

## Unfathomable 421

### Chapter 421

“How could this be?”

“The demonic mist, it has all vanished... look elders... the demonic creatures, they are dying...”

Cultivators from the Heavenly Crane Sect looked on from behind the protective formation as the golden light subsided. When it did, they could see the old landscape and the creatures that roamed it. Now without the demonic Qi swiveling around, they were succumbing to the holy Qi instead.

“This strange spiritual energy... it really was the Golden Dragon...”

The elder that arrived after Zhang Dong’s appearance was now scratching his long beard. At first, he didn’t believe his junior and thought that the man that went inside must have been an impostor. Now, on the other hand, he wasn’t that sure.

“This complicates things, the blasted Azure Emperor probably sent him here to clear out the sect and take all the knowledge and treasures for himself, this won’t do, we must investigate!”

“But Senior...”

One of the other nascent soul elders called out but the main elder just raised his hand.

“I know, we will not engage in anything stupid as a battle with the Emperor’s sworn brother, this doesn’t mean that we will relinquish all of the knowledge and treasures that was left over by the Soaring Dragon sect, he is but one man, even if its the Golden Dragon he can not possibly go through something as large as the Soaring Dragon Sect.”

“Ah, Senior is wise!”

Everyone started nodding at each other. It seemed that the Golden Dragon did most of the work for them. The miasma was gone and the monsters inside were dying. They were human cultivators so the holy energy inside would not hurt them, it would be the opposite it would actually invigorate them instead.

“My brothers, it has not been long since the one called the Golden Dragon came here. This grand purifying magics that he has used has probably drained him of most of his Qi. While he rests we will come and take the treasures for ourselves yet, if you meet this Emperor’s Brother do not engage him in battle, even if he is weakened we don’t know the true extent of his might!”

After the announcement, the group of nascent soul masters pushed beyond the protective formation. There were five of them and along with about two hundred core formation experts they made up quite the large battle force.

With so many people on their side, they hoped to quickly go through the rubble and take some of the Soaring Dragon Sect’s secrets with them. Manufacturing techniques of fabled artifacts, pill formulae, and maybe even some hidden techniques that they could make their own.

...

“Whew... that took more out of me than I thought, good that I absorbed all of those dead souls beforehand...”

Zhang Dong was floating up in the air while looking at a giant hole in the ground. Now that the miasma was gone he could see the entire sect or at least what was left of it.

The hole in the ground was truly deep and even with the thick mist gone, it was hard to see the bottom. It made it seem that the explosion was in the shape of a column instead of one that went equally in all directions.

‘It’s as if it was stuck in a different dimension or something...’

While gathering his strength he started looking around. His system map was brought up as he was interested if he would be able to see a blacked-out spot. Regretfully he didn’t, which told him that there was no dimensional cube here.

It seemed that Wang Long was not directly transported here. From what little he knew, Wang Long had started out as a young master but not one that was favored over the other ones quite yet. Only after he took the spot of his character and used the system did he start rising in the ranks. Thus it was possible that his arrival spot was at some branch city.

He achieved what he came for, Wang Long’s energy signature was implanted in his system. Before leaving though he took up the lotus position and started spreading his spiritual sense in all directions. This would help him check if there was something that he had missed and also allow him to rest momentarily.

‘I seem to have some visitors in the distance... still have some time until they arrive.’

The first thing he noticed was the large energy signatures that were coming from the direction that he arrived. It was clear to him that the cultivators from the other sect were here to check things out. The Heavenly Crane sect was somewhat on the same standing as the Long Clan, so he would not be able to talk them down with his newfound status.

‘...This is...’

While searching for possible pockets of spirit stones he discovered something else. A faint life signal that was quite hard to make out. When he prodded more and double-checked with his system map it was clear that there were survivors there.

Without thinking much about it, Zhang Dong popped a few recovery pills that he took from his sect and descended towards that area. Where there were people there could be some treasures but also maybe other answers to where Wang Long had gone.

A golden light surrounded his whole form and quickly changed to a drill. This allowed him to burrow underground to reach an open cavern.

“These walls are thick, did Wang Long failed to discover the people hiding inside, or did he just not care anymore?”

Zhang Dong mumbled while walking towards the area where he felt the faint life signal. This whole place was surrounded by several formations that made discovering anything with spiritual sense difficult. If he didn't reach a new level with his cultivation he might have not been able to discover anything.

"This looks like... a vault?"

When he arrived the first thing before his eyes was a large circular slab of metal. It looked like a huge door to a vault. The walls had many characters and runes on them, the whole place was quite intricate and created from resistant metals.

"It looks quite sturdy but there is some damage here..."

After his little holy nova that covered the entire city, almost all of the creatures were eradicated. Even the ones that were previously in this corridor but before he came here they were still probably banging on this large door.

"It seems that the creatures that were outside were able to destroy parts of the mechanism, even if the people that were inside wanted to, they would not be able to come outside a strange design indeed"

At first, he thought that this might have been some kind of panic room, but one that locked people inside lacked reason. It was as if this was designed to lock itself if anyone used force from the outside. This gave him an idea that instead of a panic room, this was some kind of treasury.

"Let's see... this should do it..."

Zhang Dong looked around and with a wave of his finger produced some spiritual energy. This energy combined with the damaged materials on the ground which started to float into the air. Soon the broken parts that were dislodged from the walls were being pieced together.

The scratches and bite marks were obviously created by the monsters that previously filled this tunnel. After his arrival, they all had turned to ash and even when they were this deep underground they succumbed to the massive holy energy output that he was able to produce now.

Even with his expertise, it wasn't that easy to piece this thing together, he even had to use some of his own crafting materials as the spirit runes were too damaged. But he was still able to repair this mechanism and with one last wave of his hand, the large vault-like door was now opening.

'This is...'

"W-who goes there!"

Not much time had passed since this whole disaster struck this sect, so he did not expect to see any malnourished survivors. When he opened up the thick door he discovered various people inside but most of them were women and children. A group of them were now holding various bladed weapons and pointing them at him.

"Lower your weapons, I am not here to hurt you."

Even when he called out to them in a gentle voice it didn't calm their nerves. It seemed that they were stuck in this reinforced prison without any way of knowing what was happening outside. Probably as Wang Long was destroying the sect, the women and children were rushed here.

“Please calm down.”

He could only repeat himself while floating forward, this indicated his level of power somewhat as no core formation cultivator was able to fly. When he glanced again he counted about fifty people, the strongest of them was an older woman at the nascent soul level; she looked quite tired and also injured. Even then she remained at the front with a large glaive in her hands.

It was clear that they didn’t trust him at all, who would? He was some kind of unknown person walking in after they spent weeks being locked away. While this tightly locked vault could keep the monsters and decrepit souls away, it probably didn’t dampen the sounds that much. Having to listen to the wails of undead creatures outside was probably not something he would want to sleep to.

While he was trying to calm the women down he took some time to look around. The inside of this vault was well lit and some of it was clearly shifted around. But the main reason behind this vault was obvious, books filled with knowledge and various weapons were everywhere.

‘It really was some kind of treasure vault, probably belonging to another elder... maybe this granny?’

It didn’t seem that the people here were very trusting of him, which wasn’t much of a problem. If he was in their shoes, a strange good looking cultivator that appeared out of thin air would look like a trick an enemy would play.

Luckily for Zhang Dong he didn’t need to be very political here. If he showed his overwhelming might and that they had no chance against him anyway, they would have to calm down. Thus he lit up the place with his overwhelming holy aura to show that he was not someone that needed them to stand down. No, even if they resisted they would have no chance against him.

“Now let’s all calm down and put away those weapons.”

The nascent soul granny found herself unable to move and the large two-handed glaive fell out of her hand. Everyone quickly realized that they were at the mercy of the person that just appeared but for some reason, they felt that he was not someone that they should fear.

“Good that’s better, now... I want to ask you a couple of questions if that’s fine with you?”

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Zhang Dong nodded to the old lady that had calmed down a bit after he entered the chamber they had locked themselves in. These people were still from the Soaring Dragon Sect, the information that he gave them was hard to swallow. It was understandable as finding out that their sect that was at the top of the whole world, had ceased to exist.

“Elder, this man has to be lying, how could our sect fall? This doesn’t make sense, we need to leave and get more information.”

One of the younger ladies here looked at him with anger in her eyes. It was clear that the juniors didn’t believe him but the nascent soul granny that was here did. When he opened up this vault he felt her spiritual sense bursting through it. She probably scanned the entire area outside and already knew that the whole place had been destroyed.

“Be quiet, what this man says is probably the truth...”

“But grandmother...”

The lady that was questioning his words referred to the granny quite closely. They were clearly related but not like he had time for pleasantries.

‘Bob, scan all the books in the area.’

With his increase in cultivation, some of Bob’s features were enhanced. Now he did not need to do it by hand or focus either, his Ai could just absorb all of the techniques that were in this room by himself. While there were various heaven grade texts here, they didn’t really add that much to his knowledge.

A few new pills here and there along with variations of preexisting battle arts. After already going through so many libraries with knowledge Zhang Dong noticed certain patterns in the skills. As long as a person was versed in the various elemental Dao’s they could add that knowledge to other techniques to get the same effects.

A palm that produced a smoldering inferno could now be easily altered to cause a frost nova instead. While it was easy to him, to a regular cultivator from this world it would be unfathomable. But as his knowledge grew so did his Dao’s of the elements in which he was now over 50% in all of them.

Even the Dao of dark energy was something that he could make his own, he just chose not to go into it too much as it clashed with his holy attribute. While he could freely study opposing elements like fire and water, this wasn’t quite the same for holy and dark. These elements were highly repulsed by each other.

If he had a small amount of dark energy in his body and activated his holy techniques. The light would feed away on the darkness until there was no Qi left. It was really hard to isolate these two energies and even keeping them close to each other could cause a massive backlash of untold proportions.

“I won’t stand in your way, you may leave and search for the remnants of your sect if you wish for but I’ll be taking these if you don’t mind...”

