

## Unfathomable 571

### Chapter 571

"It's been a while, should I wear the golden royal robe or the white ceremonial one... maybe going with the usual will make me seem more relatable, they might get scared otherwise... but the old farts will complain if I don't look properly again..."

Zhang Dong was looking at the large assortment of robes that his wife forced him to have. Each time he had to go to some kind of meeting and she was around he was forced to wear a new one, the old ones were then disposed of and remade into something else. To this day he didn't get the fascination with clothing that people had, if it was up to him he would wear the same pair of pants for the rest of his life. In this world where materials could last for millennia, it wasn't a pipe dream.

The people from the Heavenly Crane Sect were now inside the city. They were being transported by a small flying ship towards the main sect where they would be checked for any serious weaponry. Disarming people from other powers that didn't make an appointment should be obvious but he could see that late stage nascent soul master kicking up a fuss.

"There are only a few early stage masters in the sect, the only one that could match him is Zhi, Liena or Qiang... I might have to get some elders up to the middle stage at least."

While he wasn't planning on making the new nascent soul elders into his prestige units, he could still boost their cultivation with the help of the faction system. It wouldn't be as efficient and they wouldn't gain any special skills through it but they would get stronger. With the amount of points he was getting from wiping out the fish people this would actually be one of the next steps.

"However, I should level up those three first and also decide on the two remaining spots, should I give it to gramps? or maybe Qiang's father but that guy didn't really earn something like this..."

Qiang's father had on several occasions tried to go against him. Whenever Zhang Dong was gone and the power shifted to the Huo side of the sect they attempted to force their way. It wouldn't be strange if he insisted that his wife got married to his son if he never returned. He did trust Qiang but his father was another thing.

When it came to Zhang Jin then his age was slightly a problem. His capabilities as a commanding officer were over his fighting strength. He was already an early stage master and could be further enhanced through normal means. Giving him a special battle skill through the prestige unit system might not have been the greatest idea. Even now he wasn't really interested in training but having fun at his new position.

He wasn't as hungry as the younger generation as he had somewhat given up on his progress ever since being stuck at the core formation stage for a hundred years. Only when Zhang Dong appeared did he start progressing further but this required a big investment of spirit points.

"The system isn't a miracle solution and it's harder to make people with shaky foundations stronger, it would be much better to invest in someone with a better future."

Zhang Jin's potential had been spent, the only reason Zhang Dong invested in his grandfather was that he was someone he could trust. But there were two other people that he trusted just as much, his two

disciples that in the long run would even require a lesser investment of spirit points. Their foundation was strong and their will to train even stronger, it would be much better to finance the two than tired old elders that had no will to endanger their lives anymore.

“The two aren’t really ready to ascend into the nascent soul stage yet at most I can help them get half a step into that realm...”

Both of his students were following his old Dao of heavenly lightning but they did not fully grasp it yet, forcefully pushing them into the next realm without them understanding it would slow down their growth in the future. They needed to have the knowledge of getting through some bottlenecks because if not, they might falter later in life.

“If I push it too soon, they might remain at the early nascent soul stage for the rest of their lives.”

He was pushing for progress quite fast as the looming threat of the overseer was there. What he wanted was for his loved ones to be able to protect themselves after he was gone. If he ascended to the immortal stage then his presence would be gone. All the records pointed to all immortals being rejected by this world and pushed out.

A thing like a will of the world apparently existed and it forced some laws onto this realm. One of them was that no immortal was to reside in this lower ‘mortal realm’. Anyone that made it past the nascent soul stage would be going against the will of the world and their only hope of survival was to leave it. If they didn’t they would be assaulted by tribulation lightning until they were dead.

Some records say that certain immortals were able to postpone their departure by a slither before either succumbing to the lightning or venturing into the heavens. Perhaps thanks to his Dao of Heavenly lightning he would be able to postpone it longer than others but perhaps not. For this reason, he needed to leave a seed behind, one that would lead his people in his stead.

Zhang Xue and Zhang Liu, both of his disciples whom he treated like younger siblings might have to do this. His children were next in line in terms of succession of power but they needed trusted retainers that would keep them safe. If either of his disciples became the new Patriarch or if it was his children didn’t really matter to him. As long as both of them continued to work with each other when he was gone then it would be fine.

“I don’t think I need to worry about that, Xue treats Xiu and Jun as if they were her own children. Jun is a bit stricter but he just expects my kids to follow in my footsteps.”

Xue acted like a younger mother while Jun was taking on the mantle of a stricter father. Even during the training sessions, he was a bit stricter than his sister. However, whenever the training was over he would give Jun some good pointers. This worked out well as he didn’t need to play the villain to strengthen his own children when their uncle was enough.

“Well then, it’s time to listen to what these people have to say.”

Sun Shi was the elder’s name and he came together with a small group of core formation experts. One of them looked to be one of his family members and the only person that dared to raise their voice whenever he was speaking.

“Why is it always an old fart and a granddaughter combo...”

It started in the past but for some reason, a powerful elder always had a beautiful granddaughter around them. It was as if those granddaughters were there to diffuse the situation. It slightly made sense as the powerful elders could not really lower their heads and be cordial even if they wanted. They needed to seem strong and ready to eradicate all opposition.

“Those granddaughters are good at diffusing the situation, could it be another setting in this world...”

He shrugged while pointing towards one of the golden robes. In retrospect, it was better to look like a proper godly being surrounded by gold than a bum. The people meeting him will be more likely to tell him everything if they see him as a force to be reckoned with. Thus it was time to present himself as one of the most powerful experts on the face of this cultivation world.

“Though I’ll never understand why they were these rectangular small hats... wouldn’t a proper crown be better? These beads always get in the way if I walk too fast... Oh well...”

Soon he vanished from his private dressing room wearing one of the golden robes. The sleeves were long and flowy and he was sure to radiate his usual golden aura. There would be no malice in it but the man he was going to meet would certainly realize how powerful this Patriarch is.

...

“Grandfather, what do you think of this place... the city was...”

“Yes, it was peculiar... the standard of living of those regular citizens is quite high, I didn’t expect to see something like this in the lower regions. Then there is the Qi quality... they must be hiding a spirit vein. It’s not as strong as the central one but also not far behind.”

The people from the Heavenly Crane Sect had been all allowed to enter the main sect grounds and flew all the way up to the palace in the sky. They had heard about a strange gold fortress that this sect was in possession of but this one wasn’t. Even then the grandness of the structure wasn’t behind anything that their sect was used to. This Sect was new but it certainly wasn’t behind them and they had to admit that the United Element Sect had the right to be part of the big three.

“..however, while the structures and lands are exquisite I’m not sure I can say the same about their cultivators, they seem to be lacking compared to ours.”

“That is true, perhaps their experts are all out in the north?”

“That might be possible but they should have more to spare...”

While the city was large and prosperous there was a lack of powerful cultivators. The ones that appeared before them were early stage, nascent soul masters. It looked like the weapon level of this sect outpaced the power of their experts. Cultivation realms were still the most prominent measure of power and prestige so it didn’t sit well that they were being kept waiting by people of lower strength.

“Maybe the red faction was right and they aren’t capable of helping us?”

Asked the granddaughter while looking around the lush meeting room. It was a bit different than the ones they were used to as they were all sitting by a table on quite comfy chairs. Before them was a huge door that for now remained closed but would probably be used by this sect’s Patriarch.

“I hope not but if that is true then perhaps I have made the wrong decision...”

Sun Shi frowned, he was hoping to gain some help from this new upstart but if this was the level of their power then the journey had been wasted. However, as he was slowly giving up hope a powerful aura surrounded the entire room. It was as if an ancestor had awakened who could be this powerful, could it really be the United Sect Leader... and could he have heard their conversation and been maddened...

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The small group of cultivators was stunned as the expert made his way through the large entrance. No one could take their eyes off the man that was slowly venturing through the room threshold. He radiated a brilliance that they weren't expecting, much more than any other elder or grandmaster they had come across. It was at the level of an old ancestor that was at the cusp of breaking through into the immortal realm.

‘Huh, some of them actually went slack-jawed, did I overdo it with the shiny aura?’

Zhang Dong asked himself while slowly walking to the main chair in the royal meeting room. He was against it but Zhang Jin insisted on giving these places a royal prefix after his true roots were discovered. He was part of the empire's royal family but if he followed the succession laws then he would have no right to the throne.

The next in line would be the current Emperor's children and only after them, it was his turn. Though in a world ruled by might, if the strongest cultivator that was the Azure Emperor vanished then he could probably circumvent the laws if he so desired. Of course, the Long Clan would not allow that without a bloody battle.

Then even if he didn't get involved, probably some of the elders residing there would try to get the crown for themselves. This was what usually happened when the head of a sect or clan died and there was no proper successor present. Even the kids of the current Emperor would need to be backed by the other elders, the three grand elders in particular.

If for some reason two of them didn't agree with the succession then a civil war could break out. Everything depended on the goals of the individuals, some elders craved positions of power while others just wanted to be part of the most powerful sect. The more subfactions in a faction existed the weaker it became, this was the same for his United Element Sect which when he was gone went through some turmoil. Luckily his presence was so large that they managed to hold out for five years for his return.

‘This couldn't be about some succession war right? Could they want to ally themselves with me to overthrow the Azure Emperor?’

This was a wild idea but it wasn't as outlandish as it might seem. The Heavenly Crane Sect was in a bad position, from the outside it looked like it was the weakest of the big three of the empire. After the collapse of the Soaring Dragon Sect, it was supposed to be the second in command but the Emerald Phoenix Emperor destroyed that notion. They had been constantly losing their land and getting backed into a corner.

