

Unfathomable 491

Chapter 491

“That’s about it, how is Zhi doing?”

The red demi-humans that were similar to the ones he met in the north were decimated by his attacks. Even though some of them were at the level of nascent soul masters they could not contend with him at all. His power had certainly increased and was close to the pinnacle of what this Empire had to offer.

Zhang Zhi was also showing some promise as he was able to hold out against a tribe leader with a lesser horn. Yet the fight was a lot closer than Zhang Dong would like it, both of the fighters were exchanging blows and taking a lot of damage. If this continued for too long he feared that Zhi would lose as his specialty was not body refinement that gave a cultivator a lot more stamina.

‘I feel that he will be depressed if I just jump in to save him... but I can’t have him die here...’

The blade that Zhang Zhi was holding was unable to cleave through his opponent’s taught skin and bones. It was obvious that the demi-human was faster and stronger than Zhi yet the cultivator was still able to contend due to his fighting sense. His fighting style was somewhat similar to Zhang Dong who liked to predict his opponent’s movements before dodging with minimal effort and Qi use. This allowed him to hold on without utilizing his Qi for defenses but there was still a limit to everything.

‘He needs to deliver a critical blow, all those flesh wounds would be able to take a normal cultivator down but this demi-human’s healing abilities are over regular body refiners...’

There was of course a limit on how many times the red demi-human could heal himself. Zhang Zhi’s attacks also injected small amounts of his Qi into those gashes which slowly ate away at the opponent’s stamina. It was a true battle of attrition that was shifting in the favor of the humanoid monster.

‘To win this fight he will have to take a gamble...’

This was what Zhang Dong was afraid of. Zhi clearly could tell that he was slowly losing, if he didn’t alter his tactic there was no coming back. What he could do was gamble his life on a risky maneuver that would strike down his enemy. By sacrificing some of his flesh he would be able to strike down his opponent’s bones in theory, but would the demi-human risk it?

He was not about to let one of his strongest sect members just die but he at least needed to give him a chance to improve. It would be easy to jump in but he felt that Zhi would feel some resentment towards himself for not being able to be useful to his favorite Patriarch. Thus instead of jumping in directly he decided to fiddle with the lightning barrier that was keeping both of them in a makeshift ring. If there was a danger to Zhang Zhi’s life he would activate a massive discharge to save him.

‘It will be close though...’

Finally, the exchange between the cultivator and the demi-human reached the final act. The first one to act was the demi-human, he was the more aggressive one throughout the entire battle. Zhang Zhi placed his katana into the scabbard while taking up a quickdraw stance. It was the technique he was most familiar with and the one he intended to finish it all.

The monster-like human's claws expanded, they looked very sharp and were made from white bone. Its entire body was covered in them for protection and it was also the largest problem for Zhi that could not cut through them in one swing. It seemed that he was risking his life to finally cleave his opponent, either he would succeed or die.

Zhang Dong moved a bit closer as he got nervous. He did not know what was going through the man's mind precisely. Not once did he look for help or even pay attention to Zhang Dong while he was clearing out the trash around the area. The trust for his patriarch was unshakable but the man in question wasn't sure if he liked that. This put a lot of weight on his shoulders, if he did falter then the trust of his people would be misplaced.

He was prepared to electrocute the demi-human instantly but he allowed Zhi to have his way. The man was hard-headed but he was a warrior who deserved to get a chance if they decided to risk their lives. Thus when he saw what was transpiring he jolted forward, the clawed hand connected with the side of Zhi's neck, and took a large chunk of his shoulder out almost instantly.

Yet he stopped himself from stepping in as he saw the katana leaving the sheath at a tremendous speed. Zhi had offered up his left side to allow him to get in this one final attack. The sword left the scabbard while being covered in a blue light that was concentrated on the sharpened cutting edge.

A loud thunderous roar that was similar to a dragon followed soon after the blade collided with the demi-human's neck. Sparks flew as the sword was resisted by the creature's bone plates that were covering its neck for protection. It was a momentary pause as the edge slipped in through a precisely seen weak spot. The head of Zhang Zhi's enemy flew upwards as the clash was over signaling the end of the battle.

"You idiot..."

Zhang Dong appeared right next to his retainer that was almost decapitated himself. At the last moment, he shifted his body so that only his left shoulder would be blown away. His sword arm was still intact and able to be used to deliver the last blow. By focusing all of his qi on the blade while ignoring his own defenses he was able to dislodge the demi-human's head.

"I apologize Patriarch, I have shown you a disgraceful display..."

It seemed that Zhang Zhi was more concerned about looking weak in front of his leader than losing part of his body. If Zhang Dong wasn't versed in healing arts then perhaps he would have been crippled for the rest of his life. Even though he was a nascent soul master, so was his opponent. The amount of damage was serious and normally his body would take years to recover. Yet thanks to the ample holy energies that he had at his disposal, Zhang Dong could shorten the process to a week or two.

"You did well, your opponent is dead and you have gained valuable experience for the coming battles in the future but for the time being I order you to retreat to our sect, our healers will take care of the rest of your treatment."

"I... I will do as the Patriarch commands..."

Zhang Zhi was happy when he was praised but his smile soon turned sour as he was ordered to return to the sect. It was obvious that in his current state he would be a liability if more enemies appeared before

them. Luckily the man would not go against orders like this so Zhang Dong wasn't worried about him leaving the sick bed before his treatment was over.

"Now hold still, I'm glad that you won but next time you should prioritize your health. Look at the sorry state that you are in now. If you asked me for aid you wouldn't need to be removed from the battlefield for a whole week!"

"I... I made a grave mistake!"

"Hey stop that!"

Zhang Dong had to deliver a smack to Zhi's forehead as he was trying to bow down after being reprimanded. His healing energies were slowly recreating the flesh that was once the shoulder blade. It was a lot harder to perform healing arts on nascent soul masters than on regular people. That's why he needed to do it himself, if he left all of the healing up to the average healer then it could even take a year. After the initial healing was done though, they could continue with the healing process and get him running within the week.

"Patriarch, Elder we have come to aid you!"

While he was applying his healing arts two nascent soul masters that had been given their strength recently appeared.

"Good, one of you can escort Zhang Zhi back to the teleportation gate, make sure that he returns to the sect's hospital only return to me when he starts his treatment and not a day sooner!"

"Yes, Patriarch."

More and more people started gathering after the battle was over. This was not over as the demi-human parts could actually be used as cultivation resources or weapons. The bones they produced were hard to cut even by high-quality blades and were easily processed by just grinding them down into shape.

With each passing day, his sect was growing. For most other sects this was a time of turmoil and loss, yet for a small few this was the chance to rise up. All of the resources that were left in the wake of this war could be siphoned away. They didn't need to spend time making weapons, pills, or elixirs that could just be taken from other locations and used to strengthen their warriors faster.

This did not mean that they could just wait as their opponents hadn't actually shown their true hand. Their leaders were still hanging back in their respective empires. would they even appear or just continuously send their forces. It was hard to figure out the number of men that could be thrown their way as they were still in the information gathering stage.

These leader-type demi-humans seemed to know a bit more than the grunts but unless they captured one of the true tribe leaders like Valentine they would not be able to get anything substantial.

"If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles..."

Zhang Dong was starting to take some of the cheesy quotes that he read from the internet to heart. To win this battle he needed to get a substantial amount of information about his enemies. That was the only way of winning the coming battles where he was at a disadvantage.

“But also an enemy of my enemy is my friend...”

He pulled out the holy relic that Argus and the magic knights were probably here for. There was an underhanded method of getting help from them against these demi-human bastards. While he didn't want to lie there was no way that those people would just give him aid, probably even if he just gave it to them.

‘If I announce that I have it but aren't willing to give it unless they help me, then they might do it... or betray me at some point to get it... but if I do something else then they will have to help me even if they don't want to...’

Zhang Dong grinned a bit as he placed the item back into his spatial ring, then soon he took off towards the area where the demi-humans resided with a new plan in mind.

Chapter 492

‘Hm, don't think they trust me that much yet...’

A month had passed since his last run-in with the forces from the magical kingdom. After battling for two weeks at the border regions together with his sect members, he had managed to push the red demi-humans back. Their tribe chief was nowhere to be seen and it felt mostly to be an annoyance.

It bothered him that the vampire demi-humans were gone, their master was probably resting at the castle that he wished to conquer. For the time being, he couldn't do anything about that but he had a plan. This plan involved both Argus and Lord Lucius whom he was meeting now. If he was successful then he would have enough backup to storm that fortress before the vampire lord gained back his full power.

“Argus, this is a waste of time, we should resume our search for the holy blade.”

“Please Lord Lucius as you know it would be better if we worked with the natives living here.”

“You two know that I can hear you right?”

Zhang Dong chuckled as the two approached him while bickering. The area that they were in was close to the previously hidden base. It was a wide-open area without any spots that could be used as an ambush. He could also feel that there were several hidden knights on standby probably waiting to pounce if he tried attacking their lord.

‘I guess this is only natural. I did beat them all up and almost killed their leader...’

They were still in an unfamiliar place with no clue of the culture. They had come to retrieve some kind of vague relic that they probably weren't sure existed. This same relic was already in his possession and he could easily hand it over to them. The question was if that would help him or his people out in any way?

From his point of view, it seemed that these people would leave these lands after recovering the time they wanted. They were a much smaller force compared to the demi-humans with an elite unit with not that many soldiers compared to the other empires. They were not as violent and were not taking over the lands they pushed in but instead hid out of sight.

Would their disappearance be helpful for this war effort? If they vanished then people in the southeast regions would not have to battle them anymore. Yet on the other hand there was the Emerald Phoenix Empire in the upper east regions. These two powers would clash with each other sooner or later and probably keep themselves in check. Thus in a way, they were helpful in blocking the other invaders from advancing too far.

