

Unfathomable 361

Chapter 361

Silence fell upon the entire mountain range. The previous thunderous region that was covered by storms was now devoid of it. The sunlight started to rise on the horizon and gave birth to a new day bringing an end to the slaughter.

Zhang Dong was hovering above a large crowd of people. His body was radiating an oppressive aura which was causing both sides to remain quiet.

After the three Supreme Saints were vanquished by him in a very flashy matter the fighting had stopped. The evil sect members were down on the ground cowering in fear.

When the top elders fell in battle the juniors knew that there was no way of surviving. Zhang Dong was also already on a level where he could single-handedly dispose of the rest of them. The only way of survival would be to scatter and hope that he would not be able to kill them all too fast.

'Hm... some parts of the system seem to be back in working order but the most important one...'

Zhang Dong's eyebrows furrowed as he went through his system window. The part involving his sect was the most important one and he was now looking at it. He hoped to see the information about his family there. They were part of his faction so the information should be there.

'It's all grayed out... Bob, do you know something?'

'The system update was successful, some functions have a distance limit.'

'I'm too far away from the sect?'

'Affirmative.'

'Could you update my map to show me how close I have to get?'

Soon Zhang Dong was looking at a holographic image of the world. He was on the other side of this empire and it would take quite some time to get back. His hopes of at least seeing the passage of time was also denied.

His faction-building part of the system showed him the ages of his followers. If he was able to see their age he would know if more than a year had passed as his memory of them was still strong.

'Damn, I have to get all the way to the border... useless shitty system.'

Zhang Dong cursed out which caused a thunderous noise to escape from the heavens. The people below were looking cowered in fear and started to bow.

"Please senior, show mercy. We could not go against the wishes of the patriarch!"

"How dare you speak!"

Tengfei the sect Patriarch shouted out soon after. His trident was stained with the blood of his enemies, his bloodlust still not satiated. With the three strongest cultivators being busy with Zhang Dong he had

killed most of the other Supreme Saints that were below the late stage all by himself. The man that was pleading for his life was the only one left alive now.

“Ah right, I forgot about you guys...”

Zhang Dong gave out a sigh, the most important functions of his system were not working. The teleportation option was also something that was activated when he was at the nascent soul level. Even if he got it now, he felt that it would also be out of range.

When he was in the Azure Dragon empire he did not find any limitations but that was only because he could not travel beyond it in the first place. His disciple window was also not working; everything had a range limit.

“Didn’t have a choice? There is always a choice.”

Zhang Dong finally started speaking, his body started shining as he descended from the heavens.

He was not a naive person, he knew very well that these people had blood on their hands. Even with that some of them were probably victims of their circumstances.

These demonic cults and evil sects had a way that they operated. Most of the time they would go pillaging through the villages stealing the young men and women away. They would sometimes use them for their strange experiments and the ones that proved themselves would be taken in as disciples.

Even with that, it was probably too late to save them. Their characters have been tempered by bloody battles and carnage. Taking such a person and trying to bring them back into the light would be quite the hard task, one that Zhang Dong didn’t feel like he would be able to go through with.

“Your lives may be spared...”

The pleading man’s eyes lit up at the motion of sparing their lives but soon they went wide after Zhang Dong continued.

“You all will give up your lives as cultivators and become mortals, you can continue living as servants.”

The cult members cried out in shock at this proposition. For a lot of people in this world losing one’s cultivation was something worse than death. Living with no power in a world ruled by power was a sentence most cruel.

“But senior I implore you to reconsider, we could form a soul contract you may still have use for our cults powers!”

“A soul contract?”

There was that, it would force people to do your biddings. They would still have their cultivation but would be not able to go against the person hanging on to part of their soul. They would be nothing more than slaves but they would still be able to cultivate.

It was funny that the people here would rather become mindless slaves just to keep their small amount of power. Living as a farmer or a baker seemed like a worse deal to them.

Even the Patriarch from the Thunderball Hall seemed to be considering this proposition. It would be quite a boon to their sect if they could enslave thousands of cultivators. They would have a battle-hardened unit of cultivators that they could order to die for them.

It seemed like a good deal for everyone but Zhang Dong felt otherwise. There was no way of keeping tabs on all of these evil cultivators. How many people would they kill without getting an order to do so? What if they got aid from another sect and somehow regained their freedom? It was hard to do, but there were ways to counter these types of contracts.

It was far too dangerous to let them at large and Zhang Dong did not want to have more deaths on his conscience.

“No, you will become mortals. There is no need for your types to possess this amount of power.”

After saying that he pointed out with his finger. A thick ray of golden lightning energy shot out and at the halfway point down it split into many more rays of energy. All of these rays traveled towards their targets and connected with their dantians.

The people that were hit by these beams cried out in pain as they got hit. He was not able to just cripple everyone here, his power was not quite there yet. What he did was aim for the people that were around the Martial Saint and Supreme Saint realm. By holding them back with his soul core they weren't resisting much.

“Cripple the rest, you come with me.”

He pointed out towards the Hall Patriarch while everyone was too afraid to raise their heads. With the strongest fighters now out of commission, this elder here was not needed.

“What do you need, great ancestor?”

The old man bowed his head and clasped his hands as he was beckoned over. Zhang Dong could tell that after healing this old man he was quite grateful. It was time for him to start his journey through the empire but for that, he needed more information.

“Yes, show me a detailed map of the empire and also take me to the sect's treasury.”

It would be unwise for him to go unprepared. He had already burned through most of his spirit stones. Those he could recover after getting into this sect's treasury. He felt that after saving all of their lives a reward was in order.

He would not just drain the sect of all of their riches, only the items that would aid him in recovering his cultivation. Luckily this sect was concentrated in the lightning element, thus he had reason to believe that there would be many treasures involving his favorite element.

“Yes Great Ancestor, follow this junior.”

The Patriarch didn't even react at the mention of the treasury. It seemed that he was fast to switch into the junior's position after seeing Zhang Dong's might. Clearly, he believed him to be the man that died inside that coffin.

The proof that this was untrue had been destroyed during Zhang Dong's cultivation as the room he was in had exploded. The huge hole at the top of the tower was proof.

The Patriarch quickly guided Zhang Dong to the tower, the old man could also fly so he was the perfect guide. The inside of the tower looked a bit different as all of the illusory formations inside had been deactivated. Luckily the treasure room that was in the middle section was still there and well protected.

"I will bring the map of the empire promptly!"

"Mhm."

Zhang Dong nodded as he was left in the treasure room. Compared to the White Tiger Clan that he had robbed, this place had much more. The spirit stones were of middle grade quality as well as of high quality. There were many earth grade weapons and even armor that he could use to quickly improve his body's cultivation.

"I should be able to reach the golden body easily with all of these, the spirit stones should help me boost my cultivation directly."

He could also spot the thunder stones that he saw powering some of the buildings stored here. They were all promptly sucked into his new spatial ring that was quite spacious. Soon most of the high quality treasures and items made their way into it, when the Thunderball Hall Patriarch returned with the map he found a mostly empty treasure chamber.

"A..ancestor I have brought the map..."

It was clear that the old man was against this daylight robbery. He could not say or do anything about it, from his point of view the ancestor was the sect. Zhang Dong was someone above the Patriarch.

"Good, show me where those three sects are located that attacked us..."

"Ancestor... Do you intend to go there?"

Zhang Dong just nodded. He was not stupid enough to just start his journey when there was much more to be gained here. The strongest fighters from these three were now dead, the resistance that would be offered were minimal.

His plan was to clear out the three evil sects from their treasures and only then make his way back towards his empire. Even when he recovered his ability to fly it was slower than his nascent soul realm spread.

It would take him a month to reach the border, before that he could clear out these sects which would also protect this one from any more deaths.

"I will make it so that they won't be able to retaliate but then I must set off on my own journey, I will leave the sect in your care."

"B-but Ancestor..."

"This is my decision and this is what will happen."

He replied in a stern voice which caused this Patriarch to shrink back in fright. It was time to finally set off and time to begin his journey back home.

Chapter 362

“Where did you hide your treasure?”

“I’ll never tell a righteous sect scum... ARGBLARGh...”

A dark cultivator in a robe was seen being electrocuted, his body lit up like a dark sky during a fireworks show. Soon he dropped down to the ground while slightly twitching, his cultivation clearly ruined.

“Damn, word spreads fast here...”

Zhang Dong glanced over to some other cowering evil cultivators. He had arrived at the third and last sect that had attacked the Thunderball Hall. His plan was to go through the sects one by one and take away all of their most precious treasures but he had miscalculated.

When he arrived at the first sect, there was still a lot of treasures around but already a large chunk of the sect members had scattered. At the second one there were even fewer people around while on the third one, there were only some old farts left behind that probably didn’t have any worth to their sects.

It was clear that the information of his arrival spread fast and they evacuated. What was left behind were only items for beginner disciples that no one cared about. The items like high-grade spirit stones that he wanted were all gone.

If he decided to give chase he could probably gain some of those riches back. The biggest problem was that there were just too many variables. It was easy to stash everything in the spatial rings among many people. With this world being this big he could spend a month looking for everyone and still not get it all.

“Slaves...”

Zhang Dong took a glance at one of the cowering cultivators. It was clear to him that they were all compelled to stay here by some kind of occult contract. While they stalled him the true masters would run away and hide.

‘I don’t have time to play hide and seek but it would be better to gain more strength.’

While thinking he started glancing at the people here. He was in the middle of a large hall that was the main chamber for the big wigs in this evil sect. There he found a small group of people that had the stench of death on them.

“You there, come here.”

He did a grasping motion towards one of the old men that was here. This one had the largest cultivation realm from them all and seemed to have been the leader. After grasping him by the neck he started scanning.

“Hm... I wonder... this might hurt...”

“W-what?”

The man asked before a strange shadowy aura descended onto him. Zhang Dong used his soul core to poke and prod at the curse that was keeping this man as a slave. All of these contracts were based on soul arts so in theory, he could be able to overpower it.