On the other side of the Empire, this wasn't the case for the upstart Sect that Zhang Dong established. They had pushed back all of their enemies and even cleared out the island populated by the demonic

cultivators. News of a spirit vein being there had reached the inner circles of the other sects. They were clearly on the upswing while the Heavenly Crane Sect was on a quick decline.

‘Can’t discount that, perhaps that will be one of their talking points...’

While he wasn’t sure about teaming up with this sect to take care of his brother he couldn’t discount the idea. After the Emerald Phoenix Empire and the Cerulean Empire were gone they would go back to the usual power struggle between sects and clans. He did not wish to go to war with his brother but this didn’t mean that he wouldn’t be asked to make concessions.

Having such a large army that was growing each day wouldn’t fly well with the other large factions. It wouldn’t be strange for a new conflict to arise and it finishing with another confrontation. When this happened it would probably be better to have a deal made with the only people capable, which were the Heavenly Crane Sect cultivators.

‘But going by what they were constantly whispering about, they are here for help against those Emerald cultivators...’

Zhang Dong made sure to place them in this room where he could listen in on the conversation without the other party knowing. Thanks to his system he could see everything written down before him. It was always good to know what you are debating about and these people were here to ask for a favor. This service that they wanted to ask of him wasn’t something that he needed to follow through. There were no previous arrangements or deals made between these two sects so he wasn’t sure why they were here with this small group.

‘Do they expect me to jump in just because of their old name or something? Their sect name carries millennia of prestige but they should know that such things don’t matter when talking to someone on the same level... do they perhaps think less of my sect?’

Finally, it was time to stop with the speculations and hear them out. Thus after sitting down and lessening his cultivation he spoke out. The others were still a bit stunned by his appearance and were probably fearful of beginning the conversation first. This shifted the situation in his favor and put his side as the one in control, at least for now.

“Greeting friends from the Heavenly Crane Sect, If you send some word my people would have given you a better reception but I am glad that it was resolved without it affecting anyone’s dignity.”

“Ah yes... haha... This Sun Shi greets Long Dong the Golden Dragon of the west.”

Try he did but it seemed that he wouldn’t be able to escape from that title. His older brother and his whole clan were still the more famous ones. Even the people in his sect weren’t sure what to call him as having the title of Golden Dragon was in their mind an honor. Most of them liked the idea of their leader being part of the royal family as it gave validity to their sect.

They did not see anything wrong with it, the only ones against it were mostly from the Zhang side of the clan that wanted their leader to retain his old clan name. When historians uncovered the records they wanted the name Zhang Dong and not Long Dong to be remembered as it immortalized their clan.

“So you do know that title but you will have to explain to me why you have appeared before me, as you might have heard the war rages in the north, I don’t have much time to spare for trivial conversations so I would have you give me the reason for your coming.”

“Uh...”

The elder that previously was looking at animosity at his gate guards was acting like a meek kitten. He probably didn’t expect Zhang Dong to be so much stronger than himself. The power difference was above what this man probably was used to as regular nascent soul cultivators at the great circle level weren’t this imposing. This display of might was of course one of the oldest tactics in this world.

The other side would think twice before withholding information or acting rashly in front of someone that could tear them apart with one finger. However, he couldn’t keep it up for too long as most of the people before him were only core formation experts. The moment he increased the intensity they would probably pass out almost instantly. Thus for the time being he leaned back in his seat while smiling and letting the man speak.

“Of course, I must seek the Golden Dragon’s forgiveness for this unannounced visit. We are truly grateful that you have accepted our coming at such short notice, your magnanimity knows no bounds the legends of your generosity...”

‘Man this guy knows how to crawl up someone’s ass, look at him go.’

It was a bit funny to see a late stage nascent soul elder throw around this number of praises. The people around him were even surprised as they probably only saw someone of this status only act as a grumpy senior. Now on the other hand he needed to prostrate himself before someone stronger and remember all the way he kissed ass before he became a nascent soul grandmaster.

“That’s enough, Sun Shi was it? Just get to the point before you make the people that came here with you blush.”

The old man looked around and could see that everyone including his granddaughter had their heads down. They knew that the old man was trying to get on the good side of this Patriarch but seeing him lower himself to this extent was a bit traumatizing. Seeing a pillar of support for their sect acting like a fangirl wasn’t something that they expected to see when they came here.

“Very well... we have come to ask you the Golden Dragon... for aid.”

“You want my help? Is the situation in the east this bad? What about my brother, shouldn’t you ask him first?”

“”The Azure Emperor is...”

The old man wasn’t sure what to say which was only natural. He had no idea of knowledge of the relationship between the two dragons. There were only unconfirmed rumors of them either being at each other’s throats or acting like the closest brothers. If he insulted Zhang Dong’s brother in any way that could be it, the talks could be ended abruptly and they could even lose their life.

Normally the Heavenly Crane Sect wouldn’t need to worry about such things but at the moment they were apparently backed against a corner. It wouldn’t be strange if their competition saw this injured

giant as prey. It was quite a risky tactic to even send people into the bowels of the golden beast. No one really knew Long Dong's true character, just that his armies were conquering all the lands. To some, he would seem like a warmonger that could turn his sights on anyone after the invaders were gone.

"Did he decline the offer or did you not even bother because you knew the answer he would give you?"

The old man didn't answer while Zhang Dong started rubbing his chin and speaking his thoughts out loud.

"That does sound like my brother, he probably won't make a move until the enemies are right at his doorstep."

To ease the tension he waved his hand around nonchalantly in dismissal of the Azure Emperor. He wanted to give the old man the idea that he didn't think that much of the Emperor and was not afraid to speak ill of him.

"I'm sure the great Azure Emperor has his own things to worry about..."

"Better things than the survival of his empire? Well, in his case he probably sees the Long Clan as the only worthwhile part of the empire that is worth saving."

It seemed that he hit the bullseye as the old man only replied with silence. It wasn't strange for the clan or sect leaders to only look out for their own faction members. However this was a whole empire and not just the long clan, in the people's eyes the Emperor had a duty of coming to their aid which he wasn't.

"Well, I'll stop prattling on about my dear brother, how about you tell me what you really want but first tell me of how things look in the east..."

"I... Of course, great Golden Dragon..."

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"Hoh? So it's this bad already? Shouldn't you have some defenses built up in some of those cities, wouldn't that one mountain range have been a good place for a fortress... or that place filled with stormy winds..."

"That was an oversight by our elders, we never expected something like this to have happened... but it's all that Long Clan's fault, they clearly knew about this disaster coming, why they never went past the central region, why they decided to focus all of their forces in one area! It was all to sacrifice us as pawns!"

"Now, now, Elder Sun Shi, calm yourself, it's not like I'm blaming you or anything..."

He was putting the blame on them but not for the lack of information. They had enough years to push some of their resources to different regions and create defensive measures that would last them more than a week or two. As it was now, the Emerald Phoenix Empire just steamrolled through their lands as if they were nothing.

This of course was due to the culture of this place. The large sects would see the smaller ones as tax zones and nothing more. They wouldn't invest any of their own resources in the middle-sized sects,

instead they would weaken them. This was expected but if the Long Clan informed everyone this could have been prevented. They clearly knew about the bridges and where they existed.

‘I can’t tell them but this is probably because of that Overseer Empress... she must have made it so that the Long Clan never cooperates with the others. It would have been an easy task to use the millennia they had to prepare.’

His sect was able to create barricades at the locations of the two bridges from the demi-human side. After their emperor had died there were some small skirmishes but nothing that could get past the stronghold. Now they would probably remain there without anything being able to slip past them. This could have easily been fashioned with the help of the Long Clan resources. They didn’t even need to hurry as this happened every hundred thousand years or so.

‘They were the only ones that survived the previous attack and probably also the ones that withheld the information. They want everyone else to be a shield and use their flying city to escape if things get too spicy...’

At first, he didn’t think much of it, he attributed it to the setting of the world and how the cultivators were. Most of them just stuck to their own faction and didn’t care about the other but now he wasn’t that sure anymore. The people around him began changing and there became a lot more magnanimous. But that wasn’t even the biggest reason, it didn’t actually go in line with how these cultivator nuts operated.

First of all, if the Long Clan knew of the four invading forces that came from all sides, wouldn’t they have at least tried to prepare? They had almost a hundred thousand years to make some changes, and create special sects to act as bodyguards or vanguards. Normally they would have been scared into acting, the only reason they wouldn’t care would be that they were convinced that they weren’t in any danger at all.

‘Can you be that sure of your victory though? Wouldn’t it be better to tell everyone and let them prepare something? or did they think that the other sects would just continue to bother them about resources and aid?’

Zhang Dong didn’t really get it, he would have at least tried to reinforce the areas where the bridges were. It was clearly possible to halt the advances of those empires which he proved by taking out the forward forces by himself. If it was possible for him to achieve this by himself then the Azure Emperor should have been able too.

Even the other large sects would only require a few more nascent soul elders and some other troops for the same effect. It was possible to hold the invaders at the borders if all the three grand sects worked together with each other and prepared for it.

‘Chicken and the egg scenario... were they affected by the overseer to act this way or is this just how they are, selfish and fearful...’

“I must apologize for my behavior, I also insulted the Golden Dragon’s brother in his presence.”

While he was thinking about what to do the old man along with his entourage started bowing all over the place. It might have seemed that he was being remorseful about his words but in reality, he was



prodding for information. Through the conversation, the other side clearly realized that Zhang Dong didn't fear the Azure Emperor and didn't care if someone talked badly of him.

"It's fine, he's not here but you better stop while you're ahead, I do know what you are doing and trying to pit me against my brother won't work."

"I didn't... I mean I wouldn't..."

Zhang Dong's aura rose in the room and started causing the core formation experts to faint while their mouths filled with foam. It was clear to him that the other side wanted to push him against the Azure Emperor that looked like the villain here. He was withholding his help from everyone and the Heavenly Crane Sect elder wanted a target that they could team up against.

