill the void outside the world.

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The enormous chaos vortexes swirled around this chaos planet. As for Ning, he just quietly stood guard in front of the estate. A disruption in the flow of chaos energy alone generally wouldn’t attract the attention of major powers, because True Gods, True Immortals, Elder Gods, and Ancestral Immortals would cause similar phenomena when they made their breakthroughs. As a result, fluctuations in the flow of chaos energy was fairly common, and the ripples were also quite weak from a distance.

The breakthrough process took more than an entire day.

Swoosh. A chubby form suddenly rocketed into the skies, then landed before Ning. It was the chubby-face, white-teethed Pillsaint. Pillsaint’s aura was now more natural but also more majestic. Just judging from auras alone, one would believe that he was significantly more powerful than Ning. He had already reached the Daolord level.

“Congratulations, Daolord Pillsaint.” Ning smiled.

“I must thank you, Master. If it wasn’t for you, I truly do not know how long it would’ve taken for me to become a Daolord. Or perhaps I might’ve never reached this level.” Pillsaint was rather moved as well. He was far more talented in alchemy than he was in combat, but to become a true grandmaster alchemist was incredibly difficult. This time, thanks to Ning, he had been lucky enough to attract the attention of the Paragon of Pills in the alternate universe and be bestowed with her techniques, allowing him to find his own path.

Only after being guided by an eminent master did Pillsaint know what path he should take. Without an eminent master, only a man of utterly dazzling talent, such as Ji Ning, Solewind, and the others, would be able to rely on his own thoughts and ideas to enter the Daolord level. But of course, this would still be much easier if you had many other legacies and techniques to learn from. If you were able to benefit from the wisdom and experience of your predecessors, you would be able to avoid some of their mistakes. If you wished to see far, you had to stand on the shoulders of giants.

Swoosh. Moments later, yet another figure flew into the heavens, her form ephemeral and bewitchingly beautiful. Dressed in fiery red robes, it was indeed Su Youji, and her beauty and aura of seduction was only even more intoxicating than before.

As someone who trained in the Dao of Charm and control, Su Youji's natural grace and charm was becoming increasingly amazing. A single glance from her would be enough to drive most World-level cultivators insane with love, causing them to be willing to sacrifice themselves for her.

"Master." Su Youji smiled as she looked at Ning, but she felt a bit disappointed when she saw how Ning's eyes still remained very calm and tranquil. She said with a hint of resignation, "I thought I'd be able to affect you a little bit. It seems your ability to resist mesmerization is extraordinarily powerful. As expected, given that you were able to go through the primessence chains."

"If you used your secret arts, I might be affected," Ning said with a laugh.

"I would never do that to you," Su Youji said.

In truth, Ning wasn't sure if he would be able to withstand her. She was now a Daolord, after all. If she used her mesmerization secret arts with her Daolord-level energy... she might not be able to take control over him, but it was likely that she would be able to affect him. She wasn't an ordinary Daolord, after all; she had trained in the legacy of Feixian the Exalted, a terrifyingly powerful Daolord. But of course, even if she was able to affect Ning, Ning would be able to summon his quadressence lightning and water with a thought, using them to easily extinguish Su Youji. The main problem was that the difference in power between them remained too vast!

The Dao of Charm was not a Dao suited to close combat; it was meant to control and beguile foes.

"Now that you are Daolords, everything has changed for you," Ning said. "With each step they take, Samsara Daolords walk between life and death. You have only taken the first step on your path! In the future, you must be even more careful and meticulous in your cultivation. I won't make any unreasonable requests of you, but I do expect the two of you to at least survive to reach the fourth step."

"Right." Pillsaint nodded.

"Failing in the Daomerge is one thing, but if I was to fail and die when breaking through to the second, third, or fourth steps... that would be a joke!" Su Youji was quite confident as well.

For Samsara Daolords, every single step they took was akin to groping for a path through the darkness!

Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals, as well as World-level cultivators, would be able to sense the prime essences of the universe. The prime essence of the Dao of the Sword, for example, would emanate an

aura with extremely detailed information regarding the Dao which would allow cultivators to safely train all the way up to the master-class as a World-level cultivator.

After that... you would be searching through the darkness. A single misplaced step would result in death.

The Daomerge at the end would prove to be the greatest trial. If your Dao held even the slightest of imperfections, there was no way it could gain true eternity. The only result would be you dying and your Dao vanishing. Not even the likes of Su Youji, Pillsaint, or Ning were confident in being able to succeed in the Daomerge. Their goal was to first do their best to become Daolords of the Fourth Step. If they couldn't even reach that level, they really would become the laughingstocks of the Brightshore Kingdom.

As for the Daomerge? They'd worry about that after actually reaching the fourth step.

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Now that Su Youji and Pillsaint were Daolords, the journey before the trio would be even smoother sailing than before. Daolords were naturally a powerful deterrent to any would-be attackers, allowing them to easily travel for nearly three centuries in complete peace.

Slumberlake Star was a place with a spacetime transfer array.

Whoosh. The array suddenly lit up.

"The array was activated just a short while ago. Why is it being activated again so soon?" The Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals who were responsible for overseeing this spacetime transfer array were all puzzled and mumbled to each other.

A short while later, three figures suddenly emerged from the spacetime transfer array. The trio consisted of Ji Ning, Pillsaint, and Su Youji.

When the three of them appeared and the Daolord auras of the latter two wafted outwards, the Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals were so terrified that they didn't dare say another word.

By now, there was no way Ning would choose to waste time in order to save a bit of travel expenses. They naturally chose to independently activate the arrays each time!

"We're fairly close to Vastheaven Palace by now. We should arrive in about half a year," Ning said with a laugh.

"Congratulations, Master." Su Youji smiled. "You've been waiting far too long for this day."

"Yes. It has been far too long." Ning nodded slowly. The reason he cared so much about going to Vastheaven Palace... was because he truly missed his mother and father.

Swoosh!

A flying vessel appeared out of nowhere. Ning and the others entered the vessel, which then speedily departed. They needed to fly for roughly half a month, then go through a natural spatial vortex to reach a more distant location. This was how travelling through the primordial chaos was. In truth, very little of the time was spent going through spacetime transfer arrays; the vast majority of the time was spent going through some rather problematic locations.

Rumble...

There was a chaos planet located within a region of primordial chaos that was fairly close to Slumberlake Star. A fierce fight was going on upon the surface of the planet, causing quite a significant disturbance.

“Eh?” Ning suddenly had a strange feeling. At his level of power, these feelings were generally quite accurate. “Stop!” Ning immediately brought his flying vessel to a halt and put it away.

“Master?” Pillsaint and Su Youji were both puzzled. Why had they suddenly come to a halt?

“Let’s take a look up ahead,” Ning said. “A battle seems to be occurring upon that chaos planet.”

Pillsaint and Su Youji were both puzzled. A battle? So what? What was the point of watching? Still, neither would go against Ning’s wishes. They immediately followed Ning in flying over.

Three World-level cultivators and a number of Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals were watching this battle from afar. This place was fairly close to Slumberlake Star, a spacetime transfer array, and so quite a few cultivators had come over to watch.

“Gentlemen, what is happening on that planet?” Ning walked over to them.

The watching cultivators all turned their heads, puzzled, towards Ning’s group. They saw the white-robed youth, then saw the two figures behind him.

Daolords?!?!

“Greetings, Daolords.” The three World-level cultivators were badly shocked. They hastily bowed.

“Daolords.” The Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals were quivering with fear.

Ning instructed, “Tell me about the battle going on upon that chaos planet.” For him to feel an affinity for it meant there had to be some sort of a connection to himself.

One of the World-level cultivators, an elderly man, immediately said, “Right away, senior.” He didn’t dare act negligently towards this white-robed youth. The youth looked like a World-level cultivator, but the two Daolords were standing behind him. Clearly, this youth’s background was extraordinary.

“That planet has a total of six World-level cultivators who are split up into two groups,” the old man said.

“I can tell that there are two sides.” Ning frowned. He was able to see from ten billion kilometers away that atop that chaos planet, there was a single World-level cultivator who was being assaulted by five others. He was just barely able to hold his own.

“On one side is the Clearwind Temple. The five of them are working together to kill a common foe, a World-level cultivator of their mortal enemy, ‘Vastheaven Palace’.” The old man hurriedly sped up his explanation.

Ning’s face tightened. Vastheaven Palace? No wonder he sensed a connection!

“Hmph.” Ning took a step forward, transforming into a streak of sword-light that tore through space. Through the Blood Drop evasion skill, he entered a different dimensional continuum as he charged towards that chaos planet at maximum speed. If one of the brothers of Vastheaven Palace ended up being bullied by others before his very eyes, what a joke that would be!

“Senior, t-that’s Clearwind Temple!” The old man cried out in alarm. He could sense the killing intent radiating off Ning. Clearwind Temple was a force every bit the equal of Vastheaven Palace. For World-level cultivators, such organizations were unfathomably vast and powerful.

“Master!” Su Youji transformed into a streak of light as well. The nearby cultivators were all dazed when they heard her address him as ‘Master’. What was going on? Why would a Daolord address a World-level cultivator as ‘master’?

“So what if they belong to Clearwind Temple? Our master belongs to Vastheaven Palace!” Pillsaint emanated a killing aura as well as he too transformed into a streak of light.

The old man and the nearby World-level cultivators, Elder Gods, and Ancestral Immortals were all completely stunned.

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### **Book 29: Daolord Chapter 5: Darknorth of Vastheaven Palace**

By the time Ji Ning emerged from the different dimensional continuum, he had already emerged directly outside that chaos planet.