While he had already absorbed the knowledge from this place, there were still items that he could use to further his own cultivation level. There were some stones and weapons with lightning elemental energy imbued into them which he could still absorb along with some other goodies.

He waved his hand and the items in question started shining before rising up into the air and slowly floating towards him. The young lady that was previously looking at him with slanted eyebrows looked quite enraged by this fact. Luckily before she could say anything her grandmother waved her hand to force her mouth down.

It seemed that the younger generation was quite sheltered here. They didn’t know that they were in no place to make any demands with him. If any other powerful cultivator than him was here, they could easily kill them or do other dastardly things. From their standpoint, they should be happy that he was just taking some of the treasures and not even examining their spatial rings.

“I’ll take my leave then, the area should be safe now.”

He did not have time to take care of these survivors. They were together with a nascent soul elder which should be enough to guarantee their safety. Even though the main Soaring Dragon compound was no

more, this didn't mean that the entire sect was now gone. There were some remnants here and there, also some branch sects that could take them in.

'This granny would be able to form a sect of her own in the lower regions so they should be fine.'

Before leaving he decided to fly around the destroyed city once more. He managed to find one vault which meant that there could be more buried treasures here. While searching for more loot he felt the old woman leaving the shelter with her juniors. They did remain in one spot though as they were probably quite shocked to see that not much had been left.

The previous monsters that roamed the area were mostly burned up but some of their bodies were still evaporating as he was scanning the area. His search revealed a couple of pockets of hidden away troves which he promptly flew towards.

Spirit stones, magical talismans, and more books with techniques were discovered by him. This time around though, there were no other survivors so he decided to just pocket everything he could get his hands on. While most of this would be useless to him, the juniors from his own sect could use the materials for themselves.

For Zhang Dong at his current level going through a huge sect like this didn't prove much of a problem. After about twenty minutes he had scavenged everything that possessed a spiritual signature. Anything that could be absorbed was instantly devoured while everything else would be given to his sect members. It was finally time to leave but before he could there was a small commotion.

"Elder Zixin, it has been a while. It is truly unfortunate what has happened to your Soaring Dragon Sect but don't worry, we from the Heavenly Crane Sect will be glad to escort you out from here..."

In the distance, he spotted a large group of cultivators, some of them he recognized as the people that he met when entering this place. There were a lot more of them here now, they were also quick to intercept the women and children that were just looking for more survivors.

After going through here he was not feeling any other life energy. He was more than convinced that there weren't any other survivors. The holy core that he had was very receptive to life signals and along with his system minimap, he was able to perform a thorough scan of the entire area. From the millions of people that lived here, the only survivors didn't amount to a hundred.

"Elder Guanting, I will have to refuse your generous offer, we only wish to search for our sect members, there could be more survivors."

"Elder Zixin... I'm afraid I will have to implore you to leave this to my sect brothers, we will perform the search instead then we will be glad to escort you out of this horrible area, our Heavenly Crane Sect will accept you with open arms..."

"...That won't be needed, we will be fine there are some branch sects that we will stay at instead you don't need to..."

The old man that was talking to the old woman seemed somewhat angered that he was getting talked back to. Before the old lady could finish talking he raised his aura which made her back off for the time being.

"I don't think you understand the gravity of your situation... there is no Soaring Dragon Sect anymore, those branch families you speak of have no foot to stand on as they won't be able to stand up against even the middle-sized sects, you will come with us!"

It didn't seem that the old man from the Heavenly Crane Sect would take a no for an answer. He wasn't sure what their intention was but this group of survivors was composed mostly of women and children. They might hold them hostage or have the urge to integrate them into their own forces.

They were all strong cultivators for their age, after signing a soul-binding contract they could become part of the Heavenly Crane Sect. They could also be sold off to their members as potential brides. It was quite the catch for that sect as they were getting free cultivators without having to invest any resources into them.

'It doesn't look good for them but should I really get involved...'

He had already wasted enough time here, the red trail of energy that he could follow now was there. But, he knew that if he left things like this it would bother him for the entire trip. Thus he decided to clear things up between these two parties as quickly as he could.

"Excuse me, is there a problem here?"

"Huh? What... where did you..."

The people only realized that Zhang Dong was here when he chose to. With some skills, it was possible to blend into the surrounding without radiating any spiritual energy. Now everyone was looking up at him while he was radiating a gentle light from above.

"Ah, the renowned Golden Dragon, my brothers have informed me about you fellow Daoist but whatever do you mean? I don't see a problem anywhere."

The leader replied while the core formation masters scattered to the sides while riding their flying swords. Only the nascent soul elders that were with him dared to stay, it was five against one but not as he cared.

"Oh really? Elder Zixin was it?"

"Ah yes."

The old lady was a bit perplexed that Zhang Dong returned and appeared out of the blue. It was clear from how the Heavenly Crane Sect elders were acting, that he was not someone they could easily offend. In reality, he wasn't that sure as his fame was quite recent so some of these cultivation nuts would probably still try to check him.

"Do you wish to return with these fine gentlemen to their sect, or would you rather just leave the city instead? I have taken care of the dark miasma so you shouldn't have a problem getting out and about this protective formation... I don't think it's really needed anymore..."

He proclaimed while pointing his finger into the sky. There the dome-shaped barrier was still surrounding everything from all sides. This thing required a lot of spiritual energy and resources to create but it would be quite easy to turn off.

Before anyone could ask about the meaning behind his words a tiny orb of energy appeared in front of this index finger. This little dot quickly grew in size, bolts of golden energy and bright light surrounded it now as Zhang Dong charged up this attack.

“W-what is he doing... take cover!”

The nascent soul elders were quick to back away as they could feel an unreasonable amount of energy behind this finger attack. Even more, after a beam of bright light escaped from it and collided with part of the protective formation. As if it collided with glass this bright beam attack caused the barrier to break into many tiny pieces of spiritual filament that crumbled into dust soon after.

The resounding explosion caused a massive shockwave to hit the spot everyone was in. But while they had to brace themselves for it, the one performing the finger technique just floated there without a worry in his mind.

“There the way is clear, well then did you make a decision?”

He asked while smiling at the scared cultivators below him, the question was posed but the people here didn’t know if he would take no for an answer.

## **Chapter 423**

*“There it is, the trail is fading. I need to hurry.”*

*Zhang Dong was speeding through the night. He had managed to clear things up with the Heavenly Crane Sect. After his little light show they were more than happy to let the group of Soaring Dragon Survivors go.*

*They were clearly mad at him but there was nothing to gain for them here. They could either let them go or fight the man that was the Azure Emperor’s brother. No one really wanted a war between any of the big three.*

*From what he could tell, his brother didn’t really care about this Heavenly Crane Sect that much. It seemed that he was confident in them being able to battle the other empires even on their own. Zhang Dong wasn’t that sure about that, not with Wang Long looming in the darkness.*

*The ladies were quite happy to leave but a bit confused about his motive. He wasn’t surprised about that as there wasn’t really anything he would gain from it. But to him they had suffered enough, he had also nabbed some of the treasures from their sect as collateral so it was not like he didn’t receive anything in return.*

*It was unknown to him where they were going, a branch family, maybe a secluded hiding spot only known by their sect? For this reason, he had to wait another twenty minutes to keep the Heavenly Crane Sect busy. With five nascent soul masters here, it would be hard for the granny to speed them away by herself. With a little warning to not chase after them, he then flew away while leaving the salty cultivators behind.*

*‘I hope they will be fine but that’s not something I should worry about.’*

*After one last thought towards the unlucky Soaring Dragon Sect members, he returned to the problem at hand. Wang Long’s trail was quite visible as the demonic Qi that he possessed was easy to follow now.*



*It took him through the vast lands of this empire thanks to which he had some time to sightsee. Even though he had gone through some adventures it was still astonishing just how large this world was.*

*Beasts, humans, and spirits inhabited every part of this lively world. While dangers lurked at every corner there were pockets of civilization more unique than the next one. While flying he could see some farmers, hunters, and people of the wild. Even though they were close to the place where the demonic explosion happened they were still going on with their lives as if nothing happened.*

*But his mood was soon soured by the knowledge of what was to come. Soon these lands would run red with the blood of these peaceful folk that had no power to protect themselves. Not everyone was a cultivator that knew the risks and was happy to take them.*

*The people that would suffer the most were the mortals. They would be ignored, the cultivators that once ruled them would quickly abandon their strongholds if an enemy that they could not handle arrived. They would not inform the locals about the impending doom, they would just flee first while probably hoping that the people that they used to rule would serve as a distraction.*

*Zhang Dong was aware of what would transpire. His sect was in the midst of claiming some strategic locations, cities with high walls or ones in mountains with natural protection were very sought after and prioritized.*

*He expected a lot of refugees to arrive at his lands after the fighting started so he also ordered his people to cultivate more food. Crops that were easy to grow and high in nutrition were prioritized over ones that could bring in more money. This could last for decades and the ones that had the means to sustain themselves would be the ones that survived.*

*'The trails lead to this city...It doesn't look like he traveled that far...'*

*The red trail brought him to one of the largest cities in the area which was quite close to ground zero. There was quite a high concentration of the red trail at a certain large building and when he arrived there he could still feel a faint demonic aura.*

*Of course, when he appeared in a city this populated he didn't go unnoticed. When up in the air he could feel about ten people traveling his way, this time around though there was no nascent soul elder with them.*

*"We greet that honored Golden Dragon, brother of the Azure Emperor!"*

*"Oh?"*

*Zhang Dong was a bit surprised, the people here knew who he was. Word of his appearance at the old Soaring Dragon Sect location must have spread through the land. This should have been somewhat confidential information but someone along the line must have blabbered.*

*"If senior informed us about his coming we would have prepared a feast worth of your noble name!"*

*"Ah, that won't be needed, I won't be staying long but you could help me by answering a couple of my questions."*

*"It would be a pleasure."*

*The elder that he was talking to was quite cordial and he continued to bow his head while Zhang Dong descended down to what looked like to be the crime scene.*

*"This demonic energy, it hasn't been fully cleared out... could you tell me what had transpired here?"*