The intention was clear, they wanted his help against the Emerald Phoenix Emperor. The man here probably thought that Zhang Dong wanted to prove himself. If he was able to defeat the Emerald Phoenix Emperor when his brother couldn't then the validity of his power could not be disputed. As it stood at this time people still weren't sure where to place him on the power scale. It was possible that the demi-human strength had been over-exaggerated and the United Element Sect was just lucky.

If he defeated the Emerald Phoenix Emperor whom the Heavenly Crane Sect was suffering greatly against, then it would be another thing. This sect had lasted through tens of thousands of years and had a long history of victories. It would cement his place as a potential new Emperor and also in-depth this sect to him which normally wouldn't be a bad idea.

"I do not wish to swipe the throne away from my brother, this would only weaken this Empire and the blood of my sect members is not something I want to have on my hands, at least not for something this meaningless."

"M-meaningless?"

Sun Shi was stunned at the reply as for a person like him there was no greater honor than being the Emperor of these lands. It was not an empty title as the Azure Emperor title was always in the hands of the strongest cultivator. This had been true for millennia and Zhang Dong actually had the right to challenge the man for that title. With the help of the Heavenly Crane Sect, it would be possible to force a confrontation, perhaps even a one-on-one battle.

"But I digress, in short, you wish me to lend you a few of my people to clear out some of the critical locations and push back the invaders, right?"

"Y-yes, that's right."

Sun Shi gave out a sigh of relief as Zhang Dong's aura returned to normal. Everyone else that was in the room had passed out so only the two elders were left. While they were talking the silent guards that weren't part of the conversation moved in to carry the people out and to let the two seniors discuss things between them.

"Don't worry, they will be taken care of. Now for your request... Do you actually think that I would accept something like this? That I wouldn't realize that you are going behind the back of your leader to do this?"

"Aye... the Golden Dragon is truly wise, you have figured out everything, this old man might not be suited for politics..."

Sun Shi gave out a sigh while dropping his head. Zhang Dong had figured out long ago that something was fishy here. No one from that sect sent any words and instead, this one elder appeared.

"Now tell me the truth."

"As you wish... The truth is, we really need help but the council of elders wasn't able to decide yet."

"So, you were of the mind of asking me for help and decided to go behind your elder council's back?"

The man just nodded while looking dejected.

"I truly am regretful, please Golden Dragon show mercy, this was a lapse in my judgment, please don't punish the juniors."

"Punish?"

"This old man will pay with his life for this misdeed!"

"Now hold up..."

Zhang Dong's eyes almost popped out of his head as he saw the old man trying to sink his whole palm into his own dantian. The man was trying to cripple himself and regress into a mortal out of fear. In Sun Shi's eyes, he came under false pretenses and tried to swindle a powerful entity into a battle with enemies that he didn't know. Besides the talk about becoming the new Emperor, he was also offering some treasures and spoils of battle.

"There is no need for that, I'm not going to kill you or your juniors so calm down."

He wanted to give out a sigh after seeing the man going for self-mutilation. It was something that he had forgotten existed after spending his days together with his people. They knew that he wouldn't really punish anyone. However, to other people outside the sect, he could be considered a person that they couldn't antagonize. It wouldn't be hard for him to kill all of them and not even report it to the Heavenly Crane Sect, at this point they wouldn't really be able to complain as the man visited them of his own volition.

"You won't? But I tried to ..."

"Well, you're probably not used to handling things like this. I also have this stuff taken care of by some of my people, I know the feeling."

Sun Shi was stunned to see Zhang Dong just shaking his head and shrugging as if it wasn't a big deal. Any other big wig cultivator would have told the old man to slap himself at least fifty times before allowing them to speak.

"To be honest I was interested in what was happening in the eastern front, if you continue to inform me about what happens there I might even help you out..."

"You would?"

“Yes, but you’ll have to follow some of my directions first so let me explain...”

Zhang Dong smiled while taking out a special item from his spatial ring. It looked like a regular paperweight but in actuality, it was a savepoint he could teleport to. While he wouldn’t be willing to take the trip himself this man could take this to a place he could pop out from and investigate that war-torn region.

‘This way Liena won’t even know that I left...’

With the teleport in place, he could safely travel to where the action was without worrying anyone from his inner circle and mainly his wife. He would of course tell people like Zhang Jin so that in case of distress the golden dong palace could be activated to come to his rescue.

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‘It never ceases to amaze me how large this world is, it’s like I’ve arrived at an entirely new planet or something...’

Zhang Dong spread his senses into all directions and noticed various things that he had never seen before. The beasts were different, the plant life varied and evolved in a strange way compared to what he was used to. Even the clothes that people were wearing were unique to this part of the Empire that he now arrived in.

“Honorable Golden Dragon... are you sure about this?”

“Yeah, there is no problem but you’ll need to drop those honorifics, just call me Ching Li or something, I’m just a bodyguard for your granddaughter.”

“Ah yea, of course...”

The group of cultivators led by Sun Shi performed the task that they were given to their utmost ability. They were far too afraid that Zhang Dong would kill them if they went behind his back and informed their more prominent elders about this issue. While Sun Shi was a late stage nascent soul elder and part of the elder council, he was not part of the top brass that was made up of people a minor realm higher.

What had happened after their introduction to this man was a quick journey back home. They were given the right to use the teleportation gate of the United Elemental Sect and arrived really close to the central areas owned by the Long Clan. It was astonishing that this new power could have expanded this fast and could even afford to create such large gates everywhere.

They were quite surprised to see that these gates were brand new and quickly being established everywhere on the western side of the empire. Sun Shi was able to ascertain names on the teleporter list corresponding to some large cities previously owned by middle-sized sects. Now, these factions existed in a diminished fashion while this United Elemental Sect was quickly taking over everything. It was as if they were softly taking over all the areas but allowing the other older sects to prosper.

The one they visited wasn’t doing that badly. They could see modern-looking buildings similar to the ones they saw in the main sect being established. It looked like each large city would be given someone to govern it. From Sun Shi’s point, this was a good tactic to force the other sects to develop the city in

the way that Zhang Dong wanted but would also irritate the other middle-sized sects that ruled these lands before.

However, with how much stronger the United Element Sect was than the others, they couldn't really complain. They were not more like vassal states than independent factions as they were able to govern themselves only in certain ways. It seemed that the United Element Sect would jump in if a dispute occurred but the other factions could reason with each other before that happened. Only when the dispute was overblown and bloodshed was the only outcome did the other sect get involved.

This would indeed lower the death toll in each city as sects usually battled each other for resources or honor. The only downside would be that Zhang Dong's sect would be put in a tough spot and depending on the person governing the city different outcomes would be probable. Sun Shi expected these governors to be bribed left and right and a possibly bad attribute to be given to Zhang Dong's sect. Was this something the Patriarch was aware of and didn't care or was there something else he was planning?

Nevertheless, after getting to the first city they made their way through the central southern region where it was safer. The golden knights that appeared out of nowhere were around that location and were able to push back the eastern invaders. Getting through this part took some days but after around a week they finally ventured into Heavenly Crane Sect territory. At one of their minor cities, they then activated the treasure given to them by the Golden Dragon.

That's also when the main plan was revealed to them which they weren't sure what to make of. Zhang Dong insisted that he wanted to moonlight as Sun Ling's bodyguard. This was the name of the elder's granddaughter that was a core formation expert. When he appeared out of the blue he was already wearing the correct robes, which were exactly the same as the other core formation guards that were taken on the journey.

"Don't worry, just go about your things and I'll just take a stroll through your lands, it's better this way, what do you think would happen if people found out that the Emperor's brother appeared in your lands?"

"Well... that would certainly complicate things..."

Sun Shi somewhat knew what this was about. Zhang Dong here seemed to not be willing to help them just yet, or at least that's how it looked. There could be a few reasons here, one of them was that he wanted to examine the situation before committing his forces. Then another reason could be that he was afraid of how his brother the Azure Emperor could view this.

It would at least look like he had made some kind of deal with the Heavenly Crane Sect which could push the Long Clan into believing that he was hostile. Perhaps this was the true reason and he needed to weigh his options first before a pact could be made. He could just want to examine if their sect was powerful enough to even be of use. This thought was quite maddening as the Heavenly Crane Sect stood at the apex of the Empire for many millennia but now it might not even be worth helping.

If times weren't dire then Sun Shi would have never agreed to something as outlandish as this. Just the thought of some random person snooping around in his sect and lands was hard to stomach. It was however clear that this person was truly mighty and such power didn't come without wisdom. He must have been planning something and had good reasons for it. Now if this would benefit his side was still

up to debate but it was better than his entire sect to be eradicated. This in his mind was the trajectory they were heading toward and this man here was someone that could help them.

“Well then, let us head out young mistress~”

“I uh... you don’t have to...”

Sun Ling looked toward her grandfather in confusion but quickly nodded. She was not in the slightest able to deny Zhang Dong’s request. If someone as mighty as her grandfather was afraid of this man, then what was she as a tiny little core formation junior do? She and all the other sect members they came with passed out almost instantly at the sight of that aura and then awoke in a separate room after all the deliberating was over.

“Good, just try to act natural I’ll be shadowing you as a bodyguard should and don’t be afraid to give me some orders if someone gets suspicious.”

“Orders to the Golden Dragon? I would never...”

The young girl started sweating as she knew what it was about. If she behaved awkwardly around the mighty Emperor’s brother, then the trick would be easily discovered by everyone. If this happened her head and even her grandfather’s head could roll. She did not know much about this person but he had at least dispatched Wang Long, who had been a thorn in everyone’s side for quite some time.

‘They really look uncomfortable, am I demanding too much from them?... Nah, they’ll be fine, even if I’m found out it will be fine.’