Yet there was another way of making them useful but it would only work once. By producing a white lie concerning the location of the relic he would be given a chance of using this force of knights. His plan was simple, perform a joint attack on the area where the demi-humans are hiding in their fortress. His initial plan was to wait and upgrade the floating golden palace but if he could get these magic knights to aid him, then the Golden Dong Palace would not be needed.

"You must exercise the young lord Sir Dong, he is still skeptical of your motives..."

Argus turned to face Zhang Dong while awkwardly replying.

"It's only natural to be skeptical but I assure you that I mean you no harm."

He was telling the truth, even though he wanted to use these people, harming them was not his motive. Nevertheless, it also didn't feel right to just give them the item without having them work for it. In these cruel times, he could not worry about others while his own people were constantly in fear of death. The invaders were in the wrong here and if they wanted to have their treasure they would need to give their aid.

"A month has passed, do you have any information concerning the holy relic? How could you be able to achieve something that my holy knights could not for so long?"

Lucius was not having it though, it seemed that after the loss he didn't change that much. Even after being humbled, it didn't seem that his pride would allow him to calm down in front of the person that he lost to.

"Lord Lucius you shouldn't..."

"It's fine Argus, you might not believe me but I think that I might have found your treasured blade for you..."

"You found it?"

Argus was quite surprised after hearing Zhang Dong's answer. Lucius on the other hand just snorted without looking impressed.

"You want us to believe in your words, where is the proof?"

"I was just getting to that, are you always so impatient Sir Lucius?"

Zhang Dong chuckled while the blond knight was taken aback. The man that had the title of duke was probably not used to anyone talking back to him. Yet the person that he was conversing with was someone that he could not beat, even if he couldn't accept it the loss was there.

"Argus, do you perhaps have an item or a spell that could confirm the relic?"

“Yes, we do have something like that.”

The old wizard started scratching his beard while looking toward Lucius. It was clear that the person that possessed said item was the knight commander.

“That would make it easier to confirm my claim then, let me explain. I’m not sure if you are aware of the monster-like humanoid creatures that had invaded our lands recently, they are quite ferocious and don’t value human life at all...”

First to get things rolling Zhang Dong started to explain the situation with the demi-humans and how they were pillaging their lands. He went out of his way to portray them as mindless beasts that only wanted to spread carnage and suffering. It was a jab at the knight’s code that these people possessed as they would probably be fine with battling bloodthirsty monsters.

“They sound truly atrocious.”

Argus commented while shaking his head but Lucius didn’t seem that impressed.

“Where are you going with this? Are you just stalling because you weren’t able to find any leads on the relic?”

“You are truly impatient my friend. I just wanted to give you some information about the new enemy that your people will have to face to retrieve your relic as I’m convinced that it’s buried somewhere in the lands that they had taken over...”

“You want us to believe your word? Where is the proof of that?”

Zhang Dong shook his head while shrugging, Lucius clearly didn’t trust him but even the knight commander would have to if they really had an item that could recognize the holy sword’s location.

“As you might know I am fairly poised in the holy arts myself, I discovered this relic’s unique energy signature while battling with the beasts, and to some degree, I am able to recreate this energy pattern. If you really have an item that can detect your relic it should be able to confirm my claim.”

“Is that true Wizard?”

Lucius was clearly not that versed in magic. He relied a lot on that magical golden armor that he was wearing to give him most of his strength. Zhang Dong on the other hand knew the answer to that question. To know the relic’s unique magical pattern he would have to have to come in contact with it. The item was really complex and even Zhang Dong could not use it.

“In theory, it should be possible, the guiding ring should react to the divine energies that the relic produces but are you really able to copy them that easily?”

Even Argus was skeptical about Zhang Dong’s claims, how could he be able to copy their divine relic’s energy fingerprint? It did sound ludicrous but they had to at least hear him out. They had been stuck going through these strange lands that were far too huge to explore.

“What do you have to lose? If you think that I have bad intentions you can move away while I perform the technique.”

Lucius was clearly not having it as he started to back away. Argus on the other hand was more interested than afraid but he needed to listen to the knight leader. Soon the two moved back while the hidden knights closed in as if a battle would break out. All of them knew that Zhang Dong was strong and fighting him even with these numbers would not be easy.

“Well then, let me begin... it should be something like this...”

To not appear that he was trying to blast his new allies with lightning bolts he decided to sit down in the usual lotus position. The only person that wasn't on guard was the bearded wizard that was more interested in the strange combination of magic and spiritual energy that Zhang Dong was performing.

Soon his body started glowing, it was similar to his usual hue of golden but was slightly different. Lucius placed his hand on his sword while being apprehensive about this phenomenon but soon there was a change. The knight commander noticed that something was happening as the item that was around his neck started giving out chimes.

“Impossible...”

Without waiting he removed the golden chain that was around his neck. A single ring was hanging from this chain and this was the item that was giving out those gentle chimes. All the other knights and also Argus were awe-struck as this was the guiding ring that was supposed to react to their relic if it was close enough.

“Judging by your reaction, it does seem to be the item you are searching for.”

“But how...”

The chiming quickly subsided as mimicking the pattern of that secret relic wasn't an easy task. Even Zhang Dong could not make that relic budge for long, the most he could do was use up almost all of his spiritual energy to get that ring working. For safety purposes, he was actually copying the energy he experienced when he tried releasing the sword from its sealed state as bringing the relic to this place even in his spatial bag was too dangerous. Argus would probably notice it and then his scheme would be over.

“I see that it was really the relic you were looking for, good. I think we could form a pact between our sides, if you help me take care of the demi-humans plaguing my lands I will guide you towards your relic and also help you get it! Doesn't sound bad, right?”

Zhang Dong smiled while putting on his poker face. If Lucius wanted to get his hands on the relic he would need to help him capture the demi-human base. Even though the man was prideful he needed to complete his mission and for that, he would need to follow his lead.

Chapter 493

“Then I shall contact you when I have made the arrangements.”

“Very well Sir Dong, we will wait for the news.”

Argus along with Lucius blurred out of existence as they teleported away. The meeting between the leaders was over but this was only the beginning of their cooperation. Zhang Dong flew away from the meeting location only to be welcomed by his retainer.

“...Whew.”

“Is everything alright, Patriarch?”

“Yes, it’s fine more than fine!”

“Is that so...”

Zhang Zhi backed away after seeing a strange devilish grin plastered on Zhang Dong’s face. He was used to the refined look of his sect leader so the cackling noises coming from him were a shock.

“We have a lot of work to do, gather all of the elders, we must prepare for the next stage of the plan!”

“The next stage of the plan, Patriarch?”

“Yes, soon we will go to war... get some rest, this would be a good opportunity to visit your family Zhi...”

The grin that was plastered on his face quickly vanished as Zhang Dong was brought back to reality. His deal with Lucius and Argus had gone through. With some trouble, he managed to convince the two that the treasure they were looking for was in the vampire castle. This was of course a lie as it was in his possession instead.

Even though he lied he didn’t feel that he was in the wrong. After he got help from the magical knights and wizards the relic would be given to them. His reason for the lie was based on some distrust towards their leader Lucius. He feared that if he just presented the item to them, they would just leave before returning the favor.

The second option would be to bargain, inform them about the item in his possession and force them to aid him in the attack. Yet for a deal to happen some amount of trust between the two parties had to exist. Without substantial reassurance, it would be impossible for trust to arise. Even with some soul-binding contracts, there was no certainty that the leaders wouldn’t sacrifice themselves to get the holy sword back to their kingdom.

For the time being, they had made a small pact. It wasn’t much as he only promised to hand over the holy blade to them if his side discovers it during the siege first. Argus along with Lucius did perform a pact while waging their souls on it and Zhang Dong did the same. His promise was to give the weapon to them and they accepted to aid them in the assault and were guaranteed a safe return after everything was over.

‘It’s normal that they don’t trust me, going into enemy lines so deep into the empire would probably never happen unless they were desperate. They did change their tune after I simulated the blade’s energy pattern...’

He wasn’t sure if they were aware of his deception but that’s probably why they had him word the contract in such a way. After the enemy was driven back he would be obligated to give them their item if he had it in his possession. This was fine as he could not use it anyway.

“If you say so, Patriarch...”

Both the cultivators propelled themselves back towards a location with a temporary teleportation gate. With it’s help Zhang Zhi returned to the sect as he was ordered to while Zhang Dong paid a visit to the

Golden Dong Palace. After two weeks had passed the place was finally returning to a better state. When stepping through the gate he was greeted by a small group of cultivators that were here along with Zhang Jin.

“Dong’er you have returned! Does this mean that I can...”

“No, you will stay here for the time being at least the women in the sect will be safe from any unwanted pregnancies for the time being.”

“H-how could you say such a thing to your dear grandfather!”

There weren’t that many people that he trusted, his grandfather was one of them. He needed someone that would follow his orders in this place and that had enough prestige to instruct the sect workers. This place was far too important to let someone incompetent manage it. While Zhang Jin was a pervert he did all of his tasks accordingly to Zhang Dong’s wishes.

“Treat it as a honeymoon with your lovely wives, I’m sure they are glad that their numbers won’t be increasing for a while, now how goes cleaning, did you manage to get the place into shape?”

“No love for your dear grandfather I see, such is my faith.”

Zhang Jin shrugged while all the other people in this room lowered their heads down. It was clear to everyone in this room that this old man was not to be trifled with. No one besides the old man was able to be so relaxed around the Patriarch besides his wife, even his disciples were very reserved.

“We had managed to get this place into shape but some areas are locked but...”

Before continuing with the report Zhang Jin snapped his fingers. When he did a neatly dressed man appeared from the side along with a clipboard in his hand.