These contracts were easily produced as they only required the person affected to accept them. This could be done in many ways but most of the time it was done by a simple death threat. The evil cultivators were famous for doing this mostly out of fear of betrayal.

The man landed on the ground while grasping his chest. He convulsed for a moment before settling, the other cultivators were aghast by the presentation of torture. They thought they would be next in line but surprisingly their fellow sect member opened his eyes and stood up soon after.

“The soulbond is broken... how could this be... who are you?”

Zhang Dong just smirked a bit before crossing his arms over one another and puffing out his chest.

“It doesn’t matter who I am, now tell me, where did your strongest elder escape to. I already slew your Patriarch, the one next in line is the one I am looking for.”

Zhang Dong knew that there should be some kind of number two in the sect. If he was lucky it would be one person and not a whole group. If there was a second strongest then he would probably take the bulk of the items.

“Next in line? That would probably be Elder Yuan, he was the Patriarch’s younger brother...”

“That will do, tell me where he went, you are not bound to him anymore.”

Zhang Dong proclaimed while exuding a menacing aura. The man was clearly confused, living a life as a slave did change one’s outlook on life. It was hard to get rid of old habits of following orders out of fear.

“I... I will tell you senior, just swear to me that the bastard will suffer a painful death!”

Surprisingly the man did a fast 180-degree turn and turned his hate to the people that enslaved him here. Years of rage bottled up due to being stripped of their freedom. The man was unable to hold it in anymore as he started shouting as if finally he could voice his opinion.

“He will be dealt with, that I can promise you, now tell me where he went.”

After the man calmed himself down Zhang Dong received the coordinates. Apparently, they headed in the direction of something called the shadowlands. It was a place filled with shadow beasts that were hard to deal with.

“Good, this will do.”

Zhang Dong started taking off from the ground after he got his information. The sect that he had invaded was a strange one. It was deep inside the forest with many flesh-eating venus fly trap-looking monsters. The eastern-looking buildings were wrapped up in vines that were clearly alive and moving.

“I’m getting proficient at this, it’s nice to have most of my power back.”

With a few motions of his hand, he produced a round sphere of energy. At each side of the sphere, there were spell circles that were slowly circling around it.

After pointing at this orb it activated. The magical circles started shooting out thin beams of light that started connecting with the cultivators that were still left alive here. Just as during his other sect attacks he robbed people of their cultivation.

They would be left alive to live out their lives as mortals. He knew how the people in this world thought but that was just a mindset born from ignorance. There was nothing wrong in living a simple fulfilling life. Everyone here could very well build up a family and start anew.

'I hope this is the right thing...'

The only problem that he saw with this would be the people's character. He did not know if a bunch of demonic cultivators could turn over a new leaf. Would they just cause more death and destruction while harming others in hopes of regaining some of that lost power?

Would they follow the law of the land out of fright instead and live simple lives? He did not know but he was unwilling to stain his hands even more than this. There were enough people that were now dead because of him and it looked like the count would only continue to increase.

'Shadowlands huh? There are always some shadowlands...'

Zhang Dong turned to the sky and bolted towards his destination. His system map was updated with the help of the detailed one that he received from the Thunderball Hall. That one showed him all of the points of interest like sect location and distribution of the lands.

Luckily they were in the direction that he would be heading anyway. While chasing after this sect's treasure trove he needed to go through this map. The way he would be traveling was very important as there was an easy way and a hard way.

With the map and the help of the Thunderball Hall's Patriarch, he was given a couple of choices.

If he headed in a straight line he would be pushing it. On the way, there were many dangerous places that could not be approached by anyone below the nascent soul level. He was already there but still lagged behind his old early stage cultivation.

There were too many unknowns to try going in this fashion. He would be going through sect areas that had elders that were rumored to be Saint Emperor level. There were also a few spots with strong monsters and beasts that would also give him a run for his money.

This option was taken to the side, unless he received some information of his sect being in immediate danger he needed to look out for himself. It would not do anyone any good if he was dead or crippled during his journey back.

The best way that also took the least amount of time took him through some cities and points of interest instead. As before he still needed to cultivate, areas with lightning energies would bolster his cultivation but now a little problem arose.

Due to the fact that he now had three cores, they all needed to be nourished at about the same rate. He could not exclusively absorb lightning energy and use it as a power source. The golden core required holy energies and the soul core required ethereal energies.

He found it out the hard way after trying to absorb the thunder stones that he nabbed from the Hall. When only his lightning core started increasing in power it was quite noticeable. It was fine to absorb it for now but unless he managed a golden ratio of one-third for every core he would not be able to progress.

Luckily for him, he still had his system which would aid him in this process. Even though it did lose a lot of its functions there was something it could do for him. By absorbing spirit stones he could use the points towards the core that was missing out. This process was not very cost-effective but it was the only thing that could help him further his power level.

'Lightning is quite easy to find, the problem will be with the two others...'

Soon he arrived at the shadowlands that were in some kind of desolate area. Thanks to his soul core he could clearly see the shadowy phantoms lurking behind every corner.

"Hm... aren't these phantoms just decrepit souls of the dead? They should be enough to nourish my soul core..."

He rubbed his chin while glancing at some of the dark shades, one, in particular, was hiding in a tree stump.

"Come here, little guy..."

With a thump, he landed next to that tree stump and reached into it. The creature of the shades had elongated appendages which it started flailing around but the moment he utilized his soul core the shade found itself unable to move.

With some prodding here and there Zhang Dong managed to figure out the process. He opened up his mouth and a strange suction force was produced. When this force hit the shade it started siphoning away its essence.

The creature cried out in shock but soon faded away into nothingness. Zhang Dong gave out a burp before covering his mouth.

"Excuse me."

His soul core started radiating some light as it absorbed the soul energy that this creature possessed. There was not much of it there but he could feel that he was making progress.

"I guess the shadowlands will soon just be called the lands..."

Chapter 363

"Elder Xiong we have locked the exits as you have instructed, the phantoms won't be able to enter."

"What did you call me?"

"El... I mean Patriarch!"

"Yes, that's better."

A smaller group of about a hundred shadowy cultivators were in a large spacious cavern. The glowing moss on the walls was illuminating this place with a greenish light.

“Listen to me, my brothers and sisters. Our old sect might have been destroyed but that doesn’t matter, we shall rebuild and create a new one. We will rise from the ashes and become more powerful than ever!”

The group of cultivators that were here were the remnants of one of the evil sects that had previously attacked the Thunderball Hall. They weren’t fully involved as their previous patriarch had just gone with an old friend to aid him.

“I must apologize to all of you, my idiot brother brought this upon us.”

“It’s not Patriarch’s fault, no one knew that such a monster was hiding in that righteous sect.”

Everyone nodded as they were informed of one of the other sects going down in only an hour. This white-haired devil was seen destroying everything in his paths and not even the great formations could stop them.

“We will be safe here, we will send a party out to search for a new sect location for us.”

“How about we go to the lower reaches and take over one of the lesser sects? With our dark arts, we could easily make their weak cultivators do our biddings.”

“Not a bad plan brother, it would save us from having to hide in this place but for now we need to... What was that?”

While the people were discussing their plans they heard something rumbling. Dirt and small rocks started drooping from the ceiling which made the people here a bit nervous.

They were an evil sect that somewhat knew how to evade the evil phantoms outside. This didn’t mean that they would be able to contend with the stronger ones.

The only thing that was protecting them were a few old treasures and this safe house that had been built by their ancestors. Most of the people here didn’t know how to repair the formations that kept the evil souls away. If they suffered a massive earthquake and this place collapsed they would be doomed.

“Don’t worry, this is normal, the shadowlands are surrounded by a storm of death. That’s probably what’s making a ruckus outside.”

The people from the evil sect made their way into this place through a set of tunnels even before they reached the shadowlands. They had collapsed the exit for now out of fear but there were other pathways that they could use after everything had settled.

“What is that thumping? Is it getting closer?”

The rumbling stopped for a moment but then they started hearing a strange sound coming from one of the walls. It was as if someone was hitting it with a sledgehammer while being quite far away.

“No it’s impossible... could someone really be outside?”

The wall started to shake and the cultivators that were gathered here took out their weapons. The Patriarch moved forward as he was the strongest master here, in his hand a special medallion that had a purple shine to it.

“It might be one of the death beasts, get ready even if it enters here it will be weakened by the formation, it should not break just from this.”

The man said while sweating as he was not really sure if what he was saying was even the truth. Even though he was standing strong he was already eyeing the side exit. He brought the people over here and was the only one that knew all of the secrets.

There were several hiding spots that he could use while the phantoms were busy devouring his sect members. He knew well that if the walls were destroyed the formation would start weakening and the only thing he should do was to flee.

Then finally with one last hit, a small hole was blasted through the thick wall. He was ready to use the item in his hand to try to stall the evil spirits and then to flee. Instead of evil spirits, there was something else that greeted his eyes. It was the face of an unknown cultivator with snow-white hair.

“Ah, there you are. You know that you really shouldn’t place a spirit protection array in the middle of nowhere, it’s quite easy to sense with nothing else around.”

“T-the Thunderball Hall ancestor? But how!?”

“Oh, I almost forgot that they are calling me that? Well, this will make things easy, give me all of your spirit stones and treasures and you might still live to the next day.”

Zhang Dong forced his way into the inside of this cave and his radiant aura filled it with light. Inside the group of ghoulish-looking cultivators started feeling dizzy the moment they felt the overwhelming aura of good.

“W-what is this...”

The new sect Patriarch was only a Supreme Saint at the middle stage which made him far weaker than this man here. The evil medallion that he was holding out shattered almost instantly as it was pushed back by the holy powers.

With nothing else to do, he tossed this item at the overpowering presence and started running away. Before he could duck away into one of the hidden rooms he felt a pulling sensation. He could not resist it as he was yanked towards the invader.

“Listen here, I don’t have time for this, just give me your spiritual rings.”