In Zhang Dong’s mind, it wasn’t a big deal, even if his acting was seen through it didn’t really matter. He just wanted to see how everything looked in the eastern lands. If his silly bodyguard disguise was seen through he could just assume the role of the Golden Dragon. For now, at least he would be able to avoid any large meetings with old elders and everyone kicking up a fuss about his appearance.

‘It was a lot easier when no one knew who I was, I didn’t need to hide my face either...’

He did not manage to enjoy a life of adventuring too much. Everything happened too fast and he quickly became the Clan leader within a matter of months of him appearing in this world. From that point on he was responsible for a lot of things and had to even get a special skill from the old system store to now get so stressed about it.

“Well then, I’ll let you take it from here, how about we visit your sect first, I’m interested in how they are conducting themselves in such times. After that, perhaps you can take me to a more volatile location where some of the battles are happening.”

“As you wish!”

While Sun Shi wasn’t that happy about the first part, the moment Zhang Dong mentioned that he would aid them on the battlefield a glint appeared in his eye. This was all that he was to these people, a way out of being conquered by their enemies. While Zhang Dong had the power he also needed to be wary of the Heavenly Crane Sect. Perhaps this elder was docile but others could see him as an enemy.

Thus while sticking to the back he followed after the group of cultivators. At that moment he knew that they were from a splinter group that was convinced that they would lose this war. Apparently, another

delegation was sent to the Azure Emperor's side but they never returned. The plaque that represented their elder's life was supposedly still unbroken which meant that they weren't killed at least.

"They probably never let them into the main city, I bet they are still somewhere at the border trying to get in. Maybe with enough bribes, they could make the elders budge? But probably not..."

These thoughts he didn't voice as they didn't bear any meaning on his situation here. What he needed to focus on was gaining information about his enemies and if it was possible to resolve everything without any more bloodshed. While it was true that he wanted to get the Emerald Phoenix Emperor's Dao and take it as his own, if there was a possibility of damping this onslaught then he could wait.

His biggest enemy was the overseer and not these people. Absorbing Dao from the emperors was the fastest way to get to his destination but it wasn't the only one. He had calculated that it would be feasible for him to ascend even without all the battles. It would only take a lot of time, perhaps even his entire lifespan.

'Well then, let us get to it!'

## **Chapter 575**

"Sun Ling, I'll have to go report to the other elders, please stay out of trouble..."

Sun Shi's eyes darted to the side for a fraction of a second to the person leaning up against a nearby building. He was dressed as one of the bodyguards that had come on the journey to the United Element Sect. At this moment he looked like he was in deep thought while looking around the premises. What he was thinking was unknown to anyone but this was a potential powder keg that could go off at any moment.

'This is all for the future generations and the sect, I really hope that I'm doing the right thing...'

The old man thought to himself while having a hard time leaving this man with his granddaughter. There was no telling what this person would do when inside the sect. He could even decide to attack them when arriving inside, though the old man didn't believe that even the Azure Dragon would be capable of taking out their entire sect by themselves.

Everyone was constricted by the nascent soul level to an extent. Wang Long was a cautionary tale now but his case was a bit different. He had been part of the Soaring Dragon Sect and had access to their protective formation. That demonic cultivator had a lot of time to prepare and strike at the right time. Zhang Dong here on the other hand came alone and would not have access to their formations and would be closely monitored by his people. If he did something suspicious he could just spring the alarm.

"I will, grandfather, don't worry about me."

The pretty girl didn't move her head towards the man standing in the back but Sun Shi was sure that she understood the hidden order. The plan was to guide the man through all the best tourist attractions and places that wouldn't be prone to incidents happening. With a heavy heart the old man finally departed and the young jade beauty finally turned towards the group of sect brothers and one guest.

"Let us depart then, I'm sure everyone is tired and hungry, how about we go to the Flowing Gazebo for a bit?"

“That’s a great idea young miss, don’t you all thinking?”

“Y-yes sect brother, we should depart with haste...”

The whole group was having a hard time hiding their awkwardness around the hidden expert. Everyone here was even more fearful than before as the only person even capable of protecting them was now gone. People would probably be informed about the Golden Dragon but that didn’t mean that didn’t help with the part that he could flatten them with his small toe.

“Ah yes, the young miss is truly mindful, if she thinks that we should visit this Flowing Gazebo then we should.”

Everyone listened to the man’s words to seek for any hidden meaning behind them. Was he annoyed by the fact that they were going to a restaurant or was he interested? There didn’t seem to be any animosity within the words or any prickling aura that was raining down on them. It seemed that they were safe for now but if perchance the food was not to his taste they might have to even slay the cook. Thus with a robotic way of walking, they departed with the man remaining at the back.

‘They are really stiff... I wouldn’t be surprised if one of them got a heart attack if I glared at them...’

Zhang Dong thought back to the short trip to this city. He was able to see the lands of the Heavenly Crane Sect. They were similar to the western regions but in a slightly better shape. Where he came from the Soaring Dragon Sect was the supreme faction and didn’t care much for the other groups. The only things they cared about were the tolls and taxes that they needed to pay them.

This place didn’t seem much different but they did look somewhat better. This was at least from the state of the buildings and land, when it concerned the people it was different. They were all talking about the ferocious cultivators that invaded their lands which made it hard to measure their liking for this Heavenly Crane Sect. They were certainly distraught and second-guessing their masters, some of them were even in the process of fleeing to the central parts of the Empire.

The sect city was quite the sight to behold. First of all, they needed to take a ship through a huge river. There the closer they got to the city the more cherry blossom petals could be spotted in the water. Koi fish were everywhere and they were munching on those red petals that contained a trace of spiritual energy. He could already see that this would be considered a costly elixir in the old lower regions.

This gate was wooden and only opened up after Sun Shi was identified. Large statues of some old masters were in place of the columns to the gates attached. On the inside, he was greeted by a large open space filled with various bird species, cranes included. They were swimming in the water but also just hanging out everywhere. Only after slowly traveling further did they arrive at a largely populated area filled with various buildings.

What was different about this place was the lack of tall structures. The buildings were densely packed together and didn’t really go past the third floor. This of course caused the city to be quite wide as it was populated by millions upon millions of people. Cherry trees with red petals were everywhere as well as different versions with white ones.

‘Was it the cherry blossom swordsmanship they called it?’

While going towards the restaurant he recalled what his retainers brought him about the sect. They were a swordsmanship sect and they were famous for the flashiness of their moves. Apparently with every swing of their sword they would produce cherry blossoms. These petals were anything but gentle though and they would shred through the bodies of their enemies.

‘I wonder if this sword style could help me with my own Dao or if it’s just all for show, flashy moves can be confusing at first but after seeing through the illusion the flaws become apparent.’

Techniques that were eye-catching usually have the downside of being filled with useless movements. At first, they would confuse the enemy but after seeing it once and figuring out the trick they were easy to counter. This was not something that he was willing to invest his time into but it also didn’t mean that he didn’t want to see these people in action.

‘Probably better if I don’t challenge anyone to a duel though, better to just see how they fight on the eastern front.’

At the moment he didn’t want to spook his new potential allies. If he challenged their best swordmaster to a one-on-one fight out of the blue he would probably be denied. They could assume that he wished to lower their battle power by killing their grandmaster. Some might even think that it was some kind of tactic thought up by the Azure Emperor to weaken them even further.

‘Can’t give them stupid ideas, these guys always read into things too much and get the wrong idea.’

The trope of cultivators getting the wrong idea was quite prominent here. They could misconstrue him wiggling his eyebrow and think that he wanted someone dead. To not let this happen he needed to keep himself in check and implement his poker face. This place that they were taking him to required another boat ride through one of the smaller rivers that spread out through the city.

‘So this is it?... Looks like a giant gazebo...’

The restaurant in question was on a little island with a huge gazebo over it. The small boat that looked similar to a gondola could move through the water canals that connected to the center of the island where people could exit.

‘I guess the flowing part referred to all these waterways.’

It was quite a sight to see rich merchants and young cultivators being chauffeured around to this place. It was an open-air establishment with the gazebo roof meant to keep the rain out. At a glance, he also noticed that there were several formations everywhere. They were there to control the temperature and also bounce the wind away. Instead, a gentle warm breeze was hitting his cheek with the stray cherry blossom petal here and there.

‘I wonder if they didn’t block the wind if these would fly into people’s mouths...’

For a moment he wanted to disable the formation to see the petals flying all over the place and into the bowls filled with noodles. On second thought however, with all these wealthy people around it would probably generate a lot of trouble for the business owner. Some young master types were here and he knew how they reacted to bad service.

‘The regular people were a bit alarmed but these guys don’t seem to be taking the threat seriously.’



The whole place was divided into booths and the ones in the center were the most exquisite. There he could see some flamboyant young masters with multiple women around them, drinking tea and playing the zither. Some were even in a poem battle where the girls cheered, it was quite an interesting sight to behold. They didn't seem to be perturbed by the nature of the war but perhaps their parents were taking it more seriously.

'I don't see any older people here, some guards but no one that looks like a proper elder.'

"How about we get some spirit cherry sake, that will warm everyone up!"

"Great idea young miss!"

After arriving here everyone crowded around the young miss. He was just supposed to be a bodyguard so he remained standing while she should have to sit down. This of course ended up in an awkward display as the young woman wasn't able to while an expert like Zhang Dong stared at her. It took her a few moments to realize that people were looking at her to finally give in and now they just waited for their order.

'It does seem peaceful here and I haven't even had the time to travel through this wide and open world.'

The world they were living in was truly tremendous. Ever since coming here he was locked to a section of it and unable to relax. He had traversed the lands on various occasions but it was always done in a rush. What he wanted to do instead was a slow journey together with his wife and kids that would allow them to take in the beautiful sights this place had to offer. However, this dream would have to wait as for the time being some trouble approached.