*"With haste my lord!"*

*The old man was quick to turn to his helpers, it didn't seem that he was really aware of what had happened here. This was quite normal as not everyone kept tabs on everything that happened in their city. Not everyone had a faction system that was able to monitor even the smallest crime outbreaks.*

*They worked quite fast and within ten minutes they brought over someone that was a witness. It was a person in their early thirties, while bowing they gave him their part of the story.*

*Apparently, there was a strange explosion, people started running out of the hotel covered in puss and blisters. It was a horrifying display, the man shivered as he described how the people's faces started melting before everyone. Luckily the demonic technique that was used here didn't spread to people outside the building but anyone close was affected by this strange affliction.*

*"So that's what happened... your hand..."*

*"It's nothing my lord, pay no attention."*

*The man had a bandaged up hand but while the others couldn't see it, he could. There was invisible demonic Qi radiating from it along with Wang Long's unique Qi fingerprint.*

*"Take off those bandages."*

*"No my lord... you don't need..."*

*"Didn't you hear what the honored Golden Dragon said, you dare refuse!"*

*While Zhang Dong didn't want to sound like another cultivation nut, he had no time for games. It was clear that the man was trying to hide his arm from everyone here. The people that had escorted him here were quick to shout at the person with a low cultivation, clearly afraid of what Zhang Dong would do if he felt dishonored.*

*"There is no need for shouting."*

*He raised his hand and with a wave of his hand, he caused everyone to be silent. Then with another wave he made the witness float over towards him. His bandages were unwrapped by an invisible force and his disfigured arm was brought to light.*

*Some people that were looking from the side started gagging. The arm was black and the skin looked necrotic. There was a pungent smell along with blisters filled with pus, some were in the process of popping even now. The bandage seemed to be somewhat special as it kept the pungent smell from seeping out.*

*"I see, the demonic corruption has started progressing, if we don't do something about it, then this man will die..."*

*"N-no please my lord, show mercy I have a family to feed... please don't cut off my arm!"*

*The man started screaming as if Zhang Dong was going to butcher him on the spot. Demonic corruption was seen as a hard affliction to cure. One required special pills filled with divine energy which were quite costly and hard to come by.*

*Without them around, the easiest way would be to slice off the afflicted flesh as then the corruption would stop spreading. It seemed that someone was trying to help this man when they put the bandage on.*

*Lucky for him, Zhang Dong was probably the only person capable of instantly healing this mangled-up arm. Thus he pointed out with his finger and a gentle light flew out from it. When it collided with the demonic appendage the man that it belonged to was horrified. In his eyes, the scary elder was trying to murder him right there but death's sweet embrace didn't arrive.*

*Instead, he started feeling light-headed and the arm that had brought him nothing but pain started feeling numb. Soon the pain vanished and he could see the demonic energy vanishing.*

*"T-thank you senior!"*

*After his arm was healed the man broke down into tears. If Zhang Dong didn't move away he felt that the person would start kissing his feet.*

*"That's enough, you there."*

*"Y-yes honorable Golden Dragon?"*

*Zhang Dong pointed to one of the people that had guided him here. It seemed that he would need to stay here a bit longer. At first, it seemed that the demonic affliction didn't spread to other people but now it was clear that it was just slowly progressing. If he didn't do anything about it, many more people would slowly deteriorate like this man's arm.*

*"I want you to make a city-wide announcement, do you have some large gathering place? Use it to gather the people and I mean everyone, I don't care from where they come from, tell them that it's an order from the Golden Dragon!"*

*The only way to cure this was by his holy energy but it would take too long. He wasn't sure how much of this demonic Qi had spread and how many people were infected. The fastest way would be to gather everyone in one spot and then use his radiant aura to cure them.*

*Regretfully he was not strong enough to cover the whole city in it. His power had increased but not to the point of his healing arts being able to cure everyone here.*

*'Did that maniac do it on purpose to keep me here...'*

*He pondered if Wang Long was crafty enough to pull this off. His enemy didn't seem that intelligent and mostly driven by his emotions. The possibility was there as something like this was the perfect stopping block for someone with Zhang Dong's morals. Even though it wouldn't take him that long to cure it, he would be giving his opponent more time to hide.*

*'After I'm done with this, I'm going to kill that bastard...'*

*He clenched his fist while looking up to the place where the demonic aura was still stuck too. First, he needed to cleanse it and then the people that were afflicted by it.*

## **Chapter 424**

"This isn't going as well as I thought it would..."

"Oh, what was that oh honored senior?"

"Ah, nothing..."

Zhang Dong gave out a sigh after being stuck at another location. His goodwill was biting him in the behind once more as he was stuck healing more people along the way. He wasn't sure if Wang Long was doing this on purpose but it was certainly working in making him lag behind.

After getting out of that large city he continued to follow the trail of red. While most of the time it was a straight line in one direction, sometimes Wang Long rested in various settlements. Just as with the first city, some locations were then corrupted with demonic energy. He didn't outright flatten the large cities but there was always something for him to cleanse left behind.

It also seemed that his new enemy was using his skills all over the place. Sometimes he would find a trail of dead plants left behind Wang Long's flight path. Other times there were large holes in mountains that were clearly attacked by him. They all radiated demonic Qi at various levels which showed that Wang Long's proficiencies in the various techniques were all over the place.

He apparently had a hard time keeping the evil Qi from not affecting the area while also not being able to control it when performing attacks. This went all in line with what Zhang Dong thought. Wang Long was clearly over-relying on his own system, the key to his victory might be this as he took some time to practice his battle techniques after he lost the system store.

'That is if I ever reach him in time... I think I know where that bastard is going, this complicates things...'

"I'll bid you farewell then."

The group of people bowed before him while Zhang Dong flew away. After healing some villagers that were affected by demonic miasma, he was on his way towards a certain desolate area. It was a famous lawless zone that he had heard about when he was performing bounty work as his demon hunter persona.

It was in the far northern reaches of the empire. From what he knew, the first one had to go past a wide desert filled with monstrous sandworms. It was devoid of all life and covered in faint demonic mist. Past it was a large body of water named the sea of death.

It apparently had many sea creatures lurking in the deep. The water in itself was poisonous to the touch and constantly radiating demonic Qi. It was mostly impossible to get through it without some kind of flying treasure. Any ship would just be pulled down into the deep by monstrous creatures.

Then when someone was finally able to pass through these two natural barriers they would arrive on a large island. This was the true land of the demonic cultivators, it wasn't as big as the empire but would have enough space to house a few middle-sized sects.

It was of course in a constant perpetual war. The demonic cultivators weren't very agreeable with each other, they constantly fought for the spot of the next Demon Emperor. But with how little trust there was, it was almost impossible. Without someone dominating them all with pure might, it wasn't feasible.

'I guess I'm in luck... Wang Long is probably going to become the next Demon Emperor...'

While there weren't any potential evil emperor candidates before, now they had a prime candidate coming their way. Wang Long's achievement of clearing out the entire Soaring Dragon Sect was probably known by the people living there. Some of them would welcome him with open arms as their new leader but others would need to be convinced.

His counterpart would probably oblige with that. Killing every single demonic cultivator would not make him bat an eyebrow. The carnage might already be taking place as he flew there. This complicated things as Zhang Dong was losing one of his advantages, which was having an army.

While the demonic cultivators could not be trusted, there were ways to bind them. Evil contracts and rituals could secure their loyalty if Wang Long was smart enough to use them. With their lives on the lines, these monsters in human form would toss themselves into battle for their master. Unwilling as they might be, they would have no other choice.

During his travels he didn't just space out, he was still involved with his sects business. With his system, he could reach out to his faction members like Zhang Zhi who were in the process of taking back some strategic locations.

"Is Huo Qiang giving you any problems?"

"Elder Qiang has managed to compose himself as his position required."

"Oh? That's surprising, I guess he had grown up somewhat since those five years ago."

Zhang Dong reached out to his number one fan Zhang Zhi. He was informed that the Dark Palm Sect area had been liberated from the other sects. With the number of nascent soul masters and his new title, it seemed that the middle sized sects agreed to capitulate without putting up a fight.

Luckily the United Element Sect had a good reputation for being one of the better righteous sects in the Empire. The other sects actually somewhat believed that they wouldn't get stabbed in the back when they lowered their protective formations.

"Good, be sure to occupy the spirit stone mines. I want them to be quickly mined out to the last spirit stone! Don't forget to place at least one nascent soul master at that expedition ground."

With the old Dark Palm Sect lands in their grasp now, he could revisit that secret ground again. He wasn't sure if he would need to go through the test phase again but there were probably some secrets remaining there that were worth looking into. His sect had enough people to easily go through those tower defense stages now he believed that they would be able to get through it with minimal casualties.

After he ended the call with Zhi he continued with his chase, even though he knew where his opponent was going now this didn't mean that he didn't decide to go elsewhere. Maybe if he was lucky he could

get to Wang Long before he vanished into the dark criminally underbelly of the empire. Tracking his demonic Qi in that sea of evil energy would also be harder even with the help of the system.

But the journey there was long and even with his top speed, he would need another week to reach the border. So his journey continued and with it more affected people that Wang Long had gone through. With the constant slowdowns, a few more days were added to his journey.

Finally, he was now at the last large settlement closest to the demonic lands. This area was ruled by one of the more morally ambiguous sects. It wasn't that evil sects were banned from existing on the entire continent, only when they gorged themselves too much on the evil arts were there actually problematic.

"Wait honored Golden Dragon let us guide you to the evil lands!"

Just like with the other places this one was somewhat affected by Wang Long's evil Qi. After such a long journey Zhang Dong was feeling somewhat tired. Even though at his level he didn't need to sleep at all, the stress from the impending doom was getting to him. At the question of one of the cultivators he just nodded, with them in tow he headed for what was supposed to be the entrance to the land ruled by evil and corruption, the Eternal Dark.

He wasn't really sure about this small group of cultivators that were coming with him, but they were probably just trying to kiss his behind as always. To them, the brother of the Azure Emperor was a nice ticket into a higher position. Regretfully for them, Zhang Dong had no time for politics. While they were talking he just continued to mumble and nod while just looking at his system screen and preparing for the coming battles.