The evil cultivator felt his body go limp as he was held by the neck. The man jabbed his finger into his dantian and promptly crippled him. With this, the man’s dreams of finally walking out of his brother’s shadow went under.

“Doesn’t look too bad...”

Zhang Dong peeked inside of the spatial rings that this man had on his fingers. Inside of them, he saw many treasures but most unusable to him as they were of demonic nature.

“Now, give me the rest.”

He tossed away the old foggy that looked to be the strongest here. The rest could not budge a muscle due to his overpowering aura. Thanks to his half-step nascent soul powers there were now certain things he could do with his spiritual energy. One of them was to have all the spatial rings in the vicinity to float towards himself.

It only took him a moment to take away all the loo that these cultivators had. Most of it was not great but all of the spirit stones would add up. To top it off he crippled everyone here to the last person.

“Well, hope you can live simple lives from now on.”

He commented while making his way out of the cavern.

“Simple lives? You jest, the phantoms outside will eat our flesh and devour our souls, you have sentenced us to a fate worse than death.”

The old man that he crippled first spoke out while panting.

“Oh, the phantoms? I took care of them, the place doesn’t look that bad if you take care of all the evil energy...”

Zhang Dong shrugged and then quickly floated out through the cave opening that he created. On the outside what used to be a barren wasteland covered by grim shadowy energy turned into a more lush environment.

The death trees that were possessed by evil spirits were slowly regaining their life energy. The streams of water that were pure poison to anyone that drank it, was now pure as they could ever get.

Zhang Dong had used his soul core to absorb all of the decrepit soul energy that had gathered here. There was even a big bad phantom king that he had to go through. With the combination of his soul core and golden core, it was nothing more than a mob.

After his holy energies touched this place the plants and animals had turned back to normal. With time this place could be populated by humans with no threat of evil spirits taking hold of them. With the death of the phantom king, the place was cleansed.

“My soul core can’t absorb more energy, now I only need to power up the other two before the next breakthrough.”

Zhang Dong now knew of a good way to increase his cultivation. Such places with evil spirits were uncommon but still existed without ever being exorcised. He could just use the map to find such places as they would clearly be marked as dangerous zones.

The only problem that remained was his golden core. He needed divine or holy energy for absorption to further his cultivation. This core was a bit strange as it also received a boost to energy whenever he did a good deed. Even showing mercy to this group of evil cultivators and clearing up an area filled with demonic energy was making it stronger.

“It’s a bit out of balance, if I absorb more evil phantoms my soul core could go berserk, if I don’t clear up those evil places my golden core won’t progress though...”

It was a bit of a waste as he could get rid of the phantoms without absorbing their energy. The only other option was his system that might be able to equalize things out.

“This will have to be enough, I might be able to advance a bit now..”

Zhang Dong looked out into the distance and he finally took off. After flying for an hour he finally decided on a safe spot. It was deep inside of a stormy mountain range that was also surrounded by some strong beasts. Unless a Supreme Saint arrived he would probably not get any unwelcome guests.

Before passing through he had a little glaring match with the ‘Beast King’ here. The strongest beast here was some kind of glowing green stag. It’s horns were quite intricate and large, it was weaker than him so it could only move its head down in capitulation without even trying to defend itself. The beast could also feel that Zhang Dong was not dangerous.

Thus he drilled into the mountain range and when he came out he found himself in an underground cave. To the side he could spot an underground river of sorts which was probably why there was some space for him to sit on the side.

“Let’s see what I am working with.”

Like before he started taking out all the usable items. All the weapons and treasures that could help him bolster his body refinement were placed on one pile while spirit stones were placed on another pile. Then came all the thunderstones that he had obtained from the Hall.

“Great, with this I should at least be safe when traveling through these lands, it will still take a while to reach the border, better start now...”

While thinking about his family and friends he quickly grasped one of the weapons. It started glowing red and quickly turning to liquid which was then promptly absorbed into his body.

“Not much progress, this will take a while...”

He gave out a sigh while looking at the massive pile of swords and spears. It was time to absorb them all and maybe soon he would have his golden body once again.

Chapter 364

Name :	Zhang Dong
Affiliation :	Zhang Clan, United Element Sect
Spirit Points :	2891
Cultivation Base Qi :	Core Formation [Middle Stage 5 %] [Divine Spectral Lightning Trinity]
Cultivation Base Body :	Core Formation [Middle Stage 6 %] (Ascended Golden Body)
Techniques :	True Divine Lightning Path Cultivation Art, Golden Body Arts, Thunderlight Sword, Thunder Movement Art...

Dao :	Dao of Heavenly Lightning, Dao of Smithing and Crafting...
Other :	Senior Aura, Impartation of Knowledge, Mentor's Eyes...

"Whew..."

Zhang Dong gave out a sigh after looking at his cultivation realm. He managed to balance out his cores before achieving a breakthrough into the middle realm. Now after reinforcing it for an hour he could finally move on.

Going from one small realm into another wasn't that hard, he only needed to gather enough energy for all the three cores. This would probably be the same for all the other small realms; the only thing that he needed to worry about would be what was after that.

His step into this new core formation realm was quite painful already. Would he need to go through another body-altering change? The first time he ascended into the nascent soul realm he did it himself with minimal help from the system.

This time around it would be much harder but would also put him on a stage of his own. This was due to how strong he was now and how much a breakthrough into a larger realm raised one's power.

"Early stage nascent soul..."

Zhang Dong gathered some energy into his hand and the cave that he was occupying started to tremble. Bringing himself into the middle stage of core formation put him at around the early stage of his old nascent soul realm.

This could indicate that if he reached the great circle of core formation he would be back at his previous strength level. Then if he pushed himself even further beyond that he could very well shatter the limitations of this world.

"It would be nice if I knew the multiplier..."

He had asked Bob about it but his AI companion didn't really know the answers. It was quite strange how useless he was in this original world while he could offer some precious insights into the other one.

His body refinement had also progressed into the core formation stage and even had a nice name change. While his old silver body had a plus sign next to it, this golden body was now an ascendent golden body.

With it now being in the golden body stage he could also use the old abilities that he once had. The acceleration of his brain function that it came with was quite nice as it allowed him to be even better during close fights. His senses would be enhanced during activation and everything would seem slower but in actuality, his brain would just be functioning much faster.

"This thing still isn't showing anything, guess it's time to leave. At least my crafting abode is back."

Zhang Dong had access to his old crafting pocket dimension. There was a problem with it as Bob had burned through all of the upgrades that he made to it. Without any time on his hand, he could not waste it on getting it back up to the old condition.

With a thunderclap, he rocketed out of this cave. He had burned through all the weapons and spirit stones and was mostly left with useless junk. The occult items could be placed in the crafting abode for now. When he upgraded some of the features those items could be desynthesized into resources.

At least as a storage space, it was far better than the spatial rings he had. If he was ever searched by some other cultivators they would not find anything worthwhile in his possessions. The only thing he kept with him was the sword he got from the Thunderball Hall ancestor, his robes, and some spirit stones.

Back on the outside he looked at his minimap and flew forward to his next destination. He had mapped out a couple of dangerous spots that could have decrepit souls or some shadowy monsters. The stronger he got, the faster he would return home.

So he flew and time passed. The scenery unfolded before him and he could tell that this empire was not that much different than the one that he hailed from. There were pockets of people living everywhere and there were always a lot of them.

Villages with thousands of people and cities with hundreds of thousands. It was hard to find a settlement that did not have at least a thousand people living in it. The large size of this world was the only reason that it was not suffering from overpopulation.

The only big difference was that the sects in this empire didn't create large territories that could be their own countries. They kept to their spots and let the lesser clans and smaller sects operate in the cities without getting involved that much.

They still possessed sites like spirit stone mines and large treasure troves with herbs and the like. Some of these places Zhang Dong was set on visiting, he would not feel bad about taking what he needed as he was choosing the evil sects as his victims.

Maybe in the future, the legend of a lone cultivator ravaging the lands would be told to the new generation. He didn't care much as he was not intending to stay here for long. Luckily due to how the sects operated most of the treasures would be concentrated in a few areas. If he chose his targets wisely he would come up unscathed.

Two days after his travels he came to the first point of interest. When he looked into the distance he could see a thunderous mountain range filled with elements of the wind and lightning alike.

He was quick to dive into it, with his current cultivation level hurricanes and cyclones was nothing more than a summer breeze. The storm was promptly absorbed entirely into his lightning core. When he left he could see some people poking their eyes out from afar.

They were clearly cultivators coming over to see what was wrong. The moment they saw him up in the cloudless sky they bowed in fear. Not wanting to stick around to explain himself he moved on to the next area.

This area was another two days of flight away. This time it was a gloomy-looking forest covered with shadowy miasma and poisonous mists.

He could feel that right in the center of it there was some kind of soul-based creature. Before moving in though he spotted a group of people quickly walking out of the forests. They had pained expressions on

their faces and some of them were constantly looking over their shoulders and back into the spooky forest.

Soon he would realize why they were doing this. After entering he was met with the usual rabble. Angry spirits that tried to possess his body and animated corpses that tried to devour it instead.

None of them could survive his soul core's effect. Any type of undead creature had some kind of spiritual essence attached to it. Without it, they would not be able to move its reanimated body. What Zhang Only needed to do was to absorb this essence.

While moving towards the largest source of this energy he needed to take a lot of creatures out in the process. This felt like he was playing an old dungeon on an overleveled character. None of these creatures could do any damage to him and would dissolve after a flick of his finger.

"Ah, good old human sacrifice..."

He finally found why the people that were leaving had painful expressions on their faces. Before the evil creature, he spotted a young girl of about sixteen years of age. She was probably a virgin which these types of creatures loved to snack on.

She was bound to some kind of ritualistic altar and left for dead. The most powerful creature that took the shape of a large lich. It was wearing a golden crown and its body was adorned with a lot of golden trinkets with jewels. The being looked like some kind of old king, probably was one that was buried here before.