The five World-level cultivators of Clearwind Temple who were surrounding and attacking that lone figure on the surface of the chaos planet immediately noticed the intruder. Their leader, a muscular and tall World-level cultivator, immediately barked out, “Clearwind Temple is in pursuit of a thief. Fellow Daoist, leave immediately!”

“Hmph.” Ning let out a cold snort, immediately transforming into a streak of sword-light. He moved at four times the speed of light as he charged over at maximum speed.

As soon as Ning began to move, the World-level cultivators on the chaos planet were all shocked. Four times the speed of light? It must be understood that most World-level cultivators weren’t even able to move at twice the speed of light, unless they specialized in certain speed-based secret arts. Daolords of the First Step could generally move at double the speed of light, Daolords of the Second Step could move at triple the speed of light, Daolords of the Third Step could move at quadruple the speed of light, and Daolords of the Fourth Step could move at quintuple the speed of light.

Of course, this was just the ‘normal’ speed. If you were skilled in evasive techniques or had a good evasion-type treasure, things would be completely different. Both, however, were extremely rare.

“How can a World-level cultivator move that fast? He must specialize in a movement art.” The five World-level cultivators of Clearwind Temple immediately came to this conclusion.

“I am Darknorth of Vastheaven Palace!” Ning’s cold, baleful voice instantly rang out within the air above the chaos planet, and it struck against the hearts of those five World-level cultivators like thunder, causing their faces to turn pale.

Vastheaven Palace? Not good!

“Is that brother Darknorth?” The belabored and surrounded azure-robed figure immediately called out loudly, “Careful, brother Darknorth! The five of them are not easy to deal with.” He had heard of Darknorth before. Daolord Solesky’s incarnation in Vastheaven Palace had told everyone of Darknorth, letting them know that they had gained a new brother whose name was Darknorth and who was just an Elder God.

“According to what big brother Solesky said, Darknorth is just an Elder God. But that doesn’t seem to be right,” the azure-robed man mused to himself.

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“Stop him!”

“He belongs to Vastheaven Palace? Capture him as well and imprison them both into Blackwind Prison!”

“Attack!”

The five cultivators of Clearwind Temple, upon realizing that Ning was from Vastheaven Palace, immediately launched their attacks against him as well. Two of them continued their assaults on the azure-robed figure while the other three began to charge towards Ning.

“Hmph.” Ning flew forwards like a streak of sword-light, not even drawing his black swords. He just gave them a cold look.

Boom!

It was as though the heavens themselves were collapsing! A terrifying, awesome sword-intent suddenly appeared on the surface of the chaos planet, crystallizing into streaks of sword-light. Countless streaks of sword-light descended upon the world as the five World-level cultivators stared upwards in terror. In the face of this boundless rain of sword-intent, the five were like nothing more than ants.

“How can he be this strong?”

“Impossible.”

“This sword-intent...” The five World-level cultivators were completely stunned. For the sword-intent alone to be this strong... this man could wipe them out as easily as if they were ants. Utterly terrified, the five all produced white jade seals in their hands, then crushed them to beg for rescue. They didn’t even think about fighting back; all they wanted to do was beg for aid.

Whoosh. The endless sword-intent crashed upon them like a wave, smothering and drowning all five of the World-level cultivators. The sword-intent was as soft as cotton, quickly wrapping around all five World-level cultivators. Ning then took out a gourd and opened it, allowing its opening to exert a tremendous sucking power. Swoosh! All five cultivators were instantly drawn inside.

With but a thought, Ning dismissed the sword-intent from the skies.

As far as Ning was concerned, these five World-level cultivators truly were like ants. The difference in power between him and them was simply enormous. Ning, however, didn't wish to be rash. He'd first capture them, then decide later whether or not to kill them.

"Brother Darknorth?" The azure-robed man stared blankly at Ning. He was rather dazed right now.

Big brother Solesky, didn't you say that brother Darknorth was just an Elder God? For him to have reached the World level was one thing. How did he become this powerful?! He didn't even have to attack; his sword-intent alone was enough to capture all five of those World-level cultivators. Two of them were supreme World Gods!

"My name is Eastherd." The azure-robed man suppressed his puzzlement as Ning walked towards him, then said, "Brother Darknorth, thank you for saving my life."

"Brother Eastherd, I just so happened to move past this area on my way to Vastheaven Palace." Ning smiled. "What, you've heard of me before?"

"I have." The azure-robed man nodded immediately. "Big brother Solesky told us about you long ago. He said that you are an Elder God who has close to a World God's level of power, and that you'd be making a breakthrough quite soon. But now... it seems that you have not only reached the World level, you are so powerful as to render me speechless."

Ning chuckled. Indeed. When he met Daolord Solesky, he was just an Elder God.

"Has big brother Solesky returned from the Waveshift world yet?" Ning immediately asked.

"Not yet." Eastherd shook his head and sighed. "He's still trapped in the Waveshift world, with his incarnation standing guard over Vastheaven Palace. His incarnation has mentioned you to us before. Ugh... the Waveshift world is an estate-world left behind by an Eternal Emperor, and Eternal Emperor Waveshift was no ordinary Eternal Emperor at that!"

Ning nodded.

The Waveshift world was one of the many danger zones of the Endless Territories. Quite a few Daolords of the Fourth Step had perished in that place, but a steady stream of them continued to enter it. This was because Emperor Waveshift had left behind certain incredible treasures within that place. Emperor Waveshift was no ordinary Emperor; he was incredibly skilled in the art of Numerancy, to the point of being acclaimed as the number one Numerancy diviner in all the Endless Territories.

Later, he had left to go out adventuring. His estate had become an ownerless item, with generations of Daolords venturing into it to seek out their fortunes. Daolord Badlands was also very skilled in Numerancy. He had even erected his own school within the Waveshift Everworld. There were many other major powers who felt certain that he must've received one of Emperor Waveshift's legacies.

Swoosh. Swoosh.

Two figures flew in from afar. They were Pillsaint and Su Youji. Although they were both Daolords, they were slower than Ning in both teleporting as well as raw flying speed.

"Two Daolords." Eastherd was badly shocked.

“Master, what happened to those people from Clearwind Temple?” Pillsaint asked.

“Master, you move too fast.” Su Youji laughed.

Ning nodded, then looked at Eastherd. “Eastherd, let’s leave immediately. This place is very close to Clearwind Temple’s territory; it’ll be dangerous for us to stay here too long.”

Eastherd was stunned upon hearing these two Daolords address Ning as ‘master’. Upon hearing Ning’s words, he immediately nodded. “Right, right, right! Let’s hurry up and leave.”

“Let’s go.”

Ning produced his flying vessel, and all four of them immediately boarded it. The vessel quickly disappeared into the skies.

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Aboard the flying vessel.

Eastherd stared at Pillsaint and Su Youji, then looked at Ning.

“Daolords?” Eastherd looked at Ning. “Brother Darknorth, these two Daolords are your retainers?”

“Is that really so surprising? My master can become a Daolord whenever he wishes. Even now, he’s still much more powerful than the two of us,” Pillsaint said.

“You haven’t seen our master’s true power yet,” Su Youji said.

Eastherd was secretly speechless. But it was true; he really had seen nothing at all. Just now, Ning had merely exerted a bit of his sword-intent in order to capture the five foes. That couldn’t even be considered a real attack.

“Brother Eastherd.” Ning immediately asked, “How did you end up in a fight against Clearwind Temple, and on their territory?”

Clearwind Temple was located extremely close to the territory that battle had just taken place in. Vastheaven Palace, however, was still another eleven territories away. It’d still take them another half year to reach it.

Half a year wasn’t a long period of time, given how long most cultivators lived for, but it wasn’t exactly short either. Half a year was enough for you to die countless times in a life-and-death battle.

These two mighty sects were twelve territories away from each other. They had their own territories and nursed old grudges against each other; they could be considered mortal enemies.

“As for this matter, it has to do with one of my disciples.” Eastherd shook his head. “Twenty thousand years ago, when I was wandering the outside world, I encountered a young fellow who was incredibly talented and also very kind-hearted. I took him on as my disciple and watched him grow, providing some occasional guidance in secret. Who would’ve thought that he would end up harvesting a treasure that would attract the attention and pursuit of Clearwind Temple? Of course I had to rescue him! But Clearwind Temple is very close to this place, and many World-level cultivators quickly came to aid their



forces. That's why I ended up being surrounded and attacked by five of them at once. If it wasn't for you, brother Darknorth, I probably..."

Ning slowly nodded. "When I captured those five from Clearwind Temple, they all shattered jade talismans. Most likely, they were sending out a distress call."

### The Desolate Era

#### **Book 29: Daolord Chapter 6: Love Will Find a Way**

"Right. They had to have been calling for reinforcements." Eastherd's face turned solemn. "Our return to Vastheaven Palace will probably be a difficult one."

"Difficult?" Ji Ning looked at Eastherd.

"What difficulties are there?" Pillsaint asked.

"The feud between Clearwind Temple and our Vastheaven Palace is an old one. Both sides have accumulated countless grievances over the course of many years. You could call us 'mortal enemies', I suppose. They aren't any weaker than us," Eastherd said. "Clearwind Temple has four Daolords, one of which is a Daolord of the Fourth Step. Two are at the third step, while one is a Daolord of the First Step who only broke through thanks to a Pseudo Samsara Pill. Just now, when you attacked, those five World-level cultivators all shattered their jade medallions to send out distress calls. When Clearwind Temple notices so many of its cultivators sending out distress signals simultaneously, they'll send at least a Daolord of the Third Step. They might even send out their Daolord of the Fourth Step, Patriarch Clearwind himself."

