

Desolate 1201

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Book 34: The Stone Hellephant Wall Chapter 31: The Estate-Spirit's Treasures

"Damn!"

"Formations?"

"Break! Break! Break for me!" The two trapped golems bellowed with rage as they furiously assaulted the formation. Multiple layers of formations began to tremble, with a few of the innermost layers actually beginning to split apart. However, they quickly managed to regenerate.

Ninedust was stunned by what he saw. He sent mentally, "They really are strong. Darknorth, these two golems are way too strong."

"That's why I came up with the idea of using a trifacta of formations against them. We need to trap them there as long as we can. Speed is the name of the game here!" Ji Ning stared at the two slower golems who were charging straight towards them. He certainly didn't dare to trap all four golems at once, because they had a way to merge their power together. In that situation, the formation would probably last only ten to twenty percent as long as it should!

"Let's go!" Ning roared angrily. Swoosh! He charged forwards by himself, moving towards the tall, skinny golem wielding a pair of enormous scimitars.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Ning immediately began to battle against the tall, skinny golem. Saber-light flashed everywhere, and each blow was incredibly heavy. Ning couldn't help but feel a sense of extreme pressure.

"You won't be able to stop us, Daolord Darknorth!" The fourth and slowest golem was a muscular golem who wielded an enormous greataxe, and he came charging straight towards Ning.

"Go!" Ning willed it. Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! A total of twelve Emperor-class golems suddenly appeared in the empty void next to him. These were all the Emperor-class golems Ning currently owned. As for Ninedust, he also let out a furious shout as he released his four Emperor-class golems. Although he had six total, two of them had other assignments to take care of.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Ning's twelve golems and Ninedust's four launched a simultaneous attack against the greataxe-wielding golem. Swoosh! Five of the sixteen golems had invulnerable forms, and they transformed into a five-colored rope that began to coil around the greataxe-wielding golem. As for the other eleven, they began to surround and attack as well.

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Ning was able to fight against thirty-two Emperor-class golems simultaneously thanks to his Shadowless evasion art, his Soleheart stance, and his Yin-Yang defenses. This greataxe golem, however, relied primarily on brute force! Thus, the sixteen Emperor-class golems were actually able to tie it down once they entered battle against it.

“Ninedust, hurry up and go get those treasures!” Ning sent mentally.

“Leave it to me.” Ninedust immediately charged towards the core regions with his two remaining golems by his side.

“Stop! STOP!” The two golems trapped within the formation-diagram were enraged.

“You won’t be able to escape.” Ning continued to battle against the tall, skinny golems. These golems all had their own strengths and weaknesses, and Ning had incorporated them into his calculations for this plan! The slow, greataxe-wielding golem was the strongest, and thus Ning left it up to his sixteen golems to fight against it. This was because all Emperor-class golems had incredibly tough bodies and didn’t fear brute-force attacks; what they truly feared were sly, crafty attacks.

Ning, for example, was dealing with just that as he fought against the golem wielding two giant scimitars. Saber-light was flying everywhere in an unpredictable manner! Sixteen golems probably wouldn’t be enough to tie it down, and so Ning had taken on that responsibility fearlessly.

Slash! Slash! Slash! Sword-light and saber-light clashed against each other repeatedly. Ning’s sword was faster and more unpredictable, but it was slightly weaker. However... he was using a total of six swords! Thus, he was able to tie this tall, skinny golem down and ensure that it was tied down as well and unable to escape.

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With the formation-diagrams, Ji Ning, and the sixteen Emperor-class golems working in harmony, all four guardian golems were temporarily tied down. Right at this moment, Ninedust led his two golems in search of treasures.

“Go over there!”

“Try over here.”

“Smash that apart!” Ninedust gave out one order after another, sending his golems into the more dangerous areas he encountered. The golems were all top-grade Eternal treasures and weren’t easy to damage.

“Haha! Nice treasure.”

“This treasure is actually able to affect spacetime?”

“Take this one with us.” The central residences were littered with formation-diagrams, strange gemstones inlaid in stone pillars, and strange mechanisms which had unknown purposes. The Ninedust Sectlord took every single thing he saw! It didn’t matter if he saw an immediate use for them or not; he’d worry about that once they got out of this place. For now, his goal was to take away everything he could.

After just twenty seconds, Ninedust had swept away virtually all of the items in the territory protected by the four golems, with the exception of two places which were protected by residual barriers and which couldn’t be entered.

Swoosh! Ninedust immediately fled at maximum speed. “Darknorth, let’s go!” Ninedust’s voice echoed within the ruins.

“Haha, thanks for everything!” Ning led his sixteen golems in a rapid retreat. Although the two golems attacking him tried to pursue him, there was simply no way for them to catch up. After Ning fled out of the central regions, the golems immediately halted their attacks and went to help their other comrades break free from the three layers of formations.

By now, the formations had already been mostly destroyed. With all four golems working together, it took merely five seconds to completely wreck it.

“Daolord Darknorth ended up getting what he wanted.” The four golems all sighed amongst themselves.

“The Sithe in this place died out long ago; those treasures weren’t doing any good. If he took them, he took them.”

“Ugh. We’re supposed to guard this place, but what are we guarding? Our masters died long ago...”

The four golems had to guard this place and follow the final orders they were given, which was why they had repeatedly intervened to stop Ning. In truth, they personally didn’t care about the treasures at all. In fact, they had long ago felt that their solitary life was boring and pointless.

“Life had been much more interesting lately with Darknorth around.”

“Agreed.”

“Now that he has the treasures he wants, he’s probably going to leave. We’re about to go back to our normal, boring life.”

“I thought that we’d be able to hold him back and we’d fight each other for a couple thousand chaos cycles. Who would’ve thought he’d get the treasures so soon?” The guardian golems all felt rather regretful. It had been a long, long time since they had felt challenged.

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The Sithe who had been living in the ruins had died long ago, with the golems bound by the final orders they had given before dying. Only if someone was able to forcibly abduct and bind the golems would their destinies be changed.

The lion statue’s mouth suddenly opened. Ning and Ninedust flew into the mouth, entering the beastworld within.

“Greetings, senior.” Both Ning and Ninedust bowed respectfully towards the black-robed man standing in the void before them.

“You’ve both improved quite a bit, especially you Darknorth. There’s a limit to how strong Daolords can be, and you had already reached an extremely high level of power... and now, you’ve made great gains yet again. Impressive,” the black-robed man nodded in praise. Although he had been left behind by the Autarch to safeguard this beastworld, he had never heard of an Omega Sword Dao and thus had reached a wrong estimation of Ning’s abilities.

Once Ning became a Daolord of the Fourth Step, he would become truly powerful.

“I’ll give each of you a treasure.” The black-robed elder waved his hand, causing a blood-red medallion with the imprint of a claw atop it to appear.

“Ninedust, this is for you.” The black-robed elder handed the item to the Ninedust Sectlord.

“Thank you, senior.” Ninedust excitedly accepted the strange blood claw-medallion, but once he gained it he couldn’t find anything special about it no matter how he scanned it. He glanced at the black-robed man with some confusion: “Senior, might I ask what this treasure...?”

“Haha, I’ll also give you a copy of a chaos star map.” The black-robed man waved his hand, causing an astral scroll to appear. He unfurled the astral scroll, which mapped out an enormous region of darkness as well as three realmverses around it.

“Here are the three closest realmverses,” the black-robed man said. “This is the Multilight Realmverse. This is the Redcastle Realmverse. And this is the Flamedragon Realmverse. This Sithe warship we’re in has been drifting through the Great Dark for endless ages. Based on the trajectory and speed at which we were moving, I imagine we should be close to these three realmverse by now. The two of you should be from one of these three realmverses, right?”

“Senior, how is it that you know we are from the outside and are not cultivators local to this planet?” Ninedust asked curiously.

“Haha, as soon as you broke through the outermost layer of deepfire blackstone surrounding the vessel, I was able to sense you.” The black-robed man nodded and smiled.

Ning and Ninedust now understood. “We came from the Flamedragon Realmverse; this place is fairly close to the Flamedragon Realmverse,” Ninedust said.

“What a coincidence. The Flamedragon Realmverse has a special place within it that was created and left behind by my master.” The black-robed man continued, “If you bear this medallion... so long as you are close enough to that place, you’ll be able to sense it through this medallion. You’ll be able to use it to teleport yourself directly inside.”

“Where is it?” Ning and Ninedust were both curious.

“Around here.” The astral map rapidly zoomed in on the Flamedragon Realmverse, revealing a specific place.

“Is that...?” Ning and Ninedust were both shocked. “Inside the Aeonian Kingdom?!”

Both of them had extraordinarily high statuses within the Endless Territories. Thus, they naturally knew where the headquarters of the Aeonians, one of the six great powers of the Endless Territories, was located! The place the black-robed man had just marked out was within the Aeonian Kingdom. The Aeonian Kingdom was an incredibly mysterious place; although there were very few Aeonians, especially strong ones, the Aeonian Kingdom allowed them to sit securely as one of the six major powers of the Endless Territories.

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Book 34: The Stone Hellephant Wall Chapter 32: Verdant Azuresoul

Ninedust said helplessly, "Senior, you might not know this, but the place you just pointed out is within an inconceivably powerful treasure known as the 'Aeonian Kingdom'! The Aeonian Kingdom is an extremely dangerous place; not even Hegemons dare to charge into that place."

The Dao Alliance and the Aeonians were mortal enemies; Aeonians relied on devouring countless Daolords to awaken the Aeonian blood within their veins! The more they devoured, the more powerful they would become! If it wasn't for the fact that they could take shelter within the Aeonian Kingdom, the Aeonians would've been completely genocided by the Dao Alliance long ago!

"Haha..." the black-robed elder laughed. "It doesn't matter how dangerous it is; you don't need to worry at all. This medallion will tear straight through spacetime and teleport you directly inside. If the situation turns grim, you can use it to immediately tear through spacetime and leave again. This medallion was personally forged by my master, Autarch Bolin. Not even Hegemons would be able to trap you."

Ninedust let out a sigh of relief, then immediately asked, "Would I be able to bring Darknorth with me?"

"The medallion can only be used by one person," the black-robed man said. "It can also only be used to bring one person in escaping from that place."

"Ah?!" Ninedust was startled.

"Buuut, you can pull Darknorth into your estate-world before using the medallion. That solves, it yes?" The black-robed man laughed.

Ninedust immediately looked at Ning. "Darknorth, things are going to be quite dangerous inside the Aeonian Kingdom. Accompany me?"

"For sure." Ning knew that in truth, Ninedust was actually helping him out rather than vice versa. With that medallion in hand, Ninedust wouldn't need to even fear an entire host of Hegemons. What sort of 'danger' would he be afraid of?

"Right. You must remember this." The black-robed man said seriously, "The power contained within this medallion is only enough to activate it twice in a row; after that, the power will be used up and it'll shatter. Thus, the medallion is only good for a single entry and exit. Treasure this opportunity and do not waste it."

"It'll be exhausted after just two uses?" Ninedust was started, but he then let out an uncaring smile. "A single such opportunity and blessing is already more than enough."

The black-robed man nodded slightly. He was quite approving of Ninedust's attitude. He then turned to look at Ning. "I didn't expect for you to be able to improve so dramatically, given how powerful you already were. Even I am now eager to see what you will be like if you succeed in your Daomerge. Given your power, once you succeed in the Daomerge you will definitely surpass any 'ordinary' Hegemon. You'll probably be on par with Otherverse Lords."

"Are Otherverse Lords very powerful?" Ning asked curiously.