Now his vengeful spirit was snacking on the people in the area. The most probable cause of this sacrifice was to appease this menacing being. If the humans that were living outside continued to give sacrifices it left them to their own devices.

"Idiots, they don't realize that feeding this thing people only makes it stronger, for now, it is contained to its own domain. When it grows strong enough it will be able to leave this forest and will devour them all."

Zhang Dong shook his head as he knew how these evil creatures operated. It probably fooled the people into believing that this was their own option. It probably lent its power to one of the people living there that was doing its bidding and allowing it to grow stronger with time.

"Excuse me, I'm just passing through."

Just at the moment when the monster was about to devour the poor girl's soul, it felt something tugging it from behind. It found its very essence being sucked away by some kind of enemy.

When it turned around it saw a smiling Zhang Dong that was sucking away all of the phantom's soul energy. There was a translucent sphere in the middle of his chest and the monster was slowly being absorbed into it. The monster screamed and used every ounce of its being to get away.

"Oh be quiet, the neighbors will hear you!"

It didn't take long for the monster to vanish and with it the miasma that was accumulated in this place started to fade away. The lesser ghost started to fade away as they could not sustain themselves without their leader giving them parts of his power. "Hey there."

“W-what...”

“Here, I think this one belongs to you.”

Zhang Dong flew back and easily caught up with the group of people. Since they heard the monsters scream and how the forest started to clear up they remained here.

“You should really stop making pacts with these kinds of beings, if you kept giving it people to feed it would only grow stronger and devour you all.”

When he handed them the young girl the group of adults started to cry and thank him. They clearly realized that he was a powerful cultivator that managed to slay the monster that was plaguing their village.

Just to have a clear conscience Zhang Dong took the group of people back to their village. There he found the man responsible twitching down on the ground. After the monster was slain the high priest had lost his connection to it. He would still be too strong for the mortals to handle so he took care of him before going on his merry way.

“Okay, on to the next one!”

Chapter 365

“We have come as you ordered Patriarch.”

“Greetings Elders.”

A small group of old men were bowing before a certain individual. This man was writing something onto a scroll with impeccable penmanship.

“This will do, bring this scroll to our allies.”

The parchment was promptly sealed and given to one of the men here. The man that received this letter could see the intricate dragon design that was stamped onto the seal of this scroll.

“It shall be done.”

“Is everything ready? I don’t think that I have to remind you that we must not fail, if something goes wrong then we will have to suffer the wrath of an enraged Azure Emperor.”

The man that was named the Patriarch commented while taking a seat. The others followed suit as everyone sat down together around a table.

“There is one problem...”

“What is it? Spit it out!”

The man that commented swallowed hard and then continued.

“It’s about the Patriarch’s Grandson...”

The old Patriarch’s brows shot up high and he promptly slammed down his fist on the table.

“What did he do now, tell me.”

“It’s not much, more of the same. He has heard rumors of a beauty from one of the middle-sized sects and he wishes to take her into his harem...”

The old Patriarch gave out a sigh before leaning back.

“Is it just that? I thought that part of his character would mature just as his cultivation did. Is there a problem with this particular sect?”

“Yes, the woman in question is their Patriarch’s wife, this individual, in particular, is revered as one of the rising stars in the region. Normally it would not be a concern but we might suffer casualties if we engage in battle. It would be better to wait till after our plan is carried out but the esteemed junior doesn’t want to see reason, he is blinded by lust. Maybe Patriarch could talk some sense into him?”

The Patriarch listened while tapping his fingers on the now cracked table.

“Aye, the boy’s hobby is hard to satiate but even I am having trouble controlling him. He has grown strong, so strong that I can’t even foretell what heights he might reach... it is as if he is our ancestor reborn, we need him for the plan to work...”

Soon the old man nodded with his head as the decision was made.

“Lend him some of the supreme elders and go take care of it, it’s just a middle-sized sect even if their Patriarch is at the epitome of the nascent soul, he will not pose a problem, take care of it! We still have some time left.”

“As you wish, Patriarch, it will be carried out swiftly.”

Soon the meeting ended and the old man that brought up the Patriarch’s grandson was approached by some other people.

“Elder Tong, how did it go?”

“Not well, the old Patriarch favors his grandson, we must appease his urges once again, send word to the supreme elders we will move out, as always...”

The man that approached this elder also gave out a sigh while shaking his head.

“I will do as Elder Tong commands, the elders will be ready by tomorrow. What about the esteemed junior?”

“Don’t worry, I’ll talk to him...”

The two men nodded at each other and they parted ways. The man named Tong then floated out of the meeting place that was taking place in a large tower-like structure. He glanced back at this tower which had a giant dragon coiling around it.

Right at the top was the dragon’s head that was open. Right there was a giant radiant orb, this orb was producing massive spiritual fluctuations that fused into the sect’s protective barrier.

If someone would fly out beyond the barrier they would quickly notice the true meaning behind this treasure. The whole sect was floating off the ground, the barrier covered the whole set of mountain peaks that made all of it up.

Tong quickly soared towards one of these mountain peaks. The moment he arrived he could tell the changes that were done to it by its newest master. The scantily clad female disciples and lack of male disciples was a dead giveaway. Even the servants were all of the female variety. Unless a person was an established elder they were barred from entering this place.

Tong here was one of these supreme elders that could not be stopped even by the new peak master that resided here.

“Greetings elder, should I deliver a message to the Peak Lord?”

“That won’t be needed, I would request a meeting with the peak lord, free of others.”

The beauty that approached this old man lowered her head for a moment before speaking out.

“T-the peak lord does not like to be disturbed, is this an order?”

“Yes, it comes from the Patriarch, don’t waste my time!”

The woman bowed her head and quickly apologized before removing herself and moving towards the peak lord’s estate. The old man was asked to wait for the time being while she fetched the man in question.

Thirty minutes later Elder Tong found himself tapping his fingers on the table himself as he was made to wait in the guest house.

“Every damn time, that young sprout has no respect for his elders, what will become of this sect if he is meant to be the future of it...”

After another ten minutes passing elder Tong was finally able to hear someone approaching. The bamboo door slid to the side and then he saw him.

The man was about six feet tall with long jet black hair. His stature was not too muscular but also not too skinny at about that golden middle ratio. His apparel was revealing and his hairless chest was showing of that pale skin and pectoral muscles.

“What do you want you old fart, I said that I didn’t want to be bothered.”

Elder Tong’s brows furrowed and he started frowning at how the young man looked. There were two vixens wrapped around each of his arms, their large breasts pushing into his arms as they smiled.

“You smell of alcohol, this is not how the young master of the Wang family should behave!”

“Yeah yeah, what do you want, old man, I hope you brought up what I requested with ol’ gramps?”

The young master that he came to deliver the message to slowly walked in and plopped on the nearby sofa. One of the ladies quickly made her way into his lap while the young man’s hand started grasping onto her hip.

“Yes, the Patriarch has agreed. Some of the Supreme elders will join us tomorrow.”

“Great, I knew ol’ gramps would see it my way.”

The young man laughed out loud while still getting handsy with the two girls by his side. Elder Tong on the other side could see that there was something wrong with those women. Their smiles felt empty and their eyes were somewhat glossed over.

He did not know what happened behind closed doors but he knew that there was something affecting them. With a combination of herbs and certain techniques, it was easy to break someone's mind. The women the young lord fancied were known to change with time.

Even when they were returned to where they came from they were never the same as before. Stories of them ending their life afterwards were quite common.

"If it was this much, you could have just told it to one of my attendants."

Tong's intent was to keep the clan young master's name out of the dirt. If the regular disciples knew that he periodically captured women from other sects the good Wang name would go through the dirt. The young master on the other hand didn't seem to care and bad rumors were already spreading.

"There is also another issue, the Patriarch requires you to participate in the future mission, I don't think I have to explain how grave the situation is, all of the peak lords must participate!"

"Ah, the new quest? Yeah sure, after we are done with the side gig it won't be a problem, It will be a great moment to get more points."

Elder Tong wasn't sure what the young man was talking about. Even after all these years, he could not get used to the way he spoke. Even though he was an oddball the results were there.

The more enemies he slew the stronger he became. To this day he was the youngest ever nascent soul cultivator that this sect had created, rivaling only the old ancestor with his speed of progress.

His path was riddled with corpses as all of the previous young masters that stood before him were now six feet under. There didn't seem to be any remorse behind his actions and whenever a new opponent was slain the mention of some strange spirit points was given.

Then when the Azure Emperor was mentioned strange words like 'last boss' or 'raid' were mentioned. The Patriarch doted on this young man though so no one could say anything, the crazy words could only be attributed to this young man's eccentric nature.

"Fine, we shall leave in the morning, that babe will be a fine addition to my collection, not enough light-haired and tanned beauties in this world, everyone is just so pale."

The young master started laughing while Elder Tong removed himself from this place before he could lose even more brain cells. He did not even bother to mention the husband as he knew that it would only rile the young master up.

One of his favorite pastimes was taking women away from their spouses. Then he would quickly toss the women away while enjoying the show. It was as if the young man had his woman taken away from him and now he was trying to get back at any happy couple that he could see.

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"My gratitude, Senior, how could we ever repay you?"

“No need, I was just passing by on my journey, just be careful next time.”

Zhang Dong floated up while a group of merchants prostrated themselves before him. They were almost robbed and killed by a group of bandits but then he came along. The bandits were promptly taken care of and any spirit stones that they had were taken away.

“This won’t do, such an act must be rewarded!”

“Well, if you say it like that... I could use some spirit stones...”

Zhang Dong nodded and was quick to relieve the merchants of some of their spirit stones. As he was leaving he could see the man that offered him the reward being beaten up by all the other merchants that were now without any spirit stones.

“I should stop making so many stops, for some reason I have a bad feeling about this...”

Chapter 366

“I’m glad that you have stayed with us for so long, we will present tonight’s last item!”

A well-dressed man with a soothing voice pointed to the stage. Onto it a jade beauty dressed in lavish clothing was walking. In her hands, she was holding a pillow and on it was an orb. The beauty placed this orb on center stage where everyone could see it and the small crowd of people erupted.

