

Unfathomable 461

Chapter 461

‘Are those mana arrows? Those weapons are imbued with runes and spells too...’

After arriving at the large whale ship Zhang Dong made his way through the destroyed corridors. At first, it felt like he was running through a maze but soon the path took him to a large hall that looked like some type of ballroom.

Chandeliers made from gold and expensive crystals were swinging in the air but also down on the ground due to the battle that was taking place. This ship’s interior looked very costly, not something a military vessel would possess. It seemed to belong to a rich merchant or some sect master with too much money.

On one side there was a group of regular-looking cultivators in robes. The lands he was going towards were led by the Lightning Dragon Sect. The robes that these people were wearing didn’t fit the moto though. They were brown with a somewhat tree motif which also blended in with the wooden whale ship they were using.

On the other side, he saw armored men with shields and swords. Their swords were radiating mana that seemed to be close to something at the upper stages of core formation. Then behind these knights, there were people in blue wizard-like robes chanting something. Above them was a ball of flames that would probably soon be used as a projectile.

‘That one looks a bit stronger than the rest...’

Almost all of the knights were wearing silver armor but there was one in the back that was different. The armor he was wearing was quite shiny and golden. The sword he was holding was somewhat larger and the mana it radiated was similar to his own holy energies.

‘Is that some kind of high level paladin from a game or something?’

It was clear that he was the leader but it didn’t seem that he was interested in the cultivators that were desperately defending themselves. He just stood there with both his hands resting on the hilt of his giant sword that was vertical to the floor.

The battlefield soon told Zhang Dong the story, on the other side he saw an old man with a large gash that went from the shoulder down to his stomach. It looked like he had almost been cleaved in half. This person was a nascent soul master at the early stage. He was still alive but the wound was deep and probably soon to be done for.

‘These knights are the bad guys right?’

This was not Zhang Dong’s fight and he did not know what had transpired between these people. It could have very well been the cultivators that were at fault but if he didn’t step in then only more deaths would occur. Besides the martial masters that were at the forefront, he could see women, children, and the elderly behind them. They were all quivering in fear, some of them were even injured.

Thus while the silver knights shrouded themselves in blue light and aimed for another attack he appeared between the two groups. His materialization was fast and took everyone by surprise yet while the cultivators behind him just edged away the silver knights continued with their assault.

For people wearing bulky armor, they were quite fast, the mana that shrouded their bodies was giving them superhuman speed and reflexes. Some of them were even performing strange speed-based abilities that to an untrained eye would seem like teleporting.

‘Damn, I thought they would at least back away for a moment when an unknown element appears, these guys are either stupid or arrogant.’

Normally when an unknown foe appeared it was best to assess the situation slowly. Yet these just continued with their onslaught not caring for the white-haired cultivator that just materialized out of thin air. But one of them was keeping an eye on him, when Zhang Dong did make himself known the golden armored one started moving.

“I don’t think so.”

The blades connected with a barrier made from light that instantly discharged a large amount of electricity towards the attackers. Due to them using metallic weapons and armor it was an easy feat to give them a shocking welcome. The mana barriers they were using for protection didn’t fare well against his overwhelming spiritual energy either.

In a flash of light, the small group of silver knights flew in the opposite direction of their charge. They all collided with the walls and slumped forward as they were instantly knocked out. The difference in strength was just too large between them, perhaps if he was a regular core formation expert then these men would be a hindrance but as he was now, there was no contest.

“Lay down your weapons and I might still be lenient with you...”

While the cultivators that were behind him started to inch away while mumbling the armored knights didn’t react at all. It was as if they were dead set on winning this battle only when the man in the golden armor spoke up did they move to the sides.

“You are not his match, I Arnet of the radiant dawn will be your opponent!”

‘He has a cool title to go with the paladin appearance I see?’

While Zhang Dong was someone that enjoyed cultivation novels he also had a weakness for heavy knight armor and straight swords. The man before looked like a character from a game that he would probably role-play as.

“Arnet is it? I see that these knights listen to you, how about you make the smart decision and surrender, this will not go as you think...”

“Silence, you shall not stand in our way, you should be the one to surrender and cease these barbaric ways, I see that you also poses the radiant light perhaps the lord will be lenient with you.”

“The lord? I presume he is your leader but before you make any demands, shouldn’t you make sure that you have the advantage sir knight...”

Zhang Dong vanished from his location and instantly appeared behind the babbling person in the golden armor. His hand was placed on the man's shoulder and with a quick discharge of his spiritual energy, he was taken down to his knees. This fight didn't need to take long, if he took out their leader the mindless carnage could be stopped.

"H-how... my radiant protection of the goddess is being dispelled?"

This knight's mana barrier was a lot thicker than of the silver knights but for him, it was as if he was wearing armor made from paper. By using his knowledge from the other world it was simple to remove the similar shield. Surprisingly this thing wasn't only for defense, it was somehow able to boost this warrior's all-around strength and probably the reason why he was able to contend with a nascent soul master.

"Maybe the goddess likes me more than you?"

"Blasphemy!"

The man ended up squished into a wall after Zhang Dong pushed him back. While the radiant light vanished from around his body the threat was lowered yet after a quick recovery it surrounded him once more.

'That armor and that weapon are also making him stronger...'

How this opponent operated really started to remind him of an RPG game. There most of the time the player character got stronger by leveling up and gaining better gear. Sometimes the numbers on the armor far outweighed the characters basic capabilities. It seemed that it was the same for these people, the key to beating them would be to either remove their weapons or disable them.

At this point in time, he could only overpower the magic the armor was generating with stronger magic that he could wield. But when the opponent had enough time they could just reset the effect and continue with their battle. It seemed that he would need to strip these guys of their clothes and examine them if they really were from another empire as he presumed.

The fight continued as everyone else started clearing out from the large hall. The silver knights made way for their leader that quickly recovered and charged in once more. His speed was quite impressive and the way he wielded the blade produced arcs of holy energy that shot in all directions.

What his opponent didn't count on was Zhang Dong's mastery of the holy arts. These rays that were produced were just gulped up by his holy core. With one last effort the knight took off into the air, giant angelic wings of gold sprouted from his back and his sword increased in size while being covered in a bright yellow glow.

"Take this, you scoundrel!"

"Scoundrel, really?"

The man came down like he was a rocket, if the hit connected this whole ship would probably be blown to kingdom come. It was clear that the knight had forgotten where the fight was taking place or he was desperate enough to try his luck.

But just as the radiant blade's tip was about to connect with Zhang Dong's face his finger made its way towards it. As if it was never there the radiant weapon crumbled into many tiny particles of light. The flashy golden wings on his back burst along with the rest of the energy he surrounded himself.

"I guess that I took it? So what now?"

Zhang Dong smiled while pushing with his finger on the sword that the man was holding. The difference in power was too much, even with both his hands on the sword the man could not move it even by an inch. Instead, he was getting pushed back himself.

"Protect the lord!"

Finally, the enemy knights had recovered enough to help their commander. But in reality, they were planning to withdraw which was quite apparent. The magic they were using was easy to read, he knew that the silver knights charging his way were only a distraction. While he was busy the mages were creating a teleportation spell to flee, at least they had enough sense to finally withdraw.

"I won't let you."

With a flick of his finger, he sent the golden knight tumbling back. Following his lazy movement, his finger glowed with blue light very similar to the one gathering about the mages.

"T-the mana isn't gathering, what is going on?"

"Is that barbarian using mana canceling, how can he use magic?"

They were quick to notice where the source of the canceling magic was. Zhang Dong waved his hand forward to produce a shockwave. It quickly pushed the charging knights away and embedded them in the wooden ship walls once more. The place was quickly falling apart, if they were not on this ship he would have dealt with these knights a lot sooner. But if he truly started using all of his power then the whole ship would be done for.

"Stay down if you want to live, you are all my prisoners now!"

He proclaimed while sending off a suppressive attack against all of the magical knights and mages which promptly caused them to be knocked out. Only the commander was able to last through it but he wasn't looking all that great himself.

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"We will never forget this senior, the Spirit Whale Merchant Troupe always remembers their debts!"

"I will never forget Senior's gallant form!"

"Me neither! I will spread the word of the Golden Dragon for the rest of my life!"

"... Please everyone just calm down and tell me about these people, how did they get on this ship?"

After the battle was over Zhang Dong disabled all of the stowaways. With the help of some high quality rope, all of the silver knights and mages were tied up in the middle of this large ship hall. Under them, he created a mana canceling formation that would not allow them any access to any of their enhanced techniques.

While these knights were quite strong they had one large flaw, without items that could channel their mana they weren't much stronger than lower Qi condensation practitioners. Even the golden knight mostly amounted to someone at the 5th Qi condensation level if he was stripped of the magical armor.

'After they get knocked out it's easy to get rid of the mana, if the flow is disturbed these people can not regain their previous might but the mana canceling formation won't work in active battle, at least not without a large spiritual vessel with a lot of energy.'

"Lord Golden Dragon, please let me explain, I'm not sure if you have heard about us but we from the Spirit Whale Merchant Troupe are a coalition of merchants that trade between many large-sized sects, while we might not be the most prominent merchant group..."

The man continued to talk while Zhang Dong listened. First, they were just regular merchants that mostly did business with the middle-sized sects. There were other companies that were similar to that one merchant group he once interacted with.

That time he ended up together with the Divine Fist Sect which then led him to the other world. While these people weren't as rich, they still possessed some resources that he could use and that he would not refuse. With how troublesome times were now, he needed all the help that he could get.

"So, you say that these people suddenly appeared as you were leaving the port city?"

"Yes senior, they might even still be there."

"I see..."