"So, this is the desert?"

Finally, after some time had passed they arrived at the first barrier, the desert.

"Yes my lord, this is the Evil Desert of the Damned, various demonic beasts and spirits wonder about these dead lands. Are you sure you wish to go beyond it?"

"Evil spirits? That won't be a problem... but what's that..."

While looking at the vast empty land that was covered with sand and storms, he spotted something. At first he thought it was just a regular storm but it looked somewhat strange by how it remained stationary.

"Does the senior need an explanation?"

One of the random cultivators that he picked up along the way asked him after seeing Zhang Dong start into the distance. With a nod of confirmation, the man continued to speak.

"The maps aren't very detailed but this place is very close to the northern edge of the empire. That torrent of dark energy in the distance is the great divide, no one knows what is beyond it but some speculate that it's just another zone created by the evil cultivators."

The man continued with the explanation but Zhang Dong knew well what was behind this wall of energy. One of the other empires was there but for now, they remained behind the barrier. Wang Long had taken one of the more roundabout paths towards his destination as he needed to go to the northeast if he wanted to reach his true destination now.

“I will take my leave then, you can go.”

He didn't really have time to thank these people, he already cured some of their own so he didn't feel like he owed them anything. The people just bowed while slowly floating back but as he was about to plunge himself into the desert he felt something.

His eyes were drawn back to the barrier between the empires. It wasn't much but he felt a decrease in spiritual energy and the storms filled with a mish-mash of elemental energies started to die down.

“No... it couldn't be...”

This didn't look good but he thought that there was more time. To check he opened up his system map to look for something. His visit to the Azure Emperor gave him knowledge of the spots where some of the bridges should appear. He quickly overlayed these spots against his map and to his dismay this was one of the locations where a link between Empires was supposed to be formed.

“What is that... this has never happened before...”

The small group of cultivators that were with him spotted the change in the storms as well. The wall of energy that would even mangle up a nascent soul master started to subside. It was as if the sea of energy was parting in the middle to create a path.

“Shit... I can feel something... it's approaching.”

He looked at the group of people that was with him, they were still staring at the phenomenon taking place. Zhang Dong on the other hand knew that there was a potential war battle ahead of him. Thus he checked his spatial ring and brought out his sword which he placed on his hip for now, first he needed to see, maybe if he was lucky these invaders wouldn't be bloodthirsty.

## **Chapter 425**

‘Are those people? They look kind of off...’

Zhang Dong was forced to wait as the chaotic storms of elemental energies slowly cleared out. The path that was left was about one kilometer in width. When he strained his eyes he could see some strange flying objects coming his way, it was clear that one of the bridges between the empires had opened up.

‘Is this the first one... or are there more appearing now?’

He had no way of checking for this information, probably the only one that could answer his question was the Azure Emperor. They did possess a magical map of the entire empire in that one secret location. While the Long Clan was added as a side faction, the people there didn't trust him enough for him to communicate with them.

The only person with an approval rating over 50% was the Azure Emperor. But even he had clear doubts with Zhang Dong, their relationship had just started which was understandable. Even between family members, the number would mostly cap out at 60%.

Even with his enhanced vision, he had trouble picking out their forms but then, he finally saw them. From afar they looked like normal humanoids but then the large teeth became apparent.

The person that he spotted was about two meters in height and his skin was dark yellow. His hands were covered in wraps and he was wearing something similar to a tank top shirt. Thanks to this he could see the exposed bone spikes that were coming out of his arms.

Then there was the face, the man had no hair at all instead there were some kind of strange dark bumps. His mouth even when not opened showed off a large amount of sharp yellow teeth that grind against each other constantly. It didn't seem that this person was quite able to close it as the abundance of teeth made it impossible.

'Is it some kind of demonic cultivator? I can't sense any evil energy from them... it feels more like Dao of earth.'

There were other humanoids of this kind there that varied in appearance somehow. They all lacked hair and had those spiky bone appendages protruding from their bodies. He even spotted some that had a more feminine shape but still had no hair on their body. The closer they got the more they radiated earthen energy and the skin looked dried up and leathery.

"W-what is that? Why are those people coming from beyond the wall? Quickly send a message to the sect, we might be under attack!"

The people from the sect that he came from finally noticed that there was someone moving through this parted storm. From Zhang Dong's perspective, their sect would probably take the brunt of this attack and by the energies, some of these attackers were radiating, it wouldn't be easy to defend.

The flying objects that they came from varied. Some ships were clearly made from bones of beasts while other were actually living ones. There was one in particular that stood out, a large flying worm that had some kind of strange building on its back. This creature radiated might at the level of a nascent soul cultivator and there were more coming from that building.

'They don't look like the type that would be willing to talk things out, but I shouldn't judge a book by its cover...'

Zhang Dong was willing to give these people the benefit of the doubt. Though they might look like monsters out of a horror movie, it might have just been due to how their part of the empire was created. Maybe there were other ways to go about this war, there was no rule that he needed to defeat every empire.

Some could be willing to work things out and not shed the blood of others. The cultivator types were motivated by resources that were all finite. If there was a way to share some of them to evade conflict then he was willing to haggle a bit.

Regretfully it would quickly become apparent that at least this group wasn't willing to talk. While he was waiting for them to get closer the people from the sect that escorted him here made a break for it.

They could clearly feel the pressure that some of the beings here were giving off and decided that fleeing was the best option for survival. Contacting their sect was one thing but surviving this was another. They didn't even look Zhang Dong's way when they decided on this as he was clearly only an outsider.



But the people that were approaching from this bridge between empires were quick to notice this. The person that he noticed at the front turned his head towards the group of fleeing cultivators.

He moved his hand towards his own shoulder and quickly yanked out one of those spikes that was sticking out. This bone spike increased in size in a matter of moments and soon it was clear to Zhang Dong what he was about to do.

The toothy person then took out a spear-throwing position. The right arm that he was holding this bone spear with started getting bigger. His muscles bulged out to strange proportions before he launched this projectile towards the fleeing group of cultivators.

Once thrown the bone spear produced a sonic boom and was quickly closing the gap. They clearly heard the resounding boom behind them but when they turned around it was already closing in on them. Before it fully reached them the spike burst into many slightly smaller ones, each one heading for a cultivator's head.

"N-no!"

They cried out in horror as they tried to protect their bodies but these bone spears seemed to home in on them. Luckily for them, there was a person nearby that could protect them.

Not long after the initial sonic boom was heard it was followed by another strange sound. A certain white-robed cultivator appeared right out of nowhere between this small group and the flying projectiles. Without raising his hand he let them collide with the spirit shield that was surrounding his body.

The bone material was quite sturdy but even it wasn't able to pierce through Zhang Dong's natural defenses. They crumbled into tiny pieces that bounced off to the sides, when they collided with the earth below they caused small explosions.

'Hm... about the strength of a middle stage nascent soul master, nothing I can't handle.'

Zhang Dong just stood there and gave out a sigh. He had a decision to make, either he continued on his previous journey to follow Wang Long. If he did that, he would probably have to abandon this sect. They would probably all perish under the onslaught of these unfamiliar beings.

Then there was option two, in which he would remain here and hold them off. He wasn't sure if there was more of them coming but normally a scouting troop would be sent out first in situations like this. Only after clearing out a path for the main forces' arrival would they venture forth through this bridge in full force.

'If I take care of the scouting party... they might halt their advance for a while, it would also give these guys time to evacuate. Would I have been able to get to Wang Long if I didn't get distracted...'

This was a truth that he would have to live with now. Maybe if he ignored the damage that Wang Long had done along the way, he could have gotten to him before these people arrived. Now he opened a path to more trouble.

'No, I can just look forward, I knew that I couldn't save everyone.'

He turned his head towards the group of people behind him.

“What are you waiting for, get out of here if you don’t want to die and pass on this message to the other sects, the empires beyond the barrier have come to take outlands, now begins the time of war.”

The other sects had no idea who these people were, if he didn’t inform them of the other empires they might think that it’s just another demonic sect or something.

“Empires from beyond? War? What does elder...”

“Stop talking and go, I can’t protect you and hold them off at the same time.”

The cultivator that he was talking to, which was the main elder, quickly shut his mouth. Without replying he quickly zoomed into the distance and the people with him did the same.

As they retreated, there was another large booming sound from the bridge.

When he turned around the sky was slowly getting blacked out by a large amount of these bony projectiles. All of them were aimed at him instead of the group that was fleeing.

“You guys are quite the impatient lot...”

He at least thought that after blocking one of the projectiles they would think twice about attacking the cultivator capable of just bouncing it off with his aura. It seemed that these beings were as bloodthirsty as they looked.

‘Wish I had my dragon with me...’

Without his soul beast to perform large energy attacks, it was up to him. Luckily after paying a visit to the other world, he had learned ways of producing magical attacks with his spiritual energy. He was now able to use some of the ambient spiritual energy in the world to save up on energy.

Thus he reached out with his hand forward and quickly produced a magical diagram in the air. It was in the shape of a circle and had various strange symbols that looked like runes on it. This magical circle quickly started to spin around while giving out lightning energy, before the rain of fast-flying arrows hit him, the magical spell erupted forward.

A massive blast of lightning energy flew forward in a wide cone. The moment this energy collided with these bony spears they started crumbling under its might. The conal attack didn’t travel far as Zhang Dong’s focus was on defense first. Before that group of elders made a run for it, he felt like it would be best to not let any of these projectiles through.

This time around, the scale of his technique was quite grand. It seemed that these attackers were not fully braindead berserkers, after he managed to protect himself a second time. The large flying creature halted its advance and all the other flying ships also came to a halt. It was clear that now they were taking him as a serious threat.

‘Are the big boys coming out to play?’

After the bone rain subsided he started feeling beings with stronger spiritual energy emerging from the stronghold that that huge worm creature was carrying. While Zhang Dong was somewhat confident in his own abilities, he was not sure where his limits were at this moment.