"Ah, if it isn't Fairy Ling, what brings you to this place and why are you sitting so far from this young lord."

The trouble came in the form of a smiling young man. Behind him stood various people, some were guards while others were part of the main sect.

## **Chapter 576**

'Why does it always end up like this...'

"You shitty moon lily bastards are always like this!"

"What are you talking about, it's your smelly sun lily that is always looking for trouble!"

"We haven't even started trouble but it seems that you bastards need to be reminded again of your place!"

Zhang Dong was taking in the sights while looking over the restaurant. He wasn't even able to sample the eastern empire cuisine before people started arguing with each other. It all started with the usual appearance of a young master. From that point, it spiraled out of control and now the group he was with had started fighting.

It was funny how they forgot that he was with them and started mouthing off with the other group. The robes they wore were similar with one thing, in particular, being different. The ones the people he was

with had a silver lily pattern close to the heart while the other had a golden one. This was supposedly some kind of distinction between the factions and perhaps it went further than that.

What happened was that the boisterous young master started making moves on Sun Ling. However her bodyguards didn't take this lightly, some of them were quite young and probably fostered feelings for this beautiful young missus. She had the usual looks that these cultivator types liked to go for. Pale jade skin and jet black hair, coupled with quite the large rear and also front end made the young men do silly things.

Soon enough they were arguing with the young master's entourage which was composed of cultivators from the sect. As he understood it, they were lone warriors brought up by the sect and then taken in by each faction. Even though they had some personal power as core formation masters they were considered lesser without a proper nascent soul elder backing them. Only by aligning themselves to a side faction of a sect did they stand a chance of progressing in this dog-eat-dog world.

'Well... not like it's not fun to watch... but this is troublesome, I don't think my side can actually win if a brawl breaks out...'

Zhang Dong was able to remain calm and assess the situation. Thanks to his spirit sense and also the system that presented him with everyone's power level, he was sure that they would lose. Sun Ling was just an early-stage core formation cultivator and her guards were composed of late stage experts and a few in the great circle stage.

Some of the stronger combatants had left the group to carry out some orders given by Sun Shi which diminished their numbers. On the other hand, the group that he was looking at was purely composed of great circle core formation experts with the young master being in the middle stage of it.

'But someone will surely come out and stop them before that happens, right?'

Thanks to being a nascent soul master he could feel the presence of a few grandmasters watching the show. However, even after some of the people from both sides started getting pushy nothing happened. Finally, he realized that whenever a strong faction is involved not even a nascent soul master dared to interfere. They would probably at most keep them from killing each other but this didn't mean death wasn't possible.

'Even a nascent soul master has their limits and I wouldn't expect them to care about the guards...'

This was a reality in this world, only a few people were considered special. In this case, it was the young lady named Sun Ling and the young lordling that was smirking her way. As long as each of them remained relatively safe the battle might not end. Even if one of the guards gets crippled or died it could continue past it.

'Will I have to jump in?'

Now that people were getting handsy he was in a pickle. He was supposed to be part of Sun Ling's group and some people on the other side started looking at him funny. At the moment he was using his disguising skill and looked like a man in his late forties. His face was the most average-looking one that he could come up with and he was mimicking the late core formation stage.

This of course painted him as an easy target for the other side. The older a person looked the more it gave away about their talent. For someone being close to the appearance of a fifty-year-old and being at this stage, it didn't bode well. It indicated that he was close to reaching his limit and probably reaching the nascent soul level would have been hard. He just wanted to be more realistic with his appearance but it also painted a target on his face.

"Hey you there, you've been awfully quiet for this whole time, so a coward like you made it into the moon lily? No wonder no one takes you seriously!"

'Oh boy, here we go...'

One of the people from the Sun Lily faction looked in his direction. Zhang Dong was trying to not get involved and remained in the back but for this reason, he was singled out. The other guards were feeling each other out but he just remained in place with his hands crossed over one another. It was as if he wasn't willing to participate which was true but for different reasons.

"The Moon Lily faction allows such unloyal people to become retainers? Hey come over here, this lord will give you a piece of his mind!"

The man approached Zhang Dong which caused the people that he came here to freeze in place. Finally, they realized that they had begun doing such embarrassing things before a hidden expert. All of them had gone through this shouting match many times before so they didn't make much of it. Now on the other hand one of the Sun Lily guards was walking towards him with a grin on his face.

"No, that person..., you must not..."

"Fairy Ling, I don't think you should interest yourself with lowly cowards like that, if you join me and the Sun Lily faction I'll be sure to replace such lowly retainers."

Sun Ling's eyes almost popped out of her sockets as she turned to see one of the Sun Lily faction men walking towards Zhang Dong. From her perspective the hidden expert wouldn't really distinguish between the two factions, they were both part of the Heavenly Crane Sect.

If they were rude to him then it could be all over, with one burst of his Qi all of the people that were gathered here could be eradicated from the spot. In her eyes, he was a ticking time bomb that could explode at any moment she was supposed to keep busy until her grandfather's return.

"What are you too scared to reply? Are you even listening? What's wrong with you bastard?"

Sun Ling began foaming at the mouth as she saw the random Sun Lily faction guard grab the collar of the hidden expert. The man then started shamelessly shouting profanities as if he was hired by the invaders to stir up trouble. To her dismay, the people she was with were all blocked from helping by the young master and his men.

"Look at me when I'm talking to y.....ughhhhhhhh"

Suddenly a loud smack echoed through the entire restaurant. People were already looking at the entire commotion so it was easy for them to notice the man flying through the air. It was truly a bizarre sight to behold, they had never seen someone twirling through the air like a propeller blade. The man's body

made a nice arch as he flew for more than a hundred meters and dive bombed into one of the water canals. This caused the water to splash some of the new arrivals as well as some of the restaurant staff.

‘Shit, I made a scene...’

Zhang Dong remained poker-faced throughout the whole incident. At first, he intended to just wait and perhaps push the man away gently. If he mimicked the realm of a great circle core formation expert perhaps the man would have backed away. Before he could do this however the man’s ugly face was before him. He could work with the yanking of his robe but when he got a whiff of the guy’s breath he lost it.

Luckily he had enough restraint in him to not do any long-lasting damage to the man. The smack to the face would leave a red handprint but the man’s neck would still be on his head. If he actually performed a smack with his whole strength behind it then the guard’s head would have exploded instantly.

“Oh my, he went really far... he must have been injured or something, he shouldn’t have been shouting in my ear if he was this tired don’t you think?”

“T-that’s right...”

Sun Ling clearly didn’t know what to say but she along with the guards used this chance to move toward Zhang Dong’s location. That is that they tried but before they could huddle around him and protect others from another smack they heard a booming sound.

“How dare you hit my younger brother, who do you think that you are?”

A strong aura hit the whole place and out of nowhere another person appeared. He looked to be a bit older than the man that Zhang Dong smacked away but somewhat similar looking. By the words that he said he seemed to be the elder brother of this person and he had been sitting in the back watching the entire thing happen.

‘Somewhere around a half-step nascent soul master? Did he fail at ascending?’

Normally being at a half-step realm level wasn’t possible, this mostly was reached by having better-graded cultivation techniques and being a prodigy. The other way of attaining this power was by failing through the transition. They didn’t fully achieve a breakthrough but also didn’t fully fail, it was a realm between realms. The uniqueness of this state was that a person could not progress any further unless they found some kind of miracle medicine their cultivation journey was over.

‘Is it this trope? Did I really walk into something as cliché as this?’

His poker face was almost torn down as he wanted to reveal his true power level. If the scenario continued then after he smacked this person away another hidden expert would show himself. There were some nascent soul masters watching from afar so this was a possibility...

‘Is this some kind of law of this world... whenever I try to disguise myself things tend to go wrong...’

Zhang Dong gave out a sigh which was of course mistaken for an insult by the man there. It seemed that he needed to either continue taking out the small fries or stand his ground but perhaps there was also another way to diffuse this situation.

## Chapter 577

“Who is that? Was there a person like that in the Moon Lily faction?”

“If there was, we would have heard about them, he doesn’t look that old... where was this genius hiding?”

“Could it be a hidden disciple of the Moon Lily Elder?”

People started whispering among each other after seeing an unknown man slapping away a half nascent soul master like it was nothing. They tussled for a moment but the person from the Sun Lily faction was promptly disposed of. It looked like a little tap but he was sent flying in the same direction the other guard was and joined him for a swim.

‘Shit, it became harder to control my strength after the recent advancements, I just wanted to push that guy away...’

Zhang Dong was wallowing in self-pity after showing off his might. His intent was to remain hidden away and watch people without them becoming guarded against him. If they knew that he was the Golden Dragon or some hidden master they would quickly change the way they treated him. Already at this moment the people from the Sun Lily side were backing away and lowering their heads. They all knew that this amount of power wasn’t normal and that only a nascent soul master would be able to contend with it.

“Hey Sun Ling, do something about this, we have to go... figure out an excuse and lets go!”

He sent a hidden message to the granddaughter that was supposed to lead him through the city. The young lady was just standing there with her mouth open and was quick to jump back after hearing his voice. It was a bit funny to see the girl panicking and not knowing what to do but finally she raised her voice.

“I just remembered something, we were supposed to meet up with my friend at the Tea Palace, we should depart promptly...”

“T-that’s right, it’s my fault for not reminding the young miss about it!”

“It’s fine, that happens, we should go...”

The guards that were with them got the intent rather quickly and everyone started to back away. Zhang Dong was quick to turn around and follow after the departing group he was with. Luckily the people from the Sun Lily faction were smart enough to not call out to them. They did lose a bit of face but they clearly didn’t want to lose even more.

...

“Please appease your anger senior, if it’s enough you can have this Sun Ling’s head...”