The person he was talking with was the leader of this merchant troupe here. He described the events that transpired about an hour ago. After they loaded all of their items they headed for the storm but as they were going through these invaders had somehow appeared on board.

They could not explain how they managed to teleport themselves in without properly setting up a teleportation gate. Magic was somewhat different from Qi arts so they were able to use that to their advantage. The formations that this ship had were not designed to protect them against magical teleportation.

"Was the city you left attacked before they appeared?"

"I'm sorry senior, I do not know that we were preoccupied with our own problems, we did manage to leave the port without any problems though..."

'This feels like a sneak attack more, did they want something that was on this ship?'

It was strange that instead of the city they aimed for this ship. But this was another of the empires, not the same monsters that were closer to his lands. They seemed like a band of religious nuts but they were probably not hunting others as livestock.

'If they are not here for pleasure as those other bastards, then they are probably here to do business. They might have wanted to steer this ship elsewhere along with all the resources it had?'

He could only speculate only after using some techniques on these members to make them talk would he be able to confirm his theories. But these knights could be testing out the waters before invading

further. Words of their invasion were already widespread but they weren't as forceful as the people from those tribes.

'Maybe they are looking to test the materials this empire has to offer and steal them for themselves? A nation aiming more for profits than conquest perhaps?'

Zhang Dong could only shrug while looking at the knocked-out humans. They had regular human looks but were clearly more aligned with the western part of his previous world. Blond hair and blue eyes were very prevalent amongst them.

"I see, that will be all, you should go tend to your people now, here if there is anyone in a grave condition give them one of these pills."

After the report, he gave the merchant a small pouch with some pills. The moment the man laid his eyes on them they almost popped out. While for him they were not anything special, the merchants could see their worth as the highest grade holy healing pills. If ingested by someone they would quickly heal even deep wounds.

"You have my gratitude senior, we will be sure to send out regards to the Long Clan and..."

"Ah, if you want to thank me then send them to the United Element Sect that I hail from instead."

He chuckled a bit as any resources given to the Long Clan would not flow into his pocket. The pills were also very easy to make as he just grabbed some that were made by his sect members. After infusing them with some of his own healing energies they had enhanced properties that could even work against demonic corruption.

The biggest reason that he brought these pills along for his journey was for such an occasion. After trying to chase Wang Long down he had realized that he was losing too much time on helping others. Instead of spending hours healing the injured, it was better to prepare some pills that would work in a similar way. Only if the situation was grave would he need to act himself.

"In you go."

All of the silver knights made their way into the regalia replica medallion that now had a full-blown prison building inside of it. With how much he was capturing prisoners the need to house them was created.

This he achieved by transplanting a working prison from his own sect. Inside were many cells with spirit and mana sucking formations just for such an occasion. Together with them were also autonomous puppets that were able to transport some food to the prisoners.

Escape was impossible as they were trapped in a pocket dimension and only he knew where the true exit was. Only a great circle nascent soul master would have a possibility of forcing himself out of there and even then as long as he held the medallion on his neck, it would be easy to suppress any escape attempt.

After the prisoners were in the medallion the wooden puppets dragged them into their cells. Later he would dump them off at his sect for questioning. Luckily for them, the techniques his clan used were in line with hypnosis and no torturing was included.

In his opinion, this method was superior as a tortured person could always lie after they reached their pain threshold. But if they were coaxed into thinking they were talking with some friend or family member they would spill the beans.

"I shall be off then, your ship didn't suffer much damage, I also reinforced your formation so you don't have to worry about it becoming unstable."

All of the people here started to quickly bow before him. It was quite uncommon to see a person like him that just helped people out without taking much in return. If he wanted he could just ransack the whole ship and no one would know about it or care. With his current status he could just snatch everything up in the name of the Emperor.

'I guess this isn't going to be as easy as I expected...'

On the outside, he rocketed forward and approached the end of the wind storm. When he finally was outside he was greeted by quite the spectacular look. Instead of the huge winds, there was just tranquility and silence.

'The wind elements are all focused on the tornado around this area, after you go past it the concentration is really thin but instead...'

While at first everything looked calm, soon the scenery changed. Out of nowhere a thick bolt of blue lightning connected with something that looked like a pointy pillar made from steel. This produced a loud thunderous roar that sounded as if it was produced by a dragon.

"That's probably where this sect got their name from."

When he looked up he could see something that looked swirly. They were in the eye of the tornado but the sky above wasn't clear. Instead, it was filled with clouds radiating lightning energy. But this wasn't the source of the lightning elements yet. When looking at the clouds in the distance he could see a massive shiny pillar.

'So that's it, I can barely see it from here...'

There was a legend to this area, an immortal ascended to the heavens one day and left behind a pillar of lightning energy. It seemed he was versed both in wind and lightning elements that worked together nicely. He wouldn't be sure until he got closer but that lightning energies stored in there would probably help him boost his cultivation to another level.

'The lightning and this wind are separate from each other, even if I absorb all of it, the winds that protect this place should not dissipate.'

He could feel that the lightning elementals were thin here and only when getting closer to the central area would they increase in power. The wind's energies were the opposite as they were the strongest back here and slowly dissipated further in. While the winds offered protection the lightning bolts were a big hazardous risk.

'Those pointy lightning rods were probably created to prevent the people here from being shocked, they might even thank me if I manage to get rid of them.'

Zhang Dong now had a target to get to, the lightning bolts that were raining down from the skies could be absorbed but it would be much faster if he got to the source instead. Then there was also the problem with these shiny knights.

In the distance, he could also see a city at which many flying ships were floating in the sky. They were attached with huge chains to what probably was the port city the merchants mentioned. Just as they explained to him, the attack only occurred when they were entering the wind barrier.

‘The city does look normal, those guys were not aiming for it at least.’

With no smoke or angry dead spirits hovering around after being killed he didn’t really have a reason to force himself into the port city. Yet before going ahead, he needed to scout out the area for any traces of mana, perhaps he could find the spot where the knights teleported onto the ship.

“Well then, I have my work cut out for me, time to go!”

Chapter 463

“They are really not here but why were they trying to infiltrate that ship?”

Zhang Dong was floating above the port city where many various ships were floating around. After helping out the merchants he decided to see if the inhabitants were doing well. The people were just minding their own business and continuing with their work as if nothing happened. Due to the storm barrier communication with the ships inside was impossible thus they had no idea of what had happened.

‘I can feel a trace of mana being used and it’s coming from there.’

Before any pesky cultivators came out to invite him to some kind of feast he disappeared towards a faraway location. After landing behind some large rocky formations he found something interesting.

‘This does look like a magic circle.’

On the ground, he saw a circle with a pentagram in the middle. Around the pentagram were various runes that were identical to the ones he learned about in the other world. It seemed that these people could have a connection to it or magic was the same even in the other worlds.

“But I can use this to my advantage...”

There were a few options here, he had captured the group that had attacked the ship but they would probably not reveal their plans to him without a lengthy interrogation process. Yet this teleportation magic here could help him out with that problem.

‘This does look like a two-way portal, someone had to have stayed behind on this side to stabilize it.’

With that in mind, he moved his hand towards the pattern on the ground. The mana burned out a clear pattern for the spell being used and left a trace amount of mana. This mana would lead him to the mage that stayed behind on this side.

The magical technology being used here was slightly above what the cultivators in this world were capable of. It was mostly impossible to make it inside of a flying ship with a teleportation formation unless there was an existing gate inside of it. Yet these people were able to make it inside without one.

‘There could have been some item smuggled to the inside but even with that, this could complicate things if they can just ignore protective formations and get inside cities like this.’

This was the biggest problem here, if these people were able to get through the ship’s protective formations it could be possible for them to get into fortified positions. Even with a smaller force, they could cause widespread damage and then flee before launching a full-scale attack.

‘But if I attune the formations to this type of mana signature it should counter it, I’ll have to send it over with these prisoners when I have the chance but before that, I should trace this to the source.’

He had arrived here to absorb lightning energy but instead, there were more invaders from the other Empire running around. If he was lucky the forces that were gathered here would not be large enough to give him any trouble. But for some reason, he was feeling bad about this one, with teleportation being involved the forces of his enemies could have been up to something.

After grabbing some of the soil with his hand he performed a tracking spell that he learned from the other world. The spell started radiating blue light which expanded to the sides rapidly. Soon it started taking the shape of a wolf made from mana that would be used as his tracking hound.

“Well then boy, get the scent, and let’s go.”

The wolf made from pure mana started sniffing at the ground where the pentagram was. After a couple of whiffs, it turned its head to one side while giving out a howl. It had caught the mana scent of the tracking target and quickly sprinted towards it with its master following behind it.

With his finger, he pointed towards the wolf made of light to hasten the process. With an injection of the energy, the creature bolted forward at speeds similar to a core formation expert. The distance he was going was unknown to him as he needed to rely on this spell.

‘I guess I’ll look at the scenery for now...’

Zhang Dong’s journey started and while continuing the chase he was sure to get hit by some of the lightning bolts that were shooting down from the sky. Each hit was quickly absorbed with this lightning core which grew in size by a tiny fraction that was hard to notice.

‘Would be nice to have more of these cores, I’d be immune to all elemental afflictions but the downside is being reliant on external factors for cultivation.’

Sometimes he wished that he had picked up sword fighting as his main profession. This too was a Dao from this world that he could train himself in yet it only relied on regular training.

‘But this way is certainly faster as long as there are resources to borrow from, otherwise understanding the elemental arts gets quite vague.’

While contemplating the world’s Dao he made his way towards the giant torrent of electrical energy in the middle of this area he was in. Of course, he was hiding himself from the sect that ruled this area otherwise they would have made moving around their lands a lot harder.