“He will give you the details if you wish, your grandpa is far too old to remember such things.”

Zhang Dong could see the old man laugh while shoving the responsibility on one of his retainers. The man with the notes was quite old and looked more like an accountant than a cultivator. He performed the usual greeting and only when Zhang Dong nodded did he start speaking.

“As the Patriarch commanded we had moved all the rubble, dirt, and broken items into the storage facility...”

The man started going through the list as he listened and walked towards the previously mentioned storage facility. This was a temporary space that was one of the largest areas in the palace. From his system description, it was marked down as a training facility with a lot of space for combat training.

This old accountant was clearly nervous as Zhang Dong walked half a step in front of him and looked over the golden palace. After all the dirt and dust was taken care of the whole place was quite shiny. It was actually a bit too shiny as the golden metal was almost all that remained from this relic. The whole place was mostly just a framework that needed to be refurbished.

“I see, that’s enough.”

They finally arrived at the temporary storage facility where some items were gathered. Even though normally this space would be filled out with various trash it was mostly clean now. Whenever enough materials were gathered he would recycle them without the need of coming here to check. The people here had gotten used to it as even when the materials were disappearing before their eyes they didn't flinch.

Before continuing he decided to empty out the content of the dimensional medallion and his spatial ring. With all of these various building parts stashed in there, he would be able to start repairing the insides of the palace but it was not enough. More and more building materials were needed along with spirit points. To get this whole place operational far more was needed.

'Hm... how big is that Vampire guy's fortress again?'

While he was going towards the demi-human fortress to block off their advancement into his lands, there were resources for him waiting as well. Remembering that great worm with a fortress on its back made him think of a quick solution to getting this place up and running. It would probably not be enough but if he managed to transport all of the building blocks from that place then perhaps he could make his palace fly.

After going through the system he did discover the flight module that kept it afloat. It was an anti-gravity treasure that used up a lot of power just to keep it floating in place. To make it move he would need to restore a lot of the functions and even repair the power source that was that golden egg. This could be achieved through spirit points and various other materials that would lower the costs.

'But first, let's get some quality of life upgrades, if my people are going to live here they need to have better living conditions.'

The sect members here were reliant on the main sect for their well-being. There was no food to be made here nor any place to sleep. He only had enough points to get the instant transportation chamber to work but there were far more rooms to restore. One of these chambers was meant not just for food production but also to generate various spiritually packed herbs.

With his current spirit points and the various recycled materials, it would now be possible to build this zone. Thus after unloading the remainder of his spatial ring in the current storage facility he went to work on his faction window. There he only needed to find the desired room and start fiddling with the options.

It was possible to recreate this room just as it was in the past but also make some modifications. The soil used for the cultivation of rare plants could be boosted past its original specs all thanks to his system. The whole place was like his own cheat lair that could rise above the placed limits of this world.

'To keep everyone healthy and safe we do need more recovery pills, let's focus the herb cultivation facility on recovery items for now.'

While he could produce cultivation resources to raise the power levels of his people there was not enough time. Soon everyone would be flying off to battle the demi-humans where they created a fortress. For this reason, more pills and elixirs that could regenerate lost limbs would be more appropriate.

“Okay everyone, you might want to close your eyes...”

After deciding on the second upgrade he walked to the entrance. Instead of a closed ceiling, this room had one made from some kind of glass. From the outside, no one would be able to peek inside but the sun rays could still illuminate the whole area normally. The special glass and gold outlines were the only things that survived through the ages and allowed him to activate this place at a lowered cost.

Soon after the command prompt was clicked the whole area started glowing in blue light. The whole room was consumed by this light and some of the cultivators that were with him had to narrow their eyes and scrunch their noses when they looked at it directly.

Yet the process was quite hasty and a familiar smell that no one expected started coming from the illuminated zone. When everyone opened their eyes once more they were greeted by a lush farming zone filled with sprouts that were already on their way to producing valuable herbs...

Chapter 494

“How is this possible... How did you do that Dong’er? Is this part of the Golden Dragon legacy you have received?”

“Something like that but more importantly have some herb masters start cultivating the soil here, it’s very rich with spiritual energy and should be a lot better for growing special herbs with vast amounts of holy energy in them.”

Zhang Jin looked at one of the elders that were walking with them. The man just clasped his hands and quickly started running as he had heard what Zhang Dong had stated. It was a nice sight to behold, he didn’t even need to lift a finger and everything would be arranged. What he only needed to do was to restore these facilities and point his sect members towards them.

‘This area isn’t only meant for herbs, it can be used to grow fruits that should be rich in nutrients required for body refinement.’

For the time being, creating more recovery items would be more important but later it would be beneficial if this flying fortress was self-sufficient. The teleportation arrays used up a lot of energy that needed to be conserved during a long battle. While it was stationed here it wasn’t a problem but when it became operational it wouldn’t be optimal to have to constantly rely on outside sources.

‘Besides fruits and vegetables that can be grown here, people also require meat...’

Luckily this place had it all, in another location there was a wide-open area that was meant for animals to live in. With the help of the herbs being rapidly grown at this greenhouse farm animals like spirit chickens could be brought up rapidly. They would fully mature within a few weeks before being able to be eaten.

‘It is a bit strange that a palace meant for an emperor would have facilities like this...’

The Azure Palace of Zhang Dong’s brother didn’t seem to possess these types of rooms. Livestock was kept outside in one of the city districts meant for farming. All the high-quality food was also made there while the rest was imported from spots below this flying fortress. In a sense, the Azure Palace was more

reliant on outside sources for survival but would probably still be able to sustain a large population of cultivators even if they lost all the lands outside.

‘At least, in theory, they could have hidden spatial treasures that I’m not aware of like my medallion...’

What the Golden Palace lacked could be constructed inside of the Dimensional Regalia. Yet the facilities here could be created much faster as they were connected to the system. Zhang Dong imagined that in the future the Golden Palace could be used by inner and core disciples while the outer disciples remained in the Dimensional Regalia.

‘I could probably fit the entire Spirit Spring City in there but bringing it there will be the biggest problem, also the citizens might not want to come either...’

While his sect controlled the city their numbers were vastly inferior to the whole population. They were below five percent of the population but held all of the power. Even if he could order everyone to get into the spatial treasure they needed to decide themselves if they wanted to stick around. Living in a pocket dimension might not have been something that everyone wanted.

If they decided to relocate they would not be able to easily leave without the sect’s approval. The world inside was vast but compared to the whole empire it was like a grain of sand. While the regalia was an immortal grade treasure this didn’t mean that it couldn’t be destroyed either. During such an event whoever was inside this dimension would surely lose their life.

‘After getting the necessities in order I should start repairing the battlements...’

First, he needed the Palace to be able to house the minimal amount of people it required to run. There were many facilities that needed cultivators to run them. This place could not work automatically; it actually needed people to run most of the equipment. It seemed that it was created with a large force in mind and not one person using it from the throne room.

The Palace was huge, if there weren’t enough people manning the cannons there would be many blindspots through which the place could be invaded. Only if he managed to restore all of the defensive features could this fortress be operated. It was far too large to evade cannon fire from fast-moving battleships. Its only protection would be the protective barrier and its own cannons which needed to be used by a team of trained marksmen.

Thus for now Zhang Dong headed to the second location to repair it. The stunned sect members quickly followed after him as they were curious about what their leader would do this time. After arriving at another empty large room the whole area was lit up once again but this time around some of the elders kept their eyes open even if it pained them.

They were rewarded by finally being able to identify what was happening. Even then they couldn’t wrap their heads around what they were seeing. Floor tiles appeared out of nowhere along with various pieces of tools. Everything was just materializing out of some kind of spiritual energy without it making sense to them. This only furthered the gap in their understanding of this world and of their Patriarch that seemed like some kind of god.

After going through the large castle various rooms that would allow more sect members to migrate here became available. With them now working over he could prepare for the battle facilities that would be then manned by the people living there.

“This will probably take some time but prepare to move a large part of our sect members here, they can live in the barracks section for now but then will be moved to a special location...”

This whole place was created with spatial items in mind. This allowed them to create more rooms in a special space. These smaller rooms were similar to cultivation caves that were popular in the other sects. By spending more spirit points and materials Zhang Dong would be able to create a long corridor through which certain core disciples would be handed their rooms. There was a limit on the size but together with the wider barracks, it would have enough space for everyone to live in.

‘This whole place feels like it’s some kind of strategy-building game, the only thing that is missing is waves of monsters attacking the palace at set intervals...’

It all felt like a game, the more he renovated the place the more spirit points he received. At this point, he wouldn’t be surprised if he would get more resources after this place became operational and started going against the invaders. Yet for the first attack, he would not be able to use it but perhaps after stripping the vampire fortress for resources, he could fix that.

...

“Are you leaving?”

“Yes, we need to prepare everyone.”

“Dong’er are you sure that we should be rushing? If we just wait some more...”

“If we wait, then it will be far too late, time is not something that we have...”

Zhang Jin and Zhang Dong were having a private conversation after he had spent most of his remaining points on renovating the palace. His grandfather knew about the intended attack on the demi-humans that would be taking place soon and was against it. From his perspective, there was no reason to rush into enemy territory. Their position was secured and the invaders couldn’t get past their new borders.

“Is this Wang Long truly such a difficult opponent?”

“I don’t know yet but the more time we give him, the more people will die in the future. If we let him develop his skills to the fullest then even if we survive this war our lives will be forfeit.”

Zhang Dong feared Wang Long for one reason only, he had the original version of the overpowered system. There was no telling what he would be up against when this person appeared before him once more. One thing was certain, Wang Long considered all of this a game and had no reservation in using human lives to reach his goal. If he somehow was able to reach the immortal realm or even step foot in it, then it would all be over for them.

“Is he really such a monster?”