“What the hell are you talking about? Just stand there for a moment... here this should be enough...”

The group had retreated to a more secluded area of the city and into an empty alleyway. The guards along with the young miss were quite fidgety. It looked like they would be receiving a thrashing from

Zhang Dong for failing their mission. Instead however he just used his disguising technique to change his appearance yet again.

His previous persona's deed was already spreading through the entire sect and thus to remain unnoticed he needed a new face. They might look for the hidden master among the Moon Lily faction but they would not find him.

"This should do but remember, if they ask about that little incident just say that I left or something."

"O-of course, Senior."

"Stop calling me senior, now wasn't there a tea house that we were supposed to visit?"

Sun Ling covered her mouth as it was ingrained into every fiber of her being to properly refer to seniors. Zhang Dong went against the norm, no one here understood what he was actually doing as any other elder would have just demanded a tour through the city from someone at their level. It was actually deplorable to have core formation juniors lead a nascent soul grandmaster like him through the city.

Unfortunately for them, it seemed that they were under the boot of an eccentric and would need to adhere to the plan he prepared. Thus they departed towards the next destination, the place was a famous tea house where various experts liked to relax and discuss the Dao.

'Is this supposed to be a tea house? Looks more like an area for a picnic.'

They passed through a gate that had the writing 'Tea Palace' on it. However, instead of a large castle-like structure, they ended up at something that looked more like a park. It was an open field covered in high-quality spirit grass. Trees were spaced out at equal intervals which led him to believe that they were planted this way on purpose. Up in the air he could see ladies in flowy robes swishing on swords, in their hands they had trays filled with tea.

"Let us relax under the cherry tree."

Sun Ling called out without looking behind her where Zhang Dong was standing. All of the people around him were quite stiff but they needed to remember to act the part. He was still only a lowly guard so Sun Ling couldn't interact with him normally. His job was just to stand there and answer her orders. Thus for the time being he leaned up against the large cherry tree and started looking around.

'It does look peaceful here, maybe I should make one of these in my city... but it doesn't look like kids are allowed, they would certainly make this place a lot louder.'

What he saw was mostly elderly people sipping on tea and meditating. It was a peaceful place with a nice atmosphere and everyone was talking in a hushed tone. That is almost everyone, there was a certain group of people that was just sitting there and practically shouting.

'Are they putting alcohol into the tea or something?'

Most people didn't have the keen eye that Zhang Dong did but he certainly saw one of the people adding something to the teacup. Afterward, he served over to one of the women from their group that instantly became flushed in the face. It was another group of young cultivators.

'It's not the Sun Lily Faction this time around... it looks very similar but the lily is green?'

When looking at the others gathered here these people were taking up a lot more space. Everyone else had made way and cleared out. It was possible that these people were trouble or at least their leader looked like another young master type. This one had a more gentle look and demeanor. His gentle smile was deceiving as Zhang Dong could see his eyes darting towards the spiked drink.

‘He might have been the one that ordered the other person to spike the drink... the girl that is with him is probably a target, there are more with them too...’

Now, this was another predicament, there were about ten men within that group and three girls that looked to be in their twenties. On the outside, it looked like they were having fun and were laughing but he was willing to believe that they didn’t consent to the thing getting put into their drink. While he wasn’t that close to the scene of the crime he could somewhat discern with this spirit sense what they were working with.

‘Looks like it’s an aphrodisiac mixed with some other recreational drugs...’

His brain was already filled with all possible herb combinations that there were in this world. Just by the faint smell and spirit qi fluctuations, he was somewhat able to tell what would be the result of drinking the tea. The woman was already showing early signs, she was becoming less guarded and laughing. Probably after twenty minutes or so she would be ready for whatever they were planning here.

‘So this is the young generation of the Heavenly Crane Sect?’

First was the young master that was trying to pick a fight with them after seeing their Moon Lily insignia. Now it was another one attempting to drug an unsuspecting junior. It was clear that the leader of the group was interested in the lady but probably didn’t have the patience to pursue her in a regular fashion. It was quite strange to see, the man clearly had it all, looks, status, and a nice smile. Still with all of that he decided to hasten the process through underhanded means and probably had already walked over others to get to this spot.

‘Another psychopath that thinks that they are above others...’

“Sun Ling, who is that person?”

“That person?”

Zhang Dong motioned with his nose toward the group that was sitting in the middle of this tea park. They were quite easy to spot as they were sitting at exactly the center stage of this place that was up on a little hill.

“That’s... the Sage Lily Faction and that person is the grandson of their leader, Elder Jia Yong, his name is Jia Yang, is there a problem senior?”

‘There is something, do you know any of those girls that are with them?’

“Not in particular, they seem to be part of their faction.”

It would have been easy for him to just go over there and yank the girl away but then he would be giving himself away as always. Sun Ling was the better option but if it was possible for her to intervene was up for debate.

'The young lordling there seemed to have mixed something into the tea, would it be possible for you to do something about it without rousing suspicion?'

"Senior Jia Yang did?"

"So he is a senior to you? That complicates things."

This was troubling, if Sun Ling was lower on the totem pole than this young man then it would be hard for her to do anything about the situation. Even if she had his word it would be unbecoming of her to just go there and accuse Jia Yang of drugging the junior. The people around them would probably sweep it under the rug and no one would say a thing due to the difference in status.

'Think I might have become a little disconnected with how things worked around this world.'

With how Zhang Dong was at the apex of his sect he forgot how the people below him usually operated. Status and power were still supreme and even when he informed Sun Ling about a potential rape scenario she couldn't just act. Normally he would expect everyone to make a scene but instead, they buried their heads as if this was not something worth getting involved in.

'Even if they help the girl, the young master will probably inform the elder backing him about this disgrace... they could lose a lot of status or even their lives depending on the mood of that elder.'

He pondered, there were many ways of taking care of this situation but what would be the best? Just giving the young man a slap on the wrist for something as dastardly as this just felt wrong but time was of the essence as the group was probably going to leave soon...

## **Chapter 578**

"They are on the move, lets go and try not to make it too obvious."

"As you wish, Senior...but what are you going to do, you're not planning to ..."

Sun Ling replied in a meek voice as her group was forced to follow after the Sage Lily faction and their greatest young master. The young lordling had put something into the tea of her sect sister and was now leading her outside of the Tea Palace.

Zhang Dong had seen through this quick movement and contemplated how to handle the situation. To avoid another predicament as at the restaurant under the gazebo he decided to not intervene yet. Instead of taking out Jia Yang here where everyone could see them, it would be better to do it at a location with fewer people.

"Don't worry I'm not going to kill him, I'm not crazy. I'll just put him to sleep for a day or two, nothing too serious but..."

He wasn't really sure what to do about this case. The man seemed to be a sexual deviant that was fine with abusing his position and even using drugs to hasten the process. This was strange indeed, Jia Yang had to be the impatient one as from Zhang Dong's perspective there shouldn't be a reason that he wouldn't be able to get a woman for himself.

Perhaps there was more to the situation, the world had a concept of marriage but between cultivators, they were referred to as Daoist Partners. It was only socially acceptable to have one such partner and



stay loyal to them throughout their life. Usually, a cultivator would never get another one even after death but then there were people like Huo Qiang and his grandfather that were able to take in multiple wives.

It all depended on their way of living but from what he knew about the Heavenly Crane Sect, they were the type to go for one long-lasting partner. This could be the reason why he was going with the drugging route. Perhaps after the deed was over the lady in question wouldn't even remember that it happened. This would give Jia Yang an incentive to act this way, instead of committing to one partner that he would need to present to the whole sect he could hide his deviancy.

'Can't he just go to the red light district or something? There should be enough professionals there that would be willing to hide things like these...'

He didn't understand why the person was acting this way. Prostitution was legal in this world and with the amount of wealth this sect had Jia Yang should have been able to hire the best ladies. It was perhaps some kind of power move to perform the act with a fellow cultivator that was at a similar level. Women that trained in the arts did usually look better than the common folk but the reason didn't matter and the man's acts needed to stop.

"Move closer to me and you won't be discovered, just try not to bump into people."

His body vanished from the spot which caught the small group of Moon Lily's off guard. After a moment he was back but for some reason, Sun Ling and the others felt like their bodies weren't there. It was a special technique to hide one's presence. When done by an expert like Zhang Dong even a nascent soul master at the late stage wouldn't be able to tell that someone was there unless they got really close.

Thus they followed after the small group of young cultivators that weren't actually that young, to begin with. All of them looked to be in their early twenties but even Jia Yang was already over fifty. The faster one became a core formation expert the more the aging process was halted. How young a person looked was also an indication of how good of a future prospect they were.

Someone that was half a century and looked like this had a bright future ahead of them. However getting over towards the nascent soul level wasn't that easy, anyone making their way there and not looking like a sixty-year-old grandpa was a genius. Zhang Dong was considered one and his brother the Azure Dragon was another one.

The latter was many times older but the two didn't look that much different and no one could really pinpoint their real ages. Most people wouldn't believe that the famous Golden Dragon was even younger than Jia Yang here. If this was common knowledge then he would probably be considered the most promising prospect in the world.

"Sun Ling, what is this place?"

"It's an area used by core disciples and it's run by disciples as well."

"I see, it makes sense."

After following the group of miscreants they arrived at another part of the city. It looked like a large town in itself and was characterized by the people that lived there. The ages did vary but there didn't

seem to be that many old people with gray hair here. Most of the elderly were store owners and merchants while the vast majority of the population were the disciples.

It made sense that Jia Yang would take his victim to a place where he had a lot of pull in. Even the elders that resided here were probably mostly only affiliated with powerful families. They would not be able to do much against a large faction leader's grandson even if they wanted to.

'That's quite the grand cultivation abode this little shit has...'