His cultivation realm was quite new and he did not know if these beings followed the same rules as people from this empire. It was time to test if he was really ready for this coming war.

## Chapter 426

‘They do have me outnumbered quite a bit, that is... if I allow them to get here...’

Zhang Dong floated in the air while the smoke subsided. The bone spears that were thrown his way were now nothing but smoke. These organic projectiles produce a strange-looking smoke after their destruction but it didn’t seem that it would be lethal even if he let his spirit shield down.

It seemed that the diplomatic approach was off the table, perhaps if he demonstrated some of his might to these attackers they would deem it smart to retreat. Some luck was at his side, even though this bridge was about one kilometer in width there wasn’t that much space for this army to move.

“You can’t move to the sides, now can you?”

A decision was made to produce a large wide-area attack. Before they could attack him again Zhang Dong’s aura exploded. Golden lightning bolts started to coil themselves around his arms and slowly traveled towards both his hands.

He slowly opened up his hands, his fingers spreading apart while a small orb of light appeared between them. The more he concentrated the larger this light became, from a tiny dot it expanded into something the size of a basketball. The energy was hard to contain but as he charged up he continued to compress this round sphere of light.

The cultivators that were fleeing could feel it, something was happening. Most of them were too afraid to look back, but even without doing so they could see the light bursting from behind them.

“T-this... what kind of terrible attack is that... we must flee! We will surely perish if we don’t get far enough!”

While Zhang Dong was mostly paying attention to his attack, out of the corner of his eye he could see his targets reacting to this turn of events. While they were quick to attack him beforehand, it seemed that they were now scared. Some of them even started to quickly increase their speed to get past the tunnel, it was clear that they were intelligent enough to know what his intention was.

Some of them were in luck as Zhang Dong did need some time to charge up this attack but most of them were still stuck in that bridge. It was somewhat in his favor that he appeared in this location at this point in time, it now gave him the perfect opportunity to blast these invaders.

The sphere of energy was now rumbling and pushing against his palms. He had trouble holding it in place, the energy wanted to burst through. But, this wasn’t the end of his technique, before he released it he looked forward. His eyes glowed and along with this sheen a magic circle formed in front.

This magic circle was followed by another larger one and then more. They numbered about a hundred magic circles that formed a sort of compact cone that was aimed at this gap. Only when the circles were formed did he point this orb of spiritual energy forward to release a blast of concentrated spiritual Qi.

It started off small but when it collided with the magic circle the ray of golden energy increased in size. All of these circles could slightly increase the techniques might, the more the beam traveled forward the

larger it became. When it reached the last circle the beam of highly concentrated Qi shot out, its width was enough to fully encompass the one-kilometer wide gap.

A torrent of force exploded, it submerged everything in a golden glow that was a combination of Zhang Dong's holy and lightning Dao. The screams of his enemies were quickly silenced by the massive sound of explosions that followed after.

Zhang Dong's hands trembled slightly as he continued to pour all of his spiritual energy into this attack. His wrists were touching together while he pointed his palms at the magical circles that continued to enhance this ranged attack.

From the outside where the group of fleeing cultivators was, a massive hurricane sprung forth. It was as if a nuclear explosion went off in the distance. Any plant life and trees that were there were uprooted in a matter of seconds.

It didn't take long, he wasn't able to keep pumping out Qi without any end. After about fifteen seconds at the maximal output, he started to feel weaker. He couldn't just gas himself out at the first attack thus he started to end it, the bright light started to subside and the radiance vanished after half a minute of the initial explosion of energy.

As always there was now a giant dust cloud covering the whole area. His beam attack had grazed some of the earth below and created a large crater in its wake. His aim was true as he managed to push his attack into the middle of this wide passage.

While the bridge was one kilometer in width it also possessed a ceiling. The attackers couldn't just flee upwards to evade the attack and after the smoke had cleared he was glad to see that he had managed to deliver a devastating blow to the beings that attacked him.

'That's quite the devastation...'

This was probably the most devastating attack that he had ever delivered, the casualties were immense but without his old system, he would not be able to capitalize on points.

Just a moment ago the tunnel had been swarmed by many flying objects big and small, now, on the other hand, only one remained. It was the gigantic flying worm that was similar to the native sandworms living in this area. Even though it was there, it was clearly injured.

Its body that was obsidian was now covered in some strange green blood. Its front area was missing half of its head and some of those huge teeth were out in the open. Regretfully the fortress that it was carrying had managed to survive but it was also in quite a bad state.

While he couldn't see it well, he was sure that the cultivators that were on the giant work had used all of their might and resources to somehow protect themselves from this wide area blast.

Even though he wasn't able to kill them all, this wasn't a concentrated attack, in his mind, it only proved that his opponents wouldn't fare too well against him. If they barely took his long-ranged technique, how would they fare in a close-quarters combat situation?

'They didn't give me much of a choice but what will they do now...'

At this point, he wished that they would just retreat after his first 'warning' shot but instead, a blast of yellowish energy traveled his way. It came from within the crumbling fortress that was on that flying worm that was somehow still holding itself together.

'Won't give up that easily huh?'

Without thinking much about it, Zhang Dong propelled himself to the side. There was something about this yellowish energy that he didn't like. It flew past him and collided with the soil behind him. While they were close to a desert at this side there still was some plant life.

But the moment this beam of light collided with the grass, he noticed a strange effect. At first, he expected the ray of light to produce some kind of explosion, instead, it caused the plant life to be petrified.

It seemed that his opponents had some tricks up their sleeves. Now instead of bone spears, he was pelted by these strange yellowish rays that could turn things to stone. Without wanting to check if he could resist this strange effect, he continued to dodge.

From what he could tell, he was getting assaulted by multiple attackers. They were quickly approaching him and he knew that they wouldn't allow him to fire off another one of these blasts.

"I guess you don't want to talk this out huh?"

Zhang Dong called out to the beings that were approaching him, they had abandoned the large worm and quickly pushed through the bridge to arrive on this side.

"The outlander is strong but not strong enough!"

One of the strange toothy beings shouted out. His voice was somewhat hoarse and carried a lot of animosity behind it. It did seem that these people had some intelligence but were clearly motivated by violence. Surprisingly they spoke the same language as the people from this empire, which meant that they clearly understood what he had said but decided to ignore him.

What was left of the army with thousands of warriors and flying ships, where six mad-looking humanoid monsters. They were all above the early nascent soul stage with their leader being comparable to a great circle master.

'This cultivation is somewhat strange...'

While he could feel strength radiating from these people, it was more compact. The way they bolted towards him and used spears from their bodies as weapons was also telling.

'Body refiners?'

While Zhang Dong was a dual cultivator with both body and Qi, most people stuck to one. These beings clearly had strong bodies, their skin looked hard as rock and they could even produce weapons from their bodies that would be considered high-rank weapons.

Even now as he was examining them, these monsters were grasping for those bone appendages and converting them to weapons. One of his enemies created a spear, while another dual blades. Another one produced a bow that looked like a combination of ligaments and cartilage for the string part.

'I see, after seeing my ranged technique they decided to close the distance. They do have some battle sense at least.'

He had to give it to them. They quickly identified that Zhang Dong was a strong opponent with some powerful ranged attacks. While they were body refiners their strength lied mostly in close-range hand-to-hand combat. Regretfully for them, Zhang Dong was a dual refiner with quite the hard metal-like body that wouldn't be easily broken.

It was now six against one but he could feel other beings on the back of that large creature that was still moving forward. He wasn't sure but his instincts were telling him that the worm had some meaning. It would be best if it didn't manage to get through the tunnel, if this was really just a scouting party then perhaps that worm and fortress were part of a base that these monsters were trying to assemble.

"So, you are determined to die here?"

He asked once more but he was not given a reply. Instead, he could see a change in one of the monster's eyes. It was a strange sight as the middle of its pupil opened up and the strange yellowish ray of petrification was shot out.

Only now he realized that this was not a beam of light but instead some kind of strange liquid that these people shot out of their bodies through their eyes.

"That's kind of gross...I'm not the kind of guy that likes to get covered in strange eye liquid on the first date..."

Zhang Dong was quick to dodge this high-pressure eye attack but the moment he did, his opponents pounced at him from all sides. It was finally time to unsheathe his sword, even though these people were high-level body refiners he was confident in being able to cut them down.

## **Chapter 427**

"What's happening, what was that explosion of spiritual energy? Did the Golden Dragon get angered by anyone?"

"No Patriarch, invaders!"

"What nonsense? Are the demonic cultivators invading us?"

"No, it's something else they come from beyond the divide, the Golden Dragon decided to intercept their forces he referred to them as ones from another empire, he spoke of a great war coming!"

"Slow down, explain yourself!"

The group of elders that had escorted Zhang Dong out of the sect had managed to return. They were all sweating bullets as they even used forbidden techniques to increase their speeds to run away. The large technique that he had used was seen even all the way here and the ensuing shockwave had even destroyed some of the buildings that belonged to the common people living in this city.

While these elders had given a transmission that they were being attacked, the people from their sect did not truly believe that some enemies from another empire appeared. Only now after they had arrived and were behind their grand formation they could somewhat give a proper report.

“So... you are saying that these beings attacked you and the Azure Emperor’s brother is now facing them in battle?”

“Yes, Patriarch!”

Like in any other sect, they were now discussing their next move. After the large explosion of spiritual energy, they had no idea what happened. It was a really tremendous amount of Qi and they feared that the Golden Dragon might have already been dead.

The Patriarch found himself in a dilemma. It was as if he was between a rock and a hard place. From one side there was the Azure Emperor that could blame his sect for his brother’s demise if he died. Would he eradicate them if he found out that they didn’t go aid him and just left him to some savage attackers?

On the other side, there were the unknown attackers, they seemed strong enough to make someone like the Golden Dragon use a powerful attack like that. They could not have been normal enemies and it was clear that the Long clan that this Golden Dragon belonged to knew something. The whole bit about them being from another empire and that a war was approaching could have been actually true.