Luckily for him, these invaders weren't as obnoxious as the ones roaming close to his lands. Even when going in deeper he didn't spot any chaos besides the continuous lightning strikes raining down from the heavens. Yet this could have just been the quiet before the storm, if they were more methodic then they were perhaps only taking their time before the full-blown invasion.

"Wait... that's enough."

Suddenly his spiritual sense that was feeling out for magical activity sounded a red alarm. Before his mana sniffing wolf was discovered he quickly snapped his fingers to make it disappear. The reason for this was simple as right before him stood a trapping barrier similar to the trapping formations that cultivators used.

"A protective spell, if I go through here they will know that I'm here, that is unless I counter it."

This was not a threat to his life, it was mostly a large-scale detection spell. Probably the spell was created to monitor everyone entering the area. A normal person would not feel that anything was out of place when going through the threshold. But somewhere in the zone that this spell was created was something keeping track of people entering the area.

Before launching any countermeasures Zhang Dong decided to look around. The area he was in was composed of empty hills with forests populated by some lightning beasts. Even from here, he could see some white thunder tigers wandering around without caring for the thunder cracking in the distance.

'At least the closest settlement is many kilometers away, even if I cause some damage no one should be hurt but first I need to get through this barrier.'

While Zhang Dong had impersonated a magical spirit emperor in the other world he didn't spend that much time here. He had gone through all of the libraries he could but he was not all-knowing. Magic was a field as vast as cultivation and worked in mysterious ways, if he wasn't careful his enemies would be aware of his presence and then he would need to switch to plan B.

'Going in forcefully isn't always the best way, most of the time it's better to take your time and feel things out first...'

With that in mind, he placed his digits on the edge of the barrier. First, he started with one finger to get a good feeling for the energy signature. Slowly but surely he added another finger and traced both up and then down. Finally, after he got a good feel for it a third finger was added and he started pushing towards as he attempted to push the thin membrane-like barrier out of the way.

'There we go, slow and steady... there we go!'

Thanks to his slow approach he was able to produce a small opening that expanded to let him through. Without activating the initial barrier the only thing he needed to do was mask himself by creating a familiar mana signature around his body.

'But this is strange, I don't really see much enemy movement on this side of the empire. Could it have something to do with the way these people use their power?'

The tribes that he met closer to his own sect appeared faintly on the mapping system he copied over from the Long Clan. This was mostly because they were body refiners with a slim amount of Qi. These

knights that he was up against now were similar, if they didn't activate that mana aura they were quite weak.

'Their main base should be in this location...'

Zhang Dong glanced towards the area that was bright red and closest to the bridge entrance into this empire. It was south-eastwards and together with the information he received confirmed the location of one of the opposing empires. It was a lot brighter than the stronghold where those vampires were.

'There must be quite the concentration of energy there, it might be difficult to get through their defenses...'

It was a perfect circle that encompassed a huge area. It was clearly something like a grand formation protecting the area. Perhaps if the Long Clan had listened to him they could have controlled these locations and held back the invaders but as it was now it was too late.

"But this is no time for my mind to wander, I need to see what these guys are up to..."

He had shrouded himself in his own version of mana to counter this detection spell but this also forced him to travel on foot. If for some reason he produced even the smallest amount of Qi his cover could be broken. For the time being his body refining would have to be enough as it was not something that easily detectable.

"I guess you guys won't just let me through, huh?"

A group of electrically charged beasts looked towards him after the concealment spell. While using it he didn't seem all that strong so even these foundation establishment creatures saw him as a fast meal. But he did not want to waste his time and stamina on these small fries, he needed to find the hiding place of this magically inclined race of invaders.

"Well then, which one is the leader... that one."

Thus he looked towards the biggest looking tiger that was causing little bolts of energy to shoot off from its whiskers. After taking care of the alpha beast the other would probably let him through, if not then this might be quite the journey.

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"Has there still not been any word from Varus?"

"I'm afraid not my Lord."

"It might be the nature of that storm, they might not be able to contact us from the outside until they return. I want someone to immediately inform me if Varus reaches out to us."

"It will be done, my lord!"

A group of people dressed in noble-looking attire was talking with each other while someone was listening to their conversation. This person had melded himself with the nearby wall with the help of a concealing spiritual art.

'They do seem more organized than the other group...'

Zhang Dong was sticking to the wall like a certain superhero. After getting through the magical barrier he arrived inside of the enemy camp. This area was shrouded by various illusory spells that made it look like plain rocks from the outside.

Yet when he managed to get inside he was greeted by a small fort that reminded him of old medieval castles. It had four towers with sentries that were monitoring the area as well as many other soldiers doing patrols. But while this magically inclined race of people could fool other cultivators with their mana-based spells, they were also susceptible to techniques using Qi.

One of these techniques was on display now as Zhang Dong was able to sneak in without being noticed. He was invisible to them, even if he moved there was no sound being produced, and keeping his breath still was something easily done by any average cultivator.

‘Their spells are effective against cultivators but they also don’t know how to counter spiritual techniques...’

This reminded him about the time he had infiltrated the vampire fortress. There he had failed with his infiltration attempt so this time around he was playing it safe. He could spend days in this spot without moving to gather information but the big question was if he should.

The other option would be to go for the man he was spying on. The person called Varus seemed to be the golden knight he had stuck into his medallion. Supposedly that person had infiltrated a flying ship which was probably the one that he saved.

From the conversations, they were having it seemed that they were gathering information. Varus was supposed to take over the ship along with its cargo. They wanted to inspect the higher quality wares that cultivators were using without announcing themselves to the world.

They were taking a more methodical way to this war of empires. It seemed they wanted to test the waters first before going into a full-blown exchange. This was a more expected way of doing this as they probably had no idea of knowing what martial masters from this empire were capable of.

‘But if they are just waiting for the right time to strike, then they aren’t much better than the other guys, or perhaps there might be a chance to talk things out before more people die?’

He only had the merchant ship incident to go back to. There it seemed that these knights didn’t care much for the lives of the people there. It was clearly a hostile attack but due to his appearance, it ended prematurely if they actually killed all of the noncombatants after successfully capturing the ship was unknown to him.

‘Perhaps there is a possibility of reaching some kind of agreement with these people but if they don’t keep their word we’ll just be helping them fortify themselves here...’

Violence was not the only way to go around these things. If these magical knights could be reasoned with then perhaps if they gave up some land they could have peace. Yet the enemies could take a ceasefire agreement as an opportunity to build up their forces before launching an attack.

While contemplating the possibility of a diplomatic resolution he noticed that something was happening. A larger group of knights started heading into the middle of the fortress where a large

pentagram was located. It was about thirty meters in diameter and quite similar to the one he found after the ship incident.

‘So that’s their teleportation spell... It has its own problems I see.’

At first he thought these people had superior transportation technology but now he wasn’t that sure. The magical circle started glowing but instead of a gate forming through which people could go through a large number of them appeared right in the middle.

This teleportation spell was in some ways inferior to the teleportation gates he used. It did teleport a large group of people in a flash yet it had a big disadvantage of not being able to continue. After the spell finished the group was there but no more could go through. Only after a cooldown period would other people be able to use it again. This was different for the gates he implemented in his sect through which others could continuously go through.

‘This variant does have its uses though, it doesn’t require that many materials and can be used in active combat, there is no danger of the gate being destroyed while people are going through it either...’

What appeared there were about fifty soldiers with a peculiar gray-robed man in the middle. He had a peculiar getup that reminded him of various wizards from popular media from his old world. That he was right in the middle also indicated that he was someone in a high position. The person that he was spying on and that was the commander of this fortress was quick to greet this Merlin look-alike.

“It’s a pleasure, Grand Wizard Argus.”

“Lord Gregory, it is good to see you...”

They exchanged greetings while Zhang Dong looked from the distance. There was something off about that wizard though. He could not feel him out as easily as he could the other mages or magical knights in this area. The commander was a little bit stronger than the golden knight that he captured before but this old man felt like trouble.

“Actually... we have lost contact with Lord Varus...”

“You have? What aren’t you telling me?”

The commander seems to be hiding something from this grand wizard that he was talking with and it was obvious.

“P-percival was part of the group.”

“Do you mean to tell me that my apprentice has gone missing?”

The old man’s brows shot up while looking at the golden knight commander. While he was trying to explain himself Zhang Dong peeked into his medallion. In there he could see the suppressed prisoners trying to use their magic to get out of their cells. He didn’t actually kill anyone during the altercation so one of the mages was probably the one they were talking about.

‘Could it be that kid?’

While all of the mages there were mostly old shriveled up men there was one that was younger. His age was closer to thirty but he was at a similar level to everyone else which did align with the title of grand wizard apprentice.

"I don't blame you, Lord Gregory, I'm sure my stupid apprentice probably forced you to send him out, that idiot is too hasty with everything."

Argus gave out a sigh while also moving his hand to the side. Suddenly in his hand, a blue light appeared that expanded upwards to form a large wooden staff. With it in hand, he really started looking like a high level wizard.

"Don't worry I'll find that idiot and drag him back here, now give me some space."

With the staff in his hand, he ordered the soldiers to move to the side while smacking the ground with his magic stick. This caused the floor to produce more blue light that bubbled upwards. This bubble started forming into an orb that produced an image of white mist.

"Hm...he is clearly alive but something is blocking my spell, are there people capable of shrouding spells?"

Zhang Dong started to get nervous now as the wizard continued with his chants. He had the knowledge of some protective spells that he was using now but it was all from that other world. Would they be enough to counter this grand wizard?

'Even if he can get through the spell barrier, he shouldn't be able to go around the protective formation that works on different laws... right?'