They continued to a large villa with everything that a cultivator could want included. It had a backyard training area, and a garden filled with spirit herbs and fruits. There was even a separate cultivation cave protected by a powerful protective array that would block out any sounds. The young man was certainly living a life of leisure with everything being handled to him on a silver platter.

'Could my kids end up like this if I spoil them too much?'

As a parent of a five-year-old boy that was the son of the most powerful cultivator in the sect, it was troubling. He could very well see Zhang Jun becoming a spoiled brat if he wasn't careful. When he became a teenager his hormones would shoot through the roof but it would be up to him as a father to reel him in. It wouldn't be acceptable if he became a young master with no morals like this.

"You guys wait here, I'll be right back."

"S-senior if I may..."

"Go ahead."

"Thank you, w-what do you intend to do with Jia Yang... if the elder finds out..."

"You don't need to worry about that, we won't die but..."

"But..."

"Well... let's say that he won't be able to use his little brother for a while..."

"Oh..."

With that response, Zhang Dong vanished while leaving the group he came with outside the premises of Jia Yang home. The looks on their faces were truly interesting, it was as if they were constipated throughout the entire trip. It wouldn't be strange if they didn't try to contact Sun Shi to get back here before something disastrous happened. They were probably thinking that he would actually kill the young man but he had other plans.

...

"Here, why don't you just relax here... but I don't think you can hear me anymore, this miracle drug was really worth the price."

Jia Yang had a massive grin on his face that was uncharacteristic of his stoic demeanor. He had managed to fool many people by playing the perfect senior. Even the elders above him had no idea of what he was doing here but even if they found out he didn't believe that anything would come of it. His position

as a future elder was already cemented and the way had been paved by his grandfather. Sooner this woman would be accused of lying than he would

“You better be thankful, this young lord spent a lot to make this happen.”

The young master licked his lips while staring at the mostly passed-out woman. He had thrown her onto his bed and it was ready to start the fun. Her whole face was red and her body was sweaty from the drug’s side effects. She was a core formation expert and not easy to get into such a state. She would be out for half a day which gave him ample time to play around.

“Hehe, don’t run away now, I’ll be right back.”

He laughed while strutting out of the bedchamber to check once more if everything was in order. Even though the deed was done the man didn’t want to get caught in the act or have anyone interrupting them. Thus only after making sure that everything was in order did he return to the room.

There she was, his long-desired prize and something he was looking towards for all these months. He had worked tirelessly to get the woman’s defenses down and finally was able to deliver the drug into the tea. No one would suspect someone of a pristine image like him to be able to do something like this and he used this fact to his advantage.

“How did she manage to get the bedsheets onto herself?”

To his surprise when he returned the woman was curled up under some satin clothes and probably also hugging some pillows as her stature was a bit larger than he remembered. With a smirk on his face, he grabbed those fabrics to yank them down.

“This lord desires to see his bride! ... Huh?”

“Is there a problem, lover boy?”

“W...who are you, how d-dare you!”

Jia Yang’s eyes bulged out of the eye sockets as after yanking the bedsheets away there was another person waiting for him. They looked truly hideous, warts were all over their body and their face was truly horrendous. This wasn’t the worst part as clearly this person was a man and his stature was quite hefty.

“What, I’m not to the young lord’s fancy? Well, this doesn’t matter, come here, dear!”

“Wait what?”

The young master tried resisting but he quickly realized that his cultivation was sealed. All of his limbs felt like they were made of noodles as he couldn’t muster any strength to resist the man before him. This was clearly not something that he wanted, the man’s stinky breath hit his face but he couldn’t resist. Soon he realized what was happening but it was too late, the act that he was trying to perform on the passed-out lady was about to happen to him instead.

“Nnnnnnnoooooooooooooooooooo....”

...

“Hm... I guess reading those ugly bastard books paid off in the end... He won’t be able to function as a normal man for a while after this...”

Zhang Dong was looking at Jia Yang who passed out on the ground. His mouth was filled with foam and he was in the process of having the worst life-like dream ever. It was all an illusion that had been infused into his brain by Zhang Dong’s technique. He would go through quite a mind-shattering experience and would not even know that it was all a dream. The passed-out girl that was brought here was unharmed and untouched, her dream was probably much better than what Jia Yang was experiencing now.

“Time to go, I’ve already made them wait long enough.”

Soon Zhang Dong departed the premises with the girl, she would be handed over to Sun Ling and gotten some help. Jia Yang on the other hand would never be the same man he once was...

## **Chapter 579**

‘That was somewhat refreshing for some reason...’

Zhang Dong thought back to the young master he had disabled and sneaked away. Just giving him a nightmare wasn’t enough though. Inserting cultivation demons into a person of a lower realm was possible. This illusion that he fed to Jia Yang would fester and eat away at the man’s mental state.

It was a little thing he learned from the demonic faction, he would never be able to achieve the nascent soul level like this and regress. In a world ruled by power and prestige, he would be quickly overtaken by others that desired his possession and his grandfather wouldn’t be able to do anything about it.

‘Still leave a bit of a bad aftertaste in my mouth, he should be thrown to jail but this should be the closest thing here.’

In reality, Zhang Dong would have rather dealt with something like this according to his old-world morals. Here on the other hand he couldn’t if he wanted to maintain good relations with the Heavenly Crane Sect. If he crippled him in an open fashion then the faction this cultivator was a part of would hold malice against him. In a time when both sides were needed to take care of a threat, this was not an option.

‘Never thought I would be making deals like this, I guess that’s war for you, never know what you might have to do to survive...’

For the time being, he could only bury this case in the back of his mind. Perhaps when all of this was over he could go after all the war criminals he encountered. Winning the exchange between empires was for now more important than the dealings of juniors. As someone at the top, his time would be better spent creating a system to not allow things like this to happen anymore. Handling everything on a case-by-case basis by himself was not feasible, he needed to create a task force and get many other people involved instead.

“Sun Ling, do you know where this person lives we need to drop her off in a safe location.”

“Yes, Senior, it’s not that far from here.”

“Well then, I’ll be right behind you, and don’t worry, no one will be able to see you.”

Sun Ling clasped her hands while guiding Zhang Dong toward this woman's own crafting abode. He kept them hidden away from any nosy Sage Lily faction members to not implicate them. After Jia Yang awoke, he would probably search for the woman that escaped, if Sun Ling was seen dropping her over at her house then it would be obvious that she was a part of the attack on the young master.

Not much happened on the way to the lady's home that she shared with a few other junior sisters. She was in a lesser zone than to which the young master belonged. This made her a perfect target as she didn't have any proper backing than her own master that was of course below in status than Jia Yang's grandfather.

While perhaps this visit wasn't that productive it was eye-opening. Ever since he established his own sect he didn't really look into that many things. He relied on the system to point out a person's alignment to him. While no evil people were taken in there were some that were morally gray.

'What is even good anymore, a lot of things can be skewed to fit anyone's worldview and justify even murder...'

Perhaps things weren't as bad at his own sect but he couldn't discount that young masters like this one could be appearing. The new generation of cultivators might have been analyzed by the system but he didn't do the same with the older members. They were the overbearing grandfathers at the top that would strike fear into everyone.

He could also not account for new people being born with an evil alignment or it switching through their life for one reason or another. There were many things that affected this base state and it could even be switched instantly after a traumatic experience.

'But now is not the time for this, let's continue this...'

The trip through the city continued with him getting more and more disappointed with each new reveal. He stopped interfering with the people as nothing as bad happened but the small things kept piling up. This place had a clear divide between casts and it existed everywhere. The ones born to the wrong parents had to bow their heads and it was almost impossible to change their fate.

When listening to the rumors of what was happening at the eastern fronts he realized that most of the people fighting there were expendable. All the powerful sect masters were from the various Lily factions and didn't need to do anything. Even the nascent soul masters there were just groomed for such an occasion.

'So that's why a large chunk of them just want to wait here. At least it was smart for them to create backup experts for such an occasion, all the main families will be fine but the branching ones will mostly fall after this war. I bet they think that they can just rebuild as long as the tree survives, not much different than what the Azure Emperor is doing...'

After some time had passed Zhang Dong and his entourage were sitting outside another tea house. All the second-hand information that he wanted to gather was there and now he needed to make a decision. While the strongest cultivators with the best techniques were sitting on their hands, their vassal clans were dying out on the field. Probably until all of them were spent they wouldn't act.

‘They might not even act at all, this protective formation is bad, even the demi-human emperor wouldn’t be able to easily get in here...’

He only fought against one of the emperor-level threats so he didn’t have all the data. The one that ruled over the oceans didn’t show herself yet but her troops were around the same level as the demi-humans. When taking that into consideration this place seemed like it could last out for a while before being conquered. It depended on how much spirit energy and masters they had to infuse their defenses in.

‘This place is mostly self-sufficient but sooner or later they would run out of resources.’

From his calculations and current information, he believed that they would last at least ten years, perhaps more if they had some hidden resources. This also depended on how hard the opposition wanted to go. Usually what happened was a slow siege and battle of attrition, cultivator types lived for long, thus they didn’t risk rushing into things. Perhaps if the Emperor moved by himself they wouldn’t even last a few months.

“Junior greets senior.”

‘I guess I’ll have to make a decision soon, time for the next part.’

Finally, after a few hours in the city, Sun Shi arrived once more. Together with him were various other old men that were wearing the Moon Lily faction emblems on their robes. These were far more intricate than the one’s Zhang Dong and the guards were wearing.

The Lily Factions were the ones in power and they split off into quite a lot. The Sun, Moon, and Sage were only three out of ten camps. Each one had a head elder leading them to have ten feuding factions only looking out for themselves. There were exactly ten of them which made it problematic whenever any decisions needed to be made.