"A Daolord of the Fourth Step," Pillsaint murmured softly. The nearby Su Youji looked rather solemn as well.

Ning nodded, then smiled. "No need to worry. Use generals to deal with soldiers, use earth to defend against floods."

He felt quite confident. He had five mighty golems by his side; he truly wasn't worried about most Daolords of the Third Step. In addition, the Brightshore Kingdom's star map was so incredibly detailed that it even included information regarding the Daolords of Clearwind Temple.

Clearwind Temple only had a single member who would pose a threat to Ning. That person was the temple's founder, Patriarch Clearwind. He was extremely formidable, on par with Daolord Solesky! Even amongst Daolords of the Fourth Step, he was extremely formidable.

"If we really are so unlucky as to encounter Patriarch Clearwind, I'll have no choice but to use up one of my Dao-seals," Ning mused to himself. "If that really does end up happening... I'll just chalk it up to helping Vastheaven Palace get rid of a mortal enemy."

The deceased Hegemon's Dao-seals possessed unfathomable power and could easily slay Daolords of the Fourth Step. Alas, Ning only had two such Dao-seals. He wasn't willing to use them unless absolutely necessary. These items couldn't simply be purchased anywhere!

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The flying vessel continued to advance at high speed. Aboard the vessel, Eastherd said with worry, "The Daolords of Clearwind Temple can move much faster than us. It'll take us half a year to reach Vastheaven Palace, but that'll be more than enough time for them to catch up to us."

"Mm." Ning nodded. He was roughly comparable to ordinary Daolords of the Third Step in speed, but if they elected to pursue him they would send Daolords who were skilled in movement techniques or in the manipulation of space.

"Why don't we take a roundabout path?" Ning suggested.

"That's a good idea," Pillsaint said immediately. "Vastheaven Palace isn't that far off anyhow. I'd rather we take a long detour and spend an extra year or two. That way, we can avoid some trouble."

"Right." Eastherd revealed a slightly embarrassed look on his face. "There's... something else I need to disclose."

"Please feel free to say anything," Ning said.

Eastherd waved his hand, causing another figure to appear on the armored deck of the flying vessel. It was a very muscular youth whose skin was tinged with red. Flames were brimming in his eyes, while his head was completely bald. He actually looked like a Fiendgod who had been birthed from flames.

"Master." The youth immediately fell to his knees.

"This gentleman over here is your uncle-master, Darknorth." Eastherd introduced the nearby Ji Ning.

"My respects, Uncle-Master." The youth was extremely respectful.

Eastherd continued, "This is the young disciple I spoke to you about earlier. His name is Sparrow and he's quite talented."

"To become an Elder God within twenty thousand years of cultivation... he is indeed quite talented," Ning praised.

"This disciple of mine offended Clearwind Temple because he sought to harvest a certain treasure to rescue his Dao-companion," Eastherd said.

"Save his Dao-companion?" Ning's heart suddenly shook. He once more glanced at the flame-wreathed youth before him, his gaze much softer than before.

"Just now, he begged me to send him back to his homeland and let him save his Dao-companion."

Eastherd looked at Ning rather awkwardly. "But my disciple's homeland is within a territory that's close to Clearwind Temple. It's entirely possible that we'll run into one of their Daolords."

Ning laughed. "Haha, I imagine Clearwind Temple wouldn't expect us to actually dare to double back! And, based on what I understand, none of those four are skilled in Numerancy. We've already chosen to take a roundabout path; we might as well first pay a visit to young Sparrow's homeland."

"Thank you, uncle-master Darknorth." Sparrow felt tremendously grateful. He actually knew that this request of his was rather excessive. This had started out as a rather minor matter, but things only grew worse and worse, causing the World-level cultivators of both sides to get involved. However, he truly

was worried about his Dao-companion. He was afraid that if he took too much time, his Dao-companion's truesoul would disperse.

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A silver flying shuttle gleamed with light as it hurtled through the emptiness of space.

Within this flying shuttle sat a Daolord who was dressed in handsome silver robes. Behind him stood two World-level cultivators who awaited his commands. The rules of Clearwind Temple were actually quite strict.

"Darknorth of Vastheaven Palace?" The silver-robed Daolord sat there, murmuring softly to himself. "Such audacity."

"This 'Darknorth' actually dared to attack within the territory under our control. He really is courting death," one of the World-level disciples below him said.

"Don't underestimate him." The silver-robed Daolord said calmly, "Based on what I saw when I inverted the flows of spacetime, Darknorth was actually able to defeat the five of them with just his sword-intent alone. He even has two Daolords of the First Step as his retainers. He most likely has reached incredible heights in the Dao of the Sword. He may have even mastered a Supreme Dao!"

"But... no matter what, he's still just a World-level cultivator. When facing me, the only result will be his death." The silver-robed Daolord was quite confident. He was a Daolord of the Third Step. Not even the likes of Bertulu or Eastcult would be able to match him unless they first broke through to become Daolords of the First Step.

"Given what a high level of enlightenment he has reached, he must have had many strange encounters." The silver-robed Daolord silently calculated what he should do. "I'll capture him first. By then, his treasures will be mine."

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Swoosh.

A flying vessel landed atop an ice-locked, ice-covered region. The cultivators who emerged from the vessel where Ji Ning, Pillsaint, Su Youji, Eastherd, and Elder God Sparrow.

"This is one of the dangerous areas in my homeland," Sparrow said. "This entire region is completely ice-locked, up to a distance of eight hundred million kilometers. Below it is an essence of utter cold. I sent my Dao-companion deep into that essence, relying on its power to seal her away into ice and ensure that the poison in her body slows its spread."

Ning swept out his godsense, only to discover that there was indeed a cave hidden extremely deep within the ice. Within lay a woman who was sealed in ice.

"Go. Hurry up and save your Dao-companion," Ning said with a laugh.

"Dumb kid, why didn't you just ask me to come save your Dao-companion? Why did you have to take the risk of harvesting the antidote?" Eastherd shook his head.

"I couldn't find you, Master," Sparrow said in a low voice.

Eastherd was speechless. Although he had been occasionally watching his disciple in secret, he had spent the majority of the past twenty thousand years in secluded meditation. As his disciple grew increasingly powerful, Eastherd spent less and less time watching over him.

When Sparrow's Dao-companion had been in danger, Sparrow had wanted to ask his master for assistance. However, he couldn't even locate his master.

"Hurry up and go," Eastherd barked.

"Yes." Sparrow didn't dare to say anything else. He immediately used an evasion skill to delve deep into the icy ground.

Enough time passed for a kettle of tea to be boiled. Two figures suddenly appeared out of nowhere atop the ice, one tall and muscular, the other slender and petite. The tall one was naturally Sparrow, while the slender one was a green-robed woman. The affection and love between the two was clearly quite deep, and it would only grow stronger after sharing this tribulation together.

"Thank you, Master. Thank you, Uncle-Master. Thank you for saving our lives." Sparrow fell to his knees, as did the green-robed woman next to him.

"Hmph." Eastherd accepted the obeisance in a calm manner. He had nearly died this time, after all.

Ning smiled and nodded, but he had a complicated look in his eyes. These two Dao-companions had been reunited... but how long would it be before him and Yu Wei would be?

Su Youji glanced at Ning, a hint of a blissful smile on her face. "Although the person in Master's heart is not me, at least I'm the only one who follows him and am the one by his side from dawn til dusk. It is enough."

"Because of you, I ended up fighting multiple World-level cultivators of Clearwind Temple. In fact, I'm afraid that even their Daolords might be getting involved now." Eastherd continued, "Sparrow, my disciple, I'm afraid that Clearwind Temple isn't going to just give up on chasing you. They are now chasing after both me and your uncle-master, and they'll probably take revenge upon you as well. But... it's for the best, I suppose. Come with me to Vastheaven Palace. As for your homeland, take what you can with you. The Vastheaven Territory is quite vast indeed."

"Understood." Sparrow and his Dao-companion both understood. That very day, the two of them teleported away some large continents, mountains, and rivers, then joined Ning and Eastherd in leaving this land and heading forth towards Vastheaven Palace.

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In the blink of an eye, more than four years went past since Ning's clash against Clearwind Temple.

A silver shuttle was halted in midair within the emptiness of space.

"Master, if we advance any further we'll be in the Vastheaven Territory." Two of the World-level disciples were rather uneasy.

“Vastheaven Territory.” The silver-robed Daolord, Daolord Blesswind, stared off into the distance. Indeed, the territory up ahead was the Vastheaven Territory!

### The Desolate Era

#### **Book 29: Daolord Chapter 7: Ji Ning vs a Daolord of the Third Step**

“Master, what should we do? Should we charge into Vastheaven Territory?” The two World-level disciples both looked towards the silver-robed Daolord.

The silver-robed Daolord smiled coldly. “I have two ideas. Listen to them and tell me which one you would choose. The first is for us to enter the Vastheaven Territory, then wait for them at the spacetime transfer array at the Vastheaven Everworld! That way, it doesn’t matter which territory Eastherd and Darknorth travel from; in the end, they still have to go through the array to go to the Vastheaven Everworld.”

The Vastheaven Everworld was Vastheaven Palace’s base.

“If we just wait for them by that spacetime transfer array, we are guaranteed to catch them,” the silver-robed Daolord said. “Vastheaven Palace is some distance away from the spacetime transfer array. Even if we were to be discovered, we’d be able to flee in time.”

