

Unfathomable 451

Chapter 451

"I always forget how vast this world really is..."

Zhang Dong had to take a moment to look at the map. He was surrounded by snowy mountains and blizzards. It was hard to fathom that people could live in a place like this. After traveling from his last location he entered an area with a very chilly climate.

Each and every middle sized sect's land was like another planet. A lot of times the weather conditions would switch between the locations. What decided it wasn't really the geographical location but the distribution of elemental Qi.

For instance, his old Zhang Clan had been built in an area where mostly water Qi prevailed. Luckily it didn't overpower the other spiritual energy types too much, if it did then instead of a city there would be a giant ocean size lake there. Only when there was a balance between these elements would an area that was habitable sprout out.

It was hard to find a place that was truly devoid of one of the main elements. Yet ones that one prevailed over the others were quite common. In this one, it was ice and wind, a truly uncomfortable combination. The strong winds only exacerbated the cold air and made it hard for humans to survive.

"This must be one of the entrances to the underground."

Yet, the people had managed to find a way. Before him was a large hole in the ground that was radiating heat. While ice Qi prevailed over the upper world, fire had made the underground world its domain. It was as if it escaped to where the cold could not reach it anymore.

'Supposedly there are many small volcanoes like these spread through this area.'

It was a strange sight to behold. This volcano was truly active and gave out a tremendous amount of heat. Even when he was getting closer he could see a large amount of steam that was being created. The sight was spectacular, not something that he had ever expected to see before coming to this world.

The fire from the volcano melted the snow around it and then quickly made it turn to steam. Yet after a few moments, the steam was cooled down by the chilly air. The place was in a perpetual storm of snow and ice as the steam was being transformed and blown around everywhere. If Zhang Dong could not surround his body with a layer of his own warm energy he would probably turn into a frozen sculpture within a day's time.

"Down we go I guess?"

After taking a peek at his system map he dived into the active volcano right from the top. On the inside, his spiritual energy kept him safe from the increased heat. While the whole place seemed to be a death trap filled with molten lava there was a side tunnel. When arriving at it he noticed man-made columns and some writing.

"Welcome to the Underforge?"

He spoke out the written words while looking around. Instantly he noticed that there was something off here. On the walls, there were some strange incisions that looked like they were made with bladed weapons and other ones that looked like claws. There were no bodies here but a fight had clearly taken place here.

“These markings match the claw size of those red vampires... doesn’t seem that there were any survivors... did they just eat the bodies or something?”

After spreading his spiritual sense to examine the area he discovered some faint traces of human blood. The sect that operated in this area had sentries placed at most of the entrances in their lands. These volcanoes that led into the underforge were their border region which they would of course want to protect.

The entrance that he was looking at wasn’t very large nor did it seem that it had been that well-protected. Probably the soldiers were mostly placed as lookouts to signal any unwanted guests arriving and not as a force to repel them.

These people that lived in the underground were known forgemasters. They probably needed to have entrances that were large enough to let flying ships in and this was certainly not one of them. It was just a side entrance that was close to the border region with the other sects.

“The city should be that way...”

Zhang Dong knocked on the rocky walls and realized that it was quite sturdy. The system map could not detect any nearby cities. He could either try to go through these tunnels or try going through the walls. The only problem was that if he tried that he would most likely burn through his spirit energy reserves.

It was fine to drill a hole through the soft ground but when it was filled with metal the difficulty would increase. Even though the enemies that he met before were somewhat easy to defeat he did not know how many there would be down there.

With his current strength, it might have seemed that he should be able to bulldoze his way through all of these adversaries. This he knew but that way of thinking would only bring him ruin, getting too prideful would be his downfall like it was for many other strong masters before him.

Thus while spreading his senses in all directions he descended into the underforge. Bob was alerted to signal him if he discovered any pockets of minerals that could be useful to his rise in cultivation.

The opening took him through a long winding corridor that he quickly sped through. Then he found himself at a fork in a road that gave him three options. Luckily for him, there were many clues of where he should go. Thanks to the fighting that took place in this place it was clear where everyone ran through.

His journey continued and the deeper he descended the more signs of life he discovered. Yet there were no remains of the people living there, some broken weapons and destroyed furniture that was previously used by someone. Either these vampires that he had met were taking these people away or they were somehow disposing of the bodies on the spot.

It wasn't hard to trace the bloodshed but there was a certain thing missing. After gaining his soul core he had been more attuned to the astral aspect. Even though people had died here there were no leftover souls. But after his previous run in with these soul vampires he knew that they were responsible for it.

'I might be too late to save anyone...'

This left a bit of a bad taste in his mouth as he would not be here if it wasn't for the natural resources. Without there being any survivors it also made it easier for him to just grab what he needed and leave. But debating his motives would not get him anywhere so he continued to venture deeper and deeper into the underforge. Soon he arrived at a wide-open area with quite a high concentration of earth and fire Qi.

"This must be the underground river of fire that I read about."

Before leaving his sect he had gone through the areas of interest. After a quick read, he was informed about the main points of interest. All of the large and small volcanos led into the underforge. Then after passing through a wide range of tight corridors a person would come to a huge river made from lava.

This area was tremendously huge, even flying ships could go past. The main volcano that connected to the capital city was connected to this river made of molten rock. His plan was to fly through this place and then arrive at where the vampires arrived. On the way there he would help out if there were any survivors but after some time had passed something became clear.

"There is no one here..."

Zhang Dong continued to fly while looking around. Through the walls, he could somewhat sense the residential areas that people once lived in. Sometimes he would see buildings on the walls but there were no signs of life, only destruction, and emptiness.

The longer his flight continued the more his mood soured. Even when he picked up the pace there was no sign of the monsters nor the people that should be there. At first, he thought that all of them might have retreated to the capital that he was going towards but when he arrived there the sight was shocking.

Giant gates that were made from some kind of hard metal stood there. They had been bent out of shape by something. From what he had heard the city inside was supposed to be a marvel of ingenuity and the citizens inside tended to use inventions to help them with their day-to-day life. Yet when he crossed through the gates he discovered a ghost city.

"Are they all..."

There was widespread destruction through what looked to be a steampunk version of a huge city of cultivators. Small streams of lava flowed from the walls and into some strange vats. It seemed that they were somehow melting the snow outside and turning it to steam to run a lot of the mechanisms here.

At least that's what he could tell from the ones that were still intact. From what he was seeing there wasn't much left, everything was shredded or crushed under something large. There were strange markings on the ground that were somewhat familiar. It was as if some kind of giant worm or snake busted through this gate.

‘Probably the same creature that I saw at that bridge...’

There was another large hole in one of the walls that was now filling up with lava. The giant worm beast probably borrowed its way out through it. With its help, the red vampires had made their escape as it didn’t seem that any of them remained here.

In the distance, there was something like a tower, a remnant of some larger structure. It had collapsed on the side. Zhang Dong floated over towards it to discover a strange blood splatter on the ground. It looked like it belonged to a female body type and it was also next to something that soured his mood even more.

A crib made from metal was tipped over without anything remaining in there. The room he arrived in was clearly painted in gentle colors. Various toys and figurines were spilled out through the ground. One that was intact caught his eye, it was somewhat similar to an old doll that his own daughter still had.

He moved closer to it to pick it up. The moment he did the doll’s head tipped to the side and quickly fell to the ground. The faint reminder of some spiritual energy remained on this toy which probably belonged to the child that used to sleep in the crib.

“What kind of person creates this kind of world...”

His mind raced as he felt rage rise up in his chest. So many people had perished here that he would never see the faces of. Yet this was only a scenario that was playing out by the design of some kind of otherworldly being.

Yet he was unable to go against it. The part that he was playing in this game had only started and the carnage would only continue. Millions more would suffer and he could not do anything about it. The only thing that he could do was to save the few that he could and take vengeance for the ones that had fallen.

Chapter 452

“Did you hear that?”

“There is nothing there, we already took care of the prey.”

Two humanoid creatures were walking through a darkened corridor while looking around. One of them had a strange feeling that there was something following after them. Yet every time he looked back there was nothing but the wind. Their partner didn’t feel anything out of the ordinary which just made him more paranoid.

“We are almost at the temporary encampment. If you don’t want the dark mistress to devour our essence you better relax.”

The red-skinned man with bat wings on his back scoffed at the person next to him. After a smack to the back of his head, the two took flight after reaching a clearing. There in the distance, they could see something that looked like the remnants of a city.

“Now stay quiet and let me do the repo...”

While talking, the person that looked like a vampire from an old movie turned around. Within a second of him looking at the city, his partner was gone. At first, he thought that his comrade was performing some kind of joke but soon he found that there was something strange, he could not move.

His whole body felt like it was underwater but he could not move a muscle or utter a word. Then he noticed that there was some kind of strange thread of invisible energy there. It came from the cavern they just left and it continued to entangle itself over his entire body. Soon he wasn't able to feel anything as his entire body went numb and he was yanked back into the cavern that he came from.

There he finally saw the being that was responsible for it all. It was a man with silver hair and a strange aura around himself. At this point in time, his hand was around his neck and he was lifted up as if he didn't weigh anything. Even though the body that he was proud of was full of muscles and well over two meters it was easily being helped up as if he was a small child.

"You should have listened to your friend but not like you would have been able to flee..."

Soon the red vampire was turning to ash while the hand that was holding him discharged some strange energy. Before this being died he remembered the person that the Emperor was after yet why this person had ended up here was unknown to him.

"I guess I should do something about that killing intent..."

Zhang Dong stood over two piles of ash. These two scouts were discovered by him after he left the capital city of the sect of the supposed forge masters. This city had been left deserted with not even a soul remaining as these vampires had a taste for it.