Zhang Dong nodded while his grandfather just gave out a sig.

"If it is so, then I will fully support your decision but not like you need my support, the other Elders won't speak out either."

Normally even though he was the sect Patriarch he would need to at least convince some of the Elders to follow his orders. In other sects, the difference in power between the leader and the ones below him wasn't that large. Here on the other hand he was considered a true dictator that no one could go against. The only person that could realistically go against him was Huo Qiang but the man would be the first to jump into the battle.

"We have been winning most of the skirmishes so those old bastards might actually be itching for a fight this time around!"

"Let's hope so as we will need most of our elders to move out this time around, if we can secure that location then we will be able to sway this invasion in our favor."

He was convinced that controlling the area by the bridge was the first step in achieving victory. The plan was to secure that location first before turning their eyes towards the north. His main enemies were the demi-humans and after they were gone he would have access to the lands of the demonic cultivators in the north.

Regretfully he would not be able to do anything to help the people on the east side of the empire. The focus was still on Wang Long, only when he was dealt with could he start thinking of reclaiming the other areas.

"If only the Azure Emperor would see reason, do you think that he would aid us in this battle?"

"Long Qing would probably... not help me, it's better if we keep this a secret from him for now."

"Is that so?"

Zhang Jin could feel that there was something between these two brothers that he could not ask for. Clearly, his grandson had some reservations about the Azure Emperor. But was it something more on a personal level or was there a darker reason?

"It's no time for that gramps, I need you to come with me for the time being, help me gather all of our forces."

Zhang Dong was not a strategic genius and required someone trustworthy like his grandfather for aid. After assessing their forces they needed to come up with a good enough assault plan that included the magic knights. It was finally time to bring the battle to the enemy's doorstep.

Chapter 495

"I'm glad that you have decided to aid us, you will not regret your decision."

"Do we have a choice?"

"There is always a choice but this one is certainly the better one."

"Hmph."

'Lucius is kind of a tsundere, isn't he?'

It was time for the offensive and both the United Element Sect and the magical knights were gathering at the closest location to the demi-human infested lands. Even though his forces were much larger than what Lucius had brought along this didn't mean that they were weaker. What they lacked in numbers they made up in power as they were a smaller battalion of elites.

'They certainly look like people from the world I met Beatrix in...'

Zhang Dong started wondering if there was some kind of default structure these worlds were based on. Perhaps whoever made them just copy-pasted in the usual bases to make them work and then just let them run their course. Why this was happening was still the biggest question, a question that he was afraid to ask after forming relationships with this world's inhabitants.

The magic knights in question were drawing a lot of attention to them. They were all sitting on top of winged horses that radiated some strong divine energies. All of them were at least of core formation level of strength with quite a large force of ones that were a realm above. These golden paladins were led by Lucius himself, Argus on the other hand would be giving ranged support along with some of his elders.

"We should discuss our strategy, please follow me."

Before the battle could start everyone needed to be on the same page. Thanks to Lucius being their ally now he would be granted access to their intelligence. Zhang Dong moved towards a tent that was much larger on the inside than on the outside. It was a bit funny to look at Argus that examined the entrance before giving Lucius the nod.

'I guess they still don't trust me that much.'

This was a normal turn of events as he would probably not trust any other group after creating a hasty design contract. There were always ways of circumventing those kinds of binding agreements. On the inside, there was a large holographic map, a smaller version of the one they had at the sect with similar capabilities.

"This is where we are and those red spots are where the enemies are focused."

Zhang Dong spoke out while pointing at the red spots on the map. While the map still had some trouble picking out the qi signature of the body refiners if there was a large concentration of them somewhere it would show it. Argus was somewhat intrigued by the map and quickly voiced his praises.

"What a brilliant device... you can actually see where they have stationed all their forces?"

"Yes, thanks to this we won't have to worry about being ambushed by a large force. Let me explain, the demi-humans divide themselves into tribes and we will be going against three of them..."

The map started changing as it brought out a visual representation of each individual demi-human type that they had met. From what his sect knew there were at least three tribe leaders still active in these areas. One belonged to the molemen, another to the red demi-humans covered in sharp bones, and then the vampire-like creatures that were comfortably sitting in the fortress.

"Hoh, what a peculiar way of manifesting mana..., and what is this strange energy?"

Argus was more interested in how the hologram worked. Similar effects could be created with illusion magic but they worked on a different basis. While illusions affected the human brain a hologram actually produced a holographic image in front of them. They achieved a similar result of producing an image of something that wasn't there but went around it in totally different ways.

"Argus, this is not the place for this..."

"Ah yes, excuse this old man Lord Lucius."

"If you wish to study some of our treasures then I think we can work something out but let's have that conversation after we are done with our current problem, shall we?"

Zhang Dong chuckled at the old man that was acting like a curious child that found a brand new toy. He could understand the sentiment as he was somewhat versed in both spiritual energy and mana. Perhaps if things went well he could lure in Argus with his knowledge to form a more long-lasting bond.

'Even if they receive their holy relic this doesn't mean that they will abandon these lands, the bridge to their kingdom will remain open for another hundred years. Perhaps we could create a beneficial relationship between each other...'

His current enemies were the demi-humans that were killing everything that they came across. When they were removed from this location there was still much more work to be done. Even though he promised to hand over the relic after the battle was over this didn't mean that he could not bargain with something else. His knowledge concerning the holy arts was paramount, if he gave some of it away then perhaps he could gain a helpful mercenary force consisting of magical knights.

"What do you wish us to do?"

Lucius finally asked the question after going through the holographic map and the enemies that they were going to face. Before answering Zhang Dong handed him three booklets.

"These are?"

"You will find information about the demi-humans there, it includes their weak points and usual strategies during battles. I would like you to focus on the red ones and leave the mole-men to my sect members.'

The demi-human forces were divided. They were not one force and didn't adhere to one commanding officer. The plan was simple, divide and conquer. While Lucius and his knights kept part of the demi-humans busy his forces would contend with the other tribe. Then Zhang Dong along with a smaller elite force would go for the fortress.

'Lucius should be on the level of their leader, even though I have made some progress it would be unwise if I just confront all three of them by myself. Huo Qiang will have to contend with the mole leader if he appears...'

Nothing was set in stone, if he was immensely lucky none of the other demi-human tribes would participate in the battle. There didn't seem to be any sense of comradery between them which he confirmed by seeing one of the mole leaders abandoning the vampire demi-humans during his battle with them.

'But I don't think they will let their fortress fall that easily, they might not be afraid of each other but that Emperor of theirs seems to be someone they will not be willing to disappoint.'

"I see, I will examine these."

"Take your time, we still have some time before we set out."

The strategic meeting between him and Lucius didn't take long. The man quickly absorbed the layout and the strategy which it seemed was satisfactory. During the attack, Zhang Dong and his sect would be the ones in the most danger. His allies only needed to keep the other forces busy while they laid siege to the vampire castle.

Perhaps if both sides trusted each other fully they could go with a more joint offensive. Like this, they would not get in each other's way and have to fear any surprise attacks from their allies. Zhang Dong didn't have any malicious intent but he could not fully trust Lucius' side either. Perhaps when it was all said and done the knight commander might decide to attack him instead, that was also a possibility.

'Well, I don't think he will side with the demi-humans at least and if he betrays me, I do still have the relic as a bargaining chip.'

If for some reason he would have the tables turned on him he could always hold the relic hostage. Yet he did not believe that Argus would lie to him, at least the old wizard seemed like someone truthful that was trying to minimize the loss of life. This didn't take these demi-humans into consideration as they were unapologetically brutal with their hunts.

...

"Patriarch, we have gathered our forces and we are ready to leave."

"Good..."

After a whole day had passed every flying ship that his sect had created or bought was up in the sky. Some foundation establishment personnel were flying them while the core formation masters and above were using their own strength to fly. It was quite troublesome to get all of this here through the various teleportation gates, if they were unsuccessful in this attack the sect would not easily recover.

'We can not lose, too much is at stake.'

Zhang Dong floated up into the sky overlooking his large forces. He could see some of the youngsters among the current forces. While their spiritual power was low they could man the ship cannons or be part of the protective formations that protected their advance.

When up in the air there was a strange feeling in his chest. The number of people following his orders was truly tremendous. They all trusted him with their lives and would toss themselves into fire if he asked. Yet the more they relied on him the more he felt like a fraud that was only handed all of this success thanks to the strange system. If he could do everything alone then he would but even someone like him had limits.

Even when dark thoughts filled his mind there were also positive ones. These people started out as a simple clan that grew into the large sect that was before him. In a sense, he was like a father watching

his children grow up and advance through life. This sect could be considered strong and this would be their first move towards real greatness.

Previously all of them were forced to move on the whims of others. First, it was the Dark Palm sect that caused him to almost perish. Then it were the other medium-sized sects around their lands that chose to bully them and it all culminated with Wang Long's attack. Now finally it was them that would be on the offensive, it was time for his sect to rise to the top.

"Everyone, move out!"

"Yes, Patriarch!"

A faint smile appeared on his face as he saw a large number of flying vessels and cultivators follow behind him. Victory was not assured yet for some reason when he felt all those gazes on his back, it gave him strength. While they all relied on him and their belief did strain his soul it also gave him the strength to move forward. It gave him a reason to fight for and something to strive for.

Chapter 496

"Don't let them advance."

"Keep suppressing them with cannon fire! They can't do anything to us if we stay outside of their range!"

"Concentrate on the shields, don't let their attacks through!"

Zhang Dong listened to his commanders giving out orders while advancing through the air. Their large ships along with the vast number of flying cultivators threw a large shadow at the enemies below them.

'We do have an advantage when it comes to air battles.'