“Damn out bad luck... call out to all the elders, everyone get ready we might be going into battle! We do not know who these people are, but we must heed the Golden Dragon’s words, if this is a force from another empire more could come! Ready the flying vessels, if they dare invade our lands we will answer them with violence!”

While the Patriarch made preparations for a bloody battle, Zhang Dong was still battling it out with the smaller group of beings that were on the level of nascent soul cultivators.

“GAH...”

“You guys don’t know when to quit!”

A toothy head went flying after being slashed from its body by a sword covered in golden energy. The first ones to suffer a casualty from this six-man group were the attackers from the other empire. They made the assumption that their soft skin opponent wouldn’t be able to compete with their hardened bodies at close range. They soon discovered that his body was no less softer than the sharp sword that he was wielding.

It didn’t take him long to kill the first one but out of the corner of his eye, he was still looking at the giant worm in the distance. After his attack, it had slowed down significantly but it was still going. He feared that on that fortress that it was carrying was some kind of teleportation formation, perhaps after his enemies had enough time, they would be able to call forth more of their brethren.

‘I guess it’s time to test that swordsmanship of mine.’

While one of his opponents was dead, it was only the weakest. The five that stood now against him would probably not make the mistake of taking him lightly anymore. But there was one thing that Zhang Dong knew about these sorts of battles and buy how these monster-like beings were fighting, he was going to exploit it.

One of them charged at him with a bone blade in his hand, it descended with lightning speed onto his head. This wasn’t his only problem, at the same time a spear user decided to perform a quick thrust

from behind. Their aim was precise and it only took a fraction of a second for the weapons to reach their targets.

But after another large explosion, the spear user's face contorted into confusion. He felt that he had pierced through someone's flesh but it was too similar to someone of his own race. Then when he looked at his bone spear, he noticed that it didn't go through its intended target. Instead, it slipped under Zhang Dong's armpit and pierced the shoulder of his own ally.

Instinctively he tried to quickly yank the weapon back to perform another attack but when he tried he was unable to. It felt like this spear was being held back by some kind of vice that was connected to some kind of huge mountain, he could not budge it at all.

To the beings doing this mistake would cost him dearly as when he was struggling with pulling out his spear, his opponent didn't wait. Instead, he found him using that glowing sword. The blade's aim was true and it connected with his abdomen. This wasn't over as the moment he was pierced by the sword a massive torrent of energy was injected into his body electrocuting him from the inside.

Zhang Dong smirked a bit as he yanked out his blade from the being that was behind him. He had turned the disadvantage into an advantage. These people were very similar to high-level cultivators from this empire.

This of course brought a certain amount of status. Just as he thought, a person of high standing and power would not be able to work in a team too well. Even though they had him outnumbered five to one, he could still win by using their own allies against them.

The attack might have seemed coordinated but in reality, both of the fighters weren't used to each other at all. The strike that was coming from behind him was used to his advantage. He just needed to shift a bit to the side and the dual-wielding monster from his front side was pierced by an attack he did not expect.

'They have no idea how to fight in a group.'

This was the biggest weakness of cultivators that focused on themselves too much. They had no idea how to work with others. In such a confrontation where they needed to work together to combat a common foe, they would falter.

While the enemy that he electrocuted started falling he moved quickly to the side. The person pierced by the spear was momentarily stunned after being hit by his own ally which gave him ample time to perform his attack and dodge when those dual blades came his way.

"And so it was four!"

Zhang Dong shouted while encompassing his entire body with a golden sheet of energy. This energy diverged towards his shoulders and back area. Soon after two golden hands sprung out, each one of them holding a sword of light. The white blade that he was holding in his right, quickly doubled as he was now ready for battle.

He tossed himself into the fray while his opponents flew at him. With four arms and four blades in hand, he found himself able to combat even four nascent soul-like beings at once. But the longer the fight



continued the harder it became, even though these enemies weren't used to fighting with each other, Zhang Dong knew that with each passing second they would improve.

The fight turned brutal, after two of their allies had fallen before Zhang Dong the remaining four seemed to go into some kind of strange berserked state. Their muscles bulged out and their already large bodies increased in size. It was clearly some kind of technique that these beings all had, they had clearly increased in specs but this didn't mean that they would be victorious.

Regretfully the invaders had clearly overestimated their own close-ranged capabilities. From four there were soon three and not long after only two combatants remained. No one could have expected for someone like Zhang Dong to be there just waiting to greet their forces. But there he was and soon he would be the only man left standing.

"You put up a gallant fight but ... you have no way of winning, give up now and I might spare your life, that is if you answer some of my questions..."

Zhang Dong looked at the toothy monster, one of his arms was missing as he had cleaved it from the shoulder down. Instead of red blood, it was green and even as they spoke the cut-off limb was slowly healing and reassembling itself.

After facing off against these new enemies he was now aware of some differences between the races. They were clearly not humans and could regrow their limbs. They had a similar organ to a heart but it was in a different location. The best way to kill them was to chop off their heads, as humans they still possessed brains in the same location and could not live without them.

"You are strong outlander, but you will not stop us! We are many, we are the swarm, we will feast on your flesh!"

The monster could communicate but he certainly didn't want to be taken in for questioning. While Zhang Dong would rather bring this person in to get some answers, there were more crucial things to take care of.

While he was distracted by these six enemies the huge worm had managed to crawl its way to this side. Its head was now slowly sinking into the ground right next to the entrance as it seemed that it wanted to bury itself here. The only question was, would the fortress go underground with it or would it remain outside like some sort of temporary fort.

The man with more teeth than jaw tossed himself towards Zhang Dong. A fast exchange of two masters brought along another explosion. Two of them passed each other in a blink of an eye.

A small gash appeared along Zhang Dong's cheek. It was as if someone took a nail and ran it through a car. This scar burst into golden flames soon after as it started to heal up, but the wound on his opponent was much deeper.

"Damn idiot should have surrendered..."

The monster was cleaved in two exact halves which slowly parted in mid-air before descending towards the ground.

"What is that thing doing..."

Zhang Dong quickly turned to the giant worm which managed to bury itself underground. The large castle-like structure on its back now looked as if it was built here. The moment it was in place he felt some kind of strange vibration that burst forth from it.

Without thinking about it he tossed himself towards this strange construction. It looked like this structure was attempting to do something and before it could be fully activated he needed to destroy it.

## **Chapter 428**

“I don’t like the look of that... I need to hurry!”

Zhang Dong’s form blurred as he increased his speed and bolted towards the large fortress in the distance. After the strange worm burrowed into the sandy earth the fortress began giving out a strange buzzing sound. It didn’t take him long to realize what was happening as a beam of light shot out from the middle tower of this fortress.

This beam shot up for several kilometers before splitting up. It was then that he truly knew these beings were trying to set up a protective formation here. This beam started forming a dome and probably when it connected with the ground it would be hard to enter.

He was somewhat able to measure the power of this protective shield that was being formed. Even for him, it wouldn’t be that easy to break through and this was probably not the end of their plan. If he was correct in his theory, the main plan for these attackers was to create a base.

To establish such a base in this world of his a protective barrier was only one component. The second one would be a large enough force to keep any opponents at bay. This could be achieved in two ways here.

Either they believed that the shield would last long enough for more reinforcements to come through the bridge, or they had some kind of teleportation array in the fortress that would soon be activated. If they could summon more of their kind here, then perhaps they would be able to defend this position.

Zhang Dong’s figure blurred and his after image was leftover behind the dome shield that quickly descended down. His true form on the other hand made it just in time. The barrier forced itself down into the ground and it was clear that tunneling under it would not work.

“Made it and here comes the welcoming committee, they still had this many left?”

The moment he burst into the range of this strange fortress the guards that were stationed here started gathering. He wasn’t afraid though, the quality of these warriors was nowhere near the ones that he faced outside, that is beside one.

What ensued was quite the one-sided slaughter. These toothy beings tossed themselves at him like madmen while screaming out in rage. But with a big difference in power, Zhang Dong only needed to swing his hand once to produce enough spiritual energy to make his attackers explode before they could get anywhere near him.

They still managed to slow him down and he had a suspicion that this was their aim. He could feel that inside of that fortress there was some kind of higher power along with strange energy fluctuations that were similar to what he felt during the times a teleportation gate opened up.

“Get out of my way.”

He bolted forward while the toothy enemies tried to stop him but with such a big difference in strength, they were all sent flying to the side. Their flesh was burnt by the holy flames that surrounded his body and turned to paste due to how fast he was rocketing forward.

Even then, the monster-like people did not stop coming. It was as if they were mindless drones with no mind of their own, their only purpose stopping him before they could activate the teleportation device inside.

After a moment Zhang Dong collided with a large gate made out of bones and strange dark flesh. It folded almost instantly as it was also not able to stop his full powered-up approach but as he was getting closer to his destination, he was forced to protect his head.

This time around, instead of a bony spear a large hammer flew his way. At first, he saw no reason to block or to move out of the way but the moment it collided with his flame barrier he had to perform an evasive maneuver to the side. The large hammer when colliding with his Qi was able to somehow erase it from existence and continue to fly unperturbed by it. It was clear that this weapon had some strange properties.

“Who the hell are you? The last boss?”

Zhang Dong felt the weapon graze his cheek as he utilized one of his movement skills that let him change his position. His joints and body cried out in pain at the sudden movement but with some of his healing arts, he was able to quickly mend the tears to his ligaments that ensued.

The large hammer that looked like a two-handed weapon made an arc and quickly returned to the person that used it. Quite a large one appeared, this one was clearly superior to its species as it was a lot larger at about three meters tall. Its body was covered in even more spikes but the most characteristic thing about it was the large dark horn coming from its forehead.

“You shall die here outlander, you will make a fine addition to my collection!”

The large being growled while talking, its strange-sounding deep voice would probably make most cultivators shiver in fright. Zhang Dong on the other hand wasn't that impressed but it seemed that this opponent was more at his level.

“You'll probably won't just move out of the way and let me destroy the thing that's behind that large gate?”