The whole scene left a bad taste in his mouth. He knew that these creatures were soul vampires which would corrupt the essence of their victims. After fighting some of them he also realized that the souls that they generated were twisted and corrupt. Even him with his knowledge was unable to untangle them anymore. He could only absorb them into his soul core while purifying the evil energies that they were now composed of.

But the empty city was not the only strange occurrence in this underforge that he found. While the city showed a lot of battle damage and what looked like the main palace, the resources were not taken. When he was flying around to look for survivors he discovered the treasure that had been opened.

Where regular cultivators would quickly grab everything that they could get their hands on it, these red vampires for some reason didn't. What they were after was slowly making sense. They always talked about something relating to a hunt, this was nothing more than a game for them. The leftover treasures didn't matter, they only wished to kill strong enemies instead.

He could not let such an opportunity slip by, even though he felt bad about so many lives being taken he needed these resources. With the help of the replica storage medallion and his spatial rings, everything made its way into his possession. As he was able to take full buildings with him, the time he spent there wasn't long. Afterward, he decided to go towards the large hole that was dug up. There he discovered the scouts flying around and probably searching for more prey.

'Why did they stay here and not in the city...'

The capital had far more defenses than this smaller underground fortress where the vampires decided to stay. But seeing how they didn't care about their cultivation materials or weapons perhaps they didn't trust the city defenses either.

'Or they are just so confident in themselves that they don't think they could lose? No that's not it...'

Zhang Dong shook his head as these opponents he was going up against were somewhat peculiar. They never run away and always fought till they died. Perhaps it wasn't fear of someone above them that was only driving them, maybe they just liked to battle an opponent that was their equal?

'Also what were those two talking about, some kind of Mistress?'

There was more information that he needed to gather. While he could just attack the encampment that these invaders created it could somewhat wait. He was still angry about the massacre that took place but this was an important chance. Thus his form started to shift, what once used to be his face turned into something different and crimson.

Zhang Dong copied the appearance of the louder vampire from these two. After following them all the way here he had learned some of their mannerisms to help him in his next plan. It was time, to infiltrate this base and gather some information. He already knew that these people would not talk with him, they would rather die.

When he was this close there was no problem in measuring the number of invaders. This group had about three times as much when he compared it to the ones that attacked the Shadow Phantom Sect. Perhaps this was one of the main bases to which the troops would return later. If he managed to infiltrate them well he might be able to cause some serious damage.

'They shouldn't be able to block out my teleportation feature and with the spirit stones I have gathered there won't be a problem with escaping.'

With his spirit stones reserves renewed he would be able to easily escape if something bad happened. This place was also closer to his own territory which would lower the spirit stone costs even further. Thus after turning himself into a red vampire he was off to their camp.

The usual disguising technique was even able to modify his exterior to look like a demon but producing the scary-looking toothy mouth would not be possible. He would need to supplement this with some hypnosis and illusionary techniques but he was unsure if the soul suckers would be fooled.

"What took you so long and where is your brood brother?"

"Oh he wasn't so lucky, he got ambushed..."

"Ambushed? Are there more prey out there?"

"Not anymore, I killed them all, they used some strange treasure. It was an unsatisfying hunt."

Zhang Dong tried to emulate the speech pattern of the person that he took over. He wasn't sure about the social hierarchy of these creatures but they did have some leaders like the one that he killed at the Shadow Phantom Sect grounds. The person that he was impersonating was someone that would be at the core formation level and on the bottom end of it.

“Yes, these outworlders are proving to bore the chiefs but there are ones that we need to look out for.”

“You mean... like the golden one?”

Zhang Dong prodded as by this point he knew what these invaders were calling him.

“Yes that one, the Emperor wants him, if we find him we will be rewarded greatly!”

“Ah yes, the reward...”

He just nodded in agreement as he didn't want to prod too much. The info that he got from this guard was already enough and told him quite the story. Apparently, the leader was impressed by his performance at the northwest border. If this Emperor was on the level of the Azure Emperor still remained to be seen, perhaps there were multiple ones and they had some other leader altogether.

“What are you standing around, go make your report or the Mistress will have your head!”

“Yes, shouldn't let the Mistress wait.”

With that, he removed himself from the entrance and headed inside. Going to this Mistress would probably not be the greatest idea. Being the leader and probably a nascent soul master level threat she might poke some holes in his story. The better option would be to just switch it up again.

Thus he slipped away into the shadows once more. This place was built into the wall and only the burning hot lava was illuminating it. These creatures certainly didn't like light too much and could also see in the dark. None of them expected their base to be infiltrated this soon into the war effort though and just like the two before him another of the creatures was turned to dust.

From the scout, he switched into a guard that was patrolling the area. With his new appearance, he could now loiter around without anyone being too suspicious. The only problem was his old disguise, what would they do when the scout didn't arrive to make the report?

‘Well, this will be a good chance to see how they operate.’

This place had been some kind of fort but like the main capital city, it was now devoid of any human presence. He could see some clothes scattered here and there but the insides were empty. If he wasn't confident in his abilities this would have been a rather frightening experience. People just disappeared with no trace, devoured by some strange red invaders.

He went through some of the buildings which caused his rage to build up even more. These beings didn't see them as anything more than animals, this was clear. They certainly had no problem in killing young children and the elderly.

Then suddenly as he was going through one of the empty buildings he heard a strange high-pitched sound that grated his ears. It made him peek out and look out into the distance to discover that the red invaders were gathering at a peculiar tower that was radiating red light.

‘Is it their Mistress? Did they figure out that the scouts had vanished?’

While the temporary enemy base was in an uproar he remained calm and collected. The empty building that he occupied gave out a faint golden light as a character that he etched on the wall disappeared.

“Well then... this energy signature feels higher than the rest...”

Chapter 453

“Mistress please calm yourself...”

“How can I be calm, none of them have returned!”

A rather voluptuous woman dressed in dark leather was screaming at a group of men that were kneeling on the ground. Her aura was radiating crimson energy which traveled towards a small horn that was on her forehead. Unbeknownst to her, there was a person that didn't belong here watching her.

‘That horn, it's similar to the one that one guy had but it's a lot smaller...’

Zhang Dong disguised as a regular soldier was standing close to the entrance of a tower where all the screaming was coming from. When being this close he could safely use his spiritual sense to peek at what was going inside there.

The Mistress that these red vampires referred to was quite the beauty. Not as much as his own wife but she had all the right proportions. Even that red coloring of her skin somewhat added to her looks that would make any submissive male drool. At this very moment, she was shouting while cracking what seemed to be a whip-type weapon.

The Mistress was just informed that a large force they sent out had magically disappeared. It was probably the troops that he eradicated at the Shadow Phantom Sect area. Which gave him some information about them not being able to relay information to each other. That battle unfolded a while ago and it seemed that only now she became aware of it.

‘Perhaps they have no long-range communication devices like the communication jades? They probably had to wait for some scouts to come back for the information to reach them.’

What this meant was that even though these invaders were strong they didn't communicate with each other well. Tribes had been mentioned which symbolized some kind of power structure and this woman seemed to be in some kind of leading position. The small horn on her head symbolized it but its size also put her in some kind of lesser role. Probably the real leader was back at the main base while she was some kind of commander.

“Enough, what of the other reports?”

This scantily clad woman eased up with the whipping and rested on some strange-looking throne with skulls on it. From what he could feel the skulls were quite fresh and probably made from the remains of the people they slew here. She asked someone that looked like an officer but he hesitated.

“What are you hiding?”

“M-mistress... actually one of the scouting parties has gone missing, they were supposed to report but we can't find them.”

Right after the man ended the sentence his head went flying. A fast fling of the wrist was all the woman needed for the kill. The spiritual energy that was released quickly made its way towards her mouth.

“What are you waiting for? Find him!”

It was clear that she had figured out that there was something strange about that statement. While the men scrambled she remained seated with her eyes closed, it was as if she was concentrating on something.

“It’s true, two of the children are missing...”

There seemed to be some kind of connection between this woman and the rest of the grunts. Luckily this was something that she had to focus her attention on thus he wasn’t instantly discovered yet he found himself in danger. If there was a connection there, she would probably figure out that he was not one of those ‘children’ if they ever met eye contact. While he could copy the appearance of this tribe there was a limit.

‘Perhaps it’s some kind of bloodline connection? Maybe one that goes through the soul?’

He could only speculate but now he needed to make a decision. Should he wait for the right moment to strike and risk being discovered or should he wait a bit more. If he wasn’t found by anyone then he might be able to smuggle himself further down the line. Perhaps if he figured out how these people operated he could take the appearance of this commander-class woman, then visit the main camp where the leader was to slay him.

Changing into someone of the opposite gender was not one of his favorite pastimes but he was willing to do it if he could save some lives. But if that would even be a valid option remained to be seen, would this woman even report to their leader or would just push into the empire to wage more wars. There were many places that they could invade and the further into the empire they went in the pushback would become more noticeable.

From what he had seen these invaders didn’t care that much about their own soldiers. It was somewhat similar to how cultivators operated but more the ones from a demonic sect. They certainly had no problem in killing their own if they were in a bad mood.

‘So what should I do...’

Zhang Dong rubbed his chin while also inscribing a character on the tower. It glowed a little bit before fading away. While there was a possibility of continuing with the espionage mission this was not the only way. He had already carried out precautions if they found him out and now after they noticed that there was something of the base became rowdy.

“Let no one leave.”

After the Mistress noticed that a scout didn’t return they began to check with anyone that had recently returned. Everything pointed to the vampire that he had initially replaced but now he had already switched with another foot soldier which gave him more time.

But while he was sneaking around and trying to not get noticed the ground started to shake. It wasn’t the magnitude of an earthquake but something below him was coming his way. The red vampires didn’t seem to be too perturbed by it so he kept his poker face up while remaining hidden in the shadows.