The enemies they were facing were from various body refining tribes. While their elders that were at the level of the nascent soul could easily fly it wasn't the same for the core formation equivalents. They lacked flying treasures like swords to keep them afloat and were mostly stuck on the ground.

On the other hand, the people from the United Element's Sect that were participating in the current assault specialized in ranged Qi attacks. The large flying ships continued to use their massive cannons to rearrange the landscape. This made it hard for the demi-human forces to advance in any meaningful way, their capabilities to pierce the massive mobile defensive formations were also very limited.

'While my people would certainly fail when confronting these demi-humans in close range skirmishes they are at an advantage.'

By lacking in spiritual energy the demi-humans had one fatal flaw, they could not produce battle or defensive formations. One of them had the strength of five to ten when it came to pure battle power but they could not combine this strength.

By contrast, the cultivators from the empire could combine it by forming various formations that strengthened their Qi. As long as these battle formations lasted the enemies were at a disadvantage and so they were desperately trying to invade their ranks.

‘As long as we can keep the Nascent Soul equivalent masters from breaking through the defensive barriers we should be able to advance without much difficulty.’

“Give me a report on our friends, how are they faring?”

“Yes, Patriarch! Our allies have managed to block the red-skinned demi-humans approach, thanks to their mounted combat they are managing to push them back. We have also sighted the mole men in that region.”

“Good, has any leader appeared?”

“We have confirmed that a large demi-human with a long horn has appeared, he is being held back by both Argus the Wizard and Knight Commander Lucius, the mole leader is hiding his presence but he had managed to kill some of the escorting knights.”

“Good, have Huo Qiang move out to help them out with the mole problem and continue to monitor the situation”

“As you command, Patriarch.”

Everything seemed to be going well as the red demi-humans were removed from the chessboard by the people from the magical kingdom. Even the mole people had entered the fray but with some help from Huo Qiang and some other elders, they would also be too busy to help the vampire lord out. Without any reinforcements to push into his flanks, he would be free to assault their castle.

‘It does look good for me but I can’t underestimate their forces. There could be other tribes lurking somewhere or even arriving through the bridge while we are fighting, it will be best if we get this over as fast as we can... but what’s with this fog?’

They had been able to slowly progress into the enemy territory without suffering much but the further they went in the thicker the miasma became. With time the whole area was consumed by this fog which reminded him of the time he helped the Divine Fist Sect. It was clear to him that this vampire tribe was somehow affecting the environment and changing it.

‘The fog has some evil energy in it but it’s very low quality, it would not even be a problem to a Qi condensation cultivator, perhaps the reason is to block out the sun instead?’

While this thick fog would not affect living beings that much it was still hard to see through it. The bright sun rays from outside could not pierce through it which would give the vampire demi-humans some protection from their fabled weakness. These monsters were susceptible to concentrated solar energy that he could employ.

‘But not like we didn’t expect this.’

His people did their utmost effort in scouting out the area. While they did not venture too close to the fortress they gave reports about the dark mist. After analyzing it with his own spiritual sense he was sure that it would only slow down his plan slightly but as long as his ships survived he would have the upper hand.

“Patriarch, the enemy fortress is close, we are encountering resistance.”

“I’ll move out then.”

With that notion, he deactivated the communication device with his flagship and bolted forward where the rest of the vanguard was. At the helm of it all were bulky vessels that contained many core formation masters versed in protective spells. They were augmenting the formations on those ships and creating the mobile defensive array that allowed them to progress without suffering any damage to their armada.

It looked like something from an old horror flick. The castle was truly tremendous and reached up into the sky. It was composed of some kind of obsidian material that was radiating malicious energies. The whole thing looked like a giant spiky tower composed of more towers. The windows were eerie similar to ones found at a church, along with depictions of horrific acts on stained glass.

This wasn’t all, this castle was placed on elevated ground with a moat around it. This moat was not only composed of water but blood as well. Even from this location, he could feel the vengeful spirits gathering around it along with signs of decomposing bodies swimming in it.

‘Are they trying to attract more decrepit souls to feast on them by leaving all those bodies there?’

When looking from the outside he realized that the place was similar to a soul-attracting formation. Some kind of occult ritual had taken place to create a soul gathering location. It was somewhat similar to the one he first met these monsters in but here they weren’t consuming all of the souls by letting them fester and grow into stronger ones instead.

All the trees and lifeforms that resided here seemed to be dead. Nothing that could be considered alive was left behind as a wasteland had been created. This place was supposed to have been similar to a rainforest but the only thing left behind was a dried-up river filled with bones of various beasts.

“How quaint, a pentagram huh?”

With his ability to fly he put himself above his own flying armada. From this vantage point, he could see five large towers that were connected by large walls. Together they formed a pentagram that was visible when looking down. Even without getting closer, he could tell that some kind of occult spell was being sustained by those towers.

“Everyone stop!”

Zhang Dong moved his hand up into the air while shouting toward his people. Without missing a beat they all stopped instantly as if their lives depended on following that order. They wouldn’t be wrong in their assumption, if they decided to continue further their souls would indeed be in jeopardy.

“Don’t push in further, there is some kind of soul-sapping spell around this place.”

He had learned various soul arts and spells concerning them. While other cultivators could not see it there was a peculiar barrier there. It was not something that could halt their advance as anyone could pass through it but then it would already be too late. When inside anyone would have their soul energy siphoned away and soon die. This power would go through any conventional protective formations and even some strong soul-protective talismans that his people were equipped with.

“Execute the plan now and don’t pass through these coordinates.”

A lot of technology was created with the help of his crafting abode. The map in the system had a coordinate system that was now used by his sect, thanks to this he could safely locate the safe zone for his people. The ships under his command were now slowly moving to the sides and spreading out at various elevations. It was probably a strange sight to behold for the vampires inside this palace but soon they would see what Zhang Dong's sect had in store for them.

'They don't seem to be throwing their best at us yet...'

While some of the demi-humans were tossing themselves against the protective barrier they weren't coming in a big force. It seemed that they were either sure of his forces not being able to move forward or they had some kind of plan in motion. The second option was more plausible as the moment his ships started aligning with each other the castle started glowing.

The towers composed of multiple spikes started out giving out gray energy that slowly turned crimson. While most could not see what was happening Zhang Dong could feel the souls rising up from all of these dead bodies. The quantity and quality of those dead specters was truly immense.

'If it was any other sect besides mine they would probably have trouble containing all of these spirits that can't be contained with conventional means but...'

Zhang Dong raised his finger up towards the sky. The moment he did a thin ray of golden light escaped and traveled upwards. Without as much as a bang, the mist was spread apart to reveal the sunny sky above it. This approach was specifically calculated by taking the sun's location into consideration and now it was time to give their secret weapon against these vampires a test run.

The moment the sun appeared above them a loud noise escaped from one of the larger transport ships in the back. A large circular object was propelled up into the stratosphere and stopped in mid-air without falling down. It was a giant lens surrounded by golden metal that was procured from a certain Golden Palace. To the side of it there were strange runic patterns along with various gems that allowed it to float in one location without falling down.

Zhang Dong looked at this large magnifying glass that was slowly aligning itself to catch the sun's rays. During this process of alignment, various ships revealed large panels with mirrors on them. These mirrors were pointing at an angle towards the massive castle occupied by the vampires.

"Here you go, enjoy your tan, you vampire bastards!"

He appeared behind the floating lens with one hand behind his back and the other pointing towards the sun. The solar rays were easy to manifest and all of them would be concentrated on the giant lens. With its help, he would bathe the entire place in bright light and with a pinch of his holy dao it would become the bane of both the vampires and decrepit souls.

Chapter 497

"My Lord, what shall we do?"

"We don't need to do anything, the prey has just served themselves to us on a silver platter, the spirits of the damned will devour them all!"

An angry-looking vampire lord was sitting on his throne while looking towards something that looked like a red mirror. This was not a simple mirror as it rippled whenever changing the view or angle instead, it was a vertical puddle of blood. At this very moment, they were looking at a large armada of strange flying ships that had halted their progress just outside the range of one of their protective spells.

"My lord, they have stopped, they seem to be aware of our blood magics!"

"I can see that you idiot!"

The lady vampire that was giving the vampire lord information found herself losing her head after a quick finger movement. She quickly burst into a puddle of blood that just soaked into the dark brick floor. Another lady that looked exactly the same took her place but remained silent out of fright of punishment.

"Is it that bastard?"

Valentine the leader of this vampire tribe squinted before motioning the pool of water closer. There he focused his gaze on someone that he recognized and was still furious with. The man was clearly the same person that forced him to use his rebirthing technique that took hundreds of years to prepare. Now if he died there would be no coming back like before and running away was not an option.

"If I leave, the Emperor will kill me..."

The man slammed his fist down making the hand rest crumble into dust. By pointing out toward the pool of blood an image above the whole castle came into view. He started mumbling some occult words that produced a bubbling in the moat made by many of his victims. Soon the souls that were being gathered started rising out and focusing their rage on the targets he specified.

"All these souls have been corrupted by me, even if that idiot can absorb them he will surely be tainted by my blood magic!"

All of the souls here had been infected by his own will. They would not only contaminate the soul of whoever they touched but also their body. It was like a curse that would spread from body to body and soon turn everyone into a mindless slave to his will.

"Wait, what is that?"

While he was commanding all of those souls towards the flying ships he saw the man push all the mist to the side to reveal the sun. Even though it was there it could not pierce through the barrier of darkness that was around his castle. At first, he thought that his enemy made a poor choice but soon enough he started seeing strange contraptions being put into place.

"What is their intention?"

Even though he didn't know what all of those ships were doing he didn't like it. There was something they intended to do with that sun. The souls were slowly on their way but the sun would slow them down slightly.

"Use the sacrifices! We must protect my castle!"

"As you command my lord!"