Each Lily could cast a vote and most of the time it was five against five with nothing being decided. There was one above them, his name was Tao Guan and he was the current sect leader. Even though he was at the top spot he couldn’t discount any of the other factions and from what he heard was also unwilling to veto a vote when it was five against five.

“Are you the Moon Lily Grand Elder?”

“That is true, Golden Dragon, I am called Sun Shen.”

He already knew that they were somehow related but Sun Shi and Sun Ling were part of the Moon Lily Clan. This whole thing was very similar to the situation back at his own sect, there they had three main factions with the Zhang, Huo, and Feng Clans that were part of the founding clans. The biggest difference was that Zhang Dong as the Patriarch carried a lot more weight there and his orders could not be denied by any of the factions.

Here, on the other hand, their leader needed to consult everyone before making any kind of decision. If he tried imposing a rule that a lot of people were against, something like an internal war could break out. It wasn’t anything new, many times did clans or sects produce people that craved to be the leader.

It was the same here, he was sure that some people in the background were already trying to come out on top of this war. Sending their competition to the front lines would be the most sensible move but could also backfire if the people sent there actually came out victorious and ended up increasing their fame.

“Your granddaughter had explained a few things to me but she couldn’t delve too much into it, so can you answer this, what do you wish me to do?”

“Of course but this isn’t the place to discuss such issues, why don’t you join me in my private abode? The other elders would be honored to meet the honorable Golden Dragon, the hero of the western front.”

“Ah, I see that I have gained some interesting titles but sure, let us depart but first let me change into something more fitting.”

After a few pleasantries he discarded his guard persona, there was no use hiding it anymore as the Moon Lily Grand Elder was there. The man looked like a gentle person and gave off pleasant vibes but he also drew in all the eyes. The smaller tea house they were sitting outside of was filled with lesser sect members. All of them lowered their heads and dared not to look at this group.

It was quite a strenuous task as strange radiant energy took over the whole place. Some of them backed off and even raised their heads to see Zhang Dong shedding his disguise. Where previously an average-looking guard was now stood a rather handsome man with long white hair. People could feel instantly that it was a powerful master and quickly bowed before him in a show of respect.

## **Chapter 580**

‘So, this is the Moon Lily faction... I didn’t expect to be actually covered in moon lilies though...’

Zhang Dong was done with going through the main city that belonged to the Heavenly Crane Sect. After being picked up by Sun Shi who was the initial elder that started this whole journey, he met up with Sun Shen. This person was at the level of great circle of nascent soul that was above the norm. When comparing him against the tribe chiefs from the demi-humans he didn’t fall that much behind.

A theoretical battle would go in the demi-human’s favor even more if he faced someone like the vampire lord that could regenerate himself at a fast pace. However, with some help from other nascent soul masters, he could see this man being victorious. Without seeing what kind of techniques he was capable of it was hard to make a complete assessment. This at least meant that this sect had enough force to not get steamrolled by these invaders, that is if they actually committed to some type of strategy.

The more they waited the more ground the other camps took and their influence grew smaller. Zhang Dong was still convinced that if the Azure Emperor along with this Sect actually acted then the Emerald Phoenix Empire wouldn’t have been able to progress this far. He was able to hold off the demi-human offensive so it should have been possible for people that weren’t that far off from his level. The only problem as always was cooperation, cultivators didn’t like to work with one another and only acted if the reward justified it.

Perhaps if both sides were offered some kind of treasure or long-lost cultivation technique then they would consider making a move. The old men at the top wouldn't be easily convinced as they had mostly emptied all the resources that would allow them to progress. Only legendary objects would move their hearts and trust was nonexistent. It wouldn't be strange if after taking care of the Emerald Phoenix Emperor one of the sides attempted to overthrow the other if they were weakened enough.

This everlasting fear of being betrayed was the biggest reason that all sects preferred not getting involved in any kind of outside battles. There was always something that they could lose or it could have been trickery involved of some kind. This was also one of the reasons so many misunderstandings happened as they always expected some kind of ruse.

'They do have a nice fragrance and spiritual energy, I could probably make some good pills from them... I wonder if the other factions have more of the same.'

While thinking about his options here Zhang Dong slowly walked through the garden filled with spiritual lily flowers. This land was truly beautiful and he regretted that he wasn't able to look at these lilies during the night when the moon was at its zenith. From the whispers that he heard around and interaction with the Sun Lily faction, he knew that both of them were at each other's throats.

These Moon Lilies were something one had to cultivate at night while the Sun Lilies were the exact reverse. They were like Yin and Yang and also carried the same energies with them. In this case, the Sun side was pushing towards the element of fire while the Moon to the ice element. The women on this side were exceptionally pale and filled with that icy demeanor that was so sought after by the cultivators in this world. So were the men though while the Sun side was more exterior with their emotions. It was as if a group of introverts and extroverts were going after each other.

"Elder Sun Shen, I think this is enough, could you tell me your intention?"

After arriving at the main sect area and this sub-zone that was the Moon Lily faction. Some sects had mountain peaks that divided their groups while others had massive buildings or even separate cities. This one on the other hand had whole valleys surrounded by medium-sized mountains from each side. Ten such valleys existed here and he was invited to one of them where he could have a conversation with their leader.

Of course, as per cultivator standards, he was taken on a tour through all the various vistas. They were clearly trying to show him the superiority of their faction by presenting various high-quality resources and manufacturing processes. He was even shown some of the pills that this sect was famous for but it was not something that he was interested in or envious of. Anything that was in this Empire was already at his fingertips. With enough time he would have probably been able to create a massive army that would have easily defeated both three great sects even if they were at full power and existed again.

It was obvious that they wanted to entice him with something to have a bargaining chip. As it stood now they didn't know what they could offer to the Golden Dragon for his services. It wasn't possible for anyone to not want any kind of reward. Zhang Dong on the other hand didn't really need anything besides the basic resources like spirit stones and herbs. With the base materials, he could use his crafting abode to produce pills and weapons at a factory scale.



There was not really much they could offer to him and if it was any other time then a deal would not have been made. However, what he needed was to siphon the Daos of the two Emperors for himself and gain more power to go against the Overseer. If he could use the Heavenly Crane Sect to get him into a one-on-one confrontation with the Emerald Phoenix Emperor then it would actually be enough.

If he could get them to act as a vanguard and just allow him to add the finishing touches, then it would be enough. The only problem was the mistrusting nature of cultivators. If he didn't ask for anything then they would assume that there was something else he was after. Something that either was worth risking his life for or he was intending to betray them when they needed him the most.

There were many records of faction leaders not keeping promises and pulling their troops out of battle to allow their allies to be eradicated. Then invading their weakened lands and taking over. Sometimes the third party would just wait for two foes to go into battle and after both of them were at the end of their wits, they entered the playing field to flip the board.

"I'm sure the honorable Golden Dragon knows what we wish of him."

"That is true, you want me to help you with your little problem in the east but what can you offer me in return?"

After going through the various smithies, libraries, and alchemist workshops he ended up in a secluded room with Sun Shen the leader of the Moon Lily faction. It seemed that the man was convinced that the problem was greater than the other thought. He was even willing to bring in an outsider that could potentially put them in bad grace with the current Emperor.

"We will swear an oath of comradeship to the United Element Sect that will not be broken for millennia."

"Hoh, you wish to be our long-lived friends but such an oath won't mean much after both of us are gone, you'll have to give me something more tangible."

"Does the Golden Dragon have something in mind?"

"I actually do, I've seen the resourcefulness of your sect and you do have something that I want."

A bond of friendship between two sects would only last as long as their Patriarch's stayed in power. Sun Shen here could only go through with something like that if their leader agreed to it so it wasn't a done deal. Normally it would have been a great deal to any other sect or clan. If they gained recognition as an allied sect to the Heavenly Crane Sect then no one could come seeking trouble with them.

People coming from the Heavenly Crane Sect would be compelled to help anyone from the United Element Sect if there was any trouble. Zhang Dong's sect didn't really need any help in this regard as they had already proven themselves to be strong. What he needed was resources that he could use to enhance his own army.

"Oh, if it's within my power then I'm sure we could come to an agreement."

"As you know we are in dire times and as such resources are scarce. I wish you to supply me with the highest quality spirit metals that the eastern region is known for, of course without any taxation..."

"You wish to use our ore mines?"

“Yes.”

Zhang Dong nodded as the resources on his side were starting to be drained. What he needed was more materials to produce large flying ships like the Argonaut and other minerals. This was the best way of improving his forces without spending too many spirit points on rising people’s cultivation. There was just not enough spirit steel to go around for manufacturing such large flying vessels and the eastern region was known for having abundant mines.

“My faction has access to a repository of ancient metals and some mines but...”

“Is there a problem?”

“... I won’t lie, but the mines belong to another faction that we aren’t at great terms with.”

“Let me guess, is it the Sun Lily faction?”

“I see the Golden Dragon is wise.”

The old man nodded as he misunderstood Zhang Dong’s shot in the dark for wisdom. Instead, to him, it only made sense that what he wanted was lying behind someone that he was up against. It was as if the world was conspiring against him to make things harder. This could have actually been very true in this case if the Overseer was keeping track of his movements.

“Do you perhaps have a way to move the Sun Lily faction to prepare the items that I want?”

“That is...possible, I would have to discuss it at the faction leader gathering.”

“Can you take care of that? I don’t think you or me have time to waste on too much bureaucracy.”

He wished to just head out into the field and drive the invaders back. Nevertheless, he had asked for payment and unless he wanted to be looked down on he needed to stick through it. There was always a way to change the minds of others and he was very convincing when it came to knocking some sense into people.

“This might actually be possible, we are holding a meeting tomorrow... but do you wish to join me for it?”

“Yes, would that be a problem?”

Zhang Dong asked while giving the old man the gentlest smile he could muster. The only way to move things along would be to kick up a fuss where the most prominent sect elders were taking part in.