Then the rocks split apart and some other strange creatures popped out of the blue. Their bodies were quite large with the leader seeming to be at three meters. Their hands were quite big and forearm heavy, their faces resembling moles that one might find out in the open.

Their bodies were covered by dark fur but they did wear some leather to cover their nether regions. The elongated face was somewhat rat-like but their nose was quite characteristic and something found on a regular mole.

“Wampir tribe, what are you still doing here? Our Talpa tribe soldiers are already on the move.”

“Be quiet, we don’t take orders from you!”

The horned Vampire Mistress started arguing with the large mole creature. It seemed that both these tribes liked to go through darkened caves and the added heat didn’t seem to bother them. The vast differences between all of these tribes were starting to get very apparent. This was the third variant that came from that Empire and there could be many more.

‘This complicates things...’

From what he was getting here these people operated in some primitive social hierarchy. The members with the horns were on top and they all came from various tribes. The hierarchy was clearly strength based but it was strange that they weren’t killing each other. Normally intelligent humanoid beings of different species wouldn’t just find common ground, this was even less probable when they were as violent as these people.

‘Is it because of their Emperor? Perhaps they came to some kind of agreement or were forced by their strongest?’

Zhang Dong listened in on the conversation while speculating some more. He was together with many other guards and kept a low profile. With the arrival of these mole people, the attention would probably shift away from his intrusion. Perhaps soon he would have an opportunity to infiltrate further while also taking out some commanders.

“Why is this outpost in such disarray, I can smell your disorder.”

“This is none of your concern, our tribe will carry out their orders.”

The woman clearly didn’t want any help. Yet the mole man seemed to be highly capable in detecting abnormalities. After noticing that there was something off in the camp he turned towards the direction where Zhang Dong was kneeling with the other soldiers. The mole man’s strange nose started wiggling around as if it could smell something from his direction.

“You dare ignore me? What are you looking at?”

The mole man just pointed out towards Zhang Dong’s direction as it just answered the question.

“That one... the soil he carries isn’t from around here...”

He was a bit perplexed at the words that the mole person spoke. His disguise wasn’t blown yet but apparently, he was somehow able to sense the earth elements that he came in contact with. There were various ways to track a person and the soil under their boots was one.

“Not from around here?”

The woman turned towards his direction while the other soldiers that were there started looking around. No one was sure to whom the mole man was pointing to as they were all bunched up in a big group.

But the person in question knew that this would probably be it. The thought of trying to weasel out of it popped into his head yet he didn't think that it would be a valid option. He knew very little of these people's culture, talking them down would be tough.

‘Judging how that woman treated the other soldiers, she might try to decapitate me just to be sure that I'm not a spy...’

“Guess plan B it is!”

Before the woman could take a good look at him he activated his trap. His palm that was down on the ground gave out a light that quickly traveled in all directions. This pulse of Qi when coming into contact with the runic drawings he created caused a magical explosion.

Instantly the place was turned into an inferno. Golden lightning bolts started going off everywhere and each time they touched one of the red vampires they made them crumble into dust. Without having much time to react the creatures were quickly disintegrated by the holy energy that was mixed with some solar rays.

But while these types of traps were very effective against the red vampires, the mole men had a different set of weaknesses. While he did jump away and flew into the air he could see some of them burrow themselves underground to evade this electric discharge.

The massive array of magical explosions caused the entire fortress to crumble. The massive surge of energy was above what these already damaged structures could handle. Yet even though he was successful in booby-trapping the entire area there were still many survivors left.

Most of all the two leaders that were in possession of the forehead horns were still standing. The woman was floating up in the air while the mole man peeked his head out of the ground after lasting through the magical mines.

Zhang Dong started looking around and even without peeking at his minimap, he knew that he was vastly outnumbered. They were in the ground and in the walls, also on the ceiling. He was surrounded from all sides and the lava just continued to overflow everywhere.

“Well then, I don't reckon you'll surrender peacefully?”

He asked only to hear a massive screech from the woman vampire that caused all of her kin to pounce at him.

“I guess not.”

Chapter 454

“You kiss your mother with that mouth?”

Zhang Dong was looking down a large toothy mouth that belonged to the vampire mistress. After his identity was revealed she transformed into quite the ugly monster that he was battling now. The alluring face that she once had was replaced by something that was more similar to a bat.

The monster was quite fast but not at a level that he couldn't handle. The bigger problem was the other commander-class opponent that was hiding below ground. This one belonged to the strange mole people and each time he was about to deliver a devastating blow to the vampire lady he was interrupted.

It was the same pattern, after dodging the chomp to the face just before he could slice her head off a large number of spiky rock bullets was sent his way. The mole people could somehow travel through the earth as if it was made of water. Even when he tried to counter with his own ranged attack, he only managed to create a crater with no bodies left behind.

Even though the opponents traversed it as if it was an ocean, it was still hard rock mixed with lava. It presented a great natural barrier that protected them from harm, he would probably need to perform a more devastating attack if he wished to kill the leader.

The mole was also the one that somehow discovered his true identity. From what he knew, moles had a good sense of smell while they were practically blind. While he might not have carried the smell of humans thanks to his perfect disguise, some of the soil that he brought over was not from around here.

This was a miscalculation on his part but how should he have known that he also needed a change of clothes and perhaps a bath to infiltrate this place? Yet this would be a good learning opportunity for whenever he decided to infiltrate any further. These monsters didn't seem to transfer information between each other too well, so his plan might still be salvageable.

'First I need to survive though...'

After dodging a few sharp claws that had strange reddish soul energy empowering them, he was further pelted by fast-moving rocky projectiles. The mole person was a full-body refiner which made his Qi signature quite faint.

The commander class opponent was not the only mole man buried under the ground. He was skillfully using his men to fool his senses, thus he decided to rely on his AI assistant for help.

'Bob, lock in on their leader's signature and present it on the map overlay.'

'Affirmative.'

While visiting the hiding place of his predecessor he had learned that there might be something wrong with the system. Thus he was now unsure if he should be relying on his system. It was a hacked version of the old one but this didn't mean that he was truly safe from the person that made the original, nor if the videos that he found at that secret ground were to be trusted.

For the time being, he needed to get rid of this problem, it seemed that this war would be the ending point of this world's scenario. If he could get through it alive he would have enough time to contemplate a strategy. Before that occurred he felt that he was free to use the system's features to their fullest.

Thus now with a red marker on his map, he had a target to go towards. The vampire lady that was charging towards him was also a problem but first, he needed to focus on her ranged support. With a quick hand motion, he gathered energy before him, this was not a deadly attack but a quick distraction.

The whole place was bathed in a bright light that had a trace amount of holy energy. While it would not cause any lasting damage to the vampire it did stun her for a second. A second was enough time for him to charge down. While the flying opponent was shrieking loudly the moleman came to her rescue.

This time around though, Zhang Dong was ready. With the help of his sword, he performed a thrust towards the spot that the mole commander was. As he was assisting the vampire lady for a fraction of a second he remained in place and this was enough time for the sword of light to reach him.

“ARGH!”

While Zhang Dong could hear the monster’s scream he was only able to wound him. Yet this was more than enough to cause him to retreat which was his plan all along. The vampire lady quickly recovered and when she spotted him floating in the air she gave chase. But now she would be in for a surprise as he intended to go through with his attacks now.

It was clear to him that these people were similar to cultivators in some ways, one of them was their will to live and get stronger. The moleman was quick to abandon his ally after getting pierced by Zhang Dong’s sword of light that pierced through the earth. Thus he would be quite busy in trying to recover from the wound and not care about the vampire ally.

After repeatedly evading the claw attack that shredded the entire landscape along with the vampire underlings, Zhang Dong delivered a palm strike to the vampire monster’s side. This sends her flying into the nearby wall. Previously a barrage of precise rock bullets would cause him to fail but now there was nothing stopping him.

“Talpa tribe, Get back here!”

The vampire mistress shouted while also probably realizing that the molemen were on the retreat. They didn’t take orders from her and would clearly protect their own leader that was now injured.

He could not imagine his own sect members acting in this way if someone was in trouble. Some of his moral values had bled over onto his disciples and people who respected him. They would even offer up aid to ones outside their sect circle but they would still prioritize their own faction’s well-being over others.

Thus without the aid of the second commander type, the vampire lady would be in for a rude awakening. With his current skills and cultivation level, Zhang Dong wouldn’t even need to break a sweat. By utilizing his sword arts the claws that she was using were promptly cut.

By applying solar energy to go along with his holy aura the vampire was unable to regenerate her lost appendages. Even when retreating and absorbing her own followers the radiant energy that he injected into her could not be removed. Soon after a couple of exchanges she found herself with a missing leg and one legless. Her wings were also removed which caused her to plummet down to the ground.

“Your allies have abandoned you but maybe I could spare your life if you answer a few questions.”

Zhang Dong's map showed him that the moleman had retreated into the distance. Clearly, he had judged this to have been unfavorable to him and his tribe. Now he could try chasing after them but his capabilities of traveling underground were more limited. His opponent would probably inform the leaders about what transpired here so he didn't have much time.

"You will pay for this, you lowly worm!"

"Sorry but I'm not into that sort of play, now we could do this the easy way or the hard way."

He grasped the monster vampire that started to revert to her more humanoid form. She was missing some limbs and bleeding some strange dark blood. Yet even now she was showing resistance and an unwillingness to cooperate.

"The emperor will skin you alive!"

She continued to shout and thrash about until the bitter end. An attempt was made of capture yet before he could go through with it the vampire did something strange. With all of her limbs cut off and Zhang Dong ready with the prison medallion she knew what was about to happen. Before he could go through with it, her soul was shattered not by his hand but by her own.