The faces of the two World-level disciples turned pale. They were essentially going to enter the enemy base? That was suicide!

“But of course, Daolord Battlemaster of Vastheaven Palace is skilled in Numerancy. If and when he discovers that we are within the Vastheaven Everworld, he’ll begin to plot against us. His plots are quite terrifying.” The silver-robed Daolord continued, “Even if we escape, he’d probably catch us.”

“R-r-right. If Daolord Battlemaster plots against us, we might not be able to escape.”

“Master, entering the Vastheaven Everworld is too risky.” Both of the World-level disciples urged him to reconsider.

“The second method.” The silver-robed Daolord waved his hand, causing a furled star map to appear by his side in the air. The star map slowly opened up, and the silver-robed Daolord stared at it. “No matter what path they take, they still have to return to the Vastheaven Everworld. Although there are four possible routes back to the Vastheaven Everworld, there’s two main nodes which they have to travel past.”

“One node is right here, at the dimensional storms which we went past. The other is over here, through this vortex tunnel. If they wish to return to the Vastheaven Everworld, they’ll either have to go through either the dimensional storms or pass through this vortex,” the silver-robed Daolord said.

His two disciples both nodded. This was how travel through the vast territories worked. There were many areas you could avoid, but some critical junctures were unavoidable. Your only option was to slowly fly through them or possibly teleport through them.

“But there are two possible places. There’s no way we can stop them.” The two disciples looked at their master.

“So choose one,” the silver-robed Daolord said. “The rest is up to luck.” He chuckled. “If they are lucky and chose the other route, there’s nothing we can do. If they just so happen to choose the place which we are guarding, then we’ll be in a position to block their path. Both of these places are fairly far away from Vastheaven Palace. We’ll be in a position of much greater security.”

The silver-robed Daolord looked at his two disciples. “Shall we go to the Vastheaven Everworld, or shall we go to one of the two nodes on the star map?”

“The nodes.”

“Let’s choose the nodes.”

Both of his disciples immediately chose the nodes.

Even an idiot would know that if they chose the Vastheaven Everworld, they would most likely be forced to wait at the spacetime transfer array for quite some time! Given their master’s power as a Daolord of the Third Step, he’d be able to immediately capture Eastherd and Darknorth once they emerged within the formation, then immediately flee. This solution had a high chance of success, true... but it was simply too dangerous to spend that much time at Vastheaven Palace’s base.

“Then we’ll choose...” The silver-robed Daolord gently tapped at a point on the unfurled star map. “This place.”

The two disciples immediately looked at where he pointed. Their master’s finger was tapping against the vortex tunnel.

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Ji Ning’s group had taken a very roundabout path, making a journey of half a year become a journey of nearly two years.

“Up ahead is the vortex tunnel.” Eastherd was standing at the ship’s prow, staring at the emptiness of space before them. He pointed at an enormous, pitch-black vortex off in the distance. “Once we go through the vortex, we’ll be able to reach Vastheaven Palace in roughly half a month.”

“Almost there.” Ning revealed a smile. Vastheaven Palace! He had waited far too long for this day.

On the vessel, Sparrow and his Dao-companion had been behaving in a very low-key manner. There were four others on this flying vessel, after all. One was Sparrow’s master, the second was his uncle-master, and the other two were Daolords!

“Disciple.” Eastherd looked at Sparrow as he spoke. “There are no generational hierarchies in Vastheaven Palace. We are all brothers, which is why we are very cautious when accepting new brothers into our fold! Formal members are only given a single talisman of welcome, and mine was given to my first disciple long ago. For now, just stay with me within Vastheaven Palace. This can be considered a new, tempering experience for you.”

“Yes,” Sparrow and his Dao-companion immediately said.

“But of course, the two of you could also beg brother Darknorth for a chance,” Eastherd said with a laugh. “Your uncle-master Darknorth is probably going to become a Daolord soon! Once he does, he’ll

be the fourth Palace Lord of Vastheaven Palace. Our Palace Lords have much more authority than the rest of us; they have the authority to directly welcome new cultivators into our ranks.”

Sparrow and his Dao-companion both immediately looked at Ning.

Ning chuckled. Once he became a Palace Lord, he'd have a bit more authority, true... but he still couldn't just randomly accept in new members. They had to be cautious with every new recruit. Otherwise, Vastheaven Palace might end up like some other organizations which were filled with problems and strife. That would be terrible.

“Uncle-master Darknorth...” Sparrow couldn't help but call out to him.

“This disciple of mind has a kind disp-...” Eastherd spoke out as well.

“I know what type of a person he is.” Ning nodded. Sparrow was indeed a person who deeply valued his relationships. He was willing to risk his own life in order to save his Dao-companion, something which Ning rather admired. Ning nodded. “I'll handle Sparrow's entry into Vastheaven Palace.”

“Thank you, uncle-master!” Sparrow immediately expressed his gratitude.

As for his Dao-companion, Eastherd didn't say anything on her behalf. Recruiting people to join Vastheaven Palace wasn't something to be done casually.

In truth, Ning was only willing to help out because he approved of Sparrow's disposition. As for his Dao-companion? For now, Ning didn't know what she was like. He naturally wouldn't promise anything rashly.

Rumble...

The flying vessel flew straight into the howling vortex tunnel.

Within the vortex, space flowed like streams of water which the flying vessel advanced through at high speeds. Ning couldn't help but sigh. The vortex tunnel linking the Three Realms to the Badlands Territory was riddled with dimensional cracks and tears that would appear at random. It was an incredibly unstable vortex tunnel. Even World-level cultivators, if they were unlucky, might be trapped within one of the dimensional tears and be teleported to a completely unknown location.

This vortex tunnel, however, was an extremely stable one! The vast territories held both stable and unstable vortexes; generally speaking, only the stable ones would be used by cultivators.

“The exit is up ahead.”

The flying vessel spent three days flying through the vortex tunnel. Ning stood at the prow of the vessel, and he was dimly able to see a chaos planet up ahead in the void of space beyond the exit.

Whoosh.

The flying vessel surged out from the vortex tunnel. But right at this moment... boom! It was like it had rammed into some sort of barrier which crackled with dim light.

“Not good.” Ning was in control of the vessel, and his face instantly turned pale.

“Freeze!” A sonorous voice rang out, instantly filling the entire region and causing space itself to be frozen.

A silver flying shuttle flew out from a distant pocket of chaotic space. Ning was able to clearly make out that there was a silver-robed man standing within that silver shuttle. He had a grand, imposing aura and was staring straight at Ning with cold eyes.

“That’s Daolord Blesswind of Clearwind Temple!” Eastherd was shocked.

“Daolord Blesswind?” Pillsaint and Su Youji’s faces tightened a bit as well. The two of them had learned quite a bit about Clearwind Temple on this journey, and they knew Daolord Blesswind to be one of the temple’s Daolords of the Third Step.

“At least it isn’t Patriarch Clearwind.” Ning wasn’t worried at all. The only member of Clearwind Temple who could pose a threat to him was Patriarch Clearwind. But of course, if he appeared Ning would simply have to use up one of his precious Dao-seals to wipe the man out. As for this Daolord Blesswind? No need to use one of the seals at all.

“Darknorth of Vastheaven Palace and Eastherd of Vastheaven Palace, I believe?” A silver-robed man emerged from the distant flying shuttle. He slowly strode through the primordial chaos, his manner grand and imposing. “Darknorth of Vastheaven. You actually have two Daolords of the First Step serving you. Impressive, impressive. But since you’ve chosen to make an enemy out of Clearwind Temple, I’ll have to do what I have to do. I do want to confirm with you, though... are you truly a member of Vastheaven Palace?”

According to Clearwind Temple’s information, there was no one named ‘Darknorth’ amongst the fairly few formal members of Vastheaven Palace. Given that Darknorth had two Daolords of the First Step serving as his retainers, and given that his sword-intent alone was enough to capture five powerful World-level cultivators, he definitely was far too strong to be a irrelevant and nameless figure. Logically speaking, if he was an actual member of Vastheaven Palace, Clearwind Temple would’ve found out about him long ago.

“This is our first time meeting each other. It can be said that we were brought together by karma.” The white-robed Ning just stood there at the prow of his flying vessel, his black scabbard on his back. “I, Darknorth, am indeed a member of Vastheaven Palace. In the future, Clearwind Temple will remember my name well.”

“In the future? I’m afraid you won’t have a future.” The silver-robed Daolord shook his head and sighed. “I just randomly chose a place to wait for you. Who would’ve thought I’d end up actually catching a genius such as yourself? If you have to blame anything, blame your own bad luck.”

“No, no. You are the one with bad luck.” Ning smiled, but his smile was as cold as ice.

Swish.

Ning’s flying vessel instantly charged towards the silver-robed Daolord at high speeds.



## The Desolate Era

### **Book 29: Daolord Chapter 8: Inside Vastheaven Palace**

“Impudence.” The silver-robed Daolord laughed coldly. “You really don’t know your own limits.”

As he spoke, he waved his right hand casually through the void of space. His sleeves instantly began to flutter as a black wind flew out from within it, instantly filling the surrounding area for a million kilometers around then sweeping straight towards Ji Ning’s charging vessel.

Aboard the vessel, Su Youji and Pillsaint both had solemn looks on their faces. As for Eastherd, he was panicking. Sparrow and his wife simply watched. Elder Gods weren’t even qualified to take part in a battle at this level.

Ning just let out a cold snort. Rumble... lightning and water suddenly surged out of him.