Without answering the monster lowered his head slightly while pointing with the horn towards Zhang Dong. The moment that horn was aligned with his head, he quickly stepped to the side. In a moment a ray of concentrated energy collided with his afterimage and with the spot that his face was in just a fraction of a second ago.

This was the second time he was forced to evade and it was time to fight back. When the ray of dark energy passed by him, he raised his hand and pointed out with his finger. A ray of concentrated Qi flew forward while spinning around like a drill while pointing at the monster's head.

His opponent raised its weapon to intercept this shining force and like a truck flew towards Zhang Dong's position. It was clear that this weapon would be a problem, its Qi canceling properties caused his finger attack to be dispersed without causing any damage at all.

After a couple of exchanges it was clear that this monster wouldn't be going down as easily as the other six that he faced. Both of them jumped back and stood still while glaring at each other. Zhang Dong looked at his fist that collided with the hammer the monster was holding. It was really hard, he didn't feel that he would be able to crush it with his current strength.

Even though his body was more metal than flesh, he could not keep his knuckles from sustaining mini-fractures. Without his healing capabilities, it would have probably not looked too good for him. Without being able to surround his body with a layer of Qi to further protect it, he was receiving some damage.

'But, not like this creature is doing much better.'

He evaluated the situation and noticed that there was something off about his opponent. The horn was giving out some strange energy signatures and the longer the fight took, the more the monster's body started to darken. There was a patch of unhealthy-looking black skin going from its forehead and increasing slowly as the fight continued.

'Is it using some forbidden technique to boost its stats? Or is that something else...'

There was no way for him to know this opponent's biology. It was not a regular cultivator but from his perspective, his opponent was slowly running out of time. The problem was that he was also. This being was probably only trying to buy some time before some reinforcements arrived, if they did he might have to retreat.

"Sorry, but I don't have time for this..."

When his Qi and body weren't enough, it was time to use his sword arts. A golden sword appeared in his arm; its radiance caused this whole area to become as bright as day.

At first, the monster wasn't impressed, its own weapon was clearly superior to the small flimsy longsword that Zhang Dong was holding. But then it felt something, the radiant glow died down, and instead a strange humming noise was heard.

To someone untrained, it would be a mystery but to this monster it was apparent. He was against someone that had mastered the blade to an astonishing extent. His hand that was holding his hammer trembled, not from fear but because his weapon started to vibrate as well. It was as if the superior treasure that he was holding was afraid of the blade that stood before it.

Zhang Dong didn't make any flamboyant movements, he just grasped the hilt of the sword with both his hands while holding it above his head. It was as if he was trying to perform a practice swing. But to his opponent, it didn't look that way.

It was as if time stopped for him, instead of the small human that he was fighting he saw an image of a giant. It was as if he was holding a sword as big as a mountain above his head and it was clearly going to be swung his way. Out of panic, he bolted forward, in his mind the only way to survive was to kill before he was killed.

In a fraction of a second it happened, Zhang Dong swung down his sword while unleashing a torrent of sword energy. The monster as previously tried to swing its hammer towards the focal point of this attack. Both of them collided, but this time instead of the hammer canceling out what was thrown its way and crumbled instead.

While the weapon was able to cancel out spiritual Qi, it could not do the same against concentrated sword intent. This Dao of the sword worked on different principles and continued to go forward along with this practice like swing that Zhang Dong was performing.

The being along with its hammer found itself being sliced apart into two perfectly equal parts. And as the image before its eyes parted to the sides he saw a somewhat gassed-out Zhang Dong.

The fortress before him was not better off, it was sliced apart by this simple move that integrated his whole sword Dao into a single swing. While the move was powerful it was hard to use and perhaps if instead of going towards him like an idiot the enemy would have dodged to the side, he would have been unable to use it.

‘Shit... I don’t think I can use this one repeatedly...’

Zhang Dong almost tripped forward, both his hands shaking. His body was crying out for help as he felt that some of the bones in both his hands had broken the moment he finished the swing.

‘I don’t have time to stand here...’

A golden sheen surrounded his body as he started to heal himself, while he defeated this monster it wasn’t quite over...

## **Chapter 429**

“I guess it stopped when I cut it...”

Zhang Dong gave out a sigh of relief as he discovered that he had managed to destroy the device that was used for teleportation. After cleaving his last opponent in half he continued deeper into the large fortress that was now sliced into two parts.

This wasn’t all, the huge worm beast that had carried this thing all the way here was also dead. It wasn’t giving out any life signs and his spiritual sense was also not picking out anything. Everything that was here was now dead and he was the last survivor.

Only thanks to surrounding himself with a barrier of golden flames that could burn away anything that came close to him was he successfully able to not be covered in blood and guts.

The carnage remained outside as it seemed that everyone that was here decided to rush him. The reason for it was probably the huge enemy with the hammer behind them, they could either die in battle with him or get turned to minced meat by him instead.

Now he was looking at something that seemed like a teleportation gate. With the help of his Ai helper, he was able to successfully identify this alien technology.

‘This looks somewhat organic...’

Zhang Dong picked out a strange tube from the ground that was connected to the teleportation gate. At first, he thought it was a power cable, or for fuel but inside of it was some strange green liquid that seemed more like blood.

‘This almost looks like organs and veins... I can even feel some faint life coming from this, but it’s fading quickly...’

The battle mostly took place in the courtyard of this large fortress. The huge one-horned boss also charged at him before he could really enter into the whole structure. His sword strike left it destroyed and after looking around for a moment he found a certain room.

“Is this a heart?”

On the ground, there was some kind of deflated organ covered in more green goop. It was radiating his sword intent and was clearly damaged by him. This seems like the power room but it had collapsed unto itself along with most of the fortress.

Without thinking too much he used his spiritual energy to raise the rubble around this section. The damaged organ was then floated over and deposited into his spatial ring. Now was not the time to examine these things but he needed to take some samples and have his sect members examine them later.

To his surprise, these monsters didn’t seem to have any spatial technology. He didn’t discover any rings or bags that could carry more items. Maybe they didn’t feel like they needed anything like pills and more weapons to carry around if they could produce them from their own bodies?

The boss that he had sliced in half was also deposited into his spatial ring along with a few other body samples that weren’t too damaged. There was also a strange sphere on a platform made from bones and with some of those veins attached to it. He could feel some strange energies coming from it, thus it also made its way into his belongings.

“How did they build this thing... did they disassemble some beasts or somehow grow this organic mass?”

This place was strange indeed but even more baffling was the mystery behind building it. From the outside, it looked like a pile of bones, but on the inside, it clearly had organic components, even things that looked like organs and a circulatory system.

While he was continuing with the examination he noticed that he had new visitors. They were fast approaching and there was quite a big group of them.

“It must be the cavalry? Fashionably late to the party, aren’t they?”

He was not in any danger as the new arrivals came from the same sect that he visited today. It was clear that after the elders escaped they rallied the troops to defend themselves. While he wanted to compliment their resolve, they would have been dead if they tried attacking these monsters alone.

From what he could tell, there were about three nascent soul masters coming his way along with some basic flying ships and some hundred core formation masters. This was about what a lesser middle-sized sect could offer.

They probably brought about thirty to forty percent of their forces here while the rest remained on standby. It was normal for them not to give up without a fight or measuring their enemies' might. These monsters were body refiners so their combat abilities were hard to measure with spiritual sense as the amount of Qi they possessed wasn't that high.

"Body refiners... no wonder there isn't anything here that can store spiritual energy..."

After wandering around for a few minutes and scanning everything his hopes of getting some loot were crushed. The only bounty was the strange hammer that he sliced in half, its spiritual energy disrupting capabilities were interesting and clearly, it was due to the material it was made from. Besides it, there was nothing else of much value that he could spot.

"They don't need to craft weapons as they can just use their body parts and don't use pills or spiritual stones to increase their strength, this will be an annoying enemy..."

For Wang Long, this might have been a nice opponent as they would drop spirit points for him. But to him they were somewhat worthless, that is unless he figured out a way to utilize these organic components that they were using.

Without anything interesting to do, he decided to go outside. This didn't go unnoticed as he was quite the beacon of golden energy.

"I-it's honored Long Dong, he still lives!"

The moment he appeared outside the cultivators that were approaching quickly stopped in mid-air. While he was playing the Golden Dragon persona he was still not used to being called by that name.

"Ah... yes that's me... the Golden Dragon, and I have a long d... I mean, I am Long Dong."

He coughed into his sleeve while looking at the group of three elders that were approaching. These three were unknown to him but judging by their cultivation levels they were the leaders, the one that was in front was a late-stage cultivator and probably the Patriarch.

"Ma He, greets the Golden Dragon, we came as fast as we could but it seems that our help was not needed."

The man was quite respectful as he bowed a lot lower than usual. Zhang Dong just waved his hand as he had no intention of staying here too long.

"Yes, I have managed to destroy the base of these invaders but I'm not sure when the next attack will occur, as you can see the way for them is open."

He pointed towards the tunnel that was about a kilometer in width and three kilometers in height. While this might have looked like a grand victory, he didn't really defeat that many people. These forces were about the level of a stronger middle-sized sect and might have been bolstered for the purpose of establishing a base of operations.

"I wouldn't want to alarm you but I'm not sure if your people will be able to survive the second attack, worry not, I will contact my brother... he might be able to send some reinforcements."

This was too far away from his own sect that had just secured the lands that they were owed. To defend this location he would need to place at least ten nascent soul masters along with Huo Qiang and Zhang Zhi to have a chance of defending it. They would also need to create protective formations and defensive siege weapons.

“But honored Golden Dragon...”

“I know, you don’t seem convinced but the enemies I faced were above your current level, there aren’t that many cultivators in this empire that would be able to battle on equal footing with them.”

While he wanted to convince these people that it was unwise to stay here, he could not control their actions. The biggest problem was that he had eradicated all of the enemies, which could give an impression of them not being all that strong. In actuality without someone at the great circle of the nascent soul realm, they had no chance of survival.

“You should better heed my warning, but I will not stop you if you want to remain here. If you decide to remain, this would probably be a good spot to place any long-ranged weapons that you have, while in the bridge between our empires the enemies have limited space to maneuver, they will be an easy target. Though after their first failure, they will probably come in larger numbers.”

