

Unfathomable 601

Chapter 601

"This is..."

"It's one of the high-ranking generals of your opposition, the Emerald Phoenix Empire. He was in the inner circle so he should know a thing or two if you can make him talk. I have chosen to keep the leader of that army for myself though."

"Release me you damn... ARGHHHh!?"

"Sorry, they are a little feisty, they still don't understand how they could have been defeated."

Zhang Dong zapped one of the generals that were together with the Master General from the Emerald Phoenix Empire forces. After clearing up the mining areas he decided to retreat back into the Heavenly Crane Sect lands where he left Sun Shi and Kang Yunru behind. The two were quite stunned to see a powerful cultivator like this be treated like a fly.

"Don't worry, he is wearing bindings that are able to suppress his cultivation, I have produced a few of them."

"Honorable Golden Dragon I'm not sure what to..."

"Haha, no need to thank me, just take them as a gift but I'm sure you understand that I'm not doing these tasks for free."

"Of course not, I'm sure the faction leaders will prepare a proper reward for your help."

"That's the thing, I don't want any treasures, I want something different. I'll be short, take this man and the ones you already captured, and make them talk. I'm sure your leaders will get the bigger picture then and send some reinforcements here before time runs out."

"This is?"

"Some presents, give the letter to your Patriarch and have him send forces over already, you probably don't want someone like me roaming your lands."

"That is..."

After tossing a spatial ring filled with specialized chains and reworked slave collars he decided to part ways with these two elders from the Heavenly Crane Sect. He was somewhat convinced that with these gifts the sect would finally decide to make a move. They had been on the retreat for mostly one reason, uncertainty, and fear of losing their main base.

Now, on the other hand, Zhang Dong had presented them with war prisoners that they could poke for information. The strong enemy from yesterday had been turned into a docile little puppy. He had done one thing and shown that these Emerald Phoenix Empire generals weren't that scary. This would give the sect the push forward that they needed, it would convince them that they could win even if they send out some of their stronger masters into battle.

Cultivators were skeptical individuals and the longer they lived the more pedantic about their own safety they became. They would certainly not move without having a good reason for it. Now with the enemy on the retreat, it was time to reclaim their lost lands. It also made them look bad that a cultivator from a different sect was the one liberating their cities. If this continued it would make them look weak and unable to handle their own lands and that was not something these old farts could stomach.

‘If they don’t send troops now, they will take a hit to their face, their pride is always the thing that makes them move. While they get their things sorted out, I need to contact my other friends’

While his robotic army was patrolling the lands he needed to make a detour down south. They had numbers but lacked some power when it came to the higher-ups. The Archangels couldn’t compete with someone like the Master General but he knew someone that could. If he could get his other allies to bolster his angelic army then things would go much smoother.

‘Wish they were part of my own faction so I could just teleport to them...’

Zhang Dong brought up the map of the entire empire. Thanks to his system he could set up several save points but these were also limited. At one point he could have at most ten of them. Luckily thanks to his faction system he could use his people as teleportation hotspots and place the ten limited ones at several strategic locations.

One of them, for instance, was still at the Azure Palace, if he ever needed to sneak in then he would probably be able to. However, at that location, the Overseer had her base. It wouldn’t be strange if she had some way of tracking his movement. Thus it was something he needed to be careful of as he wasn’t sure what his next run-in with that woman would foretell.

‘I guess this is the closest to their base, I never actually visited their main headquarters, so this will probably be a good time to do this...’

Previously when interacting with the magical knights they met up at outside locations. Either it was some kind of small bastion built up by their workers or out in the open field. They were given a pass to travel through some of the United Element Sect teleport gates but were still seen as outsiders by most of the cultivation world.

He had left one teleportation point at the old location where he ran into Argus the first time around. It was quite surprising to see actual magic in this world and he was also discovered by it. Now when he appeared here there was nothing much but deserted buildings and overgrown grass.

‘I should probably give them a heads up, knowing Lucius he will think that I’m here to attack them or something.’