The golden lightning and the jade-green water instantly burst out into the void, and they actually seemed to twine around each other in a complementary manner as they almost instantly transformed into sword-light! Endless amounts of sword-light furiously merged together, coalescing into the Yin-Yang Sword Domain. At his current level, Ning’s Yin-Yang Sword Domain was now more brutal, savage, and terrifying than ever before.

A Yin-Yang Sword Domain formed from quadrescence lightning and quadrescence water was more than enough to annihilate a Daolord of the Second Step.

Although there was a big difference in power between a Daolord of the Second Step and a Daolord of the Third Step, it would still be quite difficult for the latter to slay the former with ease. Daolord Blesswind was skilled in the Dao of Wind, and he was able to easily slay Daolords of the Second Step in close combat. He would not, however, be able to wipe them out from a distance merely by using a few secret arts.

In the end, Daolord Blesswind was nothing more than a Daolord of Clearwind Temple. He simply didn’t have any earth-shatteringly powerful secret arts.

Ning’s sword domain of lightning and water was capable of slaying Daolords of the Second Step, but this black tempest was not. When these two surges of power clashed against each other...

Whoooooosh. The dominating sword domain of water and lightning forcibly ripped the black tempest into shreds, then continued to surge towards Daolord Blesswind in a savage manner.

“What?!” Daolord Blesswind’s face instantly turned pale. “Impossible. How could my secret art be defeated by a World-level cultivator’s secret art?” This was an absolute joke!

“B-but...” The two World-level disciples of Daolord Blesswind were completely stupefied.

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Ning’s vessel. Eastherd, Sparrow, and his Dao-companion had been extremely nervous. Now, they were just as stupefied as Daolord Blesswind’s disciples. The secret arts of a Daolord of the Third Step had been broken, just like that?

Pillsaint and Su Youji glanced at Ning, their eyes filled with veneration and awe. This was a Daolord of the Third Step! Their own master had actually won in a competition of secret arts against this figure!

"It seems you must've had some truly lucky encounters. Your Dao-seal was quite powerful... but it won't be able to do anything to me." The silver-robed Daolord Blesswind quickly regained his calm. He had immediately decided that Ning must have used a Dao-seal, as he still refused to believe that a World-level cultivator could possess a secret art of such unearthly power.

"Then die beneath my blade." Daolord Blesswind suddenly produced an enormous long saber in his hands.

Whoosh! His silver robes fluttered as he instantly charged through the skies, holding the long saber in a double-handed grip. Although Ning's sword domain furiously assaulted him, Daolord Blesswind charged forwards with incredible valor, his divine power flaring outwards and completely resisting the attacks. Clearly, the sword domain wasn't nearly strong enough to deal with Daolords of the Third Step; all it was able to do was have a bit of constrictive power over him. He moved straight through the sword domain, and his icy gaze was filled with a murderous intent.

Upon seeing this, Ning couldn't help but sigh. This Yin-Yang Sword Domain was already his most powerful attack, on a slightly higher level than even his close combat abilities. Alas, he still wasn't able to do anything to his opponent. In the end, he was still just a World-level cultivator, and his attacks weren't enough against a Daolord of the Third Step. He had no choice but to rely on an outside form of assistance.

"Die!" Daolord Blesswind's saber-light flashed like the wind, tearing apart everything in its path as he continued to soar towards the vessel.

Whoosh. Suddenly, a figure appeared out of nowhere in front of the flying vessel. It was a white-haired, icy-eyed man who held an ordinary-looking longsword in his hands.

"Go capture him, swordsman," Ning said.

"Mm." The white-haired man nodded, his face quite calm. He was the strongest of the four golem servants Ning had acquired from Emperor Mirrorsnow's legacy! Ning had chosen to summon him out of an abundance of caution, wishing to have a higher chance of success.

"A golem?" As Daolord Blesswind continued his charge, his gaze fell upon the white-haired man's body. He was able to immediately tell that this was a golem, and a flash of avarice appeared in his eyes. "Not only did he have that incredibly powerful lightning-water Dao-seal, he also has a seemingly strong golem. This World God named Darknorth truly must have had some special experiences. I'll wager he has quite a few treasures on him. He might even have more than me!"

"Hahaha, golem! You should accept me as your master instead." Daolord Blesswind's aura expanded even further. He refused to believe he would encounter a golem comparable to a Daolord of the Fourth Step, as those were far too valuable. He wasn't worried about this golem at all.

"Hmph." The swordsman charged towards Daolord Blesswind as well.

Rumble...

Space tore apart as Daolord Blesswind and the swordsman golem began an utterly earth-shaking battle, even as Ning's sword domain continuously launched attacks against the Daolord.

The swordsman had the power of a peak Daolord of the Third Step, and he was skilled in both unpredictable attacks and assassination techniques. His technique was completely based off of Emperor Mirrorsnow's [Heartseal] sword-art.

Daolord Blesswind was truly quite formidable in close combat. Although he wasn't exactly a genius, he still had the power of a peak Daolord of the Third Step. He might've been weaker than the swordsman in close combat, making the battle rather difficult, but his secret arts allowed him to hold his own.

"What a powerful golem. How can it be this powerful? I feel as though he's a bit more powerful than even me!" Daolord Blesswind was stunned to discover that the golem actually had the upper hand. "However... he just barely holds an advantage over me. This golem is using up the chaos jewels inside of him. Once his energy is used up, he'll lose."

"Eh?" Ning frowned when he saw this from atop his distant vessel. "The swordsman is already the strongest of my four golems, but he still can't capture Daolord Blesswind? It seems I'll have to have the fisherman and the emperor emerge as well."

But right at this moment, Su Youji suddenly clenched her teeth. She was standing right next to Ning, and her face instantly turned red as a streak of crimson light flickered in her eyes. An invisible ripple of power instantly surged through the skies and shot towards the distant Daolord Blesswind.

The distant Daolord Blesswind, who was still engaged in a battle against the swordsman, suddenly moved sluggishly for a brief moment, as though he had been distracted for a moment.

Swoosh! The swordsman already held the upper hand. In this moment, his longsword suddenly coiled outwards like a whip, instantly wrapping itself around Daolord Blesswind's body. Daolord Blesswind struggled furiously to break free, but that was no easy feat upon already being bound.

"Come in." The swordsman produced a gourd in his hand, then caused it to emit a powerful attractive force that drew Daolord Blesswind into it.

The swordsman turned his head to glance at Ning, then was drawn back into the estate-world within the Mirrorsnow Painting once more.

"No."

"Master!"

The two World-level disciples in the silver shuttle were completely stunned. They were also completely surrounded by that sword domain of lightning and water. They knew exactly how powerful this sword domain was, and so they didn't dare to fight back at all, allowing Ning to capture them as well.

"We won." A look of completely disbelief was on Eastherd's face.

"T-that was..." Sparrow and his wife were both stunned as well. They felt that this uncle-master was simply far too powerful. He was a World-level cultivator who not only had two Daolord retainers, he had even been able to capture a Daolord of the Third Step. They had never even heard of such power before!

Ning chuckled. "I had to rely on the power of my golem. I myself wouldn't have been able to defeat a Daolord of the Third Step."

"Golems are part of your total power as well," Eastherd said hurriedly.

Ning then glanced at the nearby Flamefairy Su Youji. She gave him a very smug wink. Eastherd and the others might not have noticed anything, but Ning was in control of the sword domain that covered this entire region; he was able to sense that ripple of invisible power surge outwards.

"Quite impressive," Ning congratulated mentally. "You were able to shake a Daolord of the Third Step."

"Just now, I used the ninth art of Feixian. I'm confident in my abilities to shake Daolords of the Second Step. As for those of the third step, it depends on their mental strength and their heartforce. If I encountered someone formidable in this regard, there would be nothing I could do. From the looks of things, this Daolord Blesswind didn't have a particularly impressive Dao-heart," Su Youji sent back.

Ning couldn't help but sigh. The legacy of Feixian the Exalted truly was incredible. It allowed the user to actually dominate and control those on the same level of power! Even if the target was on a higher level of power, it would still have an effect on that person. But of course, if you encountered someone with a particularly powerful heart, there would be nothing you could do. Heartlord Solewind, for instance, would've been far more impressive against such secret arts than Daolord Blesswind, even when he was merely at the World level.

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After capturing Daolord Blesswind, Ning continued to advance. Half a month later, he arrived at the Vastheaven Everworld.

"That right there is Vastheaven Palace." Eastherd pointed at the peaks of a distant mountain range. One could see a cluster of palaces through the many clouds.

"Vastheaven Palace?" Ning stared at the distant Vastheaven Palace, his breathing rather irregular. Some tears had appeared in his eyes as well. Ever since he had left the Three Realms, he had been hoping he would be able to make it to Vastheaven Palace. And now... he had finally made it! His Primaltwin was finally going to be able to make it back to the Three Realms and search for the souls of his parents within the River of Destiny.

Father. Mother...

In this moment, Ning's mind was not present here in Vastheaven Palace. It was completely focused upon his deceased mother and father.

## [The Desolate Era](#)

### **Book 29: Daolord Chapter 9: Within Vastheaven Palace**

Whoosh. Ji Ning's group soared through the void as they flew towards Vastheaven Palace.

"I've already sent a mental message to the other brothers of Vastheaven Palace," Eastherd said.

“Alright.” Ning stared towards the direction of the distant palace. As for Pillsaint and Su Youji, both were quite curious as well. What was it like, this place which their master had been planning to go to for so long?

Sparrow and his wife were the most nervous. To them, Vastheaven Palace was absolutely a sacred place.