"Yes. They are in control of alternate universes and are assisted by the prime essences of those universes. How can they NOT be strong?" The black-robed man continued, "And you helped me out as well. Given how much you improved... let me think about what I should give you..."

“Helped you out?” Ninedust glanced at Ning, puzzled. Ning was puzzled as well; since when did he help this estate-spirit out?

“You didn’t know this,” the black-robed man explained, “But when my master Autarch Bolin entered this place, he used an evasion art to directly bypass the deepfire blackstone and enter the vessel. He furiously massacred all of the Sithe, wrecking all of their defenses and destroying everyone and everything here. Afterwards, he tossed me here and then immediately tore through spacetime to depart. He was hurrying off to other regions to take part in the battles there.”

“But... Master forgot that the entire vessel was encased in a shell of deepfire blackstone. There was no way for me to leave!” The black-robed man said helplessly, “Ugh... master created so many beastworlds and he scattered them casually throughout the Chaosverse. He probably didn’t think too much of it when he tossed me here, and he had to seize every moment because war had spread throughout the realms. He didn’t take the time needed to actually break through the deepfire blackstone, as it would take some time even for someone as strong as him to tear through it by force.”

Ning and Ninedust now both understood. Deepfire blackstone was almost indestructible; even Hegemons like Hegemon Welkin were completely unable to do anything to it. It would take even an Autarch some time to forcibly break through the outer ‘wall’ protecting this Sithe warship. Autarch Bolin wasn’t willing to waste any time and so had used an evasion art to teleport straight inside.

“Darknorth, when you used your lifeblood weapon to drain away the deepfire blackstone, you also gave me the chance to leave.” The black-robed man smiled. “That naturally means you helped me out. I’ll now be able to move through spacetime to visit other places and search for other lucky people to bestow good fortune upon.”

“Mm...” The black-robed man was silent for a moment. “And you really have improved dramatically. I suppose giving you that treasure would be a decent choice.”

Whoosh. A round, fist-sized object suddenly appeared out of nowhere within the black-robed man’s hands. It looked like a giant egg, and it emanated strange ripples that caused both Ning and Ninedust to feel entranced by it. Their Dao-hearts were both influenced by this effect, causing them to feel the urge to devour the thing.

“My master, Autarch Bolin, has left behind some treasures in each beastworld... and this is the most valuable of the treasures I have.” The black-robed man looked at Ning. “This is known as a ‘verdant azuresoul’! Any and every Hegemon would go absolutely crazy over this.”

Ning and Ninedust were both startled.

“Later, both of you must swear oaths not to divulge any information about what has happened here,” the black-robed man said solemnly.

“Understood.”

“Don’t worry, senior.” Ning and Ninedust both hurriedly assented, while Ning stared at the egg-shaped object with an eager look in his eyes.

“The various realmverses of the vast Chaosverse are not truly eternal. There are certain destructive forces of nature within the Chaosverse,” the black-robed man said. “There are certain terrifying

celestial bodies, such as the 'Ship of Mirrors', the 'Yin-Yang Samsara Wheels', the 'Apocalypse Star', and more. Even Hegemons are helpless in the face of these naturally occurring celestial bodies, and they can easily annihilate entire realmverses. Even Autarchs need to pay enormous prices if they wish to be able to deal with them."

Ning and Ninedust were both surprised. They knew that the Flamedragon Realmverse was facing a grave danger from the Yin-Yang Samsara Wheels, but who would've thought there were multiple celestial bodies in the Chaosverse akin to the Wheels?

"The Ship of Mirrors, the Yin-Yang Samsara Wheels, the Apocalypse Star... they are not living entities," the black-robed man said. "However, the Chaosverse can also give birth to supremely terrifying creatures known as 'Chaos Primordials' that are just as deadly. Supposedly, these great beasts are born from the prime essences of the Chaosverse. Once they leave the prime essences, they'll voyage through the Chaosverse... and they love to eat the realmverses they encounter."

"Chaos Primordials are born with nigh-indestructible bodies and are incredibly few in number. They are also fairly unintelligent, perhaps on par with mortal children. However, they are so incredibly strong that only Autarchs are capable of killing them. Even Otherverse Lords are only able to just barely fend them off."

"This 'verdant azuresoul' is what Chaos Primordials love to eat beyond all other types of food." The black-robed man looked at Ning and Ninedust. "My master, Autarch Bolin, has made some special modifications to this one, converting it into a magic treasure. Darknorth, you'll be able to bind it with ease just by dripping your blood onto it. After doing so, if you ever manage to encounter a Chaos Primordial, you can toss the verdant azuresoul over to it and let the beast eat it... and once it does so, the modified verdant azuresoul will take control over the Chaos Primordial and make it a servant that obeys your commands."

Ning and Ninedust were both speechless upon hearing this. "Can I use the 'verdant azuresoul' as payment to have an Autarch reverse the flows of spacetime to revive a Celestial Immortal?" Ning couldn't help but ask.

"You cannot. A single verdant azuresoul isn't valuable enough," the black-robed man explained. "However, if you can find a Chaos Primordial and have it eat the verdant azuresoul, then give that Chaos Primordial to an Autarch? That would be enough to convince the Autarch to intervene."

"Chaos Primordials are simply too rare, while the endless Chaosverse is far too vast. Finding one is a matter of luck," the black-robed man said. "Alright. I've already given you each what you deserve. Remember – you are not permitted to tell others of what you encountered here," the black-robed man instructed.

"Understood."

Ning and Ninedust both immediately swore lifeblood oaths. Ning and Ninedust then felt space twist around them, followed by them reappearing within the Sithe ruins.

"I'm leaving now," the statue said. Suddenly, it transformed into an actual three-headed leonine beast that transformed into a streak of light that flew out of the mountains. "If you can succeed in your Daomerges, perhaps we might meet again."

Ning and Ninedust both watched as the statue flew away.

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A short while later, Ning and Ninedust left the Sithe ruins as well, returning to the surface of the planet.

Hundreds of millions of years had gone by. By now, Darknorth Palace had reached an utterly towering level of strength, while the three great clans remained hidden within their headquarters and not daring to come out.

The three great clans were simply terrified. They had always relied on their clan leaders, who had been completely wiped out. They naturally didn't dare to take any further risks, and thus they had come to a decision: "After 108,000 chaos cycles, our three great clans will once more make our presence known within the world. By then, Daolord Darknorth would've definitely died. I refuse to believe that such a freakishly strong Daolord can succeed in the Daomerge."

Ning and Ninedust secretly inspected the world for a period of time, then quietly slipped away without causing any damage to the barriers or wards surrounding the three great clans.

"Time to leave."

"Let's go back to the Endless Territories." With the treasures they had acquired from the Sithe lands in tow, Ning and Ninedust embarked upon their return journey.

By now, Ning had reached an even more profound level in his Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop. It was now much more powerful, and thus as the two tore through spacetime in the Great Dark they only had to spend a total of a bit over three hundred years before they reached the Endless Territories again.

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Book 35: The Aeonian Race Chapter 1: Realmship

Within the Endless Territories.

A dimensional gateway was suddenly torn in the empty void open next to an enormous, blazing star. A white-robed youth and a silver-robed man stepped out from within it.

"We're back! Haha, we're back in the Endless Territories." Ninedust laughed jubilantly, "We travelled through the Great Dark for so long without seeing any other living creatures at all. We didn't even see any stars or chaosworlds. That sense of loneliness was truly stifling and oppressing. I can't help but shiver when I think about how those Eternal Emperors choose to spend a million years traversing the Great Dark enroute to another realmverse."

"Once we succeed in our Daomerges and gain eternal life, perhaps we might come to the same decision." Ji Ning smiled.

"Yes... we have to succeed in the Daomerge. We have to! We made a killing off our visit to the Stone Hellephant Wall; to me, this place was just as beneficial as the Waveshift Realm was." Ninedust was in high spirits.

Ning nodded as well. He had indeed gained greatly from this trip. The greatest benefit lay in how they had the chance to memorize the Dao-guidance left behind by that Autarch. Next came the verdant azuresoul Ning had acquired and those six Emperor-class golems... and then there were the various Sithe relics they had swept out of the Sithe ruins.

“Unfortunately, that realmship we found was damaged. Otherwise, we really would’ve won a fortune,” Ninedust sighed.

“It wasn’t just damaged, it was in pieces. It would’ve been wonderful if Autarch Bolin had held back just a little bit and didn’t destroy the shuttle.” Ning sighed as well. “Still... if he really hadn’t destroyed it, he probably would’ve taken it with him when he left.”

“Yes.” Ninedust felt resigned as well.

Realmships... according to what the golems Ning had captured and bound had told them, these were flying shuttles that had been created by the Sithe which allowed them to travel between realmverses. Using these vessels, it was possible to spend less than a hundred thousand years in travelling from one realmverse to another! To powerful cultivators, this was a negligibly short period of time.

Even Hegemons found the trip from one realmverse to another a taxing one which required an extremely long period of time. Realmships, however, were able to accomplish it in a fraction of the time. They truly were incredibly fast, which meant they were incredibly precious as well!

There had been more than thirty thousand Sithe within the Stone Hellephant Wall, but only the two highest-ranking Sithe owned realmships, one each. One had been taken away by Autarch Bolin, while the other had been destroyed in the fierce fighting. Because realmships possessed regenerative capabilities, some of its parts had managed to slowly recover... but alas, the other parts were so totally trashed that they were completely unable to heal.

There were two parts of the shuttle which were in fairly good shape. Ning and Ninedust had each taken one of the two parts.

“A pity how severe the damage was. Less than half of it was remaining. There’s no way to use it at all.” Ning shook his head.

“We would’ve struck it rich if it was usable,” Ninedust sighed.

“Let’s not get too greedy,” Ning replied. The two continued to chat while separating themselves from the surrounding area, ensuring that no one was able to hear their conversation.

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The golems they had bound had all existed since the days of the Sithe. They naturally knew a great deal about the Sithe race! Ning and Ninedust learned a great deal after interrogating the golems, including many Sithe secrets. At first, they hadn’t really even understood how important the realmship fragments they had collected were; it was only after the golems helped them sort through the treasures that they knew what a realmship was.

“Darknorth, didn’t we agree to go to the Aeonian Kingdom? This doesn’t seem to be the right way,” Ninedust said with some surprise.

“We’re taking a slight detour,” Ning said. “It’ll only take a day or two.”

“Something you need to take care of?” Ninedust asked.

“The two of us have been visiting some truly extraordinary places recently. Although we’re both confident in our skills, it’s also true that we can die at any moment.” Ning sighed. “I’m planning to leave a few of these Emperor-class golems behind in my homeland. That way, even if I do fail my Daomerge and perish, my homeland will be at least somewhat protected with those Emperor-class golems present.”

Ninedust felt a mixed bag of emotions upon hearing this. He asked, “Darknorth, is your homeland very weak?”

“Yes. I can be considered the strongest person from my homeland, I suppose,” Ning said.

The Three Realms... hundreds of millions of years had gone past, and it had grown quite a bit... but it was still quite young in the grand scheme of things. Thus far, it didn’t even have any other Samsara Daolords aside from Ning himself! How could Ning not focus his attention on it?

“That’s quite a heavy burden to bear.” Ninedust sighed. “I’ve never had that sort of experience before. Although I acquired six Emperor-class golems, they really don’t mean that much to the Ancient cultivators as a race. These are all fairly weak Emperor-class golems, after all.”

“The Ancients are one of the six major powers of the Endless Territories. If you had to be responsible for the entire Ancient race, you would have to at least be a Hegemon,” Ning teased. “If the Three Realms could ever rise to become one of the top organizations of the Endless Territories, I would feel plenty proud.”