This was truly an interesting display as the man continued with various other chants some of which Zhang Dong was actually familiar with. But the more this continued the more nervous he became as there was a feeling of being discovered soon. The biggest problem was that he had cemented himself into this location and if he moved then discovery was imminent.

"I don't know who this mage is but he will know the name of Argus!"

The wizard started looking mad as after attempting a few tracking spells he was unable to make the fog vanish from the magical orb that he produced. Yet he didn't seem to be at the end of his ropes yet as various magical items appeared around him along with some talismans to aid his cause.

A tremendous amount of magical energy erupted from the spot he was standing in. The knights that were to the sides were quick to remove themselves from the vicinity as small arcs of magical lightning started to form. Soon enough to Zhang Dong's shock the orb that was cloudy started clearing up and an image of the man he identified as Percival was shown.

"Hah, I see he is alive and in some kind of dungeon."

The knights that were to the sides started cheering after hearing that the people they sent out were still alive. But the person that was the one that apprehended them was wondering if he needed to move out. If he acted quickly he would probably be able to take out this Argus with one move. The man's mana capacity was truly enormous and it reminded him of the demon lord he faced off in the other world.

Yet he hesitated, for the time being, he was not sure if these people could be reasoned with. They were not the same as those who hunt hungry monsters that did all of this for pleasure. They were probably here to get resources and perhaps to explore and not to only conquer, perhaps there was still a way to talk things out.

“Now that I know that he is alive it will be a trifling matter to find his whereabouts!”

With a wave of his staff, the man pointed at the glowing crystal that quickly changed to the top view of this location.

“That’s strange... isn’t this where we are, did I make a mistake...”

The old man started conducting some experiments but with each new spell the location continued to be the same, it was right at the spot that Zhang Dong was hiding which was on one of the castle walls. Soon the wizard and the golden night were looking at the exact spot he was sticking to while squinting with their eyes.

‘Shit, I really suck at these infiltration missions...’

Chapter 465

‘Let’s calm down, they shouldn’t be able to see me... right?’

Zhang Dong had found himself in a pickle. On the magical orb that the mage formed to find his apprentice the spot he was hiding on was being shown. From this vantage point, he could see the old man looking his way but his cover wasn’t blown quite yet.

The wizard named Argus continued to look between the spot he was in and the magical ball as if he wasn’t sure of what he was seeing. Sometimes the image changed to that of his apprentice that was leaning up against a prison wall and then back to the empty spot that Zhang Dong was in.

“That’s odd, is something there? I guess there is one way to find out..”

Finally, after playing around with his beard the wizard quickly pointed towards his hiding spot. Even without asking, he knew that something was coming as the mana particles around the wizard’s staff started to change. It was not something a regular person would notice but he was different.

Without a sound, there was a shift in the temperature around the area he was in. It was some sort of fire spell aimed for the spot on the wall that he was clinging to. If he didn’t move he would receive damage and his cover would be blown.

‘Doesn’t that old fart care about his apprentice? What if he kills the only person related to his apprentice?’

Zhang Dong was slightly perplexed about the old man’s immediate reaction. If it was him he would probably not try to blow up the only clue to his disciple’s whereabouts. But perhaps this was part of the man’s plan as this amount of mana was not as deadly as he had originally thought yet his body reacted on instinct. With a high-speed jump, he propelled his body upwards to put some distance between himself and his enemies.

“I have you, now tell me where you have my apprentice!”

It was all a scheme created by the old Merlin look alike. The moment he revealed himself Argus used a quick teleportation spell to put himself above Zhang Dong's position. A mass of small magic circles appeared from all directions which soon shot out a vast number of blue glowing chains.

The chains had a clear intention of trapping him in place. It was clear that the first attacking spell was only a distraction to reveal the enemy and the chains were there to trap him. Yet Zhang Dong was not easily captured as his body turned into a bolt of lightning to dodge the incoming energy shackles that came from all sides.

'How many of these chains are there?'

The sky was covered in them, there was not much space to maneuver to getaway. He was unsure if this was something that this magician conjured up by himself or if this was some kind of safety measure that existed beforehand. One thing was obvious though, this man was strong.

"You will not get away fiend!"

"Hey now, I'm no fiend, and do you really want to kill the only person that knows where your apprentice is hidden away, what if he dies along with me?"

There was something odd that he noticed during this fight, this old man's killing intent wasn't all that strong. During his many battles he had grown a certain battle sense but this man didn't seem that frenzied. The attacks that he was using were also not meant to kill but to capture.

"Why you..."

Then suddenly something odd happened, the shackles that were chasing after him halted with their advance. They didn't vanish into thin air though instead they just floated there like snakes ready to pounce when ordered to.

"What do you want?"

"Wait, that actually worked for once?"

Zhang Dong was surprised by the enemy actually listening for once instead of just charging towards him like a madman. He had never had much luck when it came to the diplomatic approach, most of the time his fist envied all the conversations. Even when he was the stronger one the enemy rarely avoided conflict unless the gap was truly huge.

'So, does this mean that these people care for their own?'

The only explanation for this reaction was the relationship between this old man and the student. Now the question was what he should do, in reality, he was holding most of the cards. Even if he didn't manage to get a deal, escaping should be possible.

The wizard here was at the level of a nascent soul great circle master but not exactly the same. He did possess the mana to match his Qi but this didn't mean that they were on equal footing.

The mages were quite stationary during combat, if you could crush their mana shield they would quickly crumble. They were like slow-moving turrets that could blast everything with spells but their only way of evading counterattacks was either a slower flight spell or teleporting.

That teleport that Argus performed was tricky though, even Zhang Dong could only react to it without knowing where the old man would appear. Then there was also the range, could this old fart move large distances away and constantly barrage him with deadly spells? If he took too long more of those golden knights would probably also show up, one of them was already flying up here with a shield and golden lance in hand.

“Grand Wizard, I will aid you!”

“Stand down Lord Gregory.”

This golden knight Gregory had a more intricate armor than the one he met at the ship. On his back, there were golden wings which were probably responsible for his flying capabilities. If he had to measure this knight's power level he would put it at a lower middle nascent soul stage which at this point in his life wouldn't amount to much.

“But Grand Wizard, the Knight Commander forbade us from consulting with the barbarian natives.”

“I will speak to Lord Lucius later but for now we shall converse...”

‘Knight Commander? Sounds like some big shot could be their leader if this Wizard has to answer to him.’

By the looks of things, the Wizard carried a lot of weight here. Even when another leader's name was brought up he didn't care. Yet, the shackles were still there and the knight remained in the sky as they clearly didn't trust him to not escape.

“If you are finished then perhaps we can discuss a few things, here how about we take a seat.”

Zhang Dong smiled while waving his finger forward. The two people he was looking at flinched the moment he released energy that was very similar to their own. In his mind, he thought that perhaps if he showcased that he could also cast spells then perhaps these people would see him more as one of their own. But there was also the probability of them becoming more hostile after seeing a ‘barbarian’ using their holy arts.

“This, how is this possible? Are you someone that is from the Kingdom as well?”

The spell that he used was a creation spell. It produced a floating platform with a round table. On his end, there was one chair while on the other was another one for the Wizard. To separate himself from the weaker knight he decided to only allow Argus the sitting spot. This showed that he considered the mage to be on a more equal footing than the golden knight.

“From the Kingdom? No never heard about it but I also dabble in some magic, now how about you take a seat?”

The furniture he produced was glowing with blue energy and radiating faint blue light. He was unable to create things out of thin air only when fueling them with his energy would they be able to exist.

“Grand Wizard, don't trust this barbarian, it has to be a trap!”

Gregory was very suspicious of the chair that Zhang Dong beckoned Argos towards. This was quite a normal reaction to doubt an enemy. If it was some kind of trap then their strongest member could be quickly taken out of the picture.

"It's fine Lord Gregory, there are no traps there."

The old man floated down to the chair to sit in it which also took Zhang Dong by surprise. He thought that he would remain standing, it was as if the old man was assured that there were no tricks involved. Argus seemed to be confident of his ability to see through the magic being used here or his own mana shield that was still protecting his body.

"My name is Zhang Dong, I do not wish to harm you or your apprentice but he and some other of your people attacked a merchant ship, they were lucky that it was me that captured them otherwise they would all be dead now I'm not sure what to do with them, your people have taken the lives do you think they deserve to live?"

This was the truth, if any other powerful cultivator appeared instead of him they would not bother with capturing these invaders. They would probably have no problem in blowing up the whole ship if they started losing though either.

"What do you mean barbarian? Of course, they deserve to live!"

"Oh do they? You come to our lands and slaughter our people. Do you call us barbarians so that you can justify your wanton slaughter? Is it not just an excuse to dehumanize your enemies and make yourself feel better?"

Zhang Dong raised his voice while looking at the man named Gregory. This was not something new, it happened everywhere when groups were involved. It didn't matter what the difference was, it could be race, it could be religion or it could just be the city a person was born with. People liked to divide themselves into groups, then when conflicts arose it was easy to divide themselves from the enemy.

"How dare you!"

"Lord Gregory, that's enough, leave us."

Before the person in shining armor could get mad he was restrained by the magician. His shouts were muffled by a magic spell that the mage created in a fraction of a second. Soon he was forced to fly down towards the rest of the small army below them.

When glancing there Zhang Dong also noticed many crossbows and other ranged weapons being pointed towards him. It was clear that the moment the discussion ended he would find himself in quite the pickle. This could be of course prevented if he could get this Argus on his side and for some reason, the man was wise enough to give him a chance to explain himself.

"I must apologize for my companion's outburst, I'm aware that we are nothing more than invaders in your eyes but I implore you to see past this notion, and perhaps we can come to an agreement."