The replacement vampire woman bowed before quickly running out of this throne room. In but a moment of time screams could be heard around the whole castle. All the pools of blood started bubbling up while filling up with fresh blood from some of the prepared offerings.

Outside the castle, the moat that was reacting in a similar fashion started shooting out torrents of liquids into the sky. It was as if several geysers had erupted from five locations close to the focal points of the pentagram locations. They pushed themselves outwardly creating a large-scale shield that was meant to keep everything out.

This was in the nick of time as their enemies from the United Element Sect had completed their formation. The Golden One that they had now identified as Long Dong was shining brightly like a stare before that giant lense and even the vampire leader could feel the energy here.

“Kill more sacrifices!”

Valentine was astonished by what he was seeing and quickly ordered the slaughter. It was clear to him that his opponents were aware of their weakness, which was the sun. After more groans and shouts, the blood fountain expanded even more to produce a dark crimson barrier composed of thick blood.

Soon the ray of golden light was shot towards the giant lens in the sky. Like a huge magnifying glass the solar beam was condensed towards a large array of mirrors that were on one of the ships. Various strange symbols appeared around this ship before the beam spread out to other side vessels that pushed the beam towards the occult barrier.

The vengeful souls that had left the confinement of the castle were instantly burned up by the mix of holy and solar energies. Due to the high amount of corrupted energy in them they were only more susceptible to them than regular souls. With the evil spirits out of the way the big solar spotlight illuminated the whole vampire palace from the outside.

Thanks to the barrier created from blood the vampires on the inside could relax. All of them looked to the leader that had saved them by thinking fast and activating it before their enemies could finish their plan but something was wrong. Before they could congratulate Valentine on his quick wits they saw his facial expression, one that they didn't see often.

Recently whenever the Golden one was brought up their leader had a look of anger. Many lesser vampires were sacrificed to ease it through the weeks after the resurrection ritual took place. Yet never did they see him be scared or falter.

“M-my Lord? Are you feeling unwell?”

Asked one of the vampires as they weren't sure what that expression foreshadowed. It was a new mannerism that they were not familiar with, it was fear. Everyone expected the lackey to be instantly murdered but instead, their leader kept his eyes on the blood screen that slowly began bubbling even more.

“No, this is impossible... How can they do this to me? Where are the other tribe leaders, contact them, they must all come here to protect the fortress, the Emperor will be furious with them!”

Instead of killing the vampire that dared to speak up, he started screaming at everyone else. The vampire tribesmen started shaking as they knew that the other tribe leaders would not be coming.

“My Lord, the other tribe leaders are occupied...”

“Occupied? Those scoundrels!”

With a wave of his hand, he forcefully crushed two of the lesser vampires to add their blood to the vertical pool of blood. With the addition of their blood, it was able to show him the other tribe leaders. One of them was fighting what looked to be a man clad in golden armor while the other was fleeing from some kind of demonic creature made from fire energy.

“Useless, everyone is useless... prepare for battle, it won’t hold!”

There was nothing that he could do, if he decided to flee then the Emperor would kill him. This fortress could not fall into the hands of the Golden One that proved himself to be more than just simple prey. If he managed to conquer this location then their access to this bridge here would become questionable, perhaps even the Emperor would need to move to reclaim it.

“If the Emperor is forced to move then I will be done for!”

He grabbed a crimson-colored heavy rapier from the side along with a long black cape. The moment he did he could feel the blood walls caving in on them. Soon his enemies would pierce through the defenses he thought were impenetrable...

...

‘Just a bit more...’

Zhang Dong was floating up in the sky while focusing all of his holy energy on the lense. Thanks to knowing his enemy’s weak point he had his blacksmiths develop this magnifying lens. It would focus the solar rays along with his holy energy and spread it out towards the enemy fortress.

To his surprise, they had some kind of strange barrier composed of blood. Luckily it was also susceptible to the solar rays and divine energy mixed inside of it. While this ray of spread-out light would not be able to crush a regular defensive barrier it was quickly dismantling this evil one.

It wasn’t an easy feat though, this place was supposed to be one of the main bases. He expected a lot of resistance if he went by just brute-forcing his way in. Without his cultivation methods being the weakness of his enemies and having help from Argus and the knights there was no way of him getting in there without losing half of his own forces but now the barrier was cracking.

‘Hold on a little more...’

The lens that he created could barely contain the energies it was focusing down. It would certainly not last forever and it was the same for the many mirrors that were spreading the energy out.

Suddenly he heard a strange explosion that caused a massive tidal wave. It connected with the mobile defensive formation which barely managed to hold it back. He could see some of the cultivators on the ships passing out along with others losing all spiritual energy they had in their reserves.

Almost simultaneously the lense he was focusing his energies on finally gave out. It just started melting from the center and then outwardly until there was nothing left than the golden outer shell.

'I guess we were lucky again this time around...'

He wasn't sure if he was the luckiest man alive or not. While the lens was now broken and most of the mirrors along with it, the path forward was now clear. The explosion that occurred was just the last bang before the bloody barrier collapsed before them. Yet this had also taken out the mobile protective barrier from around his armada which put all of his people in danger.

'Ten percent of the cultivators were knocked out but they are still alive...'

The people that suffered from Qi deprivation were being quickly pulled away by the medical units. No one had died yet but they would have a hard time coming back to aid them in the coming fight. On the other side, he could feel many demi-humans in that ghoulish castle.

"Everyone, this is what we were waiting for, take no prisoners! Let none of these evil creatures survive!"

"In the name of the Sect!"

"For the Patriarch!"

Everyone cheered as they descended towards the unknown fortress, their morale high as their Patriarch was with them, and with him, there was no way of losing.

'It all starts with this...'

Chapter 498

"Stay in formation, don't attack them alone!"

"Use the solar pills on them!"

"Drown them out with cannon fire!"

Everyone was shouting while a massive large-scale battle was taking place both up in the air and down on the ground. Loud shrieks of beings with wings were making regular communication difficult. Even though the demi-human tribes had fewer members their concentration at this point almost made the number equal.

'There appears to be some type of secondary barrier at that central tower...'

Zhang Dong's sword traveled in a horizontal line cleaving many red vampires in the process. He was advancing along with the vanguard that was composed of several nascent soul masters and core formation experts using battle formations. Keeping to their tactic they were forcing the monsters to battle them at a range while using various protective spells to counter their soul-draining capabilities.

Not that far away he could see the large gloomy-looking palace that was radiating dark crimson energies. Even though the moat had been drained out of most of the blood some of it remained. Their own protective barrier was also broken which now allowed some of the demi-humans to board some of the ships. Both sides were taking casualties but the United Element Sect was able to advance into the enemy lines.

'That's where their leader must be hidden but it doesn't seem that he will come out on his own accord...'

Even when they were blasting the surroundings with cannon fire he could not see the vampire leader anywhere. What he was encountering were the demi-humans with the smaller horns that could not hold out against him at all. Even when they grouped up he just needed to use his swordsmanship to be victorious.

‘I’ve used a lot of Qi to destroy that barrier.’

This was not something that he chose to do, if he could then another full-power beam blast would be already flying towards the standing castle. His spiritual energy reserves needed to be conserved as the battle could shift at any moment. This is why he was engaging the monsters in close-range combat to conserve his power which was aimed at killing the vampire lord.

The assault was progressing smoothly and everything was within their calculations. Their enemies were certainly ill-prepared to protect their fortress. Probably due to the fast counter-attack they had not been able to reinforce their position. This war was supposed to last a hundred years and normally no sect would be able to stop their regular soldiers from advancing. There was just no reason to build up defenses if their side was assured of their victory.

Yet even though their defenses weren’t that great this didn’t mean that they could just waltz in there. Besides the red vampires, there were all sorts of strange zombie-like beasts down on the ground. Some of them looked like decomposing giants that would be tiresome to contend with as they were giving out poisonous mist with each step they took.

Up in the air were also various flying beasts, not only the demi-humans. They looked of course like giant bloodthirsty bats that were the size of elephants. Some of the demi-humans were using them as mounts and trying to ram them into the flying sect ships. Then to top it off there were various ballistas and cannons up on the towers. Even as he was flying forward they were trying to kill his mostly flying forces.

“Bahamut, come out.”

Zhang Dong pointed forward and before him burst out a small golden dragon that quickly started shifting in size. Soon enough he reached a massive size that overshadowed the other giant beasts that the enemies were using. Without needing to give him a command the dragon tossed itself into a bloody battle with the flying squadron of mounted demi-human soldiers.

“Everyone, keep advancing! Surround them and don’t let anyone escape.”

Even he could see that his side was winning but before victory could be claimed the fortress needed to be breached. For this purpose he would toss himself into danger, if he was victorious then less of his people would need to be sacrificed. It would be easy to just stand here and wait for the barrier to give out but twiddling his thumbs was not something he was inclined to do.

“Zhang Zhi, take command of the forces, I will go take the head of their leader.”

“Patriarch... Understood, I will do as you command.”

Zhang Dong could tell that Zhi wanted to tell him something by the tone of his voice. Normally a group of elite elders would be sent into the castle instead. The leaders of sects would very rarely endanger their lives or even take part in battles. Only when an enemy that could not be defeated by anyone else appeared would they act.

His descent was followed up by a giant explosion as he rammed straight into the main tower. The barrier there was ill-prepared to compete with his holy energies and quickly shattered. When on the other side he stopped in mid-air only to notice that the barrier was quickly mending itself back.

"It's quiet... too quiet..."

The dark crimson barrier was making it hard to see the things on the inside and also on the outside. Zhang Dong expected to be assaulted from all sides the moment he entered this area but was left with no enemies. This was problematic as a simple fight between masters was usually easier than if one was trying to conceal themselves.

'I hope that the slimy bastard doesn't just flee somewhere...'