Whoosh. Ning and Ninedust emerged from yet another void tunnel, with a black-robed Ning standing at the other end of it.

“What’s this?” Ninedust stared at the distant black-robed Ning with surprise.

“My Primaltwin,” Ning explained. Not even the Dao Alliance or the Brightshore Kingdom knew that he had a Primaltwin; Ning had never made it public before! However, Ninedust was his friend for life; why should he hide it from Ninedust?

“Primaltwin?” Ninedust was stunned. “You have a Primaltwin? I’ve never heard of this before.” Moments later, he felt extremely moved; the existence of a Primaltwin was definitely a huge secret which generally wouldn’t be made public.

“You hid this very well indeed! I really can’t help but envy you. We Ancient cultivators are never able to have a Primaltwin,” Ninedust said.

“Primaltwins can only be created when you start cultivating as a mortal. All of you Ancient cultivators are born at the World level; how could you possibly have one?” Ning sighed. “Countless mortal cultivators would dream of one day reaching the World level, but you start off being born at this level with bodies comparable to Daolords... and you complain about envying us?”

As Ning spoke, he flew towards his black-robed Primaltwin. He sent a jade gourd flying out towards the Primaltwin. His Primaltwin accepted it, turned and tore open a spacetime tunnel, then departed.

The jade bottle held a total of six Emperor-class golems, the Sithe disk, and some other treasures. Emperor-class golems were of some use to Ning, after all, which was why he kept half for himself and gave half to the Three Realms.

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After spending thirty more years traversing through the Brightshore Kingdom's pathways, Ning and Ninedust finally reached the Aeonian Kingdom.

"The Aeonian Kingdom."

Ning and Ninedust stood atop a chaos planet, staring off into the distance. At the opposite end of the vast void was an enormous, roiling sea of blood. Above the sea of blood was an enormous citadel that glowed with dazzlingly beautiful golden light. This castle had to be trillions of kilometers in size and emanated an aura of unspeakable power that washed out in every direction. Even at Ning and Ninedust's current level of power, they felt a breathtaking sense of pressure.

This... this was the Aeonian Kingdom! It was this great castle which had kept the Aeonians alive for so long. Not even Hegemons would dare to barge into the Aeonian Kingdom, the homeland of the Aeonians!

"I've always heard of how mysterious the Aeonian Kingdom is, but I've never had a chance to actually enter it," Ninedust snickered. "I now finally have a chance."

"Is the Autarch's medallion resonating with anything?" Ning asked.

"It started to do so half a year ago," Ninedust laughed.

"Why didn't you tell me? I kept on pulling you closer and closer through spacetime teleportation."

"I wanted to get an up-close view of the Aeonian Kingdom with my own eyes. It really is rather stunning." Ninedust stared at the view before him contentedly.

"So I spent the past half year doing all that for nothing, eh?" Ning enjoyed the view as well. The Aeonian Kingdom truly was a stunning and beautiful site to behold. The two viewed it carefully for quite some time before deciding to go inside.

Swoosh. Ninedust waved his hand, pulling Ning into his estate-world. He then held the Autarch's medallion up high as he activated the power within it.

Boom! An exalted aura of blood-colored power covered Ninedust. Swoosh! It tore straight through spacetime, causing him to instantly disappear.

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The Aeonian Kingdom was a place filled with many secrets. The most mysterious, secretive place was within a certain world. This was a place which even the Aeonians found difficult to enter... and each time they did manage to enter, they had to first pay an enormous price.

A rift suddenly appeared in the void above this mysterious world. Swoosh! The Ninedust Sectlord's figure flew out from the rift.

“We arrived.” Ninedust scanned his surroundings, rather puzzled. His face suddenly tightened. He waved his hand, causing a white-robed youth to appear next to him. “We’ve already been teleported inside, Darknorth. Look over there, quick!” Ninedust pointed off into the distance.

Ning followed his gaze, only to see an absolutely enormous and dazzling astral river. There was a flying vessel within the flows of the astral river, and in front of the vessel was a strange tower-shaped flying object. At the very tip of the tower there were three royal thrones and three onyx humanoids seated atop them. The tower had a total of nine levels, and each level had silver-robed Daolords standing on them.

A total of three hundred of those silver-robed Daolords could be seen!

“The Sithe?” Ning was rather surprised.

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Book 35: The Aeonian Race Chapter 2: Bazu

The flying vessel and the strange tower were facing each other. Atop the tower were three onyx figures and three silver-robed Daolords?

“Wait, something’s wrong.” Ji Ning and Ninedust quickly noticed how something was off.

“Their auras seem off. They don’t seem like the Sithe we saw before,” Ning said softly.

“Let’s go take a look,” Ninedust said. Ning agreed, and the two began to quietly creep forwards.

As they moved closer and closer, the two were able to see the stone stele hanging right next to the flying vessel. “That stele...?” Ning and Ninedust hurriedly inspected it, quickly recognizing and reading the characters on the stone stele. The stele said:

I am Bolin.

I had five personal disciples. My fifth disciple, Bazu, was the most talented and the strongest of the five, far surpassing ordinary Hegemons. However, he was the first to die by the hands of the Sithe, and he was actually the third Hegemon to perish after the Sithe revealed their fangs and claws. In that battle, the Sithe sent out an entire regiment commanded by three of their Black Emperors to ambush and kill my disciple.

In that battle, my disciple Bazu slew a hundred and twenty-six Silver Daolords and a Black Emperor, but in the end he was surrounded and slain as well.

Although I hurried to him as fast as I could, I still arrived just a bit too late.

By now... war has begun! If our cultivator civilizations are defeated in this war, my hope is that our many worlds will continue to give birth to more and more cultivators, who can test themselves against the Silver Daolords and the Black Emperors here. That way, they can gain a sense for just how strong the Sithe are. Remember, these are just common footsoldiers of the Sithe race; they cannot be considered the true Sithe elites. You absolutely must not be overconfident against the Sithe; when you fight, you must go all-out.

The 318 nearby planets within the astral river next to us each hold a legacy within them which was left behind by one of the Hegemons who follow me. None of us know how many of them will survive this war, and it is possible that all of them will be doomed, representing an end to the cream of the crop of the cultivator civilizations and an end to a force that was built up over countless aeons. They have all left their legacies here in the hopes that our cultivator civilizations shall never fully perish.

Even if we cultivators end up losing this battle, I still believe that our worlds shall give birth to an endless stream of resistance fighters. One day, the Sithe shall be eliminated.

These are the words of Bolin!

.....

Ning and Ninedust were stunned for quite some time after reading the characters on the stone stele. They could sense the stately yet determined fighting will which was inherent within those words; although Autarch Bolin had been in great pain upon seeing his disciple perish, when he wrote upon this stone stele he was completely focused on preserving the cultivator civilizations as a whole.

“Fortunately, we ended up winning that war,” Ning murmured.

“Yes. For Autarch Bolin to leave behind so many precautions... I really can’t imagine just how powerful the Sithe once were,” Ninedust sighed.

“The Autarch said that we can spar against these ‘Silver Daolords’ and these ‘Black Emperors’,” Ning said.

“Are they capable of fighting?” Ninedust glanced at the distant tower. “I’ll give it a try first.” As he spoke, he immediately flew over.

Once Ninedust moved closer towards the flying tower, one of the Black Emperors standing atop the tower suddenly glanced downwards and said coldly, “Go and kill that enemy.”

“Yes, Emperor!” Instantly, one of the Silver Daolords on the bottommost levels of the tower immediately acknowledged the order. His aura of power quickly expanded and grew in might as he flew towards the Ninedust Sectlord.

As for Ning, he just watched from afar. He wasn’t too worried; Ninedust was much better than him at staying alive.

Whoosh. The Silver Daolord charged straight towards Ninedust with a longspike in its hands.

“I want to see just how strong a ‘real’ Sithe Silver Daolord is!” Ninedust was eager to do battle, and he sent his longstaff towards the oncoming attack, causing a seemingly endless series of ripples to appear around it.

Boom! The tip of the spear clashed head-on against the longstaff. Ninedust immediately felt his longstaff tremble to the point where he nearly lost control of it. As for the longspike, it continued its downwards stab towards him. Slash – it stabbed Ninedust on his chest! Ninedust’s eyes widened in disbelief. With a whoosh, he transformed into a vast wave that quickly retreated backwards.

“You want to run?” The Silver Daolord pressed the attack, his longspear striking at more than a hundred times the speed of light.

Ninedust immediately transformed into water once more as he continued his hurried retreat. Slash! Slash! Slash! The Silver Daolord launched one attack after another, the tip of his longspear gleaming with incomparably sharp light. Ninedust let out a miserable cry, “I can feel the pain even through my invulnerable aquaform! This is terrifying.” While howling, he continued to flee.

“Need my help?” Ning shouted to him.

“Not yet, not yet!” Ninedust immediately replied. However, after Ninedust fled a certain distance away the Silver Daolord suddenly came to a halt. The Silver Daolord glanced coldly at Ninedust, then flew back to the tower and returned to its original position on the bottom level. Its aura of incredible power quickly dissipated as it seemed to go back to normal.

Ninedust fled over next to Ning, transforming back into human form. “Whew.” Ninedust let out a sigh of relief.

“You were beaten in just one clash?” Ning smirked.

“They were definitely much more powerful than the three clan leaders,” Ninedust said quickly. “That Silver Daolord had extremely formidable spear-arts; I imagine he was on par with me! Given that he had also undergone the Ritual Sacrificium to become a Silver Daolord, he is naturally much stronger than I am.”

“So this is what true Silver Daolords are like. Those three clan leaders were at far too low a level of insight.” Ning nodded. “Those three Black Emperors are in charge of a total of three hundred Silver Daolords... how terrifying. These Silver Daolords are all comparable to the eight Archons, the lords of the Sacred Cities. Three hundred of them working together... not even a Hegemon would be able to withstand them.” Three hundred Silver Daolords truly was a terrifyingly strong force!

“Autarch Bolin’s personal disciple, Hegemon Bazu, was quite strong; even though he was surrounded, he was able to kill 126 Silver Daolords and a Black Emperor.” Ninedust sighed in amazement.

Ning felt admiration towards Hegemon Bazu as well. During the Dawn War, both of the Hegemons of the Endless Territories had perished in order to take down that Black Emperor. Clearly, Hegemon Bazu was much more powerful than they had been... but alas, he had still died.”

“I’ll go try it as well.” Ning manifested three heads and six arms, then charged forwards with six Northbow swords at the ready.

.....

The flying tower continued to hover there in the void. Once Ning moved closer to it, one of the Black Emperors at the top of the tower glanced down at Ning and then ordered, “Go and kill the invader.”

Instantly, the spear-wielding Silver Daolord at the very bottom of the tower acknowledged: “Yes, Emperor.” As it spoke, it flew towards Ning.

“These aren’t actual living beings; they are nothing more than simulacra.” Ning could tell that they weren’t alive, but he still couldn’t help but feel admiration for the Autarch; to be able to create

simulacra of three Black Emperors and three hundred Silver Daolords was absolutely incredible. Autarchs truly were unfathomably strong! It was thanks to the leadership of the Autarchs and countless cultivators sacrificing themselves that they had been able to eliminate the Sithe in the end, albeit at enormous cost.”

“Hah!” The Silver Daolord swept out with his longspear, spinning it in a circular arc as he swept it towards Ning in an indomitable fashion.

Clang! Ning moved to dodge while gently striking out with his sword using the Omega Sword Dao – Soleheart to affect the Silver Daolord’s attacks.