Finally, it was time to give his diplomatic skills a try, he had already alienated the golden knight by his previous emotional outburst but luckily this old man was not offended. Perhaps it was actually possible to resolve this without bloodshed for once.

Chapter 466

'This is an interesting turn of events...'

Zhang Dong found himself sitting with a person from another empire. After a quick introduction, the man named Argus started talking, the main point was the release of his apprentice. Now the big question was if this man would promise him something in return and then actually keep that promise.

'Will he attack me the moment I take out this apprentice of his?'

The magician was quite strong considering he was not a cultivator. His code of conduct was unknown to Zhang Dong but for now he seemed to be reasonable enough. After the golden knight was forced to go down to the ground the two were left chatting. Soon the mage produced a tea set with black tea which he decided to drink as a show of good faith. It was not poisoned or tempered in any way that he could tell.

"Sir Zhang Dong, first I would like to apologize for Sir Gregory's behavior, his words were too harsh and I hope that you can forgive his ignorance."

"Ah it's fine, being called a barbarian is an interesting choice of words but you don't seem to agree with that way of thinking."

This wasn't anything new, during a war it was normal to dehumanize the enemy in some manner. In this situation, they gave the native cultivators of these lands the label of barbarians. Through this, they could put themselves on the moral high ground.

There was no problem in killing savages, they were nothing more than uneducated brutes that had not been enlightened. Thus they could easily justify the massive number of deaths that were caused by the wars.

"I'm sure we can reach an agreement but that is if you can keep your men in check"

Zhang Dong didn't exactly trust this man yet. While he was acting nice the soldiers below could be getting ready for another attack. His system teleportation window was already floating to the side. If he found himself in danger that he could not get away then teleportation would be the only option out.

"The knights will follow my orders, you don't have to worry. Now Sir Zhang Dong, state your terms, what will it take for you to free my apprentice and also the other knights."

At first, he thought that the man was more similar to a cultivator but to his surprise, the wizard seemed to care for the other soldiers as well. When he was glancing through the magical orb to see the cell his apprentice was in he certainly saw a few other knights there with him. While a martial master from this empire would probably only care for their disciple this man also wanted to help the other captives out.

"So you want me to release all of the prisoners? That might increase the cost of the deal though..."

"That does not matter, my apprentice is dear to me but the soldiers that kept him safe are also important."

“Interesting, well I won’t circumlocute and palter, what I want is information. Why did you come to these lands, what do you really want and is there any possibility of you halting your advances before more people die?”

“That is...”

The old man started rubbing his beard while thinking, it took a moment before he finally decided to speak up.

“Very well, I can talk about my homeland but for the second part I’m afraid that I’m able to make that decision...”

“Oh?”

Zhang Dong was surprised that the man was actually willing to talk. The reason for capturing the men that invaded that ship was to get them to reveal their origins and military structure. If this man gave him this information then he would have no use for these men. Though returning them so that they could just kill more people was also a problem.

“But before I speak, can I have your word that you will release my apprentice and the men that you have captured?”

“That depends on the information you give me, to be frank, I was planning on getting it out of your men anyway so it depends on you Mr. Argus, also please don’t lie to me, I will be able to tell if you do.”

With various techniques at his disposal, he could tell if someone was telling the truth or not. That is when other cultivators were concerned, this man was covering himself with a thick layer of mana that would be difficult to prod at. The man was still human though, there were many ways he could read his mannerisms that would help him.

“I might be many things but I am no liar, do I have your word?”

“Fine, I can at least promise to release your apprentice but only if the information you give me has validity.”

“I guess this will have to do, I will keep you to your word.”

The man nodded while also pointing out with his finger towards the middle of the round table. Zhang Dong didn’t flinch but he was vigilant, the spell the man was performing didn’t have any malice behind it. After the mana gathered in the middle he was presented with a large holographic depiction of the land.

“This is my homeland, we call it Avalon.”

To confirm the man’s claims Zhang Dong quickly used his system to copy the map being presented there. In a matter of seconds, it was added to his world map and compared to the other landmasses.

For the time being, he had a detailed map of the Azure Dragon Empire and also a semi-detailed one of the Emerald Phoenix Empire that he had visited. When he aligned the borders those two fit together perfectly. The man didn’t lie to him, this version of the map was vague but it loosely aligned with the

Azure Dragon Empire's borders from the southeast regions and the Emerald Phoenix Empire from the north side.

'It stretches mostly towards the southern region but doesn't come close to my sect.'

The world map was slowly taking shape. To the West were those maniacs that were seeing everything as some kind of game. In the East was the Emerald Phoenix Empire and below it was this land of Avalon which seemed to be divided into two large continents.

"This continent here is the land of Avalon, it is my homeland and where all of the soldiers come from."

"If that's your homeland, what is this other continent there?"

Zhang Dong pointed towards the other piece of land that was color-coded black. From how Argus presented this land it looked quite desolate and hard to live in.

"That is the continent of Ragnos and the reason for us coming to these lands. It is the birthplace of the demonic races that have been plaguing our lands for millennia..."

'Oh... this does sound like an average hero setting, don't tell me that they are here to find some McGuffin to defeat a demon lord or something?'

"We have come to these lands to find the legendary holy sword Lightbringer..."

The more the man talked the more he didn't like it. It seemed that these people were justifying their actions by the impending demonic invasion. This holy sword might not even exist or it could have been destroyed many hundreds of years ago. But this changed things, perhaps if he could help them find this fabled sword then they would just pack up and leave?

"Lightbringer you say? Do you have any specifics of how it looks or its origins?"

"I'm afraid not, it's an old legend passed down by our forefathers. The sword had returned to its resting place after the previous Lord of Ragnos had been slain over a hundred thousand years ago. For the prophecy to come true we must bring the sword back to Avalon where the chosen hero will appear to claim it."

"I see, so if I helped you to find this holy blade would your people leave these lands?"

"Would you help us find the secret blade of legend?"

"That depends on your honesty, if what you say is true then this relic would have unfathomable power, a power that could be easily turned towards us."

"Sir Zhang Dong, you don't have to worry about that ever happening, the holy blade can only be used by a true hero with a pure soul."

It seemed that this weapon followed the usual tropes. It could have been an intelligent item with a spirit living in it that put its master through trials to test their worth. Perhaps it was another setting that would play out after these people left these lands with the weapon in hand. Another person like him could be summoned then to fulfill the prophecy that was aided by another system.

'But if it's a weapon created by the system, then perhaps I could use it instead?'

Argus did not have a description of the weapon or its location or he was not telling him everything. These people probably didn't come here without any clues on where the sword was hidden. Perhaps they even had some special item that could detect where the weapon was. He was quite sure the old man would not reveal this information to him but this was enough, with this knowledge he could actually start bartering.

But now there was an actual clue to getting rid of one invading force. Perhaps if he helped these holy knights out they would be grateful enough to help him with battling the other forces. He was not sure how powerful these people were but they should be at least on the levels of the others.

Sooner or later they would clash with the other invaders with which they probably didn't have anything in common. During this scenario, the Azure Dragon Empire would lose most of its lands and be forced into the middle. But this would also cause the other empire's to make contact with each other. While they went into combat with equally strong foes his side would have some time to gather their forces for a counter-attack.

"I see, Sir Argus, I think that if what you are telling me is the truth then we can reach an agreement. If you agree to hold your advances towards our lands I should be able to convince the other sects to aid you in your search without all of the bloodshed."

The weapon in question would probably be useless in the hands of the cultivators. These lands were too vast to explore but if everyone knew what they were searching for then perhaps this item could be retrieved before they suffered more deaths.

"You could do that?"

"Why yes, you might not know this but you are talking with the Azure Emperor's brother!"

It seemed that they would be coming to an agreement but before he could continue there was a shift in the environment. Zhang Dong looked down to where the teleportation formation was placed and saw a group of ten golden knights appearing. All of them were radiating power that was at the level of a nascent soul master at the great circle with some even being slightly above...

Chapter 467

"What is this supposed to be? I thought that we could reach an agreement and this is how you repay me?"

"I..."

Zhang Dong was looking at an approaching squadron of golden knights. While he was on the cusp of making a deal with this wizard Argus the teleportation spell was used. A small group of powerful magical knights appeared out of thin air that was now charging towards the location above the castle.

"Lord Lucius please stop, this man is not our enemy!"

"Argus, have you lost your mind? Are you colluding with the enemy or under some kind of enchantment? Worry not, I Lucius Lightburn of the Golden Braves will cut down the enemies of our holy kingdom."

With the enemies coming his way Zhang Dong decided to fly away from the round table in the sky. At first, he thought that this was a betrayal of trust but then as the conversation continued it was clear that the mage had nothing to do with it.

“Sir Gregory, was it you? Do you mistrust this old man this much to call upon the Knight Commander himself?”

Down on the ground was the knight that he saw before. It seemed that the man had called over their forces while he was having his talk with the Wizard. Argus was the strongest person here so he did not expect someone to ignore his orders. This was a rule that was prevalent in the cultivation world that he was now used to. Here on the other hand the most powerful might not even be their King.

‘What should I do... Can I take them out and still continue? Would they work together with me after I kill their powerful knights or just feel resentment instead?’

There were ten knights in shiny gold armor flying towards him. They were all riding large muscular horses with wings coming out of their backs. The one in the front looked like a legendary pegasus with a full golden barding covering its body. These magical beasts felt as strong as nascent soul masters and clearly specialized in speed.

“Argus, I see that we’ll have to talk this over some time later but my offer still stands but that depends if you can convince these idiots first.”

The old wizard’s eyes went wide as he flew to the side. It was clear that the man wanted to attempt a less bloody solution but his comrades had other ideas. Zhang Dong was unsure of the man’s position in this army but it felt to him that Argus was in some kind of strange position of a consultant. The knights would take his orders to a point but the real leader was someone like this Knight Commander coming his way.