"I will not be captured by the likes of you! The Emperor will avenge me, the great hunt will continue until these lands run red with blood!"

The body of the vampire was quick to crumble into dust the moment her soul ceased to exist. There was nothing left for his soul core to even absorb as she performed this strange technique that would bring true death to her. Without a soul remaining any chances of reincarnation or rebirth would be impossible.

He could only watch at the pile of gray sand that formed on the ground. Along with the vampire mistress' demise, the other vampires quickly went into a fit of rage. Yet there weren't that many left and with one burst of energy, they followed their mistress into death.

"Well, this was an unfortunate turn of events... I don't think I can catch up to those mole guys like this."

With the monsters now all dead the stronghold that he was in felt rather empty. It was devoid of any signs of life and even now he was unable to find any survivors of the crafter-focused sect that was once here. He did manage to line his pockets with various treasures and his soul core did increase in size.

"This has left a bad taste in my mouth..."

After giving out a sigh he peeked into the replica medallion to make sure that the one prisoner that he took was still in there. While he had hoped to bring the leader over for questioning, her officer would probably be enough. He had already witnessed these monsters in action but the information that this being gave him would help him confirm his theories.

"It would probably be wise to retreat, for now, those guys will probably come back with reinforcements but before that..."

Before leaving this place he decided to leave a few presents for any of those hunt loving monsters. If he was lucky he would have fewer enemies to contend with and perhaps some more information.

With that in mind, he left a save point to travel back to later on. This place was close to what looked like an enemy camp. With his teleportation feature, he would be able to open a gate to get back here. He could also decide on another infiltration attempt after the coast was clear but for now, it was time to return to his own people and decide on a new set of plans.

“This might take longer than I thought.”

He gave this place that was devoid of life another look before his body vanished and appeared next to one of his trusted allies. It was a burly red-haired man that looked somewhat excited.

“Senior brother!”

“Hey there Qiang, how is the war effort going?”

“It’s great, I haven’t had so much fun in years!”

“Fun, huh...”

The place he was in now was a battle zone. The enemies continued to come and his elders would be tested. This war didn’t seem to be close to ending and the resources of his enemies were unknown to him, only time would tell if he had made the right decisions as this battle continued.

Chapter 455

“Zhu, we must hurry, the beasts are coming, don’t look back!”

“Why is this happening to us?”

A small group of cultivators was flying through the air. Two of them were on flying swords while the rest was tightly packed on a small flying ship. Behind them, they could hear loud screeching noises similar to what bats would sound like.

The two on the swords were core formation experts at an advanced age. In the boat were people that were wearing similar robes with the same clan symbol engraved on them. It was clear that these people were trying to flee.

“I don’t know, it doesn’t matter, we must make it to the border! My distant cousin knows one of the elders there, it’s our only chance!”

The old man spoke to the old woman that he called Zhu. But she quickly shouted back at him while being worried.

“You haven’t seen him in over a hundred years, you don’t even know if he is still at the border wall, what if the sect turns their blades against us along with these monsters?”

This caused the old man’s brows to furrow but he just shook his head.

“What choice do we have? Do you wish to turn around now?”

He then pointed towards the distance where a cloud of gray mist started appearing. From within the strange sounds resonated and continued to increase in loudness. Soon the grayish coloring started to

shift into a dark red while winged monsters with fangs and teeth emerged from within. Their strange shrieks caused everyone to shiver in fear.

Try they did, but their flying treasures were just not fast enough. Every second the monsters got closer and even when everyone continuously boosted the flying speed with their own cultivation but it was not enough. The creatures were gaining ground and soon they would massacre them just like they did their whole city.

“Wait what’s that?”

When all hope was lost the old man looked into the distance where the border region would be. They were nowhere near it at this point but some kind of blue light appeared out from the distance. It was followed by an earth-quaking roar and soon the true nature of this blue hue was revealed.

“A water dragon?”

The creature looked to be made from water-based spiritual energy. It was quite huge and many times larger than the ship the people were staying on. As the blue watery behemoth passed by them the old man noticed that there were several cultivators inside it.

“It’s a battle formation! Did the sects decide to do something about these monsters?”

While the old man was full of questions he also noticed that this large dragon wasn’t the only one. Soon to the side, another one appeared but instead of being made from water, it was scorching with red fire energy that was luckily being contained thanks to the water elements from the first dragon.

It was quite the spectacle, even more so when a third dragon made from earth and a fourth one made from wind energy entered the fray. They were constructs made by cultivators in a special formation and each one had the strength of an early nascent soul master.

The dragons used their breath attacks on the strange bat creatures that were following them. With them being now busy the small group of cultivators was free to make their escape. Their speedy pace had slowed down as they continued to gwack into the distance where the large-scale battle was taking place.

“Identify yourself!”

After a few moments had passed a loud voice was heard by everyone. In the direction the dragons came from, the old man heard someone call out to him. When looking at a scary-looking man that was built like a brickhouse was staring at him.

“W-we are from the Chao Clan, we had to abandon the city that had been overrun by strange human-like beasts.”

The man that he was speaking with was clearly a nascent soul master. After hearing the quick explanation he just gave out a grunt before monologuing to himself.

“Damn pests are everywhere, Is that youngster punishing me by sending me here?”

The man's robe was unfamiliar to him but he recognized the symbols that were attributed to the United Element's Sect. This sect was said to be on the decline before their Patriarch was announced to be the Emperor's blood brother.

"S-seniorr..."

The old man wanted to ask if it was okay for them to continue but the man he was talking with shrouded his body in a layer of flames and took off towards the battle. Many other cultivators with the same robes zoomed through the air while mostly ignoring them.

"E-elder, what should we do? Don't think these people are hostile..."

The old man nodded at the person named Zhu and they soon corrected their flight path to head towards where these people came from. They came to the conclusion that this sect was their best bet at survival as they seemed to be managing the monsters that could not push further and give chase anymore.

....

"Please don't push, we will be performing a quick examination before you are allowed to move through."

A person dressed in a white robe shouted with the aid of their Qi. His words traveled far and wide to the mass of people that were both on the ground and in the air. Everyone was standing before a very high wall that was as tall as any skyscraper. At the highest point, a certain white-haired person appeared. He looked into the vast expanse while spreading his spiritual sense in all directions.

'Huo Qiang's father is doing a good job at contending with these vampire monsters, maybe I should make good use of his battle skills, he is above the other early stage elders that just managed to push through.'

A few weeks had passed since Zhang Dong's failed infiltration attempt. With the help of some unsavory techniques, they were able to get some information from the creature that he had captured. The scientists from his sect were more than happy to experiment and test out some weapons on the creature that was susceptible to solar energy.

There were a few things that they discovered after the autopsy and questioning. One was that this creature was originally human. Yet through some strange techniques, it had become disfigured and gained the enhanced traits that it had. The consensus was that their body refining technique had changed their previous physiology at a level that even affected their children.

"The great hunt huh..."

Zhang Dong murmured to himself while watching a small group of cultivators arriving from where he sent the core formation battalion to. The resources he had were still limited, there was no way for him to just pump out more nascent soul masters without any end. Instead, he used his much larger stockpile of core formation experts.

While they were nowhere near the power level of a nascent soul master, there were ways to improve their fighting capabilities. These were with various attacking formations that he had plenty of time to

improve. It was much better to gather up the core formation experts to form an elemental formation dragon than to have them wandering around the battlefields alone.

The enemies they were facing against were quite powerful. They had many leaders that were around the nascent soul level. Instead of sending his men to just be massacred, they could now be useful. While the formation was more in line with a soul beasts strength they would act as support for his own nascent soul masters,

“Patriarch!”

“Give me the report.”

“As you wish!”

While contemplating this war one of the soldiers arrived to give him more information. While the mapping feature showed him the highest concentration of the enemies, there were also various stealthy scouts scouring the area for more information.

The information came in a communication jade that he quickly crushed into powder. In it he was informed about the casualty count as well as on which clans and sects were eradicated in the process of this ‘hunt’

While the man that delivered the information removed himself he was left with lingering feelings of anger. The monsters that he was fighting with now apparently took pleasure in hunting, if the prey was strong they enjoyed it even more. But there were ones like these vampire bastards that preferred murdering the weak and defenseless.

Their leader apparently took a liking to his performance when he destroyed their first base. While he did not make his way into these lands this could change depending on how much pushback they would offer them.

Zhang Dong decided to spread out his umbrella over these lands somewhat further than he had originally intended. Thanks to this many refugees flocked from the areas that were in chaotic combat with the invaders. Luckily there was enough food to go around, at least that was easy to produce in this world.

Initially, the plan was to wait it out but things were moving faster than he expected. The creatures didn’t meet much resistance from the sects and the lands along with their people fell. It was unknown if each of these invading tribes just killed the population or enslaved them instead.

For some reason, the attackers didn’t care about the cultivation of treasures of the sect. They were more interested in satisfying their cardinal desires of hunting or slaughtering. Due to this fact, his sect was able to confiscate quite a large amount of these materials from each city they managed to liberate.

With the ever-growing resources came the increase in their strength as he could use some of them to create more nascent souls or even core formation elders. While these new experts and masters would not be as trained in their arts they were better than nothing.

“Patriarch, the elders are waiting.”

“Good, I’ll be right there.”

Another messenger arrived to inform him about the meeting that he had ordered. After some walking, he arrived at a makeshift gathering room where a bunch of the new nascent soul masters he helped create were. All eyes were on him and while in the past this would have caused him to be nervous now it almost felt natural.

"Listen up, I'm sure you know what this is about, I would have not gathered you all here otherwise."