Although the Silver Daolord’s attack was on par with Ninedust’s staff-arts, Ning was still slightly superior to him. However, the difference wasn’t that great, and the Silver Daolord’s other advantages more than compensated for it.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Boom! The two continued to fight, causing shockwaves to blast out in every direction which caused the void to tremble.

Ning and the Silver Daolord were evenly matched in the fight.

“Eh?” One of the Black Emperors at the top of the tower frowned. “Even after this much time has passed, he still has yet to be captured? Another one of you, go and kill him!”

“Yes, Emperor!” Instantly, a Silver Daolord wielding a pair of hatchets charged out as well, forcing Ning to slowly begin to withdraw.

“Don’t even think about fleeing!” the spear-wielding Daolord and the hatchet-wielding Daolord shouted in unison. The two had surrounded Ning and were attacking him from a pincer position. Ning was immediately at a disadvantage, but thanks to his defensive prowess and his six Northbow swords he was able to hold on. While defending, he continued to retreat at high speed.

“Eh? Another one, go.” The Black Emperor at the top of the tower issued the order yet again, causing a third Silver Daolord to charge forwards. This one bore a giant warblade on its back. However, before it managed to arrive Ning had already moved beyond the critical distance, at which point all of the Silver Daolords withdrew as well. This was something which Autarch Bolin had implemented; he had done all this to help temper and train these juniors, not kill them after all.

“What a tough challenge. If one doesn’t do the job, send two. If two can’t hack it, send three...” Ning shook his head.

“If we’re ever able to force all three hundred Silver Daolords and all three Black Emperors to attack in unison... now that would be truly something,” Ninedust said eagerly.

“Haha, that’ll have to wait for after you complete your Daomerge,” Ning said. “Oh, right. Autarch Bolin said that the 318 planets nearest to us all have legacies left behind by the various Hegemons. Let’s go take a look.”

“Right.” Ninedust was curious as well.

Swoosh! Swoosh! The two quickly flew towards the planet located closest to the stone stele.

This planet wasn't all that large, just ten thousand kilometers in circumference. As soon as they landed atop the planet, they immediately sensed a ripple of power transmit into their minds. They could vaguely 'see' the mental image of a four-legged beast towering before them, its voice booming within their minds.

"I am Hegemon Thousand Rhinos, a retainer of Autarch Bolin! The war against the Sithe has already begun, and all of us Hegemons are following Autarch Bolin into battle against the Sithe. No one knows what the end result will be, and so I have left all of my insights and supreme techniques behind in this place. The cultivator civilizations shall not perish! The Sithe shall one day be exterminated!"

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Book 35: The Aeonian Race Chapter 3: A Heavy Feeling

Ji Ning felt rather moved and inspired. He could sense how Hegemon Thousand Rhinos had been completely determined to battle the Sithe to the death, and could also sense how much hope the Hegemon had placed towards the cultivator civilizations as a whole.

"I wonder if this senior was able to survive the Dawn War or not." Ning knew just how brutal the Dawn War had been, because all of the Hegemons of the Endless Territories during that era had perished in the Dawn War. "No matter what... in the end, our side won. The sacrifices of all those slain cultivators were not in vain."

Boom! A wave of power shot out as a large amount of information flooded into Ning's mind. This was the legacy of Hegemon Thousand Rhinos.

Ning trained in the Omega Sword Dao and had received guidance from the Autarch's Daos; by now, he had a far broader vision than many. These Hegemon-level legacies were of use to him in comparing to his own Dao, but the secret arts were of more help to him.

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Some time later, Ning and Ninedust woke up from their reverie atop the small planet. They exchanged a glance.

"Incredible." Ninedust's voice was rather hoarse.

"Yes, quite incredible." Ning nodded. "For the sake of ensuring that the cultivator civilizations will continue, he held nothing back at all. He didn't even require us to swear any lifeblood oaths when learning these legacies."

"Yes." Ninedust nodded. It was true; neither had been forced to swear lifeblood oaths! It must be understood that the more valuable a legacy was, the more likely it was that the successor would have to swear a lifeblood oath in order to learn it.

The Sword Hegemon in the alternate universe, the Paragon of Pills, the Brightshore Hegemon... they had all required lifeblood oaths that their teachings would not be taught to outsiders. Even fairly ordinary sects like Vastheaven Palace required these oaths. Ning had been forced to pay a significant price just to

transmit those fairly ordinary techniques and divine abilities of Vastheaven Palace back to the Three Realms.

But... Thousand Rhinos had been an exalted Hegemon! And yet, he had unstintingly passed down all of the legacies he had developed over the course of countless aeons to Ning and Ninedust without even requiring them to swear lifeblood oaths.

"Let's go to that other planet," Ning said.

"Let's go." Ninedust nodded.

Swoosh! Swoosh! The two flew next to each other like streaks of light as they moved to the planet closest to them. This planet was also fairly small, just ten thousand kilometers in size. When their feet landed atop the planet, they once more sensed that ripple of power be transmitted into their minds. This time, Ning felt as though he could see a snowy-winged man who emanated a halo of white light.

"I am God Emperor Helong, a retainer of Autarch Bolin and a master of an otherverse. I established my own church, and over the course of countless years I spread my organization across three entire realmverses. I had thought that I would be able to continue my campaign of conquest... but the appearance of the Sithe brought me back to my senses. Only then did I understand that to the Sithe, I was nothing more than an easily crushed ant.

"The Sithe seek to enslave all cultivators. Those like us who refuse to submit are all subject to death. Although I have been alive for countless years and have conquered for countless years, when I think of how all cultivator civilizations might one day be enslaved by the Sithe, I have only one thought in my mind... to exterminate them!

"I, God Emperor Helong, shall do everything in my power to slay all Sithe. Future cultivators, if we fail in our task, you must take it up in our stead. Kill, kill, kill! You must exterminate every single Sithe!"

The lofty, noble voice of the snowy-winged man was filled with murderous malice that was so strong it shook even Ning's Dao-heart. Moments later, a large amount of information began to flood into his mind. This was all the legacies which God Emperor Helong had to offer.

A long time later, Ning and Ninedust opened their eyes and exchanged a glance.

"Such power." Ninedust was stunned.

"I thought that the [Heartsword] art was quite unique, but who would've thought that God Emperor Helong would've come up with a similar technique, the [God Emperor's Apocalypse] art?" Ning nodded. This was another technique that allowed for the perfect fusion of heartforce with divine power; thanks to this technique, God Emperor Helong had reached a level of power that surpassed that of ordinary Hegemons! This was what gave him the strength needed to take control of an otherverse and then spread his organization across three separate realmverses. His church had a total of eight Hegemons within it!

"I wonder if this mighty figure was able to survive," Ninedust said.

“Given how strong he was? It is entirely possible that he did.” Still, Ning didn’t feel confident in this guess. The information they had learned regarding the Sithe from the Emperor-class golems they had bound had completely shocked them... and that was probably just the tip of the iceberg!

God Emperor Helong had been very strong, yes. But compared to the Sithe? Just as the God Emperor had said; he was nothing more than an ant.

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They visited one planet after another, flying from legacy to legacy and collecting them all. This vast astral river contained trillions of planets and stars, but only the 318 planets closest to the flying vessel had legacies.

A grand total of 318 Hegemonic legacies!

They listened to the exhortations these Hegemons had left behind for posterity. They could sense the boundless wisdom and indescribable hard work which permeated each and every legacy... and in every case, neither Ning nor Ninedust were forced to swear lifeblood oaths.

“Whew.” Ning let out a long sigh. He felt as though he was releasing a pent-up sense of pressure which had been weighing on his heart.

“None of them required lifeblood oaths. In other words, we are allowed to transmit all 318 Hegemonic legacies as we please.” Ninedust sighed in amazement. “We’re actually given free reign.”

Ning was excited as well. So many techniques, divine abilities, and secret arts... and they were allowed to transmit them as they pleased! His homeland, the Three Realms, would now have a true foundation for it to grow to incredible heights!

“These seniors probably WANTED us to transmit them,” Ning said. “If the cultivator civilizations were truly defeated in that great war, there would naturally be a need to produce more cultivators of great power. For the sake of this war, they had already cast off even their fear of death; they naturally wouldn’t mind others transmitting their legacies.”

“But in the end, our side won the war.” Ninedust sighed with emotion. “Thus, every single modern-day organization is extremely protective of its precious legacies and absolutely refuse to transmit them casually to others.”

“In the past, the cultivator civilizations were facing a total war against the Sithe. The Sithe have been destroyed long ago, and so the cultivator civilizations naturally turned against each other instead.” Ning shook his head. An outside threat would prompt internal unity, but once the threat was dealt with? The internal strife would appear once more.

Even a place as small as the Three Realms had fierce civil wars. Hell, even tiny clans had internal strife, to say nothing of a place as vast as the Endless Territories! The various realmverses most likely battled against each other as well. For example, the Dark Kingdom consisted of refugees who had fled from another realmverse. As a result, they were ostracized and oppressed by the locals of the Endless Territories.

“Darknorth,” Ninedust said solemnly.

“Eh?” Ninedust looked at him.

“We absolutely cannot just hand out these legacies willy-nilly,” Ninedust said. “Once a major power realizes what we have, we’ll be in serious trouble.”

“Agreed. Every single organization’s foundation rests upon its powerful experts and its precious legacies.” Ning nodded solemnly.

“After we leave, I’m planning to take a trip back home,” Ninedust said seriously. “I’m going to write down and transcribe all of the legacies we’ve acquired. I’ll let my avatar hold onto them, and I won’t make them public. Only if I die or after I complete my Daomerge attempt will I transmit these things to the rest of the Ancients.”

Ninedust let out a sigh. “These legacies will have an absolutely enormous impact. If I make them public too soon, it’ll probably have certain repercussions for me. After I complete my Daomerge, I’ll have nothing else to worry about... and if I die, I also won’t have anything to worry about.”

“I won’t be in a hurry to transmit them either.” Ning nodded. “My homeland is still far too weak.” In the end, he was going to give these legacies to the Three Realms, but it couldn’t be rushed. Ning was preparing to first slowly introduce to the Three Realms the more shallow techniques, divine abilities, and secret arts that were suitable for Daolords of the First Step! As for the more profound ones? He would take it slow. If he died, then he would naturally arrange for the full transmission.

Legacies from over three hundred Hegemons... this brought an enormous sense of pressure to both Ning and Ninedust. Neither dared to transmit them casually. In the end, they were still too weak; only if they reached Hegemony themselves would they have nothing to fear.

.....

Atop a planet. Ning and Ninedust were in secluded meditation within a temporal thatched cottage and a temporal log cabin. Both needed time to properly ‘digest’ these legacies.

The towering battle-intent which the Hegemons had infused into their messages was actually a form of tempering for them as well, causing both of their Dao-hearts to change slightly.

“With these things, my chances of succeeding in the Daomerge have increased once again.” Ninedust walked out of the temporal log cabin, a smile on his face.

A Voidsea Jadeseal, an Autarch’s Dao-guidance, and over three hundred Hegemonic legacies. Ninedust was starting to feel more and more confident.

“Eh? Darknorth is still meditating? He’s quite a bit slower than me.” Ninedust chuckled, then turned to glance at the flying tower. “Time to test out those Silver Daolords again.”

Swoosh. Ninedust soared into the skies. Although he was still far weaker than a Silver Daolord, he would at least be able to keep himself safe. This was a good opportunity for him to temper himself.