“Is that...” As they flew closer and closer, Ning realized that there were quite a few figures congregating around the palace gates of Vastheaven Palace. Three of the ones standing at the very front radiated Daolord-level auras.

“Big brother Solesky?” Ning immediately recognized Daolord Solesky, who stood at the very front of the group. “But the aura seems a bit different. Ah, this must be his avatar.”

“Ji Ning!” Daolord Solesky laughed heartily, his laughter echoing within the skies.

“Big brother Solesky.” Ning was filled with delight as he led Pillsaint and Su Youji to descend towards them.

“Long time no see. And you’ve already reached the World level!” Daolord Solesky nodded in a satisfied manner as he looked at Ning, then turned his gaze to Pillsaint and Su Youji. The two were standing behind Ning, but there was no way he could ignore their presence. The two were already Daolords, after all!

Daolord Solesky said, “Youji, it’s only been a short while since we last met. Who would’ve thought you’d train even faster than Ji Ning? You’ve already become a Daolord!”

Daolord Solesky and Su Youji were old friends by now. When he had taught Ning, he had also provided Su Youji with guidance on occasion.

“It was all thanks to Master’s aid that I reached this level,” Su Youji said. “And Master has always been stronger than me. Even though I am now a Daolord, I’m still inferior to Master.”

“Brother Darknorth truly is formidable,” the nearby Eastherd hastily interjected. “I didn’t have a chance to let you know, since I just returned, but I was beset upon by five World-level cultivators of Clearwind Temple. Thankfully, brother Darknorth intervened and helped me out, allowing me to escape that predicament. Just by using his sword-intent alone, he was able to easily capture the five of them.”

“Clearwind Temple?” A white-robed, blue-haired man standing next to Daolord Solesky suddenly frowned.

“Battlemaster, we can discuss these minor matters later,” Solesky interrupted. “The most important thing for us to do today is to formally welcome brother Ji Ning into our ranks.”

Ning felt quite moved. Although he hadn’t spent much time alongside Solesky, the latter truly had treated him in a sincere manner.

“Ji Ning, it wasn’t easy for you to travel all the way here from the Badlands Territory. Back then, Su Youji was an Elder God, but now even she has become a Daolord. I imagine you must have experienced many things,” Solesky said.

“Too true.” Ning shook his head, rather wistful. “Shortly after I found out that you were trapped in the Waveshift Realm, I elected to leave the Badlands Territory. Logically speaking, I should’ve reached Vastheaven Palace a long time ago, but midway through I was suddenly abducted by the almighty Hegemon of the Brightshore Kingdom and taken there.”

Ning didn’t hide anything. Given how strong he had become, there was no way to hide such information. Take Lord Dawnstar as an example. Anyone in the Endless Territories who was even slightly well-informed knew who he was. Who could possibly be unaware that he was the Palace Lord of the Saber Palace of the Twelve Palaces of Brightshore?

“The Brightshore Kingdom?” Daolord Solesky was completely shocked. The Brightshore Kingdom was one of the six major powers of the Endless Territories, and the almighty Brightshore Hegemon was publicly acknowledged as being the leader of the three Hegemons! For mighty figures such as Verge-level Daolords, the fact that the Brightshore Kingdom would occasionally abduct a few cultivators wasn’t exactly a secret.

“Being abducted by the Brightshore Kingdom can be incredibly dangerous, but... judging from the looks of things, it turned into quite a blessing for you, Ji Ning.” Solesky looked at him.

“Haha. It was indeed. I encountered Pillsaint in the Brightshore Kingdom.” Ning glanced at the nearby Pillsaint.

Pillsaint felt a bit embarrassed. He immediately said, “I, uh, was probably the first person to fight against Master in the Brightshore Kingdom. Unfortunately, he beat me with ease. To be honest, the Flamefairy and I only gained our freedom thanks to Master’s assistance.”

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While Ning and Solesky were chatting, the other brothers of Vastheaven Palace were carefully inspecting this new brother of theirs. When they heard the two Daolords address him as ‘master’, they were quite stunned.

Monsters like this only existed in legends. Who would’ve thought that they’d encounter one in the flesh?

“Brother Ji Ning is incredibly talented, but he’s never had a good master.” Solesky chuckled. “In Brightshore Kingdom, you truly would’ve had the chance to soar into the heavens. Hahaha... I’ve been so busy chatting with you that I forgot to make the introductions. Come, come! This gentleman here is our Daolord Battlemaster, and he is also a Daolord of the Fourth Step.”

Ning turned to look at the long blue-haired man dressed in white robes. The man had a warm smile on his face and an extraordinary demeanor. Ning immediately bowed and said, “Darknorth greets you, big brother Battlemaster.”

A Daolord of the Fourth Step had essentially reached the apex of a certain Dao. After that was the Eternal Emperor level. Daolords of the Fourth Step were never easy to deal with.

“I once tried to use Numerancy to divine your future, brother Darknorth, only to find that everything was clouded and far beyond my abilities to see.” Daolord Battlemaster smiled. “Now that I see you have

two Daolord retainers, I understand how truly extraordinary you are. If my calculations are correct, these two Daolords should have broken through naturally, rather than relying on Pseudo Samsara Pills.”

“They broke through on their own?” The other brothers of Vastheaven Palace were all rather speechless. When they had seen two Daolords of the First Step, they had assumed that both had relied on Pseudo Samsara Pills.

“The stronger Ji Ning is, the better. Vastheaven Palace has gained yet another powerful brother!” Solesky introduced the next person. “This gentleman next to me is our newly ascended Daolord, Daolord Brightfish. He is now a Daolord of the Second Step.”

“Darknorth.” Daolord Brightfish smiled at him.

Ning felt quite startled, but on the surface he responded in a very calm manner, “Big brother Brightfish.”

Brightfish was absolutely gorgeous! In terms of appearance, he was every bit the equal of Su Youji. It must be remembered that Su Youji trained in the techniques of Feixian the Exalted, and possessed such great charm that her smiles alone were incredibly alluring. Although Daolord Brightfish wasn’t that charming, he truly was shockingly handsome, and he was also had a willowy, elegant form. And yet... judging from his aura, Ning was certain that he was male!

His face and his body was comparable to that of a peerless beauty, but he was a man? No wonder Ning was so flabbergasted!

“This is Brightfish’s avatar,” Solesky said. “Brightfish himself is adventuring in the outside world. He’s far more talented than both myself and Battlemaster.”

“You praise me too much, big brother,” Daolord Brightfish hurriedly said.

Solesky laughed loudly. “Not at all, not at all. Ji Ning, as for our other brothers... I’ll introduce you to them later, over some drinks and conversation.”

Ning nodded but couldn’t help but ask, “What about the three Wujiao Godbeasts?”

Everyone fell silent.

Daolord Solesky let out a sigh. “Northrest... ugh. Those three Wujiao Godbeasts caused Northrest’s death. Vastheaven Palace would never let them off for that. Although they fled long ago, Battlemaster was able to use his Numerancy to divine their location. The three of them were wiped out by us long ago.”

And so a question that had plagued Ning for quite some time was answered.

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Next was the welcoming banquet, where all the brothers of Vastheaven Palace gathered together.

They all drank wine and chatted happily. Vastheaven Palace had no hierarchies; every single member was a good brother to the others. Even Daolords would merely be respectfully addressed as ‘big brother’ due to their power. This was just the type of atmosphere Ning liked, and he could sense that everyone treated him with sincerity.

Over the course of the banquet, Ning got to know more than half of the brothers of Vastheaven Palace, as well as some who were still adventuring in the outside world.

After the banquet.

“Ji Ning, Vastheaven Palace is quite a large place. We have many residences within it, most of which are empty. This one, this one, that one, and that one... all of them are free for the choosing. Just pick whichever one you like.” After the banquet, Solesky personally guided Ning off.

“Then I’ll choose this one.” Ning made his choice.

“Right. When do you wish for us to hold the formal welcoming ceremony?” Solesky looked at Ning. Technically, Ning simply had the talisman of welcome; he hadn’t actually joined Vastheaven Palace.

“A month from now,” Ning said. Right now, the most important task before him was resurrecting his parents.

“Alright.” Solesky was in no rush. To cultivators, a month truly was nothing.

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Vastheaven Palace. Within the Darknorth estate.

“Pillsaint, Youji, I need to go into secluded meditation for a period of time. If there’s nothing important, do not disturb me,” Ning instructed.

“Yes, Master.” Pillsaint and Su Youji both acknowledged the order.

Ning nodded, then entered his meditation chambers.

Rumble... the doors to the meditation chambers swung shut. Ning sat down in the lotus position, then closed his eyes. His mind was completely focused on the distant Three Realms.

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The primordial chaos outside the Three Realms.

A black-robed Ji Ning was striding through the dimensions. He quickly emerged from his own estate and arrived in the void of the Three Realms.

Whoosh.

The black-robed Ning stepped into yet another dimension as he stood there within the Three Realms, sensing the fluctuations rippling through it.

It had been far, far too long since he had entered the Three Realms and the area of influence its essences held sway over. For many years now, this had been a forbidden area for him. If he dared to take so much as a single step into it, he would’ve died and his Dao would’ve vanished.

“The Three Realms.” The black-robed Ning swept his gaze across the three thousand major worlds and the trillions of minor worlds. Even everything within the Celestial Realm and the Netherworld Kingdom was contained within his gaze.



## The Desolate Era

### **Book 29: Daolord Chapter 10: The Three Realms**

The black-robed Ji Ning's gaze was focused upon a river that flowed through the void. This river... was the River of Destiny.