He had already witnessed some of the demi-humans abandoning their post to save their lives. This vampire lord would not be a hard opponent for him but anyone else would certainly die. If these monsters escape into the empire just more people would die and a lot of resources would be wasted to find them.

'Would their leader kill him for failing his mission?'

This was the big question, if the vampire thought that he had no choice he would remain here. Demonic cultivators carried themselves in a similar manner, if someone failed their task they would be severely punished by their leader. If he was convinced that the Emperor would kill them after losing the fortress then he could not escape.

'Probably the other demi-humans would not help him either but drag him to their Emperor for an execution...'

After analyzing their culture this was Zhang Dong's impression of these tribes. They were barbaric people that loved to hunt other races. They had a clear strength-based hierarchy system similar to the ones in demonic sects where compassion was seen as a weakness. They would clearly abandon their allies if they deemed them unusable.

With that in mind, he readied his sword while venturing toward the castle. In front of him was a giant spooky gate with skulls for handles. When he approached it the gate doors started slowly opening themselves up. The moment they did he surrounded himself with a layer of holy energy. This was just in time as he was hit by a strong gust of wind carrying various curse energies with it.

"Hm... So I guess he wants me to go through this..."

It was clear to him that whoever was inside that castle was expecting him. If he walked inside he was sure that some strange trap would be activated. Perhaps he would be teleported into another location and put through some kind of maze with traps. The whole place also smelled of chaotic spatial energy which made things problematic.

'Is that the plan? Tire me out by trapping me in some sub-dimension...'

He could think of a few things that Valentine was planning. The most basic approach would be to put him through some long course filled with monsters, traps, and pain. Then whenever he was tired or lost his focus the demi-human leader would show up out of the blue to deliver the last blow.

'I bet he would bore me with some kind of long speech about me being stupid for entering his lair. I guess that would be stupid...'

Zhang Dong started rubbing his chin while looking at the front gate. While he did not think any of the traps inside would pose a problem, they would certainly put him at a disadvantage and also waste a lot of time. Thus he started backing away while instead looking around and also at his map.

"Hm... I see, that's actually smart"

When looking up a person would normally think that the last boss would be right at the top of this tower. The building was really tall, taller than the biggest skyscraper from his old homeworld. But that was not the spot that he needed to go, instead, he focused his gaze on the ground below him where his enemy lurked.

'Analysis complete, sending over coordinates.'

'Thanks a bunch, Bob.'

While whistling around he moved his sword up into the air and performed a few practice swings. Then he focused his gaze up towards the peak of the tower that was hard to make out due to the dark crimson mist floating around it. With the sword in hand, he went into a thrusting stance as if he was going to push his weapon towards the sky.

His energies surrounded the blade causing it to glow brightly. The miasma that was in the air was pushed back as he covered the entire area with blinding lights. His gaze turned away from the top of the tower as he peeked to the side. There, a small creature that was an eye was promptly blinded.

He had been aware that something was watching him the moment he entered this area. Valentine had proven to be very cowardly during their fight but he could not flee due to his position. Thus instead of placing himself in the throne room that was up in the sky, he was down below. A large set of maze-like dungeons spawned throughout the underground reaching almost the same deepness as the height of the palace.

"Take this!"

Finally, his attack was complete and instead of thrusting to the top of the tower, he aimed it at the ground. His thrust was followed by a loud thunderous bang that caused almost all of the stained glass windows in this fortress to instantly shatter.

"... HOW! "

The speed of this sword art was truly immense and it split the ground like it was water. Almost instantly afterward he could hear the vampire lord screaming out in anger. Yet this was not over yet, his thrusts continued to be plunged into the hard soil producing a massive number of large perfectly circular holes.

"How could I not find you when you make yourself this obvious?"

Zhang Dong replied while halting his attack. His opponent hastily burst out from underground bringing with him a giant dirt explosion. His body was in tatters and each wound was radiating holy energies. Finally, the master of the fortress had revealed himself and it was time to put him down.

Chapter 499

“Damn, is he really going to morb?”

Zhang Dong looked up towards his enemy who was transforming into something else. It was some kind of strange cross between a human and bat monster with giant claws for hands and quite the ugly face. Before the change, the man called Valentine could be considered handsome but now he was just an ugly monster.

“Even if you saw through my traps, this is my domain, I am the Emperor here and everything has to bend to my will!”

The horn on his forehead started to expand while giving away a pulsating red light. Without needing to do much he could tell that all the vengeful spirits around the area were being sucked towards this area. Even the other vampiric tribe people were getting their energies sucked away. This demi-human was a soul sucker and he was clearly intending to absorb all of his tribe members to gain another boost in power.

“Do you actually think I’ll just sit here and let you power up?”

There was a big weak spot in this whole plan, which was Zhang Dong himself. Who in their right mind would just twiddle their thumbs and wait while their enemy reaches a higher power threshold? Even if he didn’t think that the vampire could reach anything above a certain point there was no reason to make a gamble.

Thus instead of just waiting here, Zhan Dong activated his own radiant aura to counter this blood spell. Without his soul core being there he could not absorb all of these souls himself anymore, instead, he could purify them. In some strange way, all these souls were somehow connected to this vampire lord, if he could alter this connection there was a big chance of him not being able to absorb them.

‘No, he won’t be able to absorb them even if he wanted to.’

After smiling he allowed his aura to spread in all directions. Various magical circles started appearing as he yet again combined his spiritual energy with mana. There was a spell used by clerics from the other world called ‘Turn Undead’. With a bit of ingenuity, he could emulate the effect while also forcing a bit of his holy dao into these souls. They would be purged of all malice and occult curses that were used to bind them to this vampire overlord.

His opponent had made the whole takeover a lot easier with this blunder. By stripping his people of their vital energies and trying to absorb them himself, the whole battle had ended almost instantly. The United Element Sect members watched with astonishment as all the red vampires dropped dead to the ground. Only a few of the stronger ones were able to resist their master’s call but more than ninety percent of them were now down for the count.

“It does not matter what you do, this Valentine can not be stopped!... huh?”

The mastermind behind his people’s demise started laughing as he thought that his victory was assured. Yet suddenly the souls that he had dominated started not replying to his calls. The moment they collided with Zhang Dong’s radiant spell they started being cleansed from all evil energies that they were altered by.

Without the need to adhere to the absorption spell they just started drifting away into the sky and quickly dissolving. With Zhang Dong's aura being here they would not turn into decrepit souls either.

"No, what is this? I order you to stop, you will be bound to my will!"

"Oh, I don't think so."

Zhang Dong was sure to block any attempts of this vampire lord to call the souls here. While they had been cleansed they could still be absorbed by him in this state. While the faint holy energies in them would make it harder they could still be corrupted by the evil energies that the vampires possessed.

"You will stay right here and take this boot."

Before Valentine could fly towards the mass of souls he was kicked in the face by his opponent. This kick sent him right back down to the ground where he came from. Without the worry of his opponent powering up now, he could start the counterattack. His kicks and punches rained down and even if he tried, Valentine was just not fast nor powerful enough to resist.

"Y-you..."

The demi-human leader appeared far up in the sky with a body riddled with holes. The punches and kicks that he had to suffer through weren't normal, each one of them was supplied with solar energy and the dao of the divine. Even when the monstrous vampire wanted to regenerate his body, he couldn't.

Without any other option, he started to flee, the fortress was important but his life was more precious to him than anything else. Even though the Emperor would kill him as long as he hid away until the great hunt was over then perhaps he could survive as an outlaw. There was always an option to rebuild his lost tribe, as long as he was alive he could create more vampire beings.

"Where do you think you are going."

"What? How can you be here..."

"Do you really think that I wouldn't be able to see through your tricks and illusions? You escaped me once but your life ends here."

Valentine's monstrous eyes went wide after he heard a voice behind him. There was not even enough time for him to turn around before something cleaved his body into two perfect halves. These sides started to slowly part, the holy energy of the sword being used to perform the slice made reform impossible.

"Disappear."

Zhang Dong shouted while sticking his hand out. From this palm a wide burst of energy escaped, it covered the parting monster's whole body and quickly disintegrated it into fine particles. Perhaps if Valentine was facing another master he might have been able to escape with his soul but to his surprise even it was being burned away by this attack. There was nothing remaining, his body and soul had disintegrated into nothingness.

"Hm... Is he really dead?"

This enemy had been a pain in the behind before but he was almost certain that he had managed to destroy him this time around. Just as he had predicted the previous life-saving method could not be used again and his soul had been destroyed. All that was left was rounding up the remaining demi-humans and the victory would be assured.

“But to be on the safe side...”

During the fight he had attuned himself to Valentine’s soul signature after defeating him he could identify if any shards were left behind. This was a useful method of preserving oneself, masters sometimes used a fragment of their soul behind. Even though they would not be able to retain their might there was a chance of survival.

“Let’s see... hah... that fucker...”

If he wasn’t cautious he would have certainly let his enemy escape but after using a soul tracking spell he found something. A shard of Valentine’s soul was slowly escaping but he was not in any of the other demi-humans that were here.

“Smart bastard, he probably wanted me to focus on the remaining vampires.”

“There you are...”

It didn’t take him long to home in on the new target, with a few quick bursts of speed he descended into the distance where a black bird was making its escape. Inside this bird, he could feel a tiny fraction of his enemy remaining.

“Got you, Valentine.”

“Gwack!”

The small creature could fit into his hand and was clearly the person that he was fighting with before.

“N-no please don’t kill me!”

“Oh, so you want to live? I bet all your tribe members wanted to live to but you killed them anyway.”

“N-no, you can’t kill me!”

“Hm...”

While he could easily just crush this small bird there was another option. The soul shard that remained still had all of Valentine’s memories and knowledge but none of his power. If left alone he would probably start off sucking away the souls of regular animals until going for human prey. This he could not allow but Valentine’s knowledge could come in handy, it was not time to kill him yet.