The old men and women that were reinvigorated with their new nascent soul strength all nodded. They all knew that soon they would be taking the fight to the monsters that were ravaging their lands, it was time to launch a counter-attack and to see if they were ready for victory.

Chapter 456

"Carmilla has died?"

"Yes my lord."

A tall old man with a clean-shaven visage was sitting in what looked to be a large throne-like chair. It had many strange engravings that depicted demonic-looking creatures. In his hand, he was holding a golden chalice in which a strange liquid was red and glowing. While speaking he took a few sips that when ingested made his eyes glow red.

The man's pale face made him look like a marble statue devoid of life. This white skin tone contrasted with the pitch-black clothes that he was wearing. If Zhang Dong was here he would clearly know who this person resembled.

"Lord Valentine, what are your orders?"

"My orders? Just continue, if that stupid sister of mine had gotten herself killed by one of these savages then it was her fault but this makes things somewhat more interesting, do you know who it was that killed her?"

"Yes my lord, it was the one marked by the Emperor."

The man that looked like a walking corpse perked up the moment his lackey gave him this information. Some time had passed since Zhang Dong had taken care of the soul vampire stronghold but only now did the information reach their real leader.

"Well that does make things more interesting... the Emperor's chosen prey..."

The man that looked like a vampire straight from an old movie started rubbing his chin while looking at this scared follower. After a moment a devilish grin appeared on his face that sent shivers down the messenger's spine.

"My lord?"

Before receiving any orders the vampiric lord rose from his seat. He moved towards the side where a large gothic-styled window was peeking out into the horizon. There he saw a shroud of gray that was covering the whole landscape but with his enhanced eyes he could see all of the members of his tribe.

"I was bored out of my mind, maybe it's time to stretch my wings!"

In a flash, his body transformed into mist which somewhat mixed with the environment. Without asking the followers quickly followed after their master that had clearly made the decision to go out to hunt. They all changed into the flying bat monsters that were already known for terrorizing these lands.

On his way out a huge grim-looking castle could be seen in the distance. Surrounding it was a large wall of spikes that had thousands of human skulls pierced on the top. The moat that was around it was pitch black and the rancid smell of decaying flesh was everywhere.

....

‘Hm?’

Zhang Dong was done with his meeting, the decision to push into the enemy territory was made but suddenly something had changed.

‘Is there a large force coming this way?’

With the help of his mapping feature, he could somewhat see what was happening at the enemy lines. The largest concentration of energy that was the enemy base had shifted. The map was clearly showing him that the vampires were on the move.

‘Or did their leader decide to show himself?’

While he was planning to use some of his resources to help the refugees to escape the lands that were taken by the invaders, the stage of the last attack was not yet reached. Their enemies were spread between various tribes which didn’t really function well together.

This he confirmed by injuring the moleman that was quick to abandon the vampire mistress to save his life. They would rather have the allied tribes be eradicated than waste their own manpower for a potential hard-won victory.

Not like this was any different than how the human sects operated. But at least his side was more uniform in their beliefs and looks. It was a lot more difficult to see eye to eye with people that didn’t resemble each other, even more if they looked like they came from different planets.

‘Is this some kind of trap?’

Zhang Dong started contemplating this issue. Having the leader move out this soon was somewhat strange. Normally it was him that did these things as there were not that many people on his side that could handle themselves. Did the leader give up on their troops already? Perhaps there was fear of the Emperor mixed into it?

‘The leader could also just be stupid, it didn’t seem that these vampires thought much of us... whatever the reason is, this might be a chance...’

“Patriarch, the main sect sends words, there has been movement from the enemy! A large shift in...”

Zhang Kuo was here to inform him about the movement on the map. No one knew that he had his own internal version of the map he left at the sect. The map that he left at home was there to help his soldiers make their own decisions.

With its help, they were successfully able to successfully win most of their battles and evacuate if trouble was coming. It was true, the person with more information would be victorious. Before Kuo could continue with the explanation he raised his hand to stop him.

'I know, something is approaching, have the masters gather, we will meet them in the field, have the ships move in, this might be an important battle that we must win. Use the teleportation gates if you have to, we need all able experts on this one.'

The decision was made, while he could not be sure if the leader was moving out themselves. The dimming of the spiritual markers on the map at the main stronghold indicated that at least it was a sizable force. If they could predict the movements of the monsters they might be able to take care of them in one fell swoop.

If they could get rid of a large number of them, then the stronghold could be for the taking. Yet the enemy numbers were unknown to them. They might be quickly replaced by another bunch of body refiners that had their bodies altered. This war was supposed to last for a hundred years and be the last scenario before its ascension. Then there were all the other empires that were still frolicking on the east and north side of the empire.

At this moment in time, they were further north of the Dragon Gate Sect. This place had been ransacked by the invaders but part of the old guard that ruled these lands had remained while escaping. For the time being, they took over the border region where small skirmishes were taking place.

'Huo's daddy should be wrapping out the battle, if we move fast we should be able to encircle them without them noticing us...'

With the help of this mapping feature, it was quite easy to prepare. One part was seeing the movement of troops and the other was the knowledge of the topography. From how it looked the enemies would be passing through a large gorge. It was an area where lightning energies ran rampant which made it even better for him.

'The large storms would help push the vampires down on the ground and keep them from fleeing... but will it be that easy?'

They had a moment of surprise and more information. It all seemed to be going his way but he could not let his pride get in the way. For some reason, these invaders felt confident in defeating them. He mostly attributed it to the way they ate souls.

Even if their bodies were turned to meat paste, as long as their soul survived they could save themselves. Regretfully for them, Zhang Dong was in possession of the soul core that could easily eradicate their trump card.

The leader was probably assured that even if he did lose the fight he would be at least able to keep his soul intact and regain his form later. There were many demonic techniques that prolonged one's life but due to them mostly not exceeding the heavenly grade they didn't last. With each use, these techniques would somewhat damage the original soul which would either kill the user or alter them in some kind of way.

'Well then, this will be a good test...'

With the help of the map he knew where to set up the ambush but this was only a part of the strategy. This would be one of the first large-scale operations that his United Element sect would be performing. Cultivators ranging from the foundation establishment realm all the way up to the nascent soul one would be participating.

They needed to be fast though, there wasn't much time to prepare. If they were too slow the enemies would be at their doorstep before they prepared their countermeasures.

"I'll go on ahead, have all the formation masters gather, we will be moving out in ten minutes!"

He shouted a few orders before hovering towards the gathering location. They had set up a temporary teleportation gate that was now working overtime. Through it, many soldiers and experts started to appear. They were quick to bow towards their patriarch, in their eyes he was a god-like being by now. If they had a chance to prove their worth in the coming battle they were more than willing to die for it.

The faces of the people before him were mostly new to him. He did not go out of his way to mingle with his sect members. Spending time with his family was prioritized while his underlings like Zhang Kuo were the ones forwarding his orders and interacting with others. Luckily after that one lie he experienced in the past, Kuo had made up for the lost trust.

"Haha, to think I'd see a day like this!"

While there were many new faces there was one that was quite familiar. It belonged to Zhang Jin that had managed to condense his nascent soul well enough to finally join in the battle. He along with a couple of other nascent soul masters were also going to participate in this battle but mostly during the battle phase and not for their knowledge about formations.

"I'll leave it to you, gramps. Gather the forces, it seems like a chance like this might not repeat itself, if the enemies discover that he can follow their movements they will surely change their strategy."

"Aye, leave it to me, I'll straighten them out, It's been a while since I've been able to use this!"

Zhang Jin was like a new person, he had mostly remained back at the clan or sect to manage it. Now on the other hand as a nascent soul master, he could finally sink his weapon back into an enemy. He rested his brand new large saber over his shoulder while strutting towards the gathering forces which he would be commanding.

'Well then, let us get this show on the road.'

Chapter 457

'Is that it? No wonder they are assured of their victory'

"Get ready, here they come, activate the soul-sapping formation when I give the signal."

The group of cultivators that were with him looked out into the distance but they couldn't see much in the thick fog that was approaching. It was a mass of reddish mist that looked ominous yet it didn't seem to contain any enemies.

This was obviously due to the fact that the monsters had shifted into a soul-like form. It would not be possible for anyone not versed in soul arts to see their true appearance. These techniques were quite

hard to counter as even with Qi attacks the user would not take any damage while also being able to sap away the soul energy from their enemies.

Yet in this case, they had underestimated their opponents that had Zhang Dong on their side. With his knowledge about souls and his soul core, he was more than ready to take care of these invaders. While it was hard to counter soul creatures, if you went through proper preparations it was quite easy.

“Now!”

He finally gave the order after the swarm of the monsters made their way over the trapping formation. It was placed through a large gorge that was surrounded by mountains and even though this mist was covering a lot more space, the monsters inside were more concentrated.

With the signal being given the people that were hiding in the mountains and outside the gorge started performing hand signals. Their bodies started to quickly radiate spiritual energy that was siphoned into the formation points.

At the bottom of the gorge, the earth started shining brightly with a silvery light that elongated through most of its length. Then out of nowhere shiny swords made from special energy shot out to create a prison of light.

“Fools, do you think you can contain me with this?”

The moment the prison of shiny swords formed he heard a booming voice from within. This was followed by a spiritual pressure that was akin to the horned monster he met at the fortress he destroyed.

“So you are one of the horny ones huh? Don’t think that this soul prison is ordinary!”

Some of the light swords started being pushed back by the crimson mist that turned into something that looked like blood. Yet even when it tried to push the formation was steady and stabilizing.

“How is it? You don’t seem to be able to break free.”

The formation that formed started constricting while the swords wrapped around the red mist. Even though it seemed like there was a lot of space for the mystified monsters to squeeze through, something was keeping them from moving through the gaps. Soon enough they started switching into their corporal bodies in hopes of breaking out.