This Lucius character stuck out from the rest. While they were all wearing heavy plate armor and covering their faces this Knight Commander was letting everyone see his face. He was quite handsome, his eyes looked like blue sapphires that were radiating light. The hair looked like golden straw that for some reason even when he charged towards him didn’t get in his face. It was as if he was a supermodel that came from a shampoo commercial. The weapon of choice was a golden halberd that was radiating holy energy.

‘Would be nice if they were lightning-based enemies...’

While Zhang Dong could absorb this type of energy there was a limit. This limit was close approaching as both his soul and golden core were practically full. Unless he took in more lightning energy to equal all three cores out then he was risking a cultivation backlash. At this point in time, he had not reached his limit but there were ten golden knights coming his way and all of them possessed holy-based attacks.

“Duke Lucius, stay thy hand! This is not the time for combat”

Argus tried to get the supermodel to stop but even he was ignored as the whole squadron of flying horses just zoomed past him. The golden halberd in Lucius’ hand started giving out a radiant glow as he was preparing to poke him with it.

‘So, they divide themselves by nobility... maybe that’s why they aren’t listening to this wizard?’

While propelling himself back he continued to gather more information. It made sense why the other soldiers didn't like the wizard that much if he was some kind of gifted commoner. Nobility tended to distance themselves from the peasants that they considered subhuman to them.

It was a similar division to the sects and clans. Even when the other group was strong unless they had some backing or history they would see them as lesser beings. It seemed that the wizard was outside the tightly knit group of knights that would listen to Lucius over him.

'I guess that means that he can't do anything for me which means...'

Zhang Dong glanced at his system window where his escape teleport option was already brought up. With one click he could be out of there and back in the lightning-covered lands where he saved a safe location for himself. But he decided to stall for a moment, while combat was inevitable it was a good chance to measure his enemy's strength.

The knights that he was facing were radiating might similar to top nascent soul masters with their commander being the most powerful. This situation didn't look too favorable for him, he might have been slightly stronger than their leader but there were too many enemies to count.

With that in mind, he decided to not engage the group in a close-quarters battle instead, he pointed out with his finger that quickly produced a ray of light. This ray before impact split into many smaller ones that showered the ten enemies with his attack.

Yet before the moment of impact, all of the knights raised their kite shields. All of them were uniform in their looks with a head of a lion on the middle part. At the moment of impact instead of an explosion, his attack was somehow suctioned towards the lion's mouth then after a fraction of a second, it was sent back towards him.

"Wait, that's illegal!"

He shouted out while infusing his body with more power to flee. While the attack came from him it was somehow altered through those shields. He was unable to control it anymore and if it collided with his body there was a possibility of being injured even with his body refining skill making him impervious to most damage.

This was quite the surprising turn of events which then turned for the worse. When he was dodging the blasts sent back his way the knight leader managed to catch up to him. The flying horse that he used was actually faster than he had assumed.

"I have you!"

There was no hesitation as the sparkling halberd headed towards his head. The man ignored the wizard's shouts while going straight for the kill. He was not sure what that Sir Gregory character had told this knight commander but it was enough to cost him his head.

"How about you take this instead?"

But he didn't despair yet, there were various ways to get out of this predicament, one of them was his trusted moving skill that he had perfected through his battles. Thus the moment the weapon went for his head instead of a bloody stump it created a light show of electrical energy.

Instead of his head flying off an afterimage containing a jolt of holy electrical energy was discharged through the man's weapon. It traveled further up his hand and was discharged through his entire body along with the mount Lucius was riding on.

This was the opportunity that he was waiting for, this technique was able to stun even the strongest opponents for a moment. A sword appeared in his hand along with his true form to the flank of his enemy. With a quick swing of his weapon, he decided to punish his overzealous opponent.

"Hmm?"

But Lucius didn't seem that impressed as he twirled the halberd in his hand to deflect the shorter blade with ease. His horse then took off forward before turning around for another attack. This was not his only problem as the other enemies had caught up to him and surrounded him from all sides.

'Could they be resistant to the golden lightning, or is that armor just that good?'

It seemed that he was not the only person that could resist holy attacks. Perhaps to get the edge over these opponents he would need to utilize one of his other Dao's. Using his soul core to weaken his enemies before striking them down seemed like a good plan but there was something protecting them.

Zhang Dong found himself in an evasive battle the knights attacked from all directions while he dodged. The only thing on his side was that he could perform more difficult aerial maneuvers than the men on horseback. Like an eel, he managed to evade all blows with only sustaining marginal cuts on his white combat robe.

'These guys aren't that simple.'

After a few exchanges, it was clear that these knights had gone through many battles together. Whenever he aimed for an opening there was someone blocking his way before he could deliver a finishing blow. They reacted quickly and covered each other's backs even though he was a lot faster than them.

Then there was also their leader who after the first few exchanges took himself out of the main battle. He would monitor him from afar before jumping in for the kill, it was him that constantly tore his clothes as he barely evaded.

'If this continues I might actually die here...'

Zhang Dong realized that he had been too haughty for once. He had allowed the enemies to come this close in hopes of testing their true strength. Now he found himself with no time to do anything but dodge. His movement techniques seemed to have been seen through and the armored men weren't damaged by his holy aura nor his lightning. He was also unable to affect their souls either putting him at a large disadvantage.

'I guess it's time to make a run for it...'

"Oh my god, isn't that the radiant goddess herself... and what is this! She is holding the secret sword Lightbringer!"

During the onslaught, he shouted while pointing in one direction. The knights were taken off guard and even when they didn't want the Lightbringer name had some weight behind it.

“The Lightbringer?”

Lucius turned his head around to look at empty space along with some other of the knights. Yet when they looked back towards the man that had shouted the lies he was already to the side and waving.

“You really fell for that? Well, I’ll see you next time, ciao!”

What they witnessed was a smiling Zhang Dong waving at them after finally having a chance to activate his teleportation escape. Even when they tried it was already too late, their weapons hit a few energy particles that were left behind while he vanished to fight on another occasion.

Chapter 468

“Duke Lucius! Why did you interrupt my negotiations with the native, he was about to set free my apprentice but now...”

“Wizard you are out of line, you might have the required skill to participate in this secret expedition but you are not part of the army.”

After Zhang Dong had vanished from sight everyone was momentarily stunned. Soon all of them were looking towards Argus the mighty wizard and Duke Lucius who was the commanding officer here. Just as Zhang Dong had suspected the Wizard had no say in the militaristic part where the nobles resided.

“Everyone, we will divide our forces into four and follow this barbarian, he could not have traveled far with such a fast teleportation spell he must still be close to our location! When you find him activate the beckoning spell, he might be alone but that savage is strong, don’t try to fight him alone!”

“Yes sir!”

The group of ten golden knights was quick to follow Lucius’ instructions as they all spread out in three directions while dividing themselves into smaller groups. Their commander on the other hand took the fourth position himself. Everyone here knew that he was the most powerful warrior that didn’t need anyone watching over their back.

“Wait, if you kill that man then my apprentice could be lost...”

Argus stretched out his hand as he tried to call Lucius back but no one was listening. The moment the knight commander appeared his overseeing privileges were overwritten. All of the knights now ignored him as they were given the order to find the white-haired native that had been here. Even Gregory that had called for help had gone with them.

“You blasted fools!”

The ground started shaking as bolts of blue energy appeared around his body. Yet his anger soon subsided as he heard a familiar voice.

“Is this a bad moment to interrupt?”

This voice belonged to the man that he had discussed a few things before. It was coming from his left hand in which Argus was holding a comma-shaped bead that was made from green jade.

This communication jade was thrown his way when Lucius had attacked during the diplomatic talks. He had surrounded it with a thick layer of mana as at first he thought that it might have been some kind of malicious item but now he knew what Zhang Dong's intention was.

"Sir Zhang Dong, is that you?"

"Yes, we were interrupted previously but I still think that we could work something out. That depends on if you can somehow convince those nobles of yours to work with me though..."

Argus looked around and quickly snapped his fingers to produce a sound canceling barrier. The soldiers here would certainly inform the knight commander if they heard him talk to the person they considered a barbarian.

"First I must apologize for the behavior of my countrymen, I'm not sure how I could regain your trust."

"Oh, that's fine, I understand the social structure you are under. While we might not be able to work together directly if you promise to halt your advances I could help you with that Lightbringer and about your apprentice, I'll drop him off in a few hours so keep in touch through this communication jade, I set it up so that you can contact me through your mana signature."

"You will release my apprentice?"

Argus was shocked by the words of the man he was talking with. Even though his people attacked him in a brutal fashion to kill him, the man was still seeing the bigger picture. Bringing them the Lightbringer would be the fastest way of ending this invasive expedition. This Wizard knew how the nobles operated and that it would take a massive effort to convince them to see it his way.

"Yes but I will be keeping those soldiers, I do not trust them to not just go back to killing the people that live in these lands."

He could not disagree with Zhang Dong's words. The people belonging to the kingdom's war machine would follow the knight commander's words. It was him that was the true leader here as he had the highest noble rank of a duke. But this could change in the future, he was not the only duke in the kingdom, and then there was also the royal family with its many members.

.....

"Just give me an hour or two and I will send you the coordinates of your apprentice."

Zhang Dong concluded his conversation with the man named Argus. The old wizard was not opposed to working with him so he would throw him a bone. The apprentice that he had in his medallion was a bargaining chip but he needed to show some goodwill. The rest of the soldiers were too dangerous as they would probably listen to that knight commander that wanted him dead instead.

"Those idiots think that I wasn't able to use wide-area teleportation."