“Very well, I’ll decide your fate later, for now get in here and be quiet.”

A small birdcage popped out of his spatial ring into which he tossed the bird in. With it being so weak it would be unable to even get out if it. Then to make sure that his enemy didn’t have any more tricks he was tossed into the replica medallion. Inside there he could try to escape but he would not be able to leave the treasure that was attuned to his will.

‘Well then, let’s wrap things up here...’

With the boss being taken care of only a few lackeys were left behind. Valentine had almost single-handedly helped him to minimize the damages to his sect. Perhaps if he used his people as more than disposable pawns he would have been able to cause long-lasting damage to his forces.

Thanks to him capturing the leader it was unnecessary to leave the rest of the monsters alive. It also seemed that without their leader around they were acting differently. Before they would toss themselves at their enemies to the last survivor but now on the other hand they were fleeing. Perhaps Valentine was mind-controlling all of them and with him being reduced to a shard they were finally free.

“Give chase, don’t allow any of those monsters to escape!”

He shouted out while tossing himself back into the battle. His energies were mostly drained but he had enough in his tank to take care of these lesser demi-human leaders. On the other side of the conflict, the battle was also reaching the apex. Lucius together with Argus were successful in slaying the tribe leader of the bone-covered demi-humans. Huo Qiang wasn’t as lucky as his enemy had managed to escape but all in all, it was a victory for their side.

Phase one of their plan was almost over, by defeating the demi-human tribe that was holding the fortress they were now able to move in. Various ships with sect workers started appearing from behind and moving in. Even though the enemies were routed they still needed to secure this location. Before anything else could move in through that bridge they needed to block it off.

The large castle that was left standing was ill-equipped for such a purpose. What they required was to bring over their own structures. Thanks to the technology from the secret ground he brought over this could now be tackled by his architects that were already waiting to disembark. The time to shift the tide of battle would begin with this victory and would soon spread the name of the United Element Sect through the whole Azure Dragon Empire.

Chapter 500

“That’s enough! Bring out the heavenly framework, don’t you dare drop any if you do you will be sent down into the spirit stone mines!”

A group of United Element Sect members that had a symbol of a hammer on the back of their robes was transporting a new product that the sect had managed to produce. It didn’t look like much, just a bunch of hollow tubes of various shapes and sizes. They seemed to fit into each other and were now being connected before the large bridge between the empires.

With time the whole construction looked like a big flimsy scaffolding. Some of the sect members that weren’t informed wondered if their brothers would start building a wall there but in such circumstances where they could be attacked at any moment how could they start building?

Something strange happened after one of the frames that looked like a large tower was completed. From the outside, it looked like something made from toothpicks but suddenly the whole structure started growing. The thin rods that were combined with each other started filling out the empty space between them with something similar to gray concrete. The change was rapid and soon a whole tower made of sturdy stone was standing.

“Is this the new innovative building technology that was being kept secret by the building faction?”

Some of the warriors commented from the side while their eyes opened wider. Only about a day had passed since they had taken over this part of the border and some stragglers were out there. They even managed to kill a few that tried running back into their own lands back through the bridge.

“Patriarch, please this way.”

“It’s the Patriarch!”

Various sect members that were here instantly dropped what they were doing as their leader arrived. To them everything was made possible by this one man, their survival was tied to his steady increase in power. Many rumors were spread that he might have been some kind of reincarnated immortal that was hiding his true identity. It didn’t matter though, he had blessed them with his knowledge and now their sect was among the strongest in this Empire.

“I see that you have managed to keep your promise but will it hold?”

“You don’t have to worry Patriarch, it might not look like much but these walls won’t be easily breached.”

“Is that so?”

Everyone was holding their heads down as the leader arrived. They were sure to strain their ears to catch each word that he was saying as telling tales of meeting the Patriarch would be something worth mentioning at a family get-together.

“I’ll give it a small test then...”

What was this test the leader was talking about? They couldn’t fathom his true intentions but after a moment they heard a loud thumping noise coming from the direction of the gray tower that was quickly constructed. All of them quickly raised their heads in fear that their camp was being attacked but instead they saw a palm mark from which many cracks were coming out.

“Hm, it should be enough to deflect some cannonballs... good, go ahead and resume construction. Everyone go back to work and be vigilant! We ”

“Yes, Patriarch!”

Everyone shouted while Zhang Dong floated away towards the previously gloomy-looking castle. After the take over all of the dark mist had disappeared along with the miasma. Without the evil energy soaking, everything up the structure looked a lot more reserved.

....

‘The walls didn’t collapse after a punch so it should be able to survive hits from a lower realm nascent soul master.’

Zhang Dong was floating away while looking at the quick construction of the walls and guard towers. Two large ones would be placed on each side and then smaller ones would follow soon after. A large

wall reaching up to the skies was going to be created and many defensive formations and weapons to defend this location would also be brought here.

'I have this place's coordinates saved so I can return here at any point in time too.'

The battle was over and it was a sound victory. He had managed to use his forces to capture this place not even a year into the war. With this location secured he would be able to expand his influence further. That is if he could successfully use this base and counter any enemy attacks that might come.

"You have kept us waiting long enough, where is he?"

"Hah, he will get there when he wants!"

"Why you ..."

"Please lord Lucius be calm."

"How can I be calm, my men have died and we still haven't found the secret blade, what if he had tricked us into fighting his wars?"

His ears picked up an argument in the distance. Huo Qiang and a few other nascent soul elders were keeping the golden knights company. After the siege of the fortress, he was quite busy with making sure that everything went smoothly. There were still many strange items inside the castle so it was forbidden for anyone to go in before he did a sweep.

Argus along with Lucius had arrived half a day ago after defeating one of the demi-human leaders. All they wanted to do was to get their holy relic and be on their way. They weren't convinced that it was actually here anymore. Their detection device was not picking up anything, thus they thought that Zhang Dong had lied to them.

They were only half right as the item was in his possession. The only reason that he didn't present it to them was to not make it more suspicious than it already was. If he instantly pulled it out they would surely discover that he had it on him before they even attacked. Perhaps they would have forgiven him for his lie after receiving the item but it was better not to make a bad impression on the two. Perhaps in the future, he could ask them for more aid.

"Argus, Lucius there you are, I have been looking for you, I think that I might have found what you have been looking for."

"There you are, you won't talk yourself out of... you found it?"

After Lucius noticed that Zhang Dong appeared he was ready to give him some strong words but the moment he mentioned that he had the relic the knight was stunned.

"Of course, what do you take me for?"

"A ..."

"Don't answer that, here. I think this should be it."

Before Lucius could start listing down Zhang Dong's faults before his sect members, a large chest appeared on the ground. He had found it inside Valentine's castle and it was perfect to hold the holy

relic that was once part of a bed. The moment the chest appeared from within his spatial ring there was a change in the medallion.

"It's reacting? Could this really be it?"

"Let me see my Lord!"

Argus could see that the medallion that Lucius was wearing was faintly reacting to the presented chest. In reality, the one that was blocking the holy energy from flowing outside was Zhang Dong himself. Only after lifting the chest outside of his range could their device react to it.

"This..."

The wizard held out what looked to be a part of a sword hilt with both his hands. They started to quickly shake after he activated various identifying spells that confirmed that this was the item that they were really looking for. Lucius moved the medallion closer and when it touched the relic it started giving out a strange chime.

"Is it the treasure that you were looking for?"

"It is... we have found the Holy Sword of legends!"

Lucius held the piece of the sword and almost instantly tried to activate it. The rise in holy energy caused the nascent soul masters to pull out their weapons. This in turn made the golden knights move forward with their own blades drawn. Only when Zhang Dong and Argus moved their hands up did they stop with their approach.

"It's fine, stand back."

"Please lower your swords knights."

"I..."

"Lord Lucius, only the hero can awaken the holy sword, we must bring it back to the kingdom and await his coming"

"Yes Wizard, I do know the old legend..."

The swordmaster looked disappointed as even after he continued he could not make the relic budge. Even Zhang Dong whose understanding of the divine arts was much better could only slightly make the item move. It was something specially created for a different setting and thus probably locked away by the system. While he could try to get Bob to decode the problem there was no time.

'I guess they will now retreat back to their kingdom, I probably can't expect them to help me anymore from this point on.'

He was a bit disappointed as the knights were capable allies. After giving them their relic they would probably see him as a friend. Yet when they had received what they required there was no reason for them to stay here anymore unless they also wanted to push in to get more resources or land.

"Isn't this a blessing Lord Lucius, now if we can find the Holy Aegis then we will be able to go back home!"

“The what now?”

A name that he was not familiar with was mentioned, was there another relic that these two were searching for that they didn't mention? It seemed that he was not the only person withholding information.

“If you will allow me, Lord Lucius, I think Lord Dong has proven himself as a trusted ally...”

“That he did, you must apologize for my previous behavior Sir Dong but you must understand that I had to be careful. Go ahead Argus, you have my permission.”

The stern knight commander that found fault with him at various junctions was now bowing his head. He was mistrusting to the very end but now after they had reclaimed a part of the treasure, there was more trust.

“The holy sword is but a part of the treasured relic, there is another one in the shape of a shield. Only when the two come together will the hero of the legend be able to defeat the demonic king and bring peace to our world!”

“Is that so...”

With this revelation, he realized that his new friends wouldn't be leaving just yet. There was another part to the puzzle that could have been anywhere. If the sword was at the golden palace then the other piece was probably somewhere in the enemy territory.

“Well then, I hope that we can also aid each other in the future.”

All in all, it wasn't such a bad thing, with his relationship with these knights increasing he would gain strong allies. Perhaps they would even help him to capture the second demi-human fortress now.

‘This ended better than I expected...’