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Book 35: The Aeonian Race Chapter 4: The Strange Planet

Ji Ning needed much more time to 'digest' these legacies than Ninedust, because Ninedust had already reached the Verge as a Daolord. All he needed to do was to perfect his Dao and accumulate more experience so as to improve his odds of succeeding at the Daomerge. Ning, however, was different. He was just a Daolord of the Third Step, which meant he needed many more insights. He naturally had to carefully immerse himself in these Hegemonic legacies.

"We really have gained tremendously from this visit." Ning emerged from his temporal cottage, then stared at the flying tower off in the distance. "Legacies from over three hundred Hegemons... this will be of enormous help to both me and the Three Realms."

The divine abilities were useless to Ning, but the secrets arts were extremely useful. Although he did have a secret art bestowed by that dead Sword Hegemon from the otherverse, these three hundred-plus Hegemons bestowed far more. In fact, there were four who were focused on the Dao of the Sword! Ning ended up choosing a secret art that suited him the most.

"Once I become a Daolord of the Fourth Step, I'll simultaneously train in both of these secret arts! Once I use the two of them via my Yin-Yang Sword Domain, they'll mutually reinforce and support each other..." Ning was quite eager to see what would happen. There was a certain finesse to choosing secret arts, and the more powerful a secret art was the more requirements it had with regards to the level of the wielder's insights into the Dao.

The nine novessence arts, for example, needed one to be able to perfectly master and merge together nine types of Dao lightning. Ninedust's Ripplewater art required incredible insight into the Dao of Water. The Sword Hegemon's secret art and this new secret art which Ning had chosen were both focused on the Dao of the Sword. Both required the wielder to know a great deal regarding that Dao.

"Ninedust," Ning called out loudly. His voice traversed the flows of space and passed into the ears of the distant Ninedust, who was battling more than a hundred million kilometers off in the distance.

"Haha..." Ninedust hurriedly retreated, pulling away from the Silver Daolord as he glanced backwards. "Darknorth, you finally came out."

"Judging from the way you just fought, you've perfected your ultimate attacks even further. That supremely aggressive staff-stance, you executed with water-like fluidity. This shows that your mastery of the Dao of Water has improved." Ning flew over like a streak of light, quickly arriving next to Ninedust as he spoke in praise.

"Twenty-five out of those hundreds of Hegemons were skilled in the Dao of Water, allowing me to benefit greatly from their insights. I feel as though my chances at the Daomerge are growing better and better," Ninedust said smugly. "I feel as though I have a ten percent chance."

Ten percent. It sounded puny, but Daolords normally had less than a hundredth of a percent at completing the Daomerge!

"Congratulations!" Ning revealed a delighted look. He truly did feel happy for Ninedust. As for himself, although he had gained the Autarch's Dao-guidance and also reviewed the many legacies of the Hegemons, his path was still that of the Omega Sword Dao; it was a path that was untold times more difficult than the one which Ninedust had chosen! There was a limit to how much benefit these other

legacies would be to him. None of those Hegemons had chosen an Omega Dao, and so his chances at the Daomerge still remained as infinitesimally small as ever.

If he failed his Daomerge while Ninedust succeeded, he would ask Ninedust to help take care of the Three Realms. If a Hegemon watched over it, its inhabitants would have a much easier life.

“How about you? You must’ve gained even more insights than me,” Ninedust said.

“I’m not quite there yet, but I feel close to a breakthrough,” Ning said. After distilling the experiences of over three hundred Hegemons, Ning had gained quite a few new insights into his Heavenbreaker stance. He wasn’t too far away from reaching the fourth stage of it.

“That’s enough chatting. I’m gonna go spar a bit against those Silver Daolords.” Ning immediately manifested three heads and six arms, then charged towards the flying tower with six Northbow swords at the ready.

A few moments later, an onyx humanoid standing at the top of the flying tower ordered for three silver Daolords to attack.

“He dares to come again?”

“Kill him.”

“Kill this Daolord.” The three Silver Daolords charged towards Ning, with Ning coming to a halt close to the outer perimeter and engaging them in a battle there. When he sensed that he wasn’t able to hold on any longer, he would immediately retreat outside of the perimeter. That way, the Silver Daolords would withdraw as well.

.....

Ning and Ninedust both understood what Autarch Bolin’s intentions were. Autarch Bolin had created this world, then had his hundreds of Hegemon retainers leave down their legacies, precisely so that he could ensure the future cultivators would have access to good Immortal techniques, divine abilities, and secret arts.

He had even gone so far as to make simulacra of the Sithe’s Black Emperors and Silver Daolords... all of this was for the sake of improving the combat power of the cultivators!

“He truly poured his heart into this,” Ning sighed with emotion.

“Darknorth! Darknorth!” After several years of battling, Ninedust suddenly called out, “We haven’t paid that flying vessel a visit yet. Shouldn’t we go inside and take a look?”

“Autarch Bolin didn’t say that the vessel held any treasures within it,” Ning said. The stone stele had only mentioned that one could spar against the simulated Sithe and acquire legacies from the Hegemons.

“We should still go take a look. Doing nothing but sparring against Silver Daolords is kind of boring anyhow; by now, I understand every single technique they use,” Ninedust said.

“True. Battling is rather pointless by now.” Ning agreed with this assessment. When fighting against three Silver Daolords, he often found himself unable to hold on and thus was forced to retreat! But this wasn’t due to him being at a lower level of insight; in fact, he was on a higher level than all three of them. The problem was that his foes were incredibly fast and strong, and there was no answer for that. This made sparring against them of limited use to Ning.

“Let’s be careful,” Ning warned.

“It should be fine. Autarch Bolin wouldn’t have set up traps for us,” Ninedust said. Still, he chose to send one of his Emperor-class golems to scout first.

The flying vessel was completely empty inside. There were no traps inside, nor were there any treasures. There was just a line of words left behind on the inner walls:

“The only way to break through from Hegemony and reach Autarchy is to accumulate sufficient experience. Aside from this, there are no other paths.”

This line of words was filled with stately majesty. Clearly, they had been left behind by Autarch Bolin himself.

“Accumulate sufficient experience?” Ning and Ninedust stared at the line of words for a long time.

“Let’s not dwell on it too much. The greatest challenge standing in front of us is the Daomerge.” Ning smiled. “Let’s worry about this after succeeding in the Daomerge.”

“Agreed.” Ninedust nodded. “Oh, right. Darknorth, we’ve spent this entire time in the area around the flying vessel; we haven’t explored the other parts of this world. To tell you the truth, there’s a limit to how much this place is going to be use to us. I’m planning to explore this area a bit; if there’s nothing else here, I’m going to leave! But of course, if you want to dally here a bit longer I can wait on a nearby planet and train there until you are ready to go.”

“This place isn’t of much use to me either.” Ning agreed. “Come, let’s walk around and see what there is to see. After that, we’ll leave.”

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This world which the Autarch had created was extremely large. Ning and Ninedust stood within the void above it.

“Heartworld, descend!” With but a thought, Ning send his vast heartworld projection rumbling downwards. It quickly spread out in every direction to encompass the entire planet.

“And?” Ninedust asked.

“The other parts of this world are completely empty and devoid of all things.” Ning pointed off into the distance. “The only exception is over there. The astral river seems to pass through this entire world, and there’s something inside it that radiates an aura of incredible power. Not even my heartworld projection is able to infiltrate it at all.”

“Oh? It seems we need to spend a bit of time looking into this astral river.” Ninedust was filled with excitement.

“Let’s go.” Swoosh! Swoosh! The two immediately entered the astral river and began to fly through it. The flying vessel, the flying tower, and the 318 small planets had been nothing more than a small part of this vast astral river which permeated the enormous world they were in.

“There are countless stars here, but they all seem quite ordinary.” Ninedust was rather disappointed by what he found. By now, they had already been flying for more than three months and had searched through nearly half the astral river.

Rumble...

Far away, there was an enormous planet that was slowly revolving in place, emanating an aura of oppressive majesty. Ning and Ninedust were able to vaguely sense it even from a great distance, causing their eyes to narrow. It must be remembered that all of the other planets were tiny, merely ten thousand kilometers or so in size. The vast planet they could vaguely see off in the distance, however, had to be at least ten billion kilometers in diameter.

“What an enormous planet, and what a powerful aura! So the astral river actually has such a special locale inside of it?” Ning and Ninedust exchanged a glance, then immediately flew towards it. As they moved closer, they were able to see it with increasing clarity.

This planet was quite unique. On one side, it had a blazing red sea of flames that emanated an aura of incredible heat. The flamewaves which roiled that side were actually filled with the ripples of the Dao itself, with every single wave containing an amount of force comparable to a full-strength strike from a Daolord of the Fourth Step. This caused Ning and Ninedust to feel shocked.

The other side of the planet was an endless stream of deep-blue water that emanated an aura of infinite cold. This cold similarly radiated Dao-ripples of equal power to the other side.

“What an unusual planet.” Ning was rather surprised. One side was filled with a sea of flames, the other was filled with an icy sea of water. Both sides emanated the profound mysteries of the Dao. As for the hemispheric intersection where the hot and cold energies met and clashed against each other, an endless dense line of mist appeared.

Deep within the mist, they could vaguely make out the crown of a massive tree, as well as see a few long, skinny, fiery-red fruits hanging from the top.

“Judging from those leaves... that should be one of the eight types of sacred bloodfruit, the ‘omnigeddun bloodfruit’. But... these fruits look rather strange. And, generally speaking, a single omnigeddun bloodfruit tree should have just three fruits per harvest. I can already see roughly six of those fruits sprouting from the crown of the tree, and that’s with the rest of it shrouded by mist.” Ning was puzzled. “Is it some other type of fruit? Ninedust, can you recognize this fruit tree?”

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“Judging from the trunk, the branches, the leaves, and the aura of the fruit...” Ninedust frowned in puzzlement as well. “Yeah, that should definitely be an omnigeddun bloodfruit tree.” He was an Ancient cultivator who had a very high level of status within the race; as a result, he knew most of the precious materials and ingredients in the Chaosverse.

“But something feels off.” Ji Ning frowned.

“Yes, omnigeddons bloodfruits are round and slick; they don’t look long and skinny like that. In addition, there’s way too many fruits... and the tree itself seems to be a bit too large,” Ninedust said.

Ning blinked. Right. He hadn’t noticed it earlier, but ordinary omnigeddons bloodfruit trees were roughly just thirty meters tall. The crown of the mist-shrouded tree off in the distance, however, had to be over three million meters tall!

“Although it does look a bit odd, this tree is definitely a priceless treasure.” Ninedust’s gaze turned heated with eagerness. “Judging from the auras of those bloodfruits, they have to be quite extraordinary.”

“Let’s go take a look,” Ning said. The two didn’t hesitate, immediately flying carefully into the deep mist. Soon, they descended upon the area just outside the fog-shrouded region, the place where blazing heat met scorching cold and produced that mist. Ning and Ninedust were still able to see several tens of thousands of kilometers into the fog-shrouded region.

Whooooosh. Scorching waves of flaming heat washed over them from one side, while frigid waves of icy energy swept towards them from the other side. Ning and Ninedust descended upon the thin, narrow strip of land where the two elemental seas met and collided.

“Oh, a few more kids have come to test their luck.” A hoarse, grating voice that sounded like knives and swords grinding against each other suddenly rang out.

Ning and Ninedust were both badly startled. They hurriedly turned to look towards the direction of the voice, only to see the distant fog quickly begin to dissipate. A streak of deep blue light which was even denser than the fog came surging out of it, tearing the fog apart. Ning and Ninedust soon saw a strange deep blue creature that looked like a sea dragon crawl onto the thin ‘bank’ between the two sides of the world. It stared straight at Ning and Ninedust with its dark-gold eyes.