“Too late for that now just become fuel for my soul core instead!”

Zhang Dong used the time that they were confused to position himself above the orb of constricting swords. He pointed out with his finger which produced a golden light. In a flash, the silver light turned golden along with the entire formation. This turned a trap into something akin to an oven and the souls of these vampires would be the ones being cooked.

“No, what is this, my strength it’s being drained away? You fools what are you doing, break through this prison at once, your lord commands it!”

The leader’s form had slowly taken shape. It reminded Zhang Dong of every other Dracula look-alike that he had seen in popular media. He was wearing a suit with a black cape that was crimson on the inside.

Yet even when he was taking form his powers were being drained and flowed into Zhang Dong's soul core.

'Are they the soul vampires or am I one?'

Zhang Dong could hear the monsters screaming inside the constricting prison of light. The spiritual energy flowed into him and his core started to bloat up. After absorbing so much holy energy back at the Emperor's home, he was finally equaling it out with all the soul energy he achieved through this war. After this he would need to shift towards lightning energy otherwise he was risking an imbalance of his three elements.

'This is going well... a bit too well...'

While the sword prison that started out with a circumference of half a kilometer shrunk down by ten times, there was something fishy. To the sides, he could see some of the gray mist turning crimson and shifting into a few red vampires. This was planned beforehand as it was somewhat impossible to catch them all in one spot. Some of the minions were not caught in the initial formation and for some reason remained stationary on the outside.

'Why aren't they trying to help their master, was him shouting around some kind of trick to shift the attention away from them if that's the case...'

The formation was at its end, every sprinkle of soul had been suctioned away into his soul core yet, some stragglers remained. When looking at one in particular he realized that he had been fooled by the main vampire lord.

"Something akin to soul transfer? Is it bloodline related?"

At first, the monster took the shape of a regular underling. Yet after Zhang Dong's gaze turned to it, the being started to shift. Its face took on the appearance of the Dracula look-alike in a matter of seconds as if he was him from the start.

There were many strange techniques in this world. During the soul absorption, there was some kind of strange signal that was sent out. He felt it slightly but recognized it too late, this was probably the essence of the vampire lord's soul which took over one of its underlings. With the flesh being similar the stronger soul had no trouble in taking over.

"So, these tribe members of yours are nothing more than vessels?"

"Savage, you will pay for this transgression, I wanted to offer your weakened body up to the Emperor but now you will die to sustain me!"

"What's with that Emperor of yours, is he my number one fan or something?"

While the lord of the vampires was out of his prison it didn't mean that he was fully recovered. The invaders suffered a lot of casualties already and any normal leader would probably sound the horn to retreat. Without the soul formation there to stop them, they could probably fade away to the sides to make it hard to chase them down. Instead, the remaining soldiers started screaming loudly while tossing themselves at the people operating the formation.

"Everyone, attack!"

Zhang Jin was quick to react as it was time for phase two of the plan. The nascent soul masters were waiting for this very moment and hiding. With the enemies concentrating on the formation masters, they were susceptible to another surprise attack.

Finally, he was not the only one putting himself in the line of fire. Normally he would need to take care of the leader while constantly evading the minions. While they couldn't cause much damage they were quite annoying, one misstep could be deadly.

About eighty percent of the vampires had been trapped in the sword prison that was close to vanishing. If they managed to clear out the remaining twenty percent then the leader would not have anyone to slip his soul into. Even though it might have looked like a godly technique to the untrained eye, there was a weakness.

As every technique that was not at the immortal grade level, this one probably had one too. Zhang Dong could only speculate as he didn't have any specific knowledge about it. Either there was a limit of times that the vampire could use this body swap art, or there was a limited range.

Thus the battle started with the Dracula look-alike pulling out a stylish crimson rapier. It seemed that Zhang Dong would be involved in a lot of thrusting motions as the enemy switched into a fencing position. With one swift thrust, he made the space around the blade turn crimson while shooting forward at a staggering speed.

He quickly threw himself to the side but even then he felt something grazing his cheek. Strange demonic energy started to invade his body but it was quickly repelled by his holy energies that were mixed together with sun rays.

"That was fast..."

The opponent he was facing was no beginner, the speed that this weapon could produce was something reaching the height past the great circle of the nascent soul level. If he was not the bane of demonic cultivators this one attack would have been his ruin.

"How could this be, what are you?"

Dracula noticed that something was off, the moment he saw the small wound on Zhang Dong's cheek he was assured of his victory. His devilish grin quickly turned into a frown when the gash didn't progress further but instead vanished.

"I'm probably the only person immune to demonic arts, you won't be able to defeat me with tricks like that."

"We shall see you savage!"

Another high-speed thrusting attack flew his way but this time around, instead of his cheek a little bit of his hair got tangled up into it. After the second one, Zhang Dong had figured out the art. While it was something that exceeded even his perception to a point, the attack in itself wasn't that hard to evade if he predicted where it would land.

While this sounded easy in theory it would not be possible without his keen battle senses that he had honed for some years. Thus with small bursts of flight, he started getting closer to the vampire fencer

that was dancing around him, soon enough his own blade was utilized to throw out some ranged attacks to break his enemies form.

“Speed is your forte and not caring about taking damage would make you a tough opponent if you weren’t up against something like me...”

Soon the vampire lord felt a gush on his chest as Zhang Dong sunk his blade into him. Just like his speedy attacks the soul switch happened almost instantly. The husk that had his sword inside of it was nothing more than a decoy. The move happened almost at the same time as the blade hit the flesh as if it was some kind of defense mechanism to save his life.

In the distance, one of the minions started shifting into the new appearance while battling one of his sect members. The unprepared cultivator took this chance to deliver a strike of his own but the enemy did not move from its place even when wounded. Its hand made its way towards this core formation master’s throat even when Zhang Dong charged from the distance it was already too late, the sect member was already being devoured.

“Shit...”

Not even a corpse was left behind and the floating sword he was using plummeted to the ground while other sect members cleared out. While he didn’t believe that he would be able to carry out this battle without any casualties it wasn’t easy when one of your men died. With rage building up in his eyes Zhang Dong took a swing to quickly dispose of the new body only for another switch to soon occur.

“This might take a while...”

He mumbled while quickly following after the soul that quickly moved from body to body. One by one he would kill them until none remained.

Chapter 458

“Don’t let him get away!”

“Block their escape, corner them into one area otherwise he will flee!”

Zhang Jin and Dong were shouting out orders while pointing to some of the vampire monsters. With their leader constantly switching between bodies it was hard to deliver the final blow. It seemed that this technique didn’t have a cooldown timer nor was it very taxing on his cultivation. Yet there was one weakness, the vampire always switched to the closest minion available to take them over.

Thus they decided to encircle the entire area while not allowing the enemies to leave. While the soul trapping formation had run its course, it also had a secondary function of not allowing the monsters to turn back into the soul mist form. They needed to battle their way through the countless cultivators and battle formations that they were using.

‘This guy is a lot more slippery than I had anticipated...’

While Zhang Dong could probably take the leader out if it was a one-on-one bout, first he had to corner him. This could be achieved by removing the other monsters from the battlefield either by killing them or moving them to a far enough location this his soul couldn’t jump into.

The longer this battle took the harder it was to find the leader. At first, it was obvious which of the monsters he was by their reactions but soon enough he started hiding. Whenever he changed he tried to slip into a larger group to flee as he had realized that there was no winning this battle.

“Dong’er, the sect members are getting tired, the battle formations take a lot of spiritual energy, they were not made with the intent of a prolonged battle, we must finish this quickly otherwise...”

During the chase, he had almost forgotten that not everyone had an almost perfect foundation as he did. The core formation masters in the huge dragon formations could only sustain them for up to a few hours during combat before they needed rest. By how chaotic this battlefield was, with monsters that could regenerate themselves to a point it was taking long to finish it.

With time not being on his side, he decided to go for broke. Before the enemy could escape he took up the lotus position and spread his spiritual sense to its maximum. His body started to glow with the usual golden aura as he tried to pinpoint the evil soul.

Then suddenly his eyes shot up and he pointed his digit towards one particular vampire that was crawling down on the ground and hiding behind some rocks. He needed to be fast and for this, he utilized a big chunk of his spiritual energy.

A beam of light shot out towards the monster that traveled even faster than the vampire lord’s own attacks. It split right before impact into many tiny golden rays of light that quickly showered the whole area with his energy. His aim was not to kill but to injure the monster, while he kept him immobilized his people would push the other remaining enemies out of the range of this strange game-like respawning technique.

It was clear that the monster was weaker in this new form that seemed a bit more sluggish than the one he appeared in. In Zhang Dong’s opinion, it was probably due to the soul still getting used to the new flesh it had taken over along with the soul it devoured to use it. There was probably a small pushback from its kin as it was being taken over.

“That’s it, I’ve got you now and you’re not going anywhere!”

After taking the holy rain to the back of its head the creature was stunned for just a second. This was enough time for him to get over and suppress it with his superior spiritual power. Instead of locks made from swords, he utilized chains to bind the vampire in place. Even then he felt a lot of resistance coming from the vampire lord that started shifting his appearance into a giant bat.

He would not last forever as binding spells like this did utilize a lot of spiritual energy while he was up against a body refiner. Yet he continued to suppress him while his allies tried to clear up the stranglers. With him being forced to remain here it was time for Zhang Jin and Huo Qiang to lead.

Zhang Jin had only recently made it through the change into the nascent soul realm. His soul beast was not yet formed due to this fact thus he had to utilize his other techniques that were still core formation based. Even then he was more than able to go toe to toe with the enemy underlings of similar strength.