Destiny was omnipresent. All living beings had their own destiny. Even powerful cultivators like Ning or mighty Eternal Emperors had their own destinies as well. So long as you were alive, you would have a destiny all your own! These countless destinies came together to form an endless Sea of Destiny, with the destiny of the living beings of the Three Realms being merely a small rivulet of that endless sea.

This void river was all but undetectable to ordinary living creatures, but Ning was able to see countless truesouls flowing through that great river.

Whoosh. Ning swept the river searchingly with his gaze.

"Father. Mother!" Ning suddenly revealed a look of excitement on his face. He had discovered two truesouls which were located right next to each other, rising and falling through the 'waves' of the river together. Ning was very familiar with the auras given off by those two truesouls. He would never be able to forget them.

Those truesouls were the truesouls belonging to his father and his mother.

Only major powers who had personally seen Yuchi Snow and Ji Yichuan would be able to locate their truesouls within the endless flow of truesouls in the River of Destiny.

"Freeze!" Ning sent out his will. Rumble... an invisible, powerful stream of sword-intent that was as gentle as water instantly encompassed the entire River of Destiny, causing it to come to a complete halt.

Merely seeing the River of Destiny was easy, but to draw truesouls out from within it and then revive them was incredibly difficult. This was because such an action represented going against the will of the heavens and changing the flows of destiny; it went against the very laws of the Three Realms themselves. However, Ning was now powerful enough to annihilate the Three Realms with ease; he was naturally able to easily accomplish a task like this.

Still... if Ning's parents had perished in an Everworld, there would be no way for Ning to retrieve their truesouls from that Everworld's River of Destiny! This was because the repercussions of breaking an Everworld's laws were far greater. Most likely, only Eternal Emperors and outlandishly strong Daolords would be able to resist those repercussions.

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The River of Destiny had been frozen in place. None of the countless mortal denizens in the Three Realms could sense the laws of the Three Realms trying to fight back, but the more powerful Immortals and Fiendgods of the Three Realms could.

The Crescent world. Mount Innerheart. Two figures were seated opposite of each other, holding a casual conversation regarding the world and the Dao.

“Eh? The River of Destiny just came to a halt?” The bearded, azure-haired man suddenly let out a surprised call.

“Most likely, only my disciple Ji Ning is capable of forcing the River of Destiny to come to a halt.” Opposite the first man was a white-haired, white-bearded old man – Subhuti.

These two were currently the two strongest members of the Three Realms. One was Ning’s master, Subhuti, who had been ranked the top master of the Dao of Spacetime in all the Three Realms. Ever since Fuxi, Shennong, Sui ren, Daoist Three Purities, Lord Tathagata, Houyi, and the others had all sacrificed themselves in the Endwar, Subhuti had become the number one expert of the entire Nuwa Alliance. But of course, that was excluding Ji Ning, who had long ago reached the World level.

The other man was the Lord of All Fiends of the Seamless Gate. He was now their sole leader, ‘Windfiend’... and he had long ago surpassed the limits of the Heavenly Daos in movement speed.

Both were at extremely high levels of enlightenment and were far superior to most Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals in this regard. Ever since Ning had reached the World level, he began to transmit many techniques back to the Three Realms! With those techniques guiding them, they instantly became far more powerful than they had been in the past. At present, they had reached such a high level of insight that they were able to break through to the World level whenever they wished. This was why they often sat together to discuss the Dao with each other. When all of their arrangements and preparations were complete, they would break through to the World level.

“It really is Ji Ning.” Windfiend’s divine sense instantly spread out across all the Three Realms, discovering the black-robed Ning standing in the void of the Three Realms. He could sense that stately, awe-inspiring aura of majesty radiating out from Ning.

“Let’s go.” Subhuti waved a finger, causing a spatial vortex to appear next to them. Whoosh! The two both entered the spatial vortex, then hastened towards Ning.

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“The River of Destiny froze?”

Mt. Ling, in the eastern lands of the Celestial Realm.

Buddha Maitreya sat above all others. He was now the new Lord Buddha of the Buddhist Sangha. He had always had a very high level of enlightenment, being just slightly inferior to Lord Tathagata himself. Ever since Ji Ning had transmitted many new techniques to the Three Realms, he had grown much more powerful and was second only to the likes of Subhuti and Windfiend.

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Fruit-Flower Mountain.

“Heeeey, it’s my junior apprentice-brother!” The Monkey King had been munching away at his food when he suddenly froze, then revealed a look of delight. “Time to go take a look!”

Sun Wukong was an incredibly talented figure, and he was now one of the top ten figures of the Three Realms.

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Daoist Jade Cauldron, Kuafu, Holyflame, Bloodswan, Amitabha, and the other experts of the Three Realms all sensed the ripples and immediately hastened over there as well.

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The black-robed Ning stood there amidst the void of the Three Realms. He could sense space rippling in the area around him as one figure after another began to emerge.

His master, Subhuti. His senior apprentice-brothers Sun Wukong and Silvermoon. Buddha Maitreya. Buddha Amitabha. Jade Cauldron. Bloodswan. They all began to appear, one after another, and Ning nodded in their direction. As for these Immortals and Fiendgods, they just watched afar, not moving to intervene. Ever since Ning had broken through to the World level, he had continuously transmitted techniques back to them.

In truth, Ning was quite amazed. The cultivators of the Three Realms weren't necessarily all monstrous geniuses, but on the whole they were clearly far more talented than cultivators from other chaosworlds! The Three Sovereigns of Mankind, Daoist Three Purities, Tathagata, Houyi... without any guidance or legacies, they had reached such astonishingly great heights in enlightenment that they were able to battle against Elder Gods despite merely being at the True God level! This meant they were at a far higher level of enlightenment than most Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals.

If they were given good techniques or good teachers... the Three Sovereigns of Mankind, Daoist Three Purities, Lord Tathagata, Houyi, and the others all could've become World-level cultivators! It must be understood that Buddha Jueming originally hadn't been a particularly impressive member of the Buddhist Sangha; his innate talent was far inferior to the likes of Daoist Three Purities, Tathagata, and the others. It had been very hard for him to even reach the True God level! However, after spending many arduous years in Undermoon Lake as an Empyrean God, he had received the legacy techniques of World God Northrest and had thus been able to reach the Elder God level.

This was a testament to how important good techniques and good teachers were.

It wasn't just the Three Realms; even the experts of the Seamless Chaosworld, such as Everwood, Demonheart, Devilhand, and Windfiend were also extremely spectacular figures who were comparable to Daoist Three Purities and Lord Tathagata.

"The Pangu Chaosworld and the Seamless Chaosworld... the cultivators who arose from it are all far more talented and impressive than the cultivators in other chaosworlds." Ning was secretly amazed. "There has to be a reason behind it."

The endless primordial chaos was filled with mysteries and secrets. No one would ever dare claim that he or she fully understand it. Not even the almighty Hegemon could make that claim, and so Ning didn't spend too much time on this question.

"I've now perfectly joined five Supreme Daos together. After I become a Daolord, I'll become much more powerful. By then, I should be able to buy some truly precious legacies and techniques, then transmit them to the Three Realms and strengthen it," Ning mused to himself.

If you wished to truly strengthen an organization, you needed all types of techniques and legacies, especially powerful ones. This was no easy task.

“Prior to today, I’ve only been able to transmit fairly ordinary techniques back, but the Three Realms has already strengthened dramatically. Master and Windfiend are about to break through to the World level at any moment, while Maitreya and the others might succeed as well. If I was able to transmit better techniques to them... my homeland might give birth to an entire crop of World-level cultivators.”

Ning eagerly awaited such a day, the day when the Three Realms truly skyrocketed in prominence.

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Ning continued to focus upon the River of Destiny. His gentle sword-intent moved with incredible softness, but it contained unbelievable power! The gentle sword-intent carefully embraced those two truesouls within its grip.

Rumble...

The entire River of Destiny began to roil about in protest as a backlash began.

Ning was incredibly careful. He obviously didn’t care about the backlash, but he was worried that it might cause collateral damage to his parents’ truesouls. Even the slightest bit of damage might cause those frail truesouls to instantly disintegrate.

“Hmph.” Ning’s sword-intent wrapped those two truesouls in protective layers as it slowly drew them both from the depths of the River of Destiny.

Rumble... the backlash from the River of Destiny grew increasingly powerful. Towards the end, the entire river began to writhe about as it fought to hold onto those two truesouls. Ning’s sword-intent, however continuously protected the truesouls with layers of barriers, taking on the full force of the backlash head-on.

Whoosh! Finally, the mass of sword-light flew out from within the River of Destiny. The River of Destiny had failed, and so it quickly regained its normal calm and continued to function stably as it had in the past.

“Success.” Subhuti, Windfiend, Sun Wukong, Jade Cauldron, and the others all revealed looks of delight when they saw this.

“Darknorth, congratulations.”

“Ji Ning, congratulations.” They all called out to express their congratulations. Now that the truesouls had been drawn out, the next step of restoring their souls and manifesting bodies would be easy.

Ning couldn’t disguise his own excitement either.

### [The Desolate Era](#)

#### **Book 29: Daolord Chapter 11: Heartforce, Level Five**

Ji Ning suppressed his excitement, then gently waved a finger and sent two streaks of chaos nectar outwards.

His Primaltwin didn't have much chaos nectar, as it had been here defending the Three Realms this entire time. It did, however, have at least a few drops. Since Yuchi Snow and Ji Yichuan's souls and bodies weren't particularly powerful, a single drop of chaos nectar each was more than enough.