This dark blue dragon seemed to have been completely sculpted out of freezing ice, and it radiated a cold aura of incredible power. Most likely, even second-tier Daolords would end up having their truesouls frozen solid and then shattered, resulting in their deaths, unless they had particularly powerful life-preserving methods.

“Haha, intriguing. Two young fellows, come to play. Things are finally getting interesting.” A deep, rumbling laugh rang out from other side as well, and Ning and Ninedust both hurriedly turned to look.

The dense mist split apart once more, and from the other side of the bank appeared a muscular, four-hooved equine of fire which began to walk towards Ning and Ninedust.

The deep blue dragon and the fiery equine looked at Ning and Ninedust with some curiosity.

“Darknorth, this place definitely holds some secrets.” Ninedust grew rather nervous as he sent mentally, “These two are incredibly strong and pose an incredible threat. I’m worried that I won’t be a match for them at all.”

“We’ll match them blow for blow.” Ning remained quite calm. These two strange beasts brought a sense of pressure to him as well, but he still felt confident in his abilities to stay alive.

Ninedust suddenly called out loudly, "Greetings, seniors."

"Oh, how nice. A junior who understands the proper way to behave." The deep blue dragon lowered its giant draconic head to peer downwards at Ning and Ninedust. "After all these chaos cycles, the Aeonians have finally sent another Daolord over! But... you two don't look like Aeonians. Have the Aeonians realized that they are outmatched and elected to ask outsiders for help?"

"The Aeonians truly are useless." The flaming equine said with a snicker, "They have this world all to themselves, but they haven't been able to produce so much as a single truly powerful expert. As far as Emperors go? They don't even have a Hegemon! As for Daolords, all of theirs are mediocre."

"Since the two of you are Daolords, we'll follow the same rules as always. If you can defeat the two of us, we won't bar your path," the deep blue sea dragon said.

"You only have to defeat the two of us." The flaming equine was quite eager as well.

Ning and Ninedust both were intrigued by this. They were starting to understand. "Seniors," Ning said, "Do we have to defeat you individually, or shall we fight in a group?"

"You two kids can come against us, one at a time." The sea dragon let out a chuckle. "Fight me first, then against the fiery guy over there. If you can defeat the two of us separately, you'll be allowed to do as you please."

"AWOOO! Stop sleeping! All of you, get over here!" The flaming equine lifted its head up and let out a mighty howl which echoed throughout every inch of this planet.

Whoooooosh. The entire vast planet suddenly began to tremble and rumble as the two great seas on both sides began to shake.

One deep blue sea dragon after another began to fly out of the deep blue seas, while more and more flaming equines flew out of the sea of flames. They differed in size and strength, with the large ones having auras that were even more terrifying than the two in front of Ning. The smaller ones were a bit weaker.

Nearly a hundred of the sea dragons and the flaming equines ended up appearing. They all looked over to this area, watching rather excitedly.

"This is utterly terrifying." Ninedust was badly frightened by this. He immediately sent to Ning, "There were actually this many creatures hidden within this planet? If they were all to attack in unison... I'm afraid that only Hegemons would be able to survive."

"Yes." Ning sensed the terrifying danger the two groups posed. These beasts were simply too strong; neither he nor Ninedust could possibly resist them.

To be surrounded and watched by so many of those beasts... Ning and Ninedust both felt a sense of great pressure.

"These are members of our race," the deep blue sea dragon in front of Ning said. "Don't worry. Since you two are merely Daolords, they will only stand off to one side and watch. If an Emperor came, they would have to defeat both of our races in order to proceed! As mere Daolords, beating the two of us will suffice. Otherwise, you can forget about leaving with any of the treasures on this planet."

“Which of you two will be the first to attack?” The flaming equine was starting to grow impatient.

Ning and Ninedust both felt rather stunned. Ninedust sent mentally, “The Aeonians do not have any Hegemons. It seems as though they are not able to defeat these two races, and I can’t even imagine how long it would take before they are able to give birth to a Daolord capable of defeating these two beasts without assistance.”

“Yes. I’ll go first and see just how tough these beasts are,” Ning said.

“It’ll be up to you. I have no shot at all,” Ninedust said helplessly. His subconscious was screaming danger at him, ensuring that he understood that he was no match whatsoever for these two beasts.

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The two massive beasts standing at each end of the thin strip of land squinted at the tiny little dot in front of them. Far away, within the two vast seas, the two races of nearly two hundred terrifying beasts all watched with interest.

“I’ll go first,” Ning said aloud.

“Good.” The deep blue sea dragon grinned widely. “Come forward, young fellow.”

Ning instantly manifested three heads and six arms, bringing his six Northbow swords to the ready. Swoosh! Ning instantly charged into the skies, moving far faster than a hundred times the speed of light.

“Heeey. Pretty fast!” The sea dragon’s eyes lit up. It instantly and excitedly waved its right paw, sending it striking towards Ning at more than a hundred times the speed of light. This claw-strike emanated a bone-chilling cold that pierced towards Ning’s tiny little frame.

Ning moved in an almost ghostly manner. He merely had to gently rap the flat of his blade against the right claw to force it aside, then charged straight towards the sea dragon’s flank.

“This Daolord isn’t bad.”

“He’s pretty tough.”

“The Aeonian Daolords themselves are far too weak. I wonder where they managed to find such a formidable young fellow to help them out?” The two races of beasts watched from the distant seas with interest, commenting as the battle proceed.

“Break!” Ning stabbed straight towards the sea dragon’s flank, his Northbow sword immediately executing his Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop. A mist-formed sword tore through the skies, stabbing straight at the deep blue flank. The sea dragon didn’t just look as though it had been sculpted out of an enormous piece of ice, it actually WAS covered by layers of thick, dense ice.

Slash! The tip of the sword stabbed into the ice, just barely managing to leave behind a tiny little wound on the outermost layer of the ice. Moments later, cold energy flowed forwards and quickly restored the damage down.

Whoosh. The deep blue sea dragon’s vast body suddenly flew backwards, coiling like a whip then snapping forward through the skies as it caused a vast illusory wave to appear in the skies.

It was simply too fast and too massive. There was no chance for Ning to dodge at all. He immediately used his six Northbow swords to defend as the sea dragon slammed its massive bulk straight against Ning.

BOOM! It was like using a giant whip to swat a tiny mosquito. Ning felt an enormous amount of power spread throughout his entire body, sending him flying backwards uncontrollably. He smashed into the distant ground, creating a giant crevice that was more than a thousand kilometers long.

“Eh? He didn’t die, did he?” The deep blue sea dragon hovered there in the skies, peering downwards with concern. Only when he could sense that Ning was still unharmed did he relax slightly.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 35: The Aeonian Race Chapter 6: Understood

Ji Ning had already flown out of the long crevice and landed next to it. Naturally, he was completely unharmed; after spending hundreds of millions of years within the Sith ruins inside the Stone Hellephant Wall, he had long ago trained his body to make it comparable to high-grade Eternal weapons. On top of that, he also had his Hegemon armor! Even if he didn’t use sword-arts to block, he’d still be able to take this hit. When you factored in how powerful his defensive sword-arts were... the only reason he had even been sent flying was because the sea dragon had snapped its body like a whip, generating such enormous momentum that he couldn’t help but fly backwards.

“Such power.” Ning raised his head to stare seriously at the deep blue sea dragon in the skies.

“Haha, I’m glad you didn’t die. I was afraid I would’ve beaten you to death with a single whap. That would’ve been boring.” The sea dragon coiling in the air peered downwards at Ning, its voice booming.

“Darknorth, can you beat it?” Ninedust asked mentally.

Ning had a solemn look on his face. “It’ll be a bit difficult. It’s not so bad when it stays still, but when it starts to move its entire body strikes like a supple, long whip. Its movements are extremely unpredictable, and I wasn’t able to dodge in time. That’s why I was knocked flying.” He had reached the fourth stage of his Shadowless stance long ago, and his movements were extremely unpredictable... but he had still been knocked flying by the sea dragon. Ning understood that this meant the sea dragon’s movements were every bit as ghostly and unpredictable as his own!

“Grow!” Ning roared loudly. Whoosh! Ning’s divine body began to dramatically grow in size, towering to become a titanic mountain-sized giant with three heads and six arms. Each of the six Northbow swords in his hands transformed to become utterly massive as well.

“Oh, he grew bigger?” The sea dragon watched curiously.

“We’re too close to each other at my normal size; I don’t have enough time to dodge.” Ning’s voice boomed out, “My only choice is to grow bigger and stay a good distance away from you; that way, I might be able to avoid some attacks.”

The farther away they were from each other, the more space Ning would have to maneuver in.

“You know, young fellow, I’m most confident in my agility and in my unpredictability. Come, let’s dance again.” The sea dragon suddenly charged downwards. Whoosh! Its sinuous body lashed out like a whip, leaving behind an arc in the skies as it charged straight towards Ning.

Ning hurriedly moved backwards while using one of his mist-formed swords in a ghostly block. Clank! The sword-light clashed against the sea dragon’s claws.

Whoosh! The sea dragon’s tail came lashing towards Ning with shadowy speed! Space itself seemed to be torn apart by this strike, which was so fast as to render Ning speechless.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Ning hurriedly retreated while executing his Omega Sword Dao – Soleheart. Fortunately, he himself was also quite unpredictably agile and he also moved more than a hundred times faster than the speed of light.

The sea dragon let out a mighty roar as it coiled around itself. Its tail swept outwards as its upper body dove downwards, sending its fierce draconic claws straight towards Ning.

Boom! Boom! Fortunately, Ning had three heads and six arms, allowing him to just barely block this draconic strike. However, the sea dragon suddenly opened its massive draconic maws and then bit down towards Ning! Ning hurriedly retreated backwards to avoid this terrifying bite. Boom! The sea dragon charged headfirst-towards Ning, delivering a headbutt against the fleeing Ning and sending him flying even further backwards. He only came to a halt after flying a great distance, at which point Ning flew back to the field of battle.

“Too fast and too slippery.” Ning’s head was starting to hurt. The sea dragon’s entire body was covered with extremely thick layers of frozen ice, which meant that there were no weaknesses to exploit at all. Every single part of its body could be used as a weapon! It was also incredibly fast and slippery, capable of unleashing consecutive combination attacks without pause.

“I’ve always relied on my speed and unpredictable attacks to achieve victory, but this sea dragon just so happens to be superior to me in these areas...” Ning frowned. “It seems my only choice is to break through using raw power. I suppose I’ll give it a try.”

Break through with overwhelming, raw power in a frontal strike! It didn’t matter how unpredictable the enemy’s attacks were if you could just barrel straight forwards with an unstoppable strike; so long as the attack landed, the enemy would be defeated!

The reason why Ning had yet to use his Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker was because of what had happened during his first clash against the deep blue sea dragon. His Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop had only been able to drill a tiny wound into the thick layers of ice covering the sea dragon’s body. Ning had gotten a vague sense of how terrifyingly tough that armor of ice was, and thus he didn’t feel confident in his Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker and its chances.

However, he was out of options. He had to give it a try.

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“This kid is pretty fast, and his sword-arts are also quite ghostly. Although he’s at a disadvantage, at least he’s able to put up a good fight.”

“It’s quite rare for us to encounter such a formidable Daolord.”

“Interesting, interesting.”

“It seems as though his protective divine ability is also quite formidable. He has yet to take any injuries at all.”

The nearly two hundred beasts who were watching in the two vast seas were all quite interested in this battle, and they chatted while watching.

“Darknorth’s been shut down.” Ninedust was starting to grow anxious. “We actually ran into something that has even weirder attacks than him and which is just as fast as him.”