After clearing up things with his new associate there were now two things that he had to do. One was to go towards the large torrent of electrical energy to further his cultivation by another step and then there still were the golden knights on his trail. Those people had some nice teleportation technology which meant that if he attacked his pursuers they would quickly gather at his location.

‘Or at least that’s what they are hoping for, keep me busy long enough for all of them to arrive in one location. They made a huge mistake though...’

Zhang Dong through his communication jade could hear Lucius give out his orders. There was nothing specific there but with the help of his map he was able to pinpoint the locations of his enemies. Even though the map had trouble discerning the power of these enemies he just needed to use their hideout as a reference point. The big question now was, did he gain more from taking out these golden knights before cultivating?

‘All of these people aren’t hostile, they can be reasoned with but if I just murder their Knight Commander along with a large part of their strongest men then I will probably lose any goodwill they could offer me...’

If he just went along with the guerilla tactic of taking out the smaller forces and running he would probably be successful. Yet this would put a target on his head, even if Lucius was defeated or captured those nobles would probably hate him. The man named Argus didn’t have any political power and they would probably set a bounty on his head for killing their noble leader.

This was not an easy choice to make for him. When looking at the bigger picture then it was better to postpone the fight for a later date. If he managed to get this sacred sword to them he would have all the leverage. Yet if they saw him as a true enemy of their people, even with the relic in hand they could choose to attack him as the trust would be hard to gain back.

‘Argus mentioned that some other nobles would arrive later, ones that see things more his way, that would probably be the right time to strike up a deal...’

Zhang Dong clicked his tongue while looking out into the distance. These lands were vast and populated by many cultivators. While the magical knights weren’t wantonly attacking everyone they saw they would probably retaliate swiftly whenever met with any kind of resistance.

“You can never save everyone huh?”

He knew that the morally right thing to do would be to take out the invaders before they cause more damage. Yet it was not the correct way of winning this dispute with people that were searching for some strange relic. As a leader he needed to see the bigger picture here, the sheer amount of people that could be saved by an earlier end to this war outweighed the ones he could save by acting now.

Thus with a heavy heart, he turned away from the map indicator that informed him about the general direction of his pursuers. They would not be able to find him as he was a lot further away than they expected. He could only hope that they would continue to remain hidden in these lands instead of going into a full confrontation with the sect living here.

‘Well then, first I need to drop off this apprentice... that looks like a good location.’

In the distance, he saw a large mountain that was getting struck down by many lightning bolts. It was a good natural barrier that could not be crossed by any cultivator below the nascent soul mastery level and a good hiding place for his mage. The constant lightning bolts made it hard to use any detection techniques and spells which made it perfect.

After taking off he quickly surrounded himself with a golden spiral of energy. Using this he drilled himself into the mountain range. There were no naturally formed caves here so he had to make some space so that this apprentice would be able to survive.

“That should do it...”

With a wave of his hand, he brought up some wooden furniture along with some food. He did not know how fast Argus would be able to come here as the distance from their hidden castle was about a day’s journey with his own flight speed. If the wizard could fly as fast as he could for a whole day he did not know.

“W-what?”

“Well hello there, you must be the apprentice Argus mentioned.”

“You know my mentor? Who are you, what do you want?”

“I don’t want anything, you just need to stay here, your master will come and pick you up later so it would be better if you stayed here, if you happened to die then it would probably sour our relationship.”

After the little explanation vanished from sight. The apprentice was left in a hidden cave made by him and surrounded by rocky mountains. He had reinforced the exterior so there was no problem with the mountain collapsing on the man inside or him being able to get through the walls himself. Air would be supplied by a handy treasure he had taken from his sect and with enough food and water to last him two weeks he should have been safe.

“Old man Argus, I have your disciple stashed in a safe location, he should be fine there for a week or two but it would be better if you didn’t stall too much. Also, bring some lightning protection and maybe some mining equipment.”

“Mining equipment?”

He could not see the wizard’s face but he was sure that the man was confused about his words. After some further explaining, everything was clear, the Wizard was on his way to free his apprentice and Zhang Dong started his journey towards the zone containing the largest amount of lightning energy.

Chapter 469

“So this must be the place...”

After dumping off the wizard’s apprentice Zhang Dong finally arrived in the electrically charged dead zone. The area was quite intense, if he didn’t possess his current cultivation level he felt that his body would have been torn to shreds a long time ago. Even then he was not at the center part.

“This lightning energy is somewhat different...”

Thanks to his expertise he was able to distinguish everything that concerned the Dao of Lightning. His field was in heavenly lightning that was at a higher tier but this was something on par. As he recalled it was theorized that an immortal had ascended from the area which created this torrent of energy that was able to last through many thousands of years.

“This is a lot more than I expected...”

He had gone through absorbing a large lightning storm before in the other empire but this one was many times more chaotic. What he was looking at was a giant downpour of lightning bolts that almost made everything look like a constant blue pillar of light. The clouds producing this torrent of energy were in a constant state of movement, it looked as if a god was quickly stirring the heavens.

The more he approached this spot the larger the lightning rods became. Yet this spot was devoid of any as they had probably been melted by the sheer power of this lightning phenomenon above him. The earth beneath them was shiny and clear as all of the sand had been melted from getting constantly barraged by the electricity.

Laws of physics didn't apply here, the air was filled with the Dao that his lightning core wanted to absorb. Even now when Zhang Dong was approaching towards the middle he could feel his core crying out for more energy. Luckily for once, it seemed that he would be able to progress with his cultivation of freedom.

This place was hazardous, without the lightning core that required a vast amount of energy he could perish. Even for him someone that was at the level of a nascent soul master at the pinnacle of their power this was not easy. Even now his body was constantly hit by bolts of blue energy.

Thus he advanced forward towards the center where the pillar of light was. The earth below was devoid of any life, the rocks that looked like a polished bronze mirror were reflecting all this blue light which made it look as if a large lake was underneath him.

‘T-this feels different...’

He had absorbed many energies with his other cores and even with this one yet this time he was experiencing a bottleneck. As soon as he entered the torrent of energy he attempted to open his lightning core to let the energy flow in. But to his surprise, it was having trouble dealing with all this energy that had a peculiar variation to it.

“ARGH...”

For the first time after attaining these three cores, he started feeling pain. It was similar to the moment he had achieved his breakthrough into the core formation stage yet the pain was even worse. It was as if his body was being torn away from within, his lightning core was unable to contain this energy fast enough.

‘Shit...’

Zhang Dong didn't falter as he knew that any mistake could cause a cultivation backlash. He had already plunged himself into the torrent of energy so it was too late. Thus he quickly placed his hands together to form a makeshift triangle. While holding his palms this way he brought them towards his dantian where the entrance to his lightning core was.

With a large shout, he forced the chaotic torrent of energies towards his hands. Through them, he would slow down the invasion of these lightning energies and allow his core some breathing time. Yet this was a double-edged sword as while his core was able to absorb everything at a slower rate his hands were turning dark.

He was being injured yet he needed to continue. Even when his hands became pitch black he just forced his holy energy into them to boost his healing factor. What followed was a process of destruction of resurrection as his body started crumbling. This process brought massive amounts of discomfort onto him which was fed by the constant new waves of energy hitting his body.

However, as the process continued the lightning storm above him continued to get smaller. His sacrifice was paying off but his body was being torn apart. Without his holy energy that was able to mend him over and over, he would have already perished. This was truly a foolish way to cultivate and not something that anyone besides him could stomach.

Only a combination of his lightning core that could absorb vast quantities of lightning energy along with his enhanced refined body and his self-healing abilities were allowing him to last through this for so long. Yet he had to do it, to protect his family and friends he needed to sacrifice his body. The enemies he was going to face had not revealed themselves yet so if he could get any sort of advantage, he would do it.

The swirling clouds above became even more hectic and with them brought along an even harder downpour of energies. Yet he lasted through all of it, his lightning core slowly growing in size and soon enough reached the same size as its two counterparts.

With a last one thunderous roar that was followed by a giant explosion, the clouds were pushed to the side. The ever darkened lands that had not seen sunlight for many millennia were finally illuminated by the reddish hue of the rising sun.

What was left behind was a practically naked Zhang Dong that was left panting while slowly floating down to the ground. Even though the lightning storm was gone the energy that characterized it was still there. These blue arcs continued to slowly crackle all over the place while colliding with Zhang Dong's injured body. Yet the more they hit it, the more they started to change from pale blue to deep gold.

"No rest for the righteous huh?"

He let out a sigh as he felt that his body was changing on the inside. All of the three cores had been satiated and it seemed that the time for another change was upon him. Normally what would happen was that the seed would absorb the energies from all the cores and grow larger yet this time around it was different.

A strange suction force was being exuded by this pea-sized seed. This gravitational pull was somehow forcing the three cores to come together, it was as if the seed wanted to either combine itself with them or absorb their power.

Zhang Dong found himself in unexplored territory that was not discussed in any cultivation book. His system would also not give him any answers, he could only rely on himself for answers.

'Cultivation abnormality detected, some features of the system will be unavailable until the abnormality is eliminated.'

Bob his Ai gave him some bad news about his system bugging out again. This strange transformation halted some of its features that he wanted to activate. This of course was his teleportation feature that would allow him to flee this place if he needed to.

Thus it was finally time to push his cultivation into another direction, would this make him stronger or cripple him instead? He did not know but with his future in mind, he had to take that step when the chance was given to him.

If this was truly the next step and he was able to push himself towards an alternate nascent soul realm he might become an existence that could not be stopped. Yet this would probably bring out the hidden administrator of this world as it did in the other. But these thoughts that clouded his mind were quickly pushed to the side as he needed to focus.