“Isn’t that the fabled beast core of a divine spirit beast?”

“It’s certainly the real deal, I can feel the divine power!”

Where the people were sitting was a large auction house. They were wearing various robes as they belonged to various sects from around the land.

“Yes, Seniors have a keen eye. This item belonged to a late Divine Beast! But not just any beast, it was one on the level of a Saint Emperor!”

“It couldn’t be...”

“Saint Emperor? If that’s true then it could be used to fashion a deadly weapon indeed...”

The murmurs continued until the auction started. It took a while for the cultivators here to quiet down and finally, it began.

“We will start at ten high grade spirit stones.”

Some of the people in the room swallowed hard after they heard the price point. One high grade spirit stone was worth ten thousand middle grade stones. Then one middle grade spirit stone was worth a thousand lower grade spirit stones.

This brought the starting price up to a staggering amount. If someone tried paying it in low grade spirit stones they would have to dump a whole truck of them here on the stage. Even with this steep price a paddle with a name of a sect on it was raised.

“It’s the Saint Dragon sect, they even have a Saint Emperor as a Patriarch...”

They weren't the only ones bidding though as another sect raised the price even further.

"It's the Blade Demon Sect... aren't they in competition with the Saint Dragon sect?"

Even though this beast core was of the divine element it didn't mean that only righteous sects could use it. There were ways to corrupt such cores as well as cleanse evil ones of their energies to produce a similar ranked product.

There were other large sects and powerful seniors that bid at first but soon everything devolved into a competition between these two powerhouses.

"What is your intention here Blade Demon's, you can't fully utilize this beast core are you just trying to hike the price up for us!"

A man with a long beard that reached all the way up to his waist spit out in anger at a decrepit-looking man in a black robe.

"Ha, if you don't have the spirit stones then why even come here? Is the Saint Dragon Sect so poor that it can't afford a little divine beast core?"

The people from the Blade Demon Sect started laughing while the cultivators from the righteous one fumed with anger. This was nothing new as the two parties were in a dispute with each other for generations and there was no end in sight.

"One hundred high grade spirit stones..."

Soon the price was raised to tenfold of the original price. The old man from the demonic sect grinned, his yellow teeth clearly visible. On the other hand, the old man from the righteous sect could just grit his teeth as he knew that he could not spend more.

"Hundred spirit stones, is anyone willing to match the price?"

"Going once... going twice... going, Ah I see a palm raised there!"

The two sects looked at each other and could not see anyone raising a hand from their camps. This prompted them to look down to the main stage and down from the VIP booths that they were in. There a hooded person was raising his hand as if he wanted to bid more than a hundred spirit stones.

"Who is that man? He doesn't look like he even has a hundred low grade spirit stones... is this some kind of joke?"

As this was something unprecedented the people got loud. The seats that were down below the VIP booths were intended for the poorer demographic from the cultivator world. All the powerful elders would be inclined to pay a bonus to keep face and not look like a country bumpkin with the other poor sobs there.

"Sir, I must implore you to not raise your hand if you can't afford the item..."

The person responsible for the action let out a sigh as he looked at the man that raised his hand.

"Afford it? I think I can but would you be up for a trade instead?"

“A trade?”

“Yes, I’m low on spirit stones right now but would you be willing to trade that beast core for something of equal or higher value?”

“Equal or higher value to a Saint Emperor beast core?”

“Someone remove that man, he has clearly lost his mind!”

One of the people from the Blade Demon Sect called out from up in the VIP booth. The others were of similar mind as the man looked like some scammer that was trying to steal the divine beast core from their sect.

“Hah, why don’t we hear the man out?”

On the other hand, the people from the righteous sect called out in favor of this turn of events. They didn’t have enough funds to get the item that they desired so if this man could snatch it away from the enemies instead it would be a win in their eyes.

“Okay, what would the gentleman like to trade for this divine beast core? I would advise sir to be careful about the choice of words.”

Even though the Auctioneer was fine with this continuing there were some guards ready to intervene. If it turned out that this person was wasting everyone’s time here, he would be beaten and thrown out. They needed to show that there was no place for disturbances like this, otherwise, their establishment could be seen as a questionable investment.

“Nice. How about you give me that beast core for this cultivation manual, I think it would be a fair trade.”

The man pulled out a book that was quite large compared to other cultivation manuals. The Auctioneer was a bit surprised by the item in question but he nodded to one of his workers to go fetch the book and bring it over.

“A cultivation manual? What is this farce?”

The people began to whisper again as this was a strange trade. Cultivation manuals were a rare commodity in auction houses as they were something a cultivator would mostly not give up.

Most manuals that found their way here were taken from the defeated and were of low worth. The ones that were deemed usable were mostly kept by the person that found them. No one would actually sell a rare cultivation method unless they were either crazy or really desperate for spirit stones.

“Please my dear cultivators, I will quickly look over this item and we shall finish this auction then.”

Everyone expected the auctioneer to read the first page and then quickly toss it back to the person it belonged to. Instead, a minute passed, then two and three but the man was still reading this large tome-like book.

“Hey...hey!”

“Huh, what?”

The man that was reading the book snapped out of it after the old man from the Blade Demon Sect shouted out to him. The Auctioneer looked like he had seen a ghost as his eyes were wide open and his hands were trembling.

“What of the cultivation method? What is wrong with you?”

“Ah yes... t-the cultivation method...”

The man looked at the hooded figure that this book belonged to and asked a question.

“D-does Senior really wish to trade this in for that little divine core?”

“Hm... you are right, it is worth more than that core, do you perhaps have more of those cores lying around?”

The people were taken aback by the conversation that the two men were having. It looked like what was written in the book was not just empty scribbles, it was actually worth something.

“Ah! Quickly call over the owner, this is of great importance, not a decision someone like me can make! There will be a fifteen-minute recess.”

The Auctioneer was then seen calling out to one of the servants with bulging bloodshot eyes. This caused the sects that were gathered to look at the hooded man, it seemed that the item that he brought over was quite costly.

Some people that were near him started inching away as the constant glares from powerful cultivators started building up pressure that they couldn't handle. It did not seem that the man in question was perturbed by it as he just sat there waiting while leaning back in his chair.

Within fifteen minutes, another old man appeared on the stage along with the previous person that was doing the auction. It was the owner of this establishment and in his hand was the large book that supposedly had a cultivation method in it.

“My friend, you put this old man in a bind, what would you like to trade for this item I could throw in two hundred high grade spirit stones along with the divine beast core, how would that be?”

“Wait! That beast core belongs to the Blade Demon Sect, explain yourself! How could that book be worth three hundred high grade spirit stones!”

The old man protested as it seemed that his bid was not even being taken into consideration anymore.

“I must apologize to our friends from the Blade Demon Sect but this is a matter between the Auction house and this senior here.”

He was quickly shut down by the owner of the auction house which brought more questions to what was being sold there.

“Only two hundred high grade spirit stones? You do realize that that manual contains a high grade cultivation method all the way up to the Supreme Saint realm right? It's an all-in-one deal with the path laid out for anyone cultivating it! Wouldn't a thousand high grade spirit stones be more like it?”

Everyone was taken aback by what the man in the robe just said. The beast core was in theory the higher graded item as it could be used by a Saint Emperor. This also limited its uses though as the amount of Saint Emperors that were in this empire was quite small.

On the other hand a full set of cultivation methods that could bring a person from the Inner Aura Realm all the way up to the Supreme Saint realm? That was something that sects would go to war with, this was something that could tip the balance. A cultivation road like that could very well be the backbone of any sect.

“G-good sir, please you didn’t have to...”

The moment the explanation was given the cultivators that were gathered here looked at the large book with hunger in their eyes. It looked like a pack of vultures that were looking at a tasty piece of meat. The strange way that the auction house owner was acting was proof enough that this book was worth a lot

It was clear that a lot of people were now contemplating on snatching that book away from the owner. Wars between sects started for lesser items and it was hard not to go for it when the prize was so close. Even this auction house with so many guards would not be able to contend with all the masters that we’re here and they knew it.

“Oh, would you all shut up!”

Before they could dive in for the kill though, everyone found themselves on the ground clutching their chests in pain. The one responsible for this was the robed person that finally stood up, his aura powerful and unfathomable to everyone here.

“S-saint Emperor!”

Everyone shrunk back in fright the moment the cloaked figure revealed their cultivation level. Before they could even act they all were at his mercy.

“Now, could we strike a deal? Don’t waste my time more than you already did you bunch of murder hobos.”

Chapter 367

Zhang Dong was looking at a group of bowing cultivators. One of them was handing him a spatial bag filled with high grade spirit stones along with an orb that came from a divine beast.

Traveling through these lands at his current strength level didn’t pose a problem. Even when he got in trouble and alerted Saint Emperors to his presence before they arrived he was long gone. The disguising skills that he leveled up proved their handiness on these occasions as his trail was unfollowable.

With time he arrived at this city where he heard of an auction house that would be selling a divine item. This he could use for furthering his holy core to get stronger along the way. The only real problem was the lack of spirit stones to buy it.

He absorbed them all into his system to also get stronger almost instantly as he received them. The only items that he could barter with were cultivation manuals.

Without wanting to spend days or weeks trying to sell them in the auction houses he decided to try an instant trade. When the maximum bid was raised he finally acted and now found himself with the prize in hand.

“Everything is accounted for, senior...”

Just as he had figured the cultivators valued the cultivation manual that he corrected a lot more than crafting materials. The auction house would probably make the spirit stones back quite fast after word spread of the manual they had acquired.

It would probably be quite lucrative for him to just sell manuals like these. The only problem was the lack of time. It would take time for the word to spread and to get the powerhouses to gather before he got his money's worth.

If he was just out adventuring without anything binding him in this world then he could very well do that. He could even visit various beast kings and battle them for their cores that he could then use to propel his cultivation forward.