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“Again!” Ning bellowed. This time, his demeanor was completely different. He put away his other five Northbow swords, leaving just one sword behind. All six of his arms tightly clenched the sole remaining sword.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Ning began to run across the ground. His speed wasn’t that fast, less than a hundred times the speed of light, but as he ran his aura seemed to grow increasingly powerful. The most important aspect to the Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker lay in the accumulation of power! Only after accumulating enough power could you then unleash it in a terrifying blow; only then could Ning unleash his true, most powerful strike.

“Eh?” The airborne sea dragon was slightly startled upon seeing this, then grew excited: “His aura seems to have become quite savage! But I’ll have to test it out myself to see just how strong he is. I hope he doesn’t disappoint.” The sea dragon let out an excited roar, then swooped downwards and charged straight towards Ning. It didn’t move to dodge, nor did it feel the need to.

Ning continued to bound forwards, his momentum and aura having reached an apex. Riiiiip! The sea dragon struck out with a pair of draconic claws, tearing downwards through the sky at Ning.

“Now... BREAK for me!” Ning roared loudly. All six of his hands were clenched tightly around his sword as he raised it up high, pouring more and more energy into it. It had already transformed into a thick, blurry pillar of mist-formed sword energy of incredible weight and density. Ning then delivered a furious downwards chop, causing the thick pillar of mist to suddenly explode! It was like the bursting of a volcano, with all of his power and might exploding forth from the strike.

The stately thick pillar of mist-formed sword energy seemed to have suddenly exploded and transformed into a dazzling star that had gone supernova. All of its power was unleashed in an instant as it smashed directly against the draconic claws.

BOOOOM! A terrifying shockwave of force blasted out, causing Ning to be knocked backwards. This time, he was sent flying even faster than before!

The sea dragon had previously been quite excited, but the terrifying collision caused even its body to tremble. The mighty shockwave swept across its entire body, flipping it upside down and sending it flying backwards as well. Moments later, a series of cracking sounds could be heard as the ice over its

body began to splinter and crack, making it look almost like a turtle shell. Some of the shattered pieces of ice actually began to fall off of it!

Alas, the creature quickly righted itself and brought itself to a halt in the skies. Its body had previously glistened beautifully, but it was now covered with countless ugly cracks and scars that spanned its entire body. However, a dense aura of cold energy quickly spread out to cover its body, causing the cracks and tears to quickly heal. In less time than was needed to take a single breath, the many ugly wounds had been completely healed.

“It healed that fast?” The spectating Ninedust was speechless. “This is going to be trouble.”

“Haha, again!” Ning had been blown backwards, but he charged straight forwards with an indomitable aura, roaring with high-spirited laughter.

He still held just a single sword in his six arms, and like Pangu cleaving apart Heaven from Earth he once more delivered a furious frontal chop with endless might!

“Excellent, excellent! It’s been so long since I’ve had this much fun.” The deep blue sea dragon charged forwards as well. This time, it lashed out with its massive tail in a swatting blow at Ning, smashing it straight against Ning’s sword. BOOM! The two were once more sent flying backwards. This time, the sea dragon was prepared and thus it suffered slightly fewer wounds and cracks to its body. The ones that did appear once more healed quite quickly.

“Again.”

“Yes, again!”

Ning was filled with the desire to do battle. He charged forwards repeatedly, using raw, overwhelming force to clash straight against the deep blue sea dragon. The sea dragon started off quite excited by this fight, but it quickly grew resigned and bored... it didn’t want to fight head-on against Ning, but it simply had no way to avoid Ning’s straightforward and dominating Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker. Ning was far less agile than it was, after all.

“I want to see just how long your divine power and Immortal energy will be able to hold on for!” The deep blue sea dragon started to grow angry, and it rammed straight against Ning time and time again.

Boom! Boom! Boom! The two clashed repeatedly, causing the two groups of beasts watching from the two seas to become rather puzzled.

“What’s going on with that Daolord? He knows there’s no way to win like this, so why is he doing this?”

“It does seem rather odd.”

“He won’t be able to win like this. He won’t be able to win unless he can smash open the frozen ice with a single blow.”

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Ning was no fool, of course. However, when he had first used his Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker to clash head-on against the deep blue sea dragon, the furious yet exhilarating feelings had caused him to gain a spark of insight! He began to gain more and more insights, which was why he continued to

furiously unleash his Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker against the sea dragon, hoping to be able to finally catapult his Heavenbreaker stance to the fourth stage.

BOOM! With the ninety-eighth collision, Ning's face lit up with excitement as he flew backwards. "I understand now! I finally understand!"

The Desolate Era

Book 35: The Aeonian Race Chapter 7: Autarch's Decree

Ji Ning finally saw the light, and his Heavenbreaker stance broke through to the fourth stage. Now... his Blood Drop stance, Shadowless stance, Heavenbreaker stance, Yin-Yang stance, and Soleheart stance had all broken through to the fourth stage. These five stances were linked together and reinforced each other, giving Ning a sense of perfection and completeness. However... he knew that this sense of perfection wasn't the true apex! Only when he perfectly fused these five stances into his Omega Sword Dao – Stage Four would they undergo a qualitative breakthrough.

"I'm just one step away... once I take that step, I'll be a Daolord of the Fourth Step! When that happens, my only consideration shall be whether or not I should engage in the Daomerge." Ning was filled with excitement.

The Daomerge? He felt as though his chances were slim; he didn't dare put too much hope into that! But once he became a Daolord of the Fourth Step, he'd become dramatically more powerful. As his understanding of the [Heartsword] art slowly improved, he'd probably surpass the level of the Archons of the Sacred Cities and close in on the Hegemon level! Emperor Heartsword had been inferior to Ning in his mastery of the Dao of the Sword, but thanks to his full mastery of all fifteen stances of the [Heartsword] art he had been extremely close to the Hegemon level.

Ning had a much greater grasp of the Dao of the Sword, and he had also reached an extremely high level in the [Heartsword] art; it was entirely possible for him to one day become equal to Hegemons in power!

With that level of power, he would be able to go off adventuring... and perhaps he might be able to find something that he could use to convince an Autarch to reverse the flows of spacetime and revive Yu Wei.

"Once I take that final step and become a Daolord of the Fourth Step, I'll go and challenge the Azureflower Estate once more! The destiny which awaits me there is definitely an extraordinary one." Ning eagerly anticipated the coming of that day... but everything had to wait for him to become a Daolord of the Fourth Step first! Although he had already reached the fourth stage in all five of his stances, he had to merge them together into his final Omega Sword Dao.

How long would this step take? It could be as fast as the next instant... but could also be as slow as a chaos cycle or even a hundred chaos cycles!

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"Eh?" The airborne sea dragon peered downwards at the white-robed youth, realizing that the youth had come to a halt. It let out a rumbling shout, "Kid, you tired from all the fighting? You were fighting

me head-on like crazy. I imagine you must've used up a great deal of your divine power and Immortal energy."

The distant Ning smiled slightly. "Let's do it again. If you can still withstand my strike, I'll stop the fight." His voice echoed throughout the air.

"Darknorth... did he...?" The distant Ninedust was truly shocked as he watched this.

"Why is this young fellow suddenly saying something so bold?"

"Did he come up with a way to gain victory?"

"Let's see just what he's planning."

The two races of beasts in the two seas watched curiously from afar. They wanted to see just what technique Daolord Darknorth would use in this final clash.

Boom! Ning suddenly moved with incomparable savagery, transforming into a streak of light that shot straight towards the distant deep blue sea dragon. The three-headed, six-armed Ning once more wrapped all six hands around the hilt of the Northbow sword, filling it with an aura of overwhelming might as he transformed it into a dominating mist-formed sword.

"This technique again?"

"Isn't that what he used previously?"

Everyone was puzzled. Even the sea dragon fighting against Ning was confused, but it didn't hesitate; it let out an enraged howl and charged forwards. Ning's own agility and sword-arts made it hard for it to dodge, and so it chose to meet the attack head-on.

Whoosh! As the sea dragon charged towards Ning, it suddenly swept out with its tail, using it to lash out at Ning like an enormous long whip. Crack!

Ning suddenly let out an earth-shaking howl! The ethereal, mist-formed sword in his hand suddenly exploded with power, instantly becoming millions of times brighter as it exploded against the sea dragon's tail.

BOOM!

As soon as the sea dragon collided against Ning's sword, it immediately knew that something was wrong! The power of the Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker was only evident in the very last instant, when it released its stored power. A slumbering volcano was very ordinary and unremarkable; one could only understand how truly terrifying it was in the moment of its explosion. The sea dragon could sense a terrifying surge of power instantly spread out to cover his entire body.

Bang! Its entire icy carapace was only able to withstand the force for a brief instant. A heartbeat later, the entire carapace shattered apart. No... more than just the icy carapace, the body inside cracked apart as well! The entire deep blue sea dragon shattered apart like a piece of ice, instantly breaking apart into countless little pieces.

As for Ning, he stumbled just thirty meters backwards. He stared intently at the shattered bits of eyes, watching as a stream of energy flew out from the freezing ice region and gathered into a blurry figure which looked much like that of the sea dragon. The illusory sea dragon looked at Ning, then let out a laugh: "My frozen form was built up over the course of countless years, but you broke it apart just like that? Impressive, impressive. You've won!"

Ning let out a sigh of relief. He watched as the illusory sea dragon continued to draw upon the icy energy of the area, slowly rebuilding its body. However, the full recovery process would take at least ten thousand years. The creature continued, "Still... even though that stance of yours was useful against me, it'll be useless against the fiery fellow over there. My forte lay in agility and unpredictability, but the fiery fellow's skills lie in overwhelmingly fierce attacks."

After speaking, the creature retreated into the deep blue seas, flying into it and then hovering above its surface. A large amount of watery energy swirled around its body, which it constantly drew upon and absorbed.

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"Won."

"He actually won."

"That sword-strike was quite ferocious. He smashed the frozen form apart." The hundreds of spectator beasts were all quite surprised.

Ninedust was extremely excited. He flew straight towards Ning: "Darknorth, Darknorth, you won! Haha! These two beasts should be two matching pairs; one emanates an aura of endless cold, the other is formed from endless flames. They should be on par with each other in power! Since you were able to beat one, you should be able to beat the second one as well. I can already see your victory!"

"We can't get careless." Ning stared at the distant flaming equine, then said in a low voice, "They might be on par with each other, but one might be much easier to defeat than the other."

For example, defeating Ning would be extremely difficult. Anyone skilled in defense or who had extremely formidable protective divine abilities would all be quite difficult to defeat. Given that the sea dragon came first and the flaming equine was the second challenge, it seemed likely that in some way, shape, or form, the flaming equine would be even tougher to deal with.

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"If you can defeat me, then our two races will no longer move to bar your path." The flaming equine's voice was deep and dominating. "But I'm not as easy to deal with as the frozen fellow; although those beasts have extremely hard bodies that can be used as weapons, their bodies are too easily shattered. Excessive hardness can result in brittleness. To create bodies formed from frozen ice was a fool's choice to begin with."

"No, you fire beasts are the true fools." Instantly, one of the many spectating sea dragons in the air bellowed in disagreement: "Every part of our frozen bodies can be used as weapons. We only sent out one of the most common members of our race to spar against that young fellow. If our clan leader entered the fray, his sword wouldn't be able to leave as much as a mark behind on our leader's body!"

"Defeat is defeat." The flaming equine glanced sideways at the sea dragon, not even wanting to bother with him.

"You idiot."

"No, you guys are the idiots."

"You wanna start a fight? You wanna fight again?"