Whoosh. Whoosh. The two drops of chaos nectar flew towards the two different truesouls. The two drops quickly encompassed the two souls, then immediately and naturally began to build a soul around each truesoul. Although it was also possible to use the Six Paths of Reincarnation to form souls and bodies, those bodies and souls would be of fairly low quality; at most, they would allow the reincarnated individuals to at most be equivalent to natural-born Xiantian lifeforms.

But if one directly used chaos nectar to rebuild a body and soul, it would result in the creation of a completely perfect body!

The souls were now fully formed.

Instantly, the two souls rose up to stand there within the emptiness of the void. One soul was of Yuchi Snow, the other was of Ji Yichuan. The two had completely regained consciousness, and Ning was using his Immortal energy to help them awaken the memories locked within their souls. At his current level of power, Ning was able to help them reawaken their memories with nothing more than a thought, even though Yuchi Snow and Ji Yichuan had actually died two lives ago.

"Ning. Son." The two stared at Ning in disbelief.

Ning was rather excited. He immediately said, "Father. Mother. Don't worry about me right now. Let your fleshly bodies be remade first. All you need to do is wish for it to happen. The chaos nectar around you has marvelous properties and is capable of forming all things."

Flesh and even clothes were beginning to form in the empty area around their souls; there was of course no way Ning would leave them unclad. Gradually, Ji Yichuan and Yuchi Snow were able to see many figures off in the distance. Soon, the two had fully materialized. Clad in snowy white furs, the two stood there in the emptiness of the void.

The thing was, Ji Yichuan and Yuchi Snow actually had an additional set of memories. This set came from the life they had spent as Willowriver Chuan and Eastflow Snow.

"Snow." Ji Yichuan looked at his wife.

"Yichuan." Yuchi Snow stared back at him.

They had been together in both the past life and the present life. During her life in Swallow Mountain, Yuchi Snow had died due to illness. Ji Yichuan had suffered heavy wounds as well. In the end, he felt he had nothing else to live for and so had perished as well. The next life had been an even sadder one; in the end, the curs of the Seamless Gate had captured everyone in their city and used them to refine magic treasures, resulting in their souls being shattered.

Ji Yichun and Yuchi Snow held each other's hands.

"Ning. Son." They turned their gazes towards Ning.

“W-what’s going on?” Yichuan was completely puzzled. The area around them was filled with empty space, and they were even able to see figures who radiated auras of incredible power off in the distance.

Snow was both excited and puzzled. She had died, as had Yichuan, right? And how was it that they were able to stand there within the emptiness of space as easily as standing on flat land? What was supporting them? But they felt certain that this all had to do with their son.

“Father, Mother. All those bad things have come to an end. Nothing will be able to separate us ever again.” Ning’s voice was trembling slightly as he spoke.

Snow’s eyes immediately reddened and she walked straight forwards to embrace Ning. Ning hugged his mother back as well.

His mother’s embrace... it was as warm as it had been in his memories.

Ning suddenly raised his head. His father, Yichuan, had walked over as well, and Ning reached out to include his father in their joint embrace.

Their family of three was together again.

As for Subhuti, Windfiend, and the other nearby figures, they all sighed as they watched with looks of envy. Many of them had been born from the primordial chaos or from Heaven and Earth; they had never had parents before. However, they could sense how deep the relationship between Ning and his parents were.

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As he embraced his father and his mother, the tension which had been within his soul for so many years was able to finally be released. And in this moment... Ning’s heartforce broke through to the fifth stage and began to rapidly expand in power.

The Endwar of the Three Realms had resulted in Ning finally understanding the Heartsword Realm and using it to slay Old Man Yuan. Logically speaking, he should’ve been able to step into the fifth stage of heartforce at that time. However, he had too many things weighing down his heart, causing him to be stuck at that bottleneck.

After leaving the Three Realms, he had entered the Endless Territories. He had experienced many things in the Brightshore Kingdom and the alternate universe, eventually linking five Supreme Daos together in a perfect manner. His mind and his heart had both been strengthened tremendously, but he still remained stuck at that bottleneck.

His heart had never been able to see through to the ‘truth’ of life. Now, after reaching Vastheaven Palace and rescuing his parents’ true souls from the River of Destiny, Ning was finally able to truly relax. As a result, he naturally reached the ‘truth’ level of heartforce.

Ning did have another firm desire in the deepest parts of his heart... reviving Yu Wei! However, he knew exactly how difficult that would be. Even the number one expert in the Dao of Seals in the alternate universe, Emperor Maniseal, had been unable to revive his own disciple. Ning had never heard of

someone successfully doing such a thing, which was a testament to how difficult it would be. But precisely because it was so difficult, Ning was able to face it fairly calmly.

Boom! His heartforce massively expanded. The many things he had experienced in recent years caused Ning's heartforce to instantly skyrocket and reach the apex of the fifth stage. His heartforce and his sea of consciousness joined together, causing certain changes to arise.

If his heartforce was a bit stronger, the fusion between his heartforce and his sea of consciousness would've allowed him to establish a heartworld. Only by establishing a heartworld would one be truly considered a Heartforce Cultivator, and those were truly, incredibly frightening figures. Heartforce Cultivators who had reached the Verge as Daolords would have heartworlds that were as vast as an entire territory. At this point, the descent of their heartworld projection alone would be enough to easily crush to death an ordinary Verge-level Daolord.

But using a heartworld projection was merely the crudest way of fighting with heartforce.

True Heartforce Cultivators had certain mysterious secret arts which were truly formidable. Bertulu, Eastcult, and Greatjoy had all mastered and joined multiple Supreme Daos together, but Bertulu was a Heartforce Cultivator! In an actual battle, he would've been stronger than both of the others.

If Bertulu had managed to fully learn the [Heartsword] sword-art and learned how to perfectly mesh his heartforce with his close combat abilities, his powers would've skyrocketed even further. Alas, the [Heartsword] sword-art was extremely difficult. Ning himself was a sword cultivator who was also skilled in heartforce, which was why he had been able to reach a basic level of skill in it, but Bertulu was not!

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The void above the Three Realms.

Yichuan and Snow both released their son, then smiled as they gazed at him.

"Ning, son. Tell us what in the world is going on. Your mother and I are both completely confused," Yichuan said.

"The story is a long one. I trust both of you know about the Seamless Gate," Ning said.

"The Seamless Gate." Yichuan and Snow both turned very solemn. "We've heard of them. The stories say that they are the ones causing chaos throughout the Three Realms." The two of them had died due to the machination of the Seamless Gate.

"Right. That had been a true tribulation, and many of our seniors perished during it," Ning said softly. He couldn't help but think back to that grand final battle and those figures who had calmly sacrificed their own lives. "But that war ended long ago. The Three Realms is now peaceful once more. I was bound by a lifeblood oath and so I wasn't able to retrieve your truesouls from the River of Destiny until today. Only then could I bring you back to life."

"River of Souls? Truesoul?" Both Yichuan and Snow were a bit dazed. Neither of them had reached high levels of cultivation in either of their two lives. They had no idea that someone whose soul had been shattered could be brought back to life.

“Father, Mother. We can discuss these things later in the privacy of our home.” Ning smiled, then turned and looked at the nearby figures. He called out, “Master.”

Subhuti flew over.

“Ji Yichuan and Yuchi Snow. The two of you certainly gave birth to a wonderful son,” Daofather Subhuti said with a laugh.

“Father, Mother, this person here is my master, Patriarch Subhuti,” Ning said. “If it hadn’t been for Master’s guidance, I never would’ve reached my current heights.”

“Aha! Ji Ning, your accomplishments were due to you and you alone. I didn’t help much,” Subhuti immediately said.

Ning continued, “And that gentleman over there is the leader of the Seamless Gate, the Lord of All Fiends.”

The distant Windfiend nodded towards Ning’s parents. With a flicker, he appeared next to Patriarch Subhuti as well. “I was wracked by guilt when I learned that Ji Ning’s parents died due to the actions of my Seamless Gate! Although it was Demonheart who instigated that calamity, I’m ashamed to say that I didn’t act to stop him.”

“The leader of the Seamless Gate?” Yichuan and Snow were both stunned. The Seamless Gate was the major force behind the chaos that had swept the Three Realms. Supposedly, not even the leaders of the Daoist Path or the Buddhist Sangha were able to do anything to them. How was it that their son knew people like this? How powerful had their son become, exactly?!

When the two of them had first perished, Ning hadn’t even gone to the Black-White College.

“This person is Buddha Maitreiya of the Buddhist Sangha. This person is Daoist Jade Cauldron of the Daoist Path...” Ning began to introduce the nearby Immortals and Fiendgods to his parents.

Yichuan and Snow were growing increasingly confused. Although they hadn’t heard of most of these figures, they had heard of a few of them and knew them to be figures whose reputations shook the Three Realms.

“These are now the most elite Immortals and Fiendgods of the Three Realms,” Ning explained to his parents, then turned and said in a sonorous voice, “Friends, I’m going to accompany my parents and leave for a time. In a few days, I’ll invite you all to a grand feast that I will hold.”

“You are far too kind, Darknorth.”

“Haha, this is the first time that Darknorth is hosting an Immortal banquet.”

“We’ll definitely attend!”

Ning smiled, said a few words to his master Subhuti, then led his parents away.

“Father. Mother. Come with me.” An aura of incredible sword-intent covered the three of them, then hurtled them through the void to the home where Autumn Leaf, Brightmoon, Uncle White, Little Qing, and Bluecliff Xiaoyu were residing.