Huo Qiang on the other hand as always tossed himself into the fray attacking the strongest opponent he could find. His style of fighting was not that well suited for cooperation as the increased heat produced

from his attacks could hurt his allies. Thus he was mostly charging in before everyone else to help them identify the area that they should avoid.

This time around he needed to contain his battle hunger as there were far too many sect members encircling the gorge from all sides. At this point in time, they had managed to contain the monsters inside that were slowly getting slaughtered by mostly ranged attacks.

“You lower being, I will not stand for this!”

“Quiet down, soon we will be able to chat after my people dispose of yours.”

A little droplet of sweat appeared on Zhang Dong’s forehead as he started to get tired. It seemed that he might have underestimated the horned bastards too much. This monster had an unmanageable amount of stamina that was fueled by its soul and body.

The longer it had time to get used to the new vessel the harder it was for him to contain him within the shackles. While it would have been easy to make him explode when he had him contained, he needed to wait until the other monsters were dead.

When he looked into the distance he could see his people working hard. They were all working according to plan, if one of them got injured a group of sect members jumped in to save them. They formed a barricade with their bodies and the ones versed in medicinal arts were quick to mend them right up.

They were doing better than he had expected. Even with the increase in their cultivation art grade, it was still up to them to use it. With the help of his system faction bit, he was able to somewhat steer them in the right direction, even though he was gone for five years they managed to stay on course.

While this did bring a smile to his face, they were still getting injured. These monsters were quite ferocious, they were really end-game mobs made for the scenario with the intention of taking a large chunk of the outer empire for themselves. Without the help of the top sects and clans, the regular ones had no chance.

It was a strange feeling to see people be affected by your own decisions. In his past life, he didn’t have the opportunity to be responsible for any employees. He felt like a president of a company that was gaining more and more prestige. If it went well then they could take out the monsters occupying the border region and perhaps take out their fortress soon enough. If they managed that, then perhaps halting their advance would be a possibility.

‘That Emperor of theirs sounds troublesome. If I can get their base and reinforce it with my own defenses it could be possible to save many lives.’

His main objective was to create his own stronghold in the region. It would probably take some time but with enough cannons and formations, it might be possible to seal the bridge. There was not much space to maneuver there with enough firepower they could shoot down any flying ships or monster worms. They also seemed unable to borrow into the land at the crossing point and needed to get over to their side for a proper fight.

“Stop struggling, it’s over, perhaps I’ll let you live if you let me bind your soul.”

“Bind this lord to your will, Impossible!”

“Are you sure, you are running out of bodies to switch...”

The vampire lord looked out into the distance where his uncoordinated tribe members were getting slaughtered by the larger number of cultivators. After their master was detained they didn't seem capable enough on their own. They were quick to get into a frenzy which was easy to counter by soldiers with enough experience.

“No this cannot be... I will remember this disgrace outlander, I will have your head!”

“You still think that you will get away?”

Zhang Dong focused even more of his spiritual energy on the bindings of this monster while he continued to squirm around. It looked like his people would be fast enough, before he run out of Qi the vampires would be no more. Then he could either imprison this horned one or kill him on the spot. Without his soul having another vessel it would dissipate or be up for his soul core to absorb.

Yet, as the victory was assured something unexpected happened. These monsters were not cultivators so he had not seen them using any safety measures like hidden talismans. But when the victory was almost there, the vampire's horn started glowing. It quickly shattered while producing a light that shot up into the sky.

“Shit!”

He instantly felt that the soul left the creature's body and flowed with that light into the sky. Even when he bolted towards it with all his might, he was not fast enough. The dark ray of energy started to constantly increase in speed until it vanished into the horizon.

The body that the monster was occupying quickly crumbled into dust as it turned into a lifeless husk. With the master retreating the other vampires were in even more of a frenzy now, it was as if they received some kind of temporary buff that burned their souls towards destruction.

“Hold them, they are breaking through the line!”

“AHhhhhh.”

“No, stay back!”

“Defend the injured, there is something wrong with them, they are getting bigger and faster!”

The cries of his sect members made him look back, he made a quick judgment call and turned back. His people needed help while the monster commander was long gone. While it might have been possible to chase him down, the lives of his people were more important. Before more people died he would protect them so that they could fight on another day.

Chapter 459

In a dimly lit chamber, a pool of blood started bubbling slightly. Soon a strange dark light flew through a hidden opening in the ceiling which caused a chain reaction. The blood started erupting and gushing in every direction while a humanoid shape formed in the middle.

“He Will Pay! All of them will pay, how dare they do this to me Valentine!”

The vampire lord’s body was crimson in its coloring, a side effect of the rebirthing method that he had used. Valentine looked at the blood flowing out from the small basin he was in as his body continued to absorb it and soon there was nothing left.

“That savage made me use the rebirth chamber, this much pure virgin blood was not easy to gather, I will not be able to go through another rebirth also in my current weakened state if those humans attack us again...”

The vampire started monologuing while four beautiful pale women appeared with his clothes. The man was quickly dressed up in the Dracula look-alike clothes, if it wasn’t for the red coloring on his face no one would have probably noticed a change. But he did as he glanced up to his horn, a visible crack was there that indicated his weakened state.

Valentine’s rage did not subside even after going back to his throne room, the gazes of his tribe members were telling a story. They could clearly tell that he had lost and even used up a valuable resource without which he would not be able to cheat death anymore.

The resources required for it was the blood of virgins at a certain level of soul strength which was uncommon. He needed to capture them first before performing a ritual that would allow him to add the blood into the pool. The old one took a hundred years to fill out and now it was almost empty.

“My lord you must rest, forget about the hunt, the savages can never reach this castle.”

One of the many wives that tended to his needs spoke out while bowing her head. The whole throne room was filled out by the closest of his kin that was still alive. His army of blood relatives had suffered a large defeat, this was a good proposal yet it only brought anger to this vampire’s eyes.

“Are you telling me to hide like a coward? I’m not the prey here, they are!”

The outburst of anger brought everyone in the room down to their knees but he could not deny the truth in those words. It was not time to take his revenge just yet, he needed some time to prepare. Leaving the area was impossible as his tribe was tasked by the Empire himself but his tribe was not the only one here.

“Bring over the eye, I need to speak with the other tribe leaders...”

The vampire woman that was previously trembling on the ground gave out a radiant smile while quickly moving to the side to bring over a basketball-sized demonic eye that was clearly alive. The eye was placed on a stand made of blackthorns, the moment it was set down a demonic scream escaped from the strange item and produced a reddish aura. This aura started to form into an image that slowly started to take shape.

“What do you want Valentine?”

Was the response that he got, a characteristic horn was protruding from the forehead of the person on the other side. A glint appeared in his eyes while looking at the person on the other side, if pushed correctly then perhaps his tribe would not need to face against the strange golden cultivator he faced which would give him time to recoup his losses.

.....

"How did we fare?"

"I'd say better than expected, there weren't that many deaths and with the help of the healing arts all of the injured will be able to eventually recover."

"I see..."

Zhang Jin looked at Zhang Dong in a worried fashion as he noticed that his grandson wasn't as cheerful as he usually was. While to this veteran something like this battle was a great victory, the small number of deaths was an amazing accomplishment.

To Zhang Dong on the other hand, even losing a few people was a failure on his part. He knew that it was almost impossible to have a war with no casualties but it still pained him to see people that looked up to him to die. The only way to lower the death count would be for him to take a more active role and roam the lands himself.

But he was the leader of the sect, he was the only person that could not die or be injured. If he did, the whole war effort was at a risk of collapsing. He was the glowing beacon of hope and strength that his people relied on. As long as he was there to push them forward, they would continue to fight and improve themselves. While wars were brutal they were also an opportunity for growth.

"I'll leave the troops in your hands gramps, be sure to give them some words of wisdom but try not to bore them too much, they have earned their time of respite."

This was not the time for moping, it was a glorious victory on their part. With the help of his sect members, he had managed to deliver a devastating blow to the vampires and cause their leader to use up some kind of forbidden spell. Those always had their drawbacks and perhaps the next time they met he would not pose that much of a threat.

"Aye, I could use a drink, this is truly the time to be festive!"

"Please, don't mingle with the women warriors too much, you have enough wives as it is you old fart..."

Zhang Dong delivered a smack to Zhang Jin's head the moment he saw him staring at a somewhat voluptuous lady from the healer division. With his youth being somewhat restored Zhang Jin would probably use this opportunity to spread his seed even further than before.

"Don't make me regret making you a nascent soul master..."

"What's there to regret?"

The old man laughed while floating towards the encampment at the border region that they retreated back to. While the enemies were defeated they did not press the offensive as there was not enough information.

The map they had only gave a general idea of the enemy forces which could be too much for their one battalion of sect warriors that arrived here. Their forces were still spread out thin and it was taking time to recruit the other sects under their wing. Those had their own problems as they could not trust them to perform well against these monsters that had an uncanny strength.

Huo Qiang on the other hand had disappeared to chase after more enemies. While there weren't many, some of the lesser vampires had escaped. He was at a level that they would not pose a threat to him after receiving a protective talisman made by Zhang Dong to ward off soul attacks he had gone on his hunt.

'Everyone is working hard, at this rate we should be able to reinforce the border region. I'm not sure if expanding beyond this point will be that easy...'

While he did not know much about wars he knew one truth, they didn't end in one day. Even in his old world that was many times smaller, wars could take months or years without ever ending. Here where the distances between sect ground were the sizes of continents it would be even harder.

They needed to slowly transport their troops and reinforce the defenses so that the enemy soldiers could not push further in. While those tribes seemed unorganized at the moment, this could change. There were two choices here, either they rushed in swords swinging or they waited to slowly build up their momentum.

The first option was quite risky and would probably cause a large number of deaths. The gap between the cultivators here and the strange beastman-like tribes was still large. They had more members that were comparable to nascent soul masters and they were all body refiners that didn't require as much rest as cultivators focusing on spiritual energy.