"Bitch, let's go!" The two races quickly began to squabble against each other. Both sides were boiling with the eagerness to do battle, a sight which stupefied both Ning and Ninedust.

What Ning and Ninedust didn't understand was that this planet had no other living beings, and so the two races which lived on it had nothing better than to do when bored than to battle against each other! They'd fight until the skies themselves turned dark and the world itself turned old. To them, fighting against each other was as normal as eating or drinking.

"Let's not be too hasty." An ancient voice rang out from one of the deep blue sea dragons in the skies. This sea dragon looked quite ordinary, but its aura was so reserved and stately that Ning hadn't even noticed it earlier. The sea dragon continued, "The Autarch's decree was that we were to live here and prevent cultivators from entering that place! If you want to fight, you can fight later; we have business to finish first."

"Agreed. We have business to finish first." A similar order came from a stately flaming equine on the other side of the planet.

The two races quickly calmed down and fell silent. As for Ning and Ninedust, they were intrigued; the 'Autarch's decree'? It seemed as though this place had also been set up in accordance with an Autarch's plans... but why had none of it been written down on the stone stele?

"Come, then." The flaming equine stood in the air above that narrow strip of land, its body blazing with flames so hot that the air around it was bubbling.

"Let's." Ning instantly transformed into a streak of light as he shot over towards the flaming equine.

The flaming equine moved as well, its four hooves galloping across the air itself as it suddenly sped up. It immediately moved more than a hundred times the speed of light... and in fact, it was even faster than the sea dragon. Its flying speed was absolutely ferocious! It lowered its head slightly, pointing its horns straight at its foe.

BOOM! Ning once more used his most savage strike, the Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker. His sword shot out, smoting furiously upon the flaming equine's skull! As for the equine, it didn't dodge at all; it just continued its headlong charge.

An enormous explosion rang out! The flaming equine trembled slightly as it staggered more than three hundred meters backwards, while Ning was actually blasted more than a thousand kilometers away before Ning came to a halt. Ning was secretly shocked: "Just like the sea dragon said... this beast specializes in overwhelmingly ferocious attacks. It really is ferocious; it's even stronger than my Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker! Perfect! Only foes like this are strong enough for me to temper my sword-arts."

What he needed to do was to take that one final step and become a Daolord of the Fourth Step. To do that, he needed sufficient challenges to face!

The Desolate Era

Book 35: The Aeonian Race Chapter 8: Daolord Coldsy

“Gwaaaaaar!” The flaming equine’s entire body was covered in flames as it galloped across the skies towards Ji Ning with frenetic momentum.

BOOM! Ning transformed into a streak of light, clashing against the flaming equine time and time again in midair. Sometimes he fought it head-on, sometimes he used unpredictable movements, and sometimes he completely disappeared into thin air... but once he moved closer to the creature, he was forced to show himself by its blazing flames!

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This was an incredibly exciting battle. The shockwaves generated by the repeated collisions blasted out in every direction, causing Ninedust to repeatedly move backwards as he watched.

“Such power! Darknorth is growing stronger and stronger.” Ninedust was excited by what he saw.

“Interesting.”

“They’ve fought to a standstill?”

“The flame beast holds an advantage in power, while the kid holds an advantage in unpredictability. Still... based on what I can tell, this battle should be depleting quite a bit of the kid’s divine power and Immortal energy. Once a bit more time passes, it’ll be hard for the kid to stay in top fighting form, whereas his opponent can draw from the energy of the endless sea of flames. It’d be easy for him to stay in battle for ten years or even a hundred years without resting. If things proceed like this, the kid’s probably going to die.”

“Yes, if the young fellow wishes to win, he needs to win as soon as possible. The longer this drags out, the greater his chances of losing will be.” The two races of beasts watching from the sidelines all commented with interest.

One day... two days... three days... Ning continued to battle against the flaming equine in midair, the two landing on the ground every so often to continue the battle there.

“He’s definitely going to lose.”

“Look! His sword-arts aren’t able to maintain that mist-form from before.”

“He probably has depleted too much divine power and Immortal energy. He’s unable to maintain it.”

“It’s been too long. He’s lost.” The majority of the watching beasts all came to this conclusion.

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The battle between Ning and the flaming equine lasted for an extremely long period of time. By the third day, Ning gave up on using the [Heartsword] art! This was because the [Heartsword] art allowed Ning to fight the flaming equine to a standstill... and Ning had quickly discovered the flaming equine's flaws! Whenever Ning wished it, he would be able to quickly defeat the creature.

However... Ning's greatest goal was to break through to become a Daolord of the Fourth Step. What he needed was a good opponent to temper himself against! This was why, after the third day, he pretended to be exhausted and stopped using the [Heartsword] art. Without it strengthening him, his power instantly dropped by half! This caused him to immediately be at a disadvantage and be suppressed by the flaming equine.

"This is perfect. Now, I can truly test out my sword-arts. Mm... yes, I see many more flaws in my sword-arts that I previously had not discovered. I need to perfectly master and merge the mysteries of these five stances into a whole. Only then will my sword-arts be truly flawless and complete."

Ning was being dominated and beaten down, but this only showed him more clearly the weaknesses in his sword-arts. His mind was now filled with many new insights... but these insights weren't enough! He would need far more if he wished to merge his five stances into the fourth stage of the Omega Sword Dao and then become a Daolord of the Fourth Step.

In the blink of an eye, nineteen days had passed with Ning and the flaming equine locked in combat. This caused the many watching beasts to feel puzzled: "The kid's actually been able to hang on for nineteen days?"

"That couldn't have been easy. He's clearly much weaker now, but he's still been able to hold on... not bad at all."

"This will end in defeat, but an honorable one."

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Ning continued to dodge and stumble about while defending with his six swords. Suddenly, his movements changed as a sharp light flashed through his eyes. "Time to bring it to an end."

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

The sword-light once more formed into streams of mist as the power of his strikes increased twofold! With a boom, Ning's strikes collided against the flaming equine, catching it off-guard and sending it stumbling.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Slash! Slash! Slash! Ning's six swords suddenly disappeared without a trace, reappearing much closer to the equine when its flames forced them to manifest. The six swords were like a peacock unfurling its plumage. They were absolutely incandescent yet completely ghostly in their movements.

Although the flaming equine was quite valiant and doughty, Ning had used the Heavenbreaker stance and the Blood Drop stance to break through its guard, then used the Shadowless stance to quickly wrap his swords around its bodies. The divine swords transformed to become long and flexible, coiling around the flaming beast and quickly tying the entire thing up securely.

“Impossible.” The trussed flame beast had a look of disbelief on its face. “How could this have happened?”

It clearly recalled what had just happened. It had endured the Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop, Heavenbreaker, and Shadowless multiple times by now; those techniques were of no threat to it. How was it that this time, it had been defeated?

In truth, if Ning had merely used those three stances by themselves, he wouldn’t have been able to pose a threat to the creature at all. However, when he used all three together in a manner where they reinforced each other, he was able to capitalize on a weakness in the flaming equine’s movements and thus capture and bind it.

An effective combination of attacks could cause one to become quite a bit more dangerous.

“Again! Let’s do it again! I can’t accept this outcome.” The flaming equine was furiously struggling against its bonds, twisting and turning while it roared angrily, “You got lucky just now! I was over-confident. Let’s fight again!”

“Hmph.” When Ning saw the uncowed look on the flaming equine’s face, Ning silently muttered to himself, “If I didn’t want to use you to temper my sword-arts, I would’ve captured you on the very first day.”

“A defeat is a defeat,” an ancient voice rang out. The stately clan leader flew out from within the ranks of the hundred or so flaming equines.

“Clan leader.” The tied-up equine was still rather unwilling to accept this outcome. “I-I...”

“Just look at yourself. You’ve been tied up like a baby.” The flaming equine turned to look at Ning. “This young fellow’s sword-arts can switch between being supremely hard and supremely soft, between being fast and being slow, and is defensively impenetrable. It truly has no weaknesses at all. As soon as he unleashed his full power, he instantly captured you. Although it was partially because of your own over-confidence, even if you were careful you still probably wouldn’t have been able to hold out too long.”

Ning was secretly startled. The clan leader really had good judgment. It was true that part of the reason why he had been able to instantly capture the flaming equine was because he hadn’t used the [Heartsword] art during the past ten-plus days. His sudden usage of it and the corresponding increase in power had caught the flaming equine off-guard, allowing him to catch it with ease. If his foe was prepared, Ning still would’ve been able to capture him, but it wouldn’t have been nearly this easy.

“Alright.” The captured equine nodded submissively. The clan leader’s prestige was quite high and had a suppressive effect on it.

“Young fellow, you won. From this moment forth, our two clans will no longer stand in your path.” The flaming equine leader looked at Ning.

Ning waved his hand, retracting the Northbow swords which had been wrapped around the flaming equine and drawing them back into his hands.

“These two battles have benefited me tremendously,” Ning said with a respectful bow.

Whoosh. The similarly stately and reserved leader of the sea dragons flew out of deep blue sea and towards Ning. It landed next to Ning, then let out a laugh: "Hah! It has been a very, very long time since a Daolord has passed the trials."

"When was the last time a Daolord passed the trials?" Ning asked curiously.

"Very long ago, more than nine hundred thousand chaos cycles ago." The sea dragon leader peered at Ning. "I think his name was Daolord Coldsby."

"Coldsby?" Ning was puzzled.

"Daolord Coldsby? Who?" Ninedust was puzzled as well.

Anyone capable of passing this trial had to be just as strong as the current Ning. By all rights, he should've been an incredibly famous figure. Even though nearly a million chaos cycles had gone by and very few would've remembered him, people like Ning and Ninedust who had access to many historical records and secrets should've heard of him. They knew all of the most dazzling and most talented Daolords in history. Neither, however, had ever heard of an incredibly talented Daolord by the name of Daolord Coldsby.

"Back then, Daolord Coldsby said that he belonged to a different branch of the Aeonian race. He had been invited here to help out the Flamedragon branch," the sea dragon leader said.

"A different branch?" Ning and Ninedust were both shocked.

"Other realmverses also have Aeonians?" Ning was puzzled.

"The Aeonian race has quite an extraordinary background." The sea dragon leader smiled. "The ones in the Flamedragon Realmverse represent nothing more than a single branch of that race. Otherwise, how could they possibly have acquired a treasure like this 'Aeonian Kingdom'?"

Ning and Ninedust were both enlightened. Indeed, the Aeonian Kingdom was a place which not even Hegemons dared to trespass within. It really wasn't a treasure which the local Aeonians, a race which merely had a few Eternal Emperors, would've been able to create on their own. Ning had always believed that the Aeonians must've acquired it somewhere when adventuring. Now, it seemed, it was actually created.

"Daolord Coldsby had already failed his Daomerge, but before his death he was invited to come here to the Flamedragon Realmverse. Ignoring the cost to his vitality, he consecutively defeated two of the younger members of our two races. By the time the battles concluded, his truesoul's collapsed had been hastened to the point where he only had less than a hundred thousand years to live." The sea dragon leader shook its head and sighed. "The more monstrously talented a Daolord, the more difficult the Daomerge. A pity, what a pity."

Ning felt mixed emotions in his heart. If he failed his Daomerge, he would probably do everything he could to help the Three Realms.

Once the Daomerge was failed, one's truesoul would slowly crumble apart. If one actively avoided using divine power and Immortal energy, one might be able to live for a bit longer... but engaging in combat would result in hastening the truesoul's collapse! The more times one fought, the more quickly one's

truesoul would decay and the shorter one's lifespan would become. When the truesoul finally, truly collapsed... one would die.