His opponents were clearly not expecting someone like Zhang Dong to be waiting for them. There weren’t many cultivators or weapons that could create such a devastating wide-ranged attack as he did. If they had some way to relay information back to their leaders, they would probably consider the same thing happening again.

‘This fight has taken more out of me than I thought...’

While he looked fine from the outside he was running on fumes. That huge magically enhanced attack almost instantly drained him of half of his spiritual energy. Then he had to fight off many opponents and use a devastating sword art that injured his own body in the process.

He had been a bit hasty in this battle as he was racing against time. This had now left him out of gas to continue his journey forward. The desert and then the wide dead sea filled with many monsters was still waiting for him.

‘Shit, do I really have to postpone this?’

The reason he came here was to find Wang Long. But he felt that if his other opponent popped out at this very moment he would probably have to flee. With how much Qi he used up he would need some time to recover. Anything related to spiritual energy was already consumed as he needed it to bolster his system and then feed his three cores.

‘These guys didn’t even have any nascent souls, they are a terrible match for me.’

Regretfully he would need to retreat for now but this wasn’t the end. Thanks to his system he would be able to create a teleportation point that he could use later on. It would cost him dearly as this was not part of his own lands but it needed to be done.

‘If I’m lucky those monsters will take some time to return, I might be able to come back and set up my own defenses here.’



With that thought in his mind, he decided to create a save point. He would place it somewhat away from this direct location. If it was taken over by those beings before he could come back, he would be teleporting right into their base where they were waiting for him with some new countermeasures.

"I will have to bid you farewell then, I hope that you and your people survive this, we will need any help we can get to get through this war."

With a few chosen words to Ma He he started retreating, first he needed to find a nice hidden location for this teleportation point, and then it was time to contact his dear brother, the Azure Emperor.

## **Chapter 430**

"What do you mean they are all dead?"

\*crunch\*

A somewhat peculiar crunching sound was heard by several people in this large chamber. A huge demonic-looking man was holding a bloodied head along with the body that was now just dangling around. He then promptly engulfed it in a blaze before throwing it to the side where everyone could see it.

"You there, answer me!"

"Y-yes my Emperor, as the previous high shaman stated, the tribe that was tasked with the mission to the outlands had fallen in battle..."

"What tribe was that again?"

The man called the emperor moved forward while the other person continued to talk. With each footstep, he took the ground and continued to shake along with the other beings that were here.

"It was t-the Terakota Tribe, they w-won the honor by c-combat..."

"So, you are saying that something in the outlands proved too much for the Terakota Tribe? Thought that their chieftain was better than this..."

The large emperor looked to the side. There he saw various humanoid creatures that varied in all kinds of ways. All of them had their heads lowered, no one dared to raise their voice as everyone knew how much of a temper this Demonic Emperor had.

"Did the outlanders predict their arrival and sprung a trap?"

"W-well my Emperor it was..."

The shaman that was talking started stumbling over his own words while the Emperor continued to glare. He knew that if he angered this being of great power, he would be the next one to get his head squished and popped like a watermelon.

"Don't waste my time shaman."

"Y-yes my Emperor, w-why don't I show you instead."

The shaman was wearing a dark robe and his face was also hidden behind it. From inside of his sleeve he took out something that looked like a large insect with a gem on its back. When the Emperor saw it, he instantly knew what the shaman was doing.

“Good.”

He said while walking back to his throne and sitting down. Then after he was in a comfortable position the shaman placed the large bug on the ground. This insect moved into the center of the chamber before the gem on its back started to give out a green light.

Soon a beam of light traveled from this gem and produced a vivid image to everyone that was here. What they saw was the view from the large fortress that was placed on the huge sandworm beast during the attack.

It was a recount from their travels with multiple angles as if there were various cameras at the fortress. The shaman made sure to not bore the emperor so the image played right before the scouting party was attacked.

Without saying anything it continued to play, all the way from when Zhang Dong fired off a large beam of spiritual energy towards them all the way until he cleaved the Terakota Tribe chief in half.

At the end, all the people from the other tribes that were here were shocked. Every single one of them had a similar horn protruding from their head. The Terakota Tribe leader was not inferior to anyone from them in any way. They all believed that they would not fare much better against the frail-looking outlander that he had faced.

“Are you telling me that they were defeated by one man?”

“Y-yes my Emperor... there were other outlanders there but they quickly fled the scene while this bright one remained...”

Without saying anything the Emperor took out a certain weapon from the side. It looked like a giant cleaver which handle was made from some molten rock. He raised it up into the sky while a giant oppressive aura exploded in all directions. Then without warning, he turned around to swing his massive weapon once.

A large torrent of strange energies traveled forth towards the volcanoes and mountains in the distance. It didn't take long for this attack to connect with the rocks in the distance. With one swing of his huge cleaver, the mountains were no more. All of the living beings on them groaned out in fear and indignation at their demise.

“This bright one... he will make a fine trophy for my wall, rally the tribes spare no men, I want that gate! Failure is not an option!”

The Emperor declared while hefting the massive blade that was covered in lava over his shoulder. He looked out into the distance with a giant grin on his face, it seemed that this hunt would be more interesting than he anticipated.

....

While his enemies were scrambling around to resume their invasion, Zhang Dong had teleported back to his own lands. Along his travels he had created some save points that he could teleport to but there was a limited number that he could use with his current system.

'I need to call him...'

He gave out a sigh before tapping his system screen, on it was one of his new faction members, the Azure Emperor. While he did retreat from the pursuit of Wang Long, he still would like to ask for some help. In his mind, the talk could go in any direction but he hoped that Long Qing would see it his way.

It all depended on how fast they could rally the troops and head to that place. Zhang Dong was even willing to go back there to act as support. The somewhat narrow passage would not be that easily crossed if they managed to create a base of operations there. If they managed to plug that hole, it would save them a lot of resources later on as they would be able to control one point of entrance.

"Greetings, can you hear me?"

"... brother Dong... is that your voice? Where are you?"

It was clear that the Azure Dragon was surprised by the voice in his head. From what he could tell, Long Qing was probably looking around for the hidden Zhang Dong that was talking to him.

"Ah, I'm not at your location, I'm talking to you thanks to a certain technique of mine. You don't need to actually use your mouth, you just need to think and I'll be able to hear your thoughts, that is if you want me to hear them."

While Zhang Dong could communicate with people through his system, this didn't mean that he could hear their thoughts. Unless the recipient didn't think of the words that they wanted to relay to him, he would not be able to hear them.

"Oh? Let me try then... Can you hear me like this?"

"Yes, loud and clear, also don't worry no one else is able to hear our conversation, it will remain private."

"Oh really?"

There was a small pause but soon Long Qing was back to talking, this time around to someone that was with him.

"Are you there?"

"Yes, did you hear that my wife? No?"

Due to this system feature not being able to pick up sounds of others or at least not until the Azure Dragon's devotion rating went up, he couldn't hear the conversation that they were having. It was clear that he was together with his wife, who was probably asking him some questions.

"She won't hear me."

"Did you hear that my wife? Really not? But he is being so loud..."

“As I said...”

Zhang Dong wanted to give his brother a smack across his face for not listening. It had been a while but he needed to get used to not getting his way thanks to his Patriarch status. After some back and forth, he was finally able to talk some sense into his new brother.

“You did what? Did you hear that honey? My brother managed to intercept a scouting party from the other empire and wipe them from the face of this empire! Didn’t I tell you that we could rely on him!”

“Could you listen to me for a moment...”

“Ah yes my brother, Haha! I’m a little distracted!”

Zhang Dong was afraid to ask but it wouldn’t be surprising that he contacted the Azure Dragon while he was having some fun time with his wife.

“Anyway... would it be possible to send some of the Long Clan elders or convince the Heavenly Crane Sect to send someone over there? I think if we manage to control that location we would be able to minimize the damage to the empire...”

“Minimise the damage?”

The Azure Emperor asked as if he wasn’t sure what Zhang Dong meant.

“Well... if we are able to block the progress of those beings, we won’t suffer that many casualties?”

“Haha, why would we suffer any casualties?”

“But the sects that are located there will be...”

“Oh? I see that my brother is a compassionate one, don’t worry, they can retreat further into our lands where we will use them to bolster our own forces!”

Zhang Dong was a bit shocked by this reaction but it did somewhat go in line with what a regular cultivator thought. In their eyes the only important part was their own faction which was the Long Clan. It didn’t seem that even the Azure Emperor cared all that much about his subjects that lived outside the Long Clan area.

“But we could get valuable information about our foes? We could have their weapons examined and maybe get some treasures?”

“Treasures? That could be useful... but I’m not sure if it will matter at this point in time.”

“What do you mean?”

Zhang Dong asked but there was something telling him that the news wouldn’t be good.

“Well, while you were battling the invaders, more of the bridges had opened up. The one you discovered won’t be the only one coming from that side so I’m not sure if we would be able to defend such a remote location away from our clan.”

The Long Clan had a map that showed them every bridge that appeared and would later appear. Thus they already knew about the arrival of the enemy. Even without Zhang Dong telling them to act, they were probably already scrambling around to bolster their defenses.

“So that means?”

“Yes, I don’t think I can spare any soldiers but if you need some personal guards I could send over some elders, I’m sure they will be honored to accompany the Golden Dragon!”

“Ah, that won’t be needed...”

Zhang Dong shook his head in disappointment as it seemed that he needed to abandon that location. Even if he built a base of operations there, the enemy could pop out a thousand miles away after a day. It wasn’t wrong to bunker up at your own sect where everyone had most of their resources.

“Is that so? Don’t worry my brother, this is only the beginning. Everything is going according to plan!”

“It is huh...”

‘Would be nice if I heard it first...”

It seemed that he would need to retreat for now. Instead of helping the other sects, it would be better to defend his own lands where everyone he loved and cherished was. With that in mind, he ended the conversation with his brother. While he didn’t like it, he would need to be a bit more selfish this time around.