The seed was demanding more energy but he theorized that he couldn't just force it in. Perhaps if it was an emergency then he would need to force it but for the time being, he was alone here. Would that remain that way though? He had managed to evade being detected by the sect ruling these lands and the golden knights. But now after the storm had cleared up visitors were probably on the way.

This was somewhat according to his plans as he had calculated the distance to the closest settlement. After taking into consideration the speed of the average nascent soul master and flying ship he had about one or two days before someone arrived here. Perhaps longer if the sect decided to prepare a larger force so examine this case.

Even if that sect sent a few people they would probably leave him to his cultivation. Attacking monstrous cultivators while they were busy reaching another realm was a delicate endeavor. Some sects would attempt robbing this soon-to-be expert when they were vulnerable while others aided them in hopes of rewards.

When they saw him here they would probably not recognize him. To the natives gaining favor from an expert was important but robbing them was also a way to achieve greatness. That was the riskier move but he was in their territory which might push them towards that decision.

But what he feared more than the native sect were the golden knights he bumped into the day before. They would attack him the moment they saw him and would not think about it twice. Before they got here he needed to focus and get this over with as there was nowhere he could hide in this desolate area.

If he moved too much he risked failing his transformation process. Thus for the time being sitting down was the only option. He could only create a haphazard protective formation while he could still somewhat focus on the outside world. Without being able to teleport back to his sect to push through in freedom this was the only option he had left.

Thus he centered himself while focusing on the slowly growing seed inside of him. The closer the cores moved towards it the more it reacted. The process needed to be slowed down as another bout of chest pains was forced upon him. It was as if this world was trying to deny him from getting this seed to sprout.

But he continued on while in a state of disarray. Time began to pass and soon enough people appeared around him. Many curious gazes, some with malice mixed into them were appearing to watch the strange master go through with his advancement what would become of it, no one knew.

Chapter 470

“Elder, you have arrived!”

A small group of cultivators bowed their heads before a long-bearded man. All of them were wearing similar robes with a white dragon on their back. They were members of the Lightning Dragon Sect that kept order in these lands.

A day ago they had all witnessed a strange phenomenon. The large torrent of lightning energy that had existed before any of them had been born, was no more. It was an inhabitable land that none of them could visit so only when the spiritual energy faded did they start to notice.

While this area still had a lot of residual energy left, it was nothing they couldn't handle. Even a foundation establishment cultivator would be able to walk into the center. This center all of them were looking at as there was someone there.

“Have you identified this cultivator?”

“We can only speculate, but there aren't many masters that are able to control lightning to this extent, we fear that it might be the Emperor's brother that has been seen active...”

“Long Dong? This complicates everything...”

The old man looked at the strange thing that was circulating at the spot where the energy pillar was. Instead of the pure lightning energy they were used to it was composed of some strange mixture.

The elder could detect the Dao of Lightning that he was a student of himself but it was a lot purer than he was used to. Then there was a radiant golden glow that was giving out a warm glow that was making his skin tingle. It was as if some of the old wounds that he had suffered through his five hundred years of battles were being slowly healed.

It was clearly the Dao of the divine yet there was a third energy that he could now decipher. It was not something he was familiar with but even when he couldn't see it he could tell that it was there. It was pulling at his nascent soul as if wanting to absorb it.

“If this is truly the brother of the Azure Emperor then we can't disturb his enlightenment yet if it is an enemy then...”

The Lightning Dragon Sect was not unaware of the strange happenings in their lands. People had been disappearing that were even nascent soul masters. These events were mostly accompanied by divine energy that was left behind at the scenes.

This aura here was similar, the person responsible for the disappearances could be the man before them. They had a chance to strike, during the period of cultivating a person would be unaware of their surroundings and unable to protect themselves. If they wished to strike this would be the best chance but it could cost them dearly if the person here was really related to the Azure Emperor.

“... Everyone spread out, we will create a protective array for the senior...”

Everyone else looked at each other and quickly nodded. All of them could feel that the person inside of that spiritual bubble was someone tremendous. Even being this close was making their own cultivations throb out of embarrassment. Striking the person in there could fail as the difference in powers was large and even if they failed in cultivating that wouldn't mean that they would die on the spot.

Thus all of the people gathered here spread out in all directions. While they were missing the large torrent of lightning energy that was once here, it wasn't all gone. It was as if the person here left some of it behind so that they could contemplate its Dao and get stronger.

This was actually a great boon for them as now they would be able to turn this into a cultivation spot where they could study the residual laws of this greater Dao. Previously the lightning torrents made the innermost lands inhabitable but now they would be able to expand. They knew that if they dug into the ground here they would be able to mine out various treasures as well.

The biggest reason for helping was as always self-interest. This elder was unsure of being able to contend with the being who was before him. Each time he tried to measure that area with his spiritual sense he couldn't feel anything. It was as if the gap between him and the thing in there was inhumane. He could not see himself winning with that powerful being and this is why seeking favor with them instead was the most logical conclusion.

Soon more cultivators were pouring in, some were from the same lightning sect but others were just curious to see who was responsible for this spectacle. It was inconceivable to everyone here that someone was able to remove this lightning storm that plagued these lands for so long. Was there a trick involved or was the one responsible for it a master of never before seen proportions.

Yet while most that gathered here were waiting for the man in question to be done with their cultivation journey, there were a few others that didn't belong. They were wearing golden suits of armor and riding on white horses with wings.

"Inform the Knight Commander, that we have found him."

....

'Almost there...'

Zhang Dong was floating up in the air while surrounded by a thick layer of his own three energies. At first, they were very chaotic but soon they began to slowly react with each other. It was as if the purpose of separating the three cores was to later bring them together and fuse them into one.

This was just the process he found himself in now as all three of his cores were slowly fusing with each other and the seed in the middle. The most difficult task was to keep everything at an equilibrium, whenever something was out of line a sharp pain would attack his body. Without his body refining at this level, he would have already failed but thanks to it he was allowed enough retries without his body crumbling into dust.

'I can't heal myself during this process but my guests don't seem to be hostile, at least not for the time being.'

While he was concentrating on his development he had also noticed that he was surrounded by multiple unknown cultivators. He could only feel the ones that were the closest, some of them were nascent soul masters that should not pose a problem if he was in a rested state. If after this core fusion he would advance further or be tired was still unknown to him.

The ascension he was going through was unknown to him. His system could not even identify the name of it nor was it able to help him with its progress. This made him believe that it was an unknown variant

that the person that created this system didn't know about. Yet there could be another reason if the creator of the system did not want the system holders to know about it. Either way, if he managed to progress further and had to challenge this godly being then this unknown cultivation realm could be his only way of victory.

'It's almost there...'

Soon enough after a few failures, he had managed to stabilize all three cores that started to slowly fuse with the white seed in the middle. The first effect of this fusion was represented by the seed's growth from something that was pea-sized into a walnut-size seed. Yet even with the size increase, there was something wrong, he did not feel that much of a power increase.

The seed had multiplied in size by quite a lot but his all-around spiritual energy reserves did not. Instead of this feeling like a proper large realm breakthrough, it felt like he had gone through a few years of training. But this wasn't quite over as the seed started to change its color.

From a pale white into a deep blue and quickly into a transparent gold. It continued to switch between the coloring of his three previous cores until it settled on a yellowish pattern. This wasn't all as from the top it started to slowly open up, perhaps when it sprouted the real realm shift would commence pushing him into a higher state of being.

However, instead of the expected change the seed never sprouted. Instead, little golden whips of light shot out from within and made its way towards his middle dantian. Through it, the small ball of light escaped and started increasing in size. At the same time, the energies that were surrounding his body exploded causing everything to be bathed in white.

On the outside, the cultivators had quite the scare as the person the phenomenon they were all watching violently exploded. The formation that Zhang Dong created himself took the brunt of the force but quickly exploded. A wave of spiritual energy was forced outside in all directions and towards the defensive array, the people from the other sect created.

Even though the blast had been lessened in its destructive force it still went through the barrier as if it was made from paper. The people that were sustaining it started coughing up blood while using all sorts of defensive talismans to save their life.

But just as soon as this devastating wave of spiritual energy traveled through everything leaving injured in its wake, their misery was short-lived. A warm glow appeared soon after that quickly cured everyone's wounds. This glow was accompanied by a strange low pitched roar that sounded like some kind of powerful beast.

"W-what is that?"

"It really is the Golden Dragon!"

"It is... but what is that strange small creature next to him?"

'Strange small creature?'

Zhang Dong had to take a moment to gather himself. When looking inside of his spiritual sea he could see the enlarged seed that looked as if it was about to sprout into something. Yet it still didn't, it looked

like it was frozen in time. Even with the cores now gone, he could still feel all three of the energies pulsating from the seed but the progress was halted.

Now the other peculiar thing was that light that shot out. At first, he didn't notice it but there was something familiar about that small light. When he opened his eyes he was surprised to see a somewhat familiar-looking creature before him. The first noticeable thing about it was the golden pattern to its scales and the two wings it was using to keep itself afloat.

"Are you... my soul beast?... but why do you look like that?"

"Purrrr!"

What he was seeing was a rather cute baby dragon that was about the size of a large dog. It was floating around him while making cute sounds. It looked like a smaller version of the golden dragon that was once his soul beast. But there was something different about it, the connection was different. Instead of it being part of his soul it felt like a separate being with a similar energy as his, as if it was made from his soul but not part of it.

'Interesting...'

Zhang Dong placed his hand on the creature's head. The cute dragon baby reacted by fluttering its wings and purring like a cat. While his cultivation breakthrough didn't go as planned he had gained something else, his soul beast had returned and the spiritual energy that was coming from it was not low at all.