There was a problem though, he had a strange feeling tugging him elsewhere. He had a very bad feeling that if he didn't return in time something bad would happen. It was a bad premonition that made him quickly leave this auction house and bolt into the skies at full speed ahead.

The people there were left astonished by the speed that he was leaving which prompted them to believe that he was really a Saint Emperor. Knowing well that this was the limit of this empire's cultivators they thought themselves fortunate to have survived this day.

While leaving he could hear them bickering over the cultivation manual that he had left behind. He hoped that they would be able to work it out between themselves without bloodshed but that was probably just wishful thinking.

Yet he didn't have time to have a bad conscience. He has abandoned the thought of being able to take care of everyone here. He could not take responsibility for others people's actions even though he might have been the catalyst for them.

'I need to find a safe spot and move on...'

After leaving the city he found himself a secluded mountain range that was protected by deadly wind and ice elementals. He quickly burrowed himself into the land to form a makeshift cultivation cave.

For one reason or another cultivation in his crafting abode was impossible. It would be the safest area for a breakthrough but alas he had to contend with a quick protective formation that would mask his aura.

The divine beast core was placed on the ground along with all the spirit stones he was able to gather. Zhang Dong was actually surprised at how fast he was progressing. After he was done here he would already enter the late stage of core formation.

There was no lack of shadowy places with evil phantoms floating about. Lightning storms that spread devastation through the lands were also promptly absorbed into his lightning core. It was a lot easier to progress than when he first came to this world.

He did not need to stop and slowly purify the lightning energies as he used to. This lightning core was quite efficient at doing this by itself. He just needed to find the correct power source and his cores would just take in the energies as if they were black holes consuming light.

Even now as he held the divine beast core in his hand his holy core was pulsating with joy. Soon the football ball-sized beast core crumbled into dust. With his holy core being enriched he followed it up with the high grade spirit stones that were used to equalize all of the other cores and bring them to the edge.

Soon he felt the cores bursting with unimaginable power. They were ready to go through their next enhancement and soon he would reach the late stage of core formation. This would still put him below his old middle stage nascent soul level but he would be quite close.

‘This will have to do, I’m not far away from the border.’

After reaching the late stage the plan was to make a last sprint for the edge of the empire. He knew that he needed to make it into the teleportation range of his sect. Only then could he finally reach his home, he also needed to save some of the spirit points for the jump.

Besides the high grade spirit stones that he received from the auction house, he had many more treasures here. Some were taken as gratitude from people that he saved while others were snatched from the less stellar cultivators.

He knew that remaining in this empire like this would also pose a large threat to his well-being. The news of a renegade cultivator flying around the empire unhinged from any responsibilities was slowly spreading through the lands. Even though he was able to hide his appearance it didn’t mean that he would remain unnoticed forever.

With a lot of pressure on his shoulders, he got to work. The cores started resonating with each other and circling around each other once more. Instead of creating more cores like with foundation pillars, he needed to refine them.

The process of refinement would actually compress the cores into smaller ones. The original ones were like large sponges that absorbed all kinds of energies. What he needed to do was to purify these energies and compact the cores.

This process required a lot of concentration and also a lot of energy. After it was all done the energy in the cores would become purer than before. It was as if he was reforging a blade from a lesser one to the highest graded one possible.

This process was quite volatile just as with the blades, one mistake, and the cores could shatter into tiny pieces. It was possible to lose one of the cores if something went wrong.

For someone with three cores, this was three times as difficult but would save him from losing all of his built-up power. The cores were like bonus lives which even if they faded he could probably push forward with only one. This would probably revert him to his old core formation stage which would be much weaker than what he had now.

‘It’s all or nothing now...’

The earth rumbled and the stormy weather outside was halted. It seemed as if time had stopped for this land as a massive burst of energy was produced. A pillar of light shot out from within the ground causing destruction in its wake.

This pillar intensified with time and continued to cast a glaring light throughout the land. It reached up into the sky and caused the storm above it to be absorbed into it.

Zhang Dong could not do anything about this, he knew that he had limited time. The longer he took to break through the more danger could come his way.

The beasts and animals that were here looked up into the sky. They did not flee or scatter, their senses told them that there was no enemy nearby. Once the storm was gone the soothing energies that came from within that pillar invigorated the land.

Long unattended injuries that any of these creatures possessed were healed while any demonic phantoms were eradicated in the process. Some of the more intelligent beasts that possessed a cultivation level lowered their heads in worship as they knew that a master was there.

With a thunderous boom, the pillar exploded and its energies rained down onto the ground. These rays of light did not bring death and destruction, instead where they landed the soil became invigorated with strange energies.

'There we go...'

Zhang Dong gave out a sigh as he looked up. The cave that he burrowed into was long gone. Above his head was a fifty-meter-wide circular hole that he created after breaking through. He could see the clear blue sky and the sun shone its bright rays on his face.

'Damn... there is someone there...'

He did not have much time to reinforce his cultivation as he felt someone approaching him from afar. There were multiple people and all of them seemed quite formidable.

"There you are, Renegade Cultivator, your days of terrorizing the lands will end here!"

After floating up into the air he found himself surrounded. There were six people around him and he could tell that they were all Saint Emperors.

'Five early stage and one middle stage...'

He had a theory about his true power level but he didn't really have an opportunity to test out his newfound cultivation. All of the enemies that he had faced were one or more steps behind him. They didn't even make for good sparring partners.

"Renegade cultivator? I think you might have found the wrong person. I'm just 'a cultivator' I think that renegade flew that way, he had a really menacing look on his face."

Zhang Dong pointed in the opposite direction where he was going while smiling.

"Well, I will excuse myself then while you go to apprehend that menace!"

He clasped his hands while slowly floating away but before he could leave two old men blocked his escape route. When he looked behind him there were two old women instead while below him was another old master.

“Do you think we were born yesterday?”

Above him was the most powerful member of them all. He looked quite imposing and didn't actually look that old compared to the others. The salt and pepper hairstyle went well with his rough looks but the dark demonic-looking robes told Zhang Dong a tale.

“Can't fault me for trying...”

He shrugged while smiling but soon his expression became stern and his cultivation was unleashed.

“Guess I'll have to do this the hard way.”

Chapter 368

Zhang Dong looked at the six people that were floating around him. They were all on top of the food chain when this empire was concerned as they were all Saint Emperors.

It seemed that his money-grabbing ways have come back to haunt him. He had spent the last weeks ransacking spirit stone mines. Snatching away divine elemental herbs and even absorbing shadowy energies from evil sect grounds.

He was mostly sure to focus on the evil sects as those tended to be the less morally friendly bunch. Thus the people that witnessed his deeds attributed everything to him being from the more righteous paths.

It was clear that the people on top of their sects would not let this just go on. With the lack of time and a goal in mind which would bring him far away from this empire Zhang Dong didn't erase his tracks well enough.

In his eyes, he would be long gone back in the Azure Dragon Empire before anyone could figure out where he went. His appearance in the auction house must have alerted some of these old fogies to his whereabouts.

Even then he would still evade their clutches if he just didn't stop to cultivate. There were ways for him to hide yet this was not something he was planning on doing. With hiding, he would lose precious time. The old cultivators lived long and they could very well remain in close proximity while waiting for months on end.

There were two options left for him here, one was to run away. With his current flight capabilities, he could very well be able to reach the border and teleport out.

There were a couple of problems with that plan. For one he did not know how far these six would chase him and they could always call for their friends to meet him halfway. From six there quickly could become ten or twenty.

Then there would be protective barriers that could be activated to stop him in his tracks. There was a danger in getting caught in a trap from which he could not escape. While flying they could easily track

his whereabouts while contacting their allies. He lacked the knowledge of key locations in the empire so he would not know how to evade pockets filled with cultivators.

“If you come with us and return what you have stolen we might show mercy, otherwise consider your life forfeit! Did you really think you could rob us of our belongings and see the light of day?”

The main man that possessed the highest cultivation level here started speaking out. His realm was of a Saint Emperor at the middle stage which would place him at around the nascent soul late stage level. His five comrades that were all at the early stage would be a bit below the middle stage of nascent soul.

In contrast to them, Zhang Dong was not sure where he stood. He was only a core formation expert at the late stage but after battling with people at the levels of half-step nascent soul masters he felt that he stood a chance here.

“I think I’ll go with option B. How about you retreat and you might still retain some of your dignity?”

He replied while his aura exploded, it didn’t seem that he could talk his way out of this. These six people clearly felt that they had the upper hand so he didn’t have anything to bargain with. The only way to prove otherwise would be to prove himself in battle against them.

After his reply, the five lesser Saint Emperors quickly pulled out their weapons and activated their cultivation. It was clear by their auras that they were all from fewer staller sects of the evil variety. It also didn’t seem that they were planning to give him much time to retaliate. Being all old experienced fighters they knew that it was best to strike their enemies down as fast as possible.

They charged but as they approached their target they were met with a strange feeling in their chests. There was a strange crushing feeling, it felt like their feet were stuck and that there was a giant weight upon their shoulders.

This was Zhang Dong’s soul core. He activated it at max power to see if he could just crush his enemies with soul pressure. Regretfully he could see that these Saint Emperors were different from all the other cultivators that he had faced. Even though his soul core was at full effect it didn’t fully disable them.

“What is this trickery?”

The strongest Saint Emperor that was there seemed mostly unaffected. With a hand gesture, he activated his own cultivation aura which started countering Zhang Dong’s soul core. While he was somewhat effective against the other five this man was able to dispel his soul attack.

“Watch out!”

Zhang Dong was not born yesterday as he knew that it was best to strike when there was confusion within the enemy’s camp. While his soul attack was resisted it gave him enough time to charge at one of the disabled enemies. With one ferocious slice of his sword a cultivator fell.

One man’s head fell from his shoulders while another one was quick to move to the side. The slice was aimed at the two but the second one was nimble enough to only receive a grazing wound.

“Hey now, you’re not supposed to be dodging and I’ll be taking that.”