'Is sneaking in there a possibility? They would certainly not expect someone like me to go there alone...'

He did not want to leave things unfinished, not being able to kill the leader was a big blunder on his part. But even with his death, there would not be enough information about the occupied lands. Only now his spy network was slowly seeping in, after a big blow to the vampires the lands were ripe for the taking.

'This is going to get hectic...'

Zhang Dong let out a sigh while vanishing from the spot, he appeared at his private quarters at this location. There as always he contacted his wife and had a little chat with his children through a long-range communication device that could carry a hologram of him. These required special towers to be constructed at certain locations but after they took over the lands here, it was an easy fix.

After catching up it was time to get rid of some spirit stones and reevaluate his cultivation method. He slowly went down to the ground to position himself in the usual lotus position. After clasping his hands together he started to concentrate to look within himself.

The three cores were not aligned, the recently absorbed soul energy was seeping out of the soul core. What he required now was an abundance of lightning energy which he was lacking.

'The most common elemental energy and I'm lacking in it, well its better than searching for more holy relics to absorb...'

Some of the spirit stones that he ransacked from the underground cities had already been absorbed. The weapons and magical treasures that he could use to bolster his body's refining state had also pushed him towards the apex of this technique. The body he was in the possession of was that of a nascent soul master at the great circle level.

Anyone below that level of strength would find it hard to even produce a scratch that would bleed. This variation of the golden body was a great defensive measure that would allow him to go toe to toe with those horned bastards which were precisely on that level.

‘If the generals are at that level then the Emperor is either at mine or slightly above it...’

While glancing at his struggling lightning core he decided on his next location. Sneaking into the vampire castle didn’t seem like the greatest idea at this point in time. If he managed to bolster his spiritual energy even further and evolve this seed in some way, then no one would be able to stand in his way.

‘I don’t need to endanger my people, If I get stronger those strongholds won’t be worth much nor will that Emperor. Even if I capture that location it won’t end the war. I need to get more powerful and this location seems to have the lightning energy that I require...’

Chapter 460

“I really need to create more waypoints through this empire...”

After the issue with his borders was resolved Zhang Dong continued with his travels. This time around he traveled eastwards towards an area fabled for their stormy weather. He decided to travel lightly without his soldiers as moving the heavy flying ships around would just bring unwanted attention.

His soul and golden cores were brimming with power yet his original one that was meant for lightning remained the smallest. It was possible to upgrade it with the help of spirit stones but with this method, he would burn through his reserves too fast.

This system of his didn’t have many methods of earning him spirit points. Spirit stones were the easiest and then he also had his faction that supplied him with a daily dose of points. Thanks to this he would never run out of them but it was not nearly enough to progress his cultivation.

The amount that he got from his faction mostly covered the teleportation expenses. There was always a reserve he needed to keep for any potential traps from which he needed teleporting out. If someone decided to employ any teleportation blocking formations it was still possible to flee but only at an increased cost.

Then there was the problem of Wang Long that had all the same features as he did and perhaps even some that he wasn’t aware of. These systems tended to alter themselves along with its user, it didn’t seem that his evil counterpart was using any kind of crafting abodes and only utilized the system store for all his needs.

But with a supply of spirit points, there was no reason to use any other functions. That store could provide everything, cultivation materials like potions and pills were also included. Luckily for him, Wang Long never practiced with the arts he bought and always tried forcing the fight with his superior cultivation. While that worked against the young masters he faced in the past it would not against him.

‘I wonder what that idiot is up to, some time has passed since then...’

Due to the war, all information that concerned the northern region was halted. He had no idea what happened with that bridge that he managed to defend the attack against. The long clan was unwilling to

send their people to defend it which meant that these invaders had probably built another stronghold there.

Wang Long had made his way towards the demonic cultivators that were situated close to that location. If he was still there was up to debate but with so many of these invaders around he would have a lot of spirit points coming his way. The longer this war continued the more Wang Long would grow and after getting his ass beat the first time he would probably prepare better for the rematch.

“This world sure is vast though...”

Even now he had not had the pleasure of freely exploring this entire empire. The distances between the cities were massive and it felt like he was on another planet whenever he went between them. The differences between the environment and the people living there were sometimes extreme.

“So it’s supposed to be past that storm huh?”

Before his journey could continue he was greeted with a stunning phenomenon. A huge wall of wind and rubble was before him. It was a giant twister that was hundred of kilometers long and if he managed to pass through it he would arrive at an area filled with electrical discharges. It was hard to imagine that anyone could live there but large trade ships with enough armor were able to pass inside.

“What was the sect’s name that rules these lands? The Lightning Dragon Sect? Reminds me of that thunder sect I visited in the other empire...”

This sect’s name was very similar to one of the techniques that he bought of the system store all those years ago. With it he could summon serpentine dragons that could act independently from him and aided him in some of his previous encounters.

It was actually one of the larger middle-sized sects that had made it into the top ten. Thanks to this natural barrier that they used to their advantage they were hard to invade. But from his standpoint, this was one of the biggest weaknesses. When people started relying on these types of defenses they crumbled if they were ever removed or countered. The same thing happened to the sect with soul arts that was almost crushed by the red vampires.

‘If an armored ship can cross this, then so should I’

Zhang Dong nodded to himself while surrounding his body with a protective layer of Qi. This he probably didn’t need as his body had already reached defensive capabilities of a pinnacle heaven grade weapon. Yet, this was not the same for his clothes that would be shredded by the sharp winds and rubble flying around.

‘They are lucky that I’m not interested in the wind qi that is gathered here or their biggest shield would have to go.’

Finally, he plunged himself into the tornado and continued with his flight path. The inside was of the storm was quite dark and it was hard to maneuver. But with the help of his map, there was nothing that he needed to worry about. The shield that was around his body was enough to make this an underwhelming experience. Perhaps if he visited this area when he was weaker it would have been a struggle but now he was like an unstoppable rocket going forward.

Now on the other hand he was just ignoring these massive torrents of wind energy. Even though this storm had the thickness of hundreds of kilometers at the speed he was going it wouldn't even take him an hour to pass through it. The experience was quite underwhelming as the inside was devoid of light and chilly.

'At times like this, I wish I still had my phone to watch some movies or something...'

Even though the world was vast and beautiful, long journeys like this were somewhat boring. There was nothing to do besides to look at the scenery that passed by in a flash. It was as if he was stuck in a high-speed train with nothing else to do but look out of the window.

'Wait what's that?'

In an unexpected turn of events, he spread out his spiritual sense to do a quick scan. There he noticed that there was something a few kilometers in front of him. There were many people there and they were getting closer.

'A flying ship going out?'

This was not that out of the ordinary as this place could be passed even by the locals. Either a person needed cultivation of at least an early nascent soul master or a strong enough ship with metal plating. This was certainly the former but something was off, when he used his sense further he noticed an oddity.

'Is that... mana?'

The spot he was scanning was clearly a flying ship with a lot of people on it but besides the usual variations of spiritual energy, he felt mana similar to the one he interacted with in the other world. It was slightly different with its own flare but it clearly wasn't spiritual energy used by the cultivators of this empire.

'I did hear some information about strange men in full body armor using straight swords...'

The war had taken off now so more information was flowing over towards him. There were rumors that some of the fleeing cultivators brought with them that his people reported to him. One of them was a rumor about people looking like knights that used strange sword techniques.

This was something worth looking into thus he increased his speed slightly to see intercept the flying ship. While he was still inside the storm there should be a latch there that he could climb through, if not he could also force his way inside. But this could still just be a specialty of some clan and not be related to another invading party thus he decided to not make any presumptions.

'There it is, the ship isn't in good shape either and... they are fighting...'

The storm was making things hard on his spiritual sense but when he got closer the mystery was revealed. On the inside, he felt a larger group of cultivators using their spiritual energy meant for combat. It was clear that a fight was taking place, even the ship was slowly falling apart and the shield formation that was keeping the storm at bay seemed to be flickering.

This ship's exterior was not made from heavy metal, instead it was designed with energy shields in mind. If the formation that was producing the shield was damaged more it would go out and the people inside would suffer the consequences.

'This thing won't last much longer...'

It was their lucky day as Zhang Dong was an expert in the field of formations. Within a few minutes of him arriving he was already mending up all the holes and reinforcing the shield so that it wouldn't burst into tiny pieces of spiritual energy.

The ship had a strange exterior appearance, it looked like a whale made from wood. It had no mast or anything that would make it resemble a flying shield. Yet it was moving as if it was swimming through the air. With The shield being fixed he made his way inside by slipping through the formation he had reinforced.

'There should be a way to get into the interior without destroying the exterior, it would be unwise to damage this thing with so many people in it...'

After a moment of searching, he found the entrance at where the whale had its blowhole. There was a sealed entrance that could be opened from the outside. After a little fiddling, he was through and found himself at a large empty hall.

"Fighting took place here..."

The moment he arrived he could see blood stains and nicks in the walls and ceiling. The place was mostly made from some special wood that would be resistant to core formation level of strength.

"These look like they were made by double-edged blades, could it really be those magic knights?"

Now that he was inside he made his way through the various hallways. The inside of this flying whale was quite large, it was similar to a luxury cruiseliner from his modern world yet much larger. The further he went the more destruction he saw which finally culminated in dead remains that were still fresh.

Without wanting any more dead on his hands he bolted forward now with full speed. Within a moment he got to the area where fighting was taking place, people were shouting at each other and various energies were being used.

'They really are knights...'

What he saw was a group of armored men surrounded by radiant light. The blades they were holding truly gave him that magic knight vibe and they were clearly hostile against the cultivators they were facing.