He raised his head while smirking. This was not quite the end of this attack, just like with nascent soul cultivators these Saint Emperors were able to utilize soul divinities. These soul forms could then be able to function to a lesser extent and with some techniques, it was even possible to recover one's body.

At least in theory that was possible but for Zhang Dong, this soul divinity was quite similar to the evil phantoms that he had faced off before. It was a fat juicy piece of soul energy that he could absorb with his soul core.

This was what this group of evil cultivators was seeing. Just as the soul form of their ally left its body to escape it was pulled back and absorbed by their enemy.

"What is this technique, he absorbed his source!"

Zhang Dong could feel the man's very essence being consumed by his soul core. Luckily he only consumed the underlying energy without any strange things like the man's memories.

Some lesser techniques would burden cultivators with such things which then left them a mess if they consumed too many souls of the dead. His soul core would only go for the base energy while ignoring the rest which just faded away into oblivion.

"What are you doing, surround him, don't let up!"

The strongest cultivator didn't seem perturbed by his allies' demise. He was able to see the big picture as he threw his spear clad in demonic energies towards Zhang Dong. This spear burst forth with purple energy and turned into a serpent composed of this dastardly Qi.

Zhang Dong moved his sword to intercept this attack. Spear met sword and a resounding boom filled the area. He found himself retreating a few steps while the spear rebounded back to its master.

He was then met with a pincer attack from four sides which he evaded thanks to his moving technique. The spot that the four Saint Emperors struck now contained an afterimage that discharged a holy energy-charged jolt of electricity.

While the ones that dived in for the kill first were affected by this some of them continued their chase. The area around here began being filled with holes and bursts of energy as the fight continued.

The party of five found themselves unable to gain the upper hand even after several exchanges between the two occurred. Soon all five found themselves on one side while the white-haired Zhang Dong with his bloodied sword was on the other side.

While dodging he didn't remain passive, his weapon delivering punishment to his enemies that were out of position. Their clothes told a tale of who was winning, while Zhang Dong's white clothes were without a blemish his opponents found themselves with sliced-up robes.

"S-senior, this Renegade cultivator is formidable, we might have to retreat for now..."

The four Saint Emperors that were clearly used as cannon fodder by the one above them looked drained. Their wounds only increased while their opponent seemed to be able to see through their attacks.

“I have no quarrel with you, do you really want to die just for some poultry resources that you can just regain with time?”

Zhang Dong shouted out while glowing in his usual golden color. His aura was very confusing to these five cultivators as they had never met someone in the core formation realm.

It was clear to him that these people here didn't come from one sect. Their robes were different and their fighting techniques also differed. There was no unity among them, facing a stronger opponent was only possible with good teamwork which they clearly lacked.

It seemed that the four lesser Saint Emperors were considering the proposition but their 'leader' just seemed more enraged by this proposal.

“Poultry resources? Do you even know how far back you set us back!”

“Is that so? How about this then, I'll reimburse you for your losses.”

“Will you give us back the spirit stones you stole?”

“Well, I didn't say that I would use spirit stones, I might have something even better...”

With that being said Zhang Dong pulled out a booklet that he promptly tossed over towards the five cultivators. They were quickly taken aback by this gesture and their leader used his aura to hold this booklet away from the group out of fear of it being some kind of trick.

“What is this? How will this make up for our lost resources?”

“Oh, you don't want the Saint Emperor level Demonic Ashura palm? It's just a pinnacle grade palm technique.”

“Pinnacle grade?”

While eyeballing Zhang Dong from afar the leader of the group opened up the booklet. Even from afar all of them could see what was written there and as they continued to read so did their eyes start to get bigger.

“T-this is...”

“It looks authentic... everything written there ... how magnificent...”

To masters of this level, it was easy to see a gem like this cultivation method. After a few glances, they could tell that it was the real article. It didn't take much to make these cultivator nuts look at things with hunger in their eyes.

“You see, could you even buy such a technique with those poultry spirit stones and treasures that I took?”

Zhang Dong gave out a grin while yanking the book back towards his own hand. The four old cultivators looked at the technique with hunger in their eyes. Then with a pristine pitching form, he threw the book into the stratosphere.

“If you want it, then go get it!”

With that, he bolted in the opposite direction leaving the group to decide on what was more important.

Chapter 369

“Greetings brother.”

A dashing young man nodded at the welcome he received from quite a lovely young woman. Both of them were wearing pure white robes reminiscent of their master. Their pure white hair was a clear indication of who that master was.

“The scouts have given their report, it seems that it is inevitable...”

“This does not make any sense, what would one of the great three powers want with us...”

Asked the young man that hailed by the name Zhang Liu. His younger sister was right next to him and they were standing before the hall of elders. Not that long ago word arrived that a large fleet of ships had crossed into the middle sect reaches.

Through the years they had created a vast network of informants that were planted in all of the large cities. Their communication technology was quite advanced for the times. The spies were there to inform the main sect of any suspicious movement from the other powers.

Not long ago such information had reached their ears. A couple of ships from a rather powerful sect have entered this side of the empire and their course was their sect. This was hard to confirm at first but now they were dangerously close and about a day remained until they reached their doorstep.

“What do you think that the elders will decide on?”

Asked Liu while Xue, his younger sister, contemplated. She could only shrug and shake her head as this sort of thing was above her. Both of them were now core formation cultivators, which didn't grant them access to the inner workings of their sect.

While their master was still around they would be informed about the decisions through him. Since he vanished on that fateful day, their standing in the sect had lessened. It was a slow progress but they could tell that some people were treating them differently.

They still had the support of the matriarch but she was also on thin footing without the support of the strongest. That title fell towards Huo Qiang and since his father was also one of the great elders some felt that he should take over while the Patriarch was away.

“We might have to ask your partner about the decision, the Matriarch might speak to her about it before announcing it to the rest of the sect.”

Zhang Xiu flinched a bit at the mention of his ‘partner’. The girl in question was still Nuana who continued to strongarm him into a more permanent relationship. Now without his master's support, he was running out of options to refuse the girl.

“Let's not talk about that...”

Zhang Xue chuckled to herself but soon her expression became solemn. She looked to the large gates that they were both standing at. These gates would only open for registered members of the great elders which they were not.

Past these doors was a large open chamber with seats around a middle platform. This platform had no one standing on it and the elders were sitting around it. It was similar to a lecture hall with the professor missing. The spot in the middle belonged to the Patriarch but since no new one had been unanimously announced it remained empty.

Above the spot where the Patriarch should be standing was a holographic image of the large ship. The image was of various shades of blue but it was quite clear to the people here to whom this ship belonged to.

“Do you recognize the ship?”

A woman with light pink hair and quite an exotic look asked one of the other people in the room.

“Yes, that crest belongs to the Soaring Dragon Sect.”

The group cultivators started murmuring among each other as they knew that this was one of the top three powers in this empire. If this sect wanted to go to war with any of the middle-sized sects they could easily wipe them from the face of the earth.

Someone like the Dark Palm sect that they barely beat with the help of their Patriarch would be nothing more than a speck.

“What do they want from us? Did they figure out our situation?”

“They could be after our technical advances, it’s become hard to keep the flow of information hidden away from the other sects. Ever since the Patriarch disappeared it has become hard to handle the spies from other sects...”

The room wasn’t filled with many nascent soul elders. Ever since Zhang Dong’s disappearance, the progress of the elder generation was halted. He was the only one that could cleanse them from any impurities and offer them the correct advice to help them break through.

Even with their advanced knowledge that they received, passing into the nascent soul level was not an easy procedure. Only Huo Qiang was fortuitous enough to reach the middle stage of the nascent soul level. Zhang Liena, who was second in line, had not been able to progress.

This was mostly attributed to the demons that sprung up in her heart. The days of worry about her husband brought her cultivation to a stop and she couldn’t bring herself to advance like Qiang who was more battle-focused.

“Do we really need to fear them? Their visit here might be unavoidable but it does not have to cause destruction for our sect!”

One of the older members that was not quite at the nascent soul level commented and some of the others agreed.

“That’s right, we know not of their true purpose we should hear them out before we make a decision.”

“We should hear them out? Did you lose your mind, why would they gather a whole fleet of flying vessels to come here? It’s obvious that they aren’t coming here to have tea with us!”

Another elder commented on the issue and a fight of words between the two parties commenced. One side was of the mind of raising the alarm and being prepared to fight to the bitter end. The other side was willing to welcome the guests with open arms and hear them out instead.

“Silence you old farts!”

The voice was raised by Zhang Liena which managed to quiet most of the people.

“What do you expect us to do then?”

The one that raised his voice was a tanned man with a muscular stature. Next to him was a man of similar build but hair that looked like it was on fire. He sat there looking bored with his hands crossed over one another as if he didn’t have a care in the world.

“Could I have a word?”

From the side a voice that a lot of people knew spoke out. A certain dashing young man was seen by everyone which made Zhang Liena scoff slightly.

“Stop using that technique when you are at the elder gathering you old leech.”

“Ha ha, excuse this old man.”

The man’s appearance started changing and soon he was back to his older looks. Zhang jin was his name and he was the late Patriarch’s grandfather. Next to him was Zhang Zhi that was also from the old Zhang Clan.

“What I wanted to inform the Matriarch about is that particular ship. It is quite famous around some of the circles and it does not bode anything good...”

“Is that so? Could you explain?”

“Certainly!”

Zhang Jin started talking. He explained that the ship belonged to a certain grandson of that sect’s Patriarch. He also explained that there were only bad rumors about this young man. His talents were second to none and he rose to peak lord status in just a few years.

It was quite astonishing but also very bloody. He apparently took his opponent’s life without any remorse, if there was a chance to vanquish his opponents he would take it.

“You are saying that such a maniac is approaching our sect... What does he even want with us?”

“Ah yes, I’m afraid that this particular young man has a strong love for women... If he has moved here then he is probably after one thing and one thing only...”

Zhang Jin proclaimed in an elusive voice which brought everyone’s attention to him. After a brief silence and not getting a response Zhang Liena slammed her fist down.

“Well, what is it?”

Zhang Jin finally licked his lips and gave a quick reply.

“Beauties.”

“Beauties?”

“Yes, beauties.”

“What do you mean old man?”

“I mean what I said, wherever that young man is seen women vanish. He is very well known around some circles, the women sometimes find their way back home but they are nothing but empty husks of their former self...”

“Then you mean to tell me, that they organized a whole fleet of battleships to take our women?”

This time Huo Qiang chimed in as he was a bit surprised as well. So were the others as they started asking questions about the person that this young man was after. Soon they came to a consensus on who the beauty in question was that he was after.

“Zhang Xue.”

“Yes, it must be Zhang Xue.”

She was the most sought-after beauty that this sect had to offer. There were a few others that came to mind but all paled in comparison to the late Patriarch’s disciple.

“Do you think that this peak lord will leave if we give them the disciple...”

One of the men here asked the question that was on everyone’s tongue. It might seem cruel but offering one member as a tribute didn’t sound so bad if the whole sect was not affected. To some of the people here, it would actually be profitable to get rid of a potential thorn in their side.

There were two main camps in this current sect. One was composed of the people from the old Zhang and Feng clan while the others were of the Huo clan. The latter had abandoned the motion of ever finding Zhang Dong’s remains while the other still wanted to wait till they discovered more clues.

The Patriarch in question that they thought of being dead was at this moment speeding away from an encounter with five powerful cultivators. He could hear the explosions and screams behind him as they battled for possession of the palm technique that he threw far away.

“I should have enough time to get away from here before they discover the fault of this technique...”

While the palm was a powerful technique it had a certain downside of exploring a person’s nether regions if ever used. It could serve as a last-ditch effort for survival but one gave up on ever having children in the process.

‘They’ll need to read the whole thing until they realize I should be able to reach the border by then...’

His body soon vanished in a torrent of lightning energy as he made his way towards the teleportation range. The bad feeling in his stomach did not go away so he continued with utmost urgency.

Chapter 370

“Xue, you must leave, you can easily use one of the secret shelters that we created in these lands. Even if it’s the Soaring Dragon Sect they won’t be able to find you.”

“Brother, it’s fine...”

A confused Zhang Liu was yanked back as he was trying to pull his younger sister away. He was just informed by Zhang Jin of what the real reason for that sect’s arrival was. If it was true then his sister would be subjected to a life worse than death.

“What do you mean, you must escape, we can’t let that maniac desecrate you!”

While Zhang Liu continued yanking Xue finally managed to get her hand free. She grasped her wrist while looking down to the floor. Her shoulders were slumped forward but she seemed to have made up her mind.

“No brother, if I escape by myself many of our brothers and sisters could die...”

Zhang Jin that was here as well started frowning as he knew what his great-granddaughter was getting at. There was no telling what the young master of the Soaring Dragon Sect would do if the prize he came for was not here.

He knew of a few circumstances of this happening which always led to more deaths. This person clearly didn’t hold people up to high standards. When being denied what they thought was theirs they would lash out and if they did lives were at stake.

“It pains this old man to admit it but...”

“But what? You can’t seriously be thinking of just giving up Xue to those bastards!”

Zhang Jin didn’t know what to say, he could see the pain in Zhang Liu’s eyes. It seemed that he was taking it rather badly while his sister was somewhat composed. Zhang Jin wasn’t sure what was going through her head but she was clearly willing to make the sacrifice.

“Brother, stop shouting, it’s not grandfather’s fault! If it means that I can save lives I will gladly sacrifice myself for the sect just like master did!”

Zhang Xue started shouting back while tears formed in her eyes. The moment she mentioned her master everyone was reminded of the times that Zhang Dong put himself in danger for the sect.

The first time was against the Dark Palm sect, he had almost lost his life during the expedition. Then he faced off against their elders in the final battle and finally came out victorious at the end with some help from the two other nascent soul elders.

Some of the sect members were against how the Patriarch acted. This was shown at the time where he agreed to help another sect out. No one really saw the merit of them facing off against that monstrosity. Some even blamed him to this day as his disappearance only weakened them.

“Have you set your mind to this?”

Zhang Liena walked out while being followed by two attendants.

“I did, matriarch.”

“Liu, you need to calm down. Nothing is set in stone, you might not be the reason for that young lord to come here.”

What Zhang Jin informed them about had been confirmed by some other sources. This didn't mean that the man in question always went for the particular beauty in question.

“For the time being, remain hidden, if he doesn't call for you directly we won't have to reveal you to them.”

Zhang Liu let out a sigh of relief but his frowning face did not vanish. He would remain by his sister's side for the time being.

“The scouts say that they will be there within four hours. Please use this time to calm yourself down.

Soon everyone from here departed. The members from the Huo side of the sect were a bit less friendly as they left a few people to watch Zhang Xue and Liu's movements. Everyone knew that the sect was at stake here and they would be willing to give up the late Patriarch's niece to let it survive.

“This sect is changing...”

Zhang Xue returned to her room and looked out of the window. There he saw a magnificent set of buildings that were a wonder of modern architecture. Everything was built with the help of her master and even in his absence, the people living here were progressing at a rapid pace.

“Yes, it has not been the same since master vanished, wherever could he be... we couldn't find anything, not even a flicker of his Qi or soul...”

Zhang Liu dropped down on a couch while sighting out some more. Both he and his sister noticed that after about a year of their master's disappearance the people started to change.

Their master was not one to make public appearances often but he was regularly seen flying around the sect. At first, they told everyone that he was just cultivating, this was an excuse that worked most of the time.

It could take many years for a nascent soul cultivator to progress through a bottleneck. Thus it was not odd to not see them for years on end. Even then, everyone knew that something was off.

Whenever something happened only the grand elders were sent to clear up the problem. Some problems were resolved but others were not. The sect started clearly operating similarly to others and not as it used to when the Patriarch was at the helm.

Soon some started speculating that the Patriarch was either injured or dead. No longer did they see him clearing up demonic beasts or healing the injured. No more lectures were given, the techniques that he improved upon were also slowly getting withheld by the top brass.

With time a power struggle in the sect was seen to happen. With this most of the people could easily deduct that something had happened to the Patriarch. It was clear to them that if he was there no one would dare to go against the old rules.

Zhang Liena was also a big tell as the Matriarch had been seen acting strangely. The smile that she had on her face was replaced by a stern look. Even his closest students seemed vacant and uncharacteristic which caused everyone to speculate that Zhang Dong was no more.

Some saw this as a catastrophe while others saw this as a chance. Without the monolithic person on the top that could force everyone to act, there was now a chance to gain some power.

Even though the new recruits were handpicked for their morals this wasn't the same for the old brass. Some members from the old clans took the chance to gain power and fatten their purses.

The sect was just too big to manage for the limited number of elders that was on the old Patriarch's side. The next in line Huo Qiang also showed no desire to take over which left things up to others.

Zhang Liena still had a lot of say in everything but most of the nascent soul elders were still coming from the Huo side of the sect. They could not be denied and they often butted heads when it came to decision making.

After a few hours, all of the elders gathered outside.

"They aren't taking us seriously, aren't they?"

Huo Qiang was there, for once he looked quite ecstatic about the situation. It was clear that he was itching for a fight.

"Yes, they didn't contact us until they already passed through our borders, if they were from any other sect we would have just attacked them..."

"This is normal, that's how the strong operate. We can only hope that they leave quickly..."

Zhang Liena replied while looking at all the other elders that didn't comment. All of them looked a bit ticked off about the blatant disrespect but they could only wait here for the ship to arrive.

Soon they saw it on the horizon. It was huge, bigger than the flagship that was produced by Zhang Dong. Behind it were several smaller flying ships and all of them carried strong auras with them.

It was clear from the start that there were several nascent soul cultivators in that armada. One of them was radiating astonishing might while the others trailed behind him slightly.

Without having made an appointment the elders from the United Element sect decided to not take out the red carpet. Instead, they activated the protective barrier that would be hard to pierce through from even a nascent soul grandmaster at the great circle level.

This caused the ship to halt before its approach and a certain person to appear in the front. Behind him was a group of nascent soul cultivators all in the late stages.

"People from the United Element Sect, listen well. We have not arrived to cause you harm, we will soon leave after we achieved our objective."

The man's booming voice filled the entire area. The people that lived in the city were previously informed about the danger and were already in the process of evacuating.

The sect had an extensive underground with long winding tunnels. They would lead everyone outside the sect grounds and into the forest area several kilometers away. The tunnels were lined with special materials that halted anyone from piercing them with their spiritual sense. Thus even now the people from the Soaring Dragon Sect would not know that people were escaping while being directly under their ships.

“We from the United Element Sect greet the great elders from the Soaring Dragon Sect. I apologize that we could not receive you respectfully but you did not inform us of your arrival...”

The one talking was Zhang Jin while the rest of the elders remained on standby.

“Yes, we have to apologize for this but we do not have much time on our hands. First, let me introduce myself, I am Rang Tong.”

The elders started discussing things with each other but soon another powerful aura washed over the area which was followed by an annoyed voice.

“Damn, I wish there was a dialogue skipping option in this shitty world, can you old farts shut up for a moment!”

This was followed by the appearance of a handsome-looking young man. Normally such a face would be envied by many other men and would cause the women to flock. The only problem was to who it belonged to. It was clear from one glance that this person was quite a quirky individual.

In his hand, there was a bottle of wine that even while talking he continued to sip from. When it was empty it was promptly tossed to the side and followed by a loud burp.

“Young lord please, let me perform the negotiations so we can return with haste.”

“Negotiations? Hah, let me show you how you negotiate!”

The young man appeared next to the most powerful elder and started looking around. Soon he spotted a certain woman from the elder group that was floating along with them.

“You there, yes you with the massive milkers. You will come with me and become my concubine!”

The young man pointed with his finger at Zhang Liema, who was taken aback by the revelation. The man was not here to take away Zhang Xue, no he was here for her instead!