While Argus the Wizard was on his side the blond-haired Knight Commander wasn’t fully a fan yet. This showed that he was the right leader for the job, for this mission to succeed he needed to keep people at arm’s length. There was no telling when a betrayal could occur and these unknown lands could quickly become their grave if they weren’t careful. They could not be sure that Zhang Dong wouldn’t betray them in the end.

However currently, they were allies and the sword was gained thanks to his involvement. Even if they didn’t trust him, he was their best chance of finding the other secret relic which he already did.

Previously the same thing happened but this time around he didn't want to beat around the bush. He would not lie about already having the item they desired but instead just use it as a proper bargaining chip.

'There, message sent... I wonder if they'll actually let me into their base, probably not but perhaps their mission is more important to them.'

With his plan in mind, he turned into an arch of golden light in the sky. His traveling speed was tremendous but it would still take at least a full day of flying through the air to get to their base. Not much was known about this fortress but from the rumors and his spies, he knew that it could be seen from far away. Thus with his enhanced senses he was able to see a giant structure that reached up to the skies even before arriving at the location.

'Is that a giant tower?... it looks like a giant sword.'

Was it a sword-shaped tower or a giant sword that was turned into one, he wasn't sure. However, before he would be able to examine it further he was intercepted by a group of knights. Lucius was not among them but instead, two of the other golden knights he once beat up were there. The rest was a full battalion of silver soldiers that were mostly around the core formation level.

'Hm... I guess they are here to either guide me inside or keep me from going in?'

From his perspective, these people were probably not here to stop them. The two golden knights were at the level of nascent soul experts but they wouldn't last a minute if he decided to attack them. They were more than likely here to either guide him inside or stall him until Argus or Lucius actually got here.

"Is Argus and Lucius not here, I'm sure I gave your Wizard the message."

"Lord Lucius is awaiting your arrival, he has ordered us to guide Lord Dong to the Holy Citadel."

"Hoh? He did, well then, guide me."

To his surprise, they were actually willing to welcome him inside their stronghold. He was more inclined to believe that they would stall him but perhaps his visit would be short-lived or happen outside of those large walls. Zhang Dong also didn't fully trust these people, it seemed that they were doing some heroic quest but it wouldn't be strange if something unsavory came to light at the end. Perhaps they were the true end boss of this entire four-way war.

'Well, this will be a good chance to confirm all of this. Bob, be sure to scan everything you can see, they are our allies for now but better to be safe than sorry later.'

While he didn't go through many betrayals, for now, he knew that even people from his own faction would turn on him if he was gone for too long. It wouldn't be strange if Lucius had a different reason for letting him enter his domain. He needed to be ready for any signs of betrayal and he was also sure to leave the item they desired in a safe location.

"That's quite the city you build up here..."

The knights didn't answer as they approached the giant tower that looked like a sword with its hilt stuck in the ground. The blade went all the way up into the sky and pierced the clouds. It was quite the sight as the same clouds up in the sky looked like they were being parted by this sharp blade made of stone.

'I don't remember any mentions of such structures in this location before this war started and it looks like the ground around here had shifted, it might have been buried underground and waiting for them to arrive.'

It wasn't hard for him to spot the tossed-up soil, they had covered up their tracks but for an expert of his caliber, it was child's play. The large sword wasn't the only thing here as a massive wall stood before him. It went around the sword tower in an almost perfect circular shape and was manned by many archers and siege weapons. Behind it, he could see some buildings that looked like they belonged in 14th-century Europe.

'I can sense Argus coming, I hope this goes well.'

His wizardly friend was on the way, perhaps with him around he could figure out what these people were truly after and if he should be worried. Nevertheless, he needed to barter for their help and take care of the Emerald Phoenix Empire before more time was lost.

Chapter 602

'It's similar to a defensive formation but entirely made out of mana, must be Argus' handiwork. I don't think anyone besides me would be able to make it through this barrier without forcing it.'

Zhang Dong was inspecting the mana structure that surrounded the whole area. While the walls were high they could not halt anyone that was capable of flying. For this purpose, large barriers were always created to protect large settlements like this from all sides. This one was quite powerful as he could see himself having trouble blasting his way through. It would probably take a few battleships focusing their beams in one spot to leave and make a small opening for people to slip through. The time required and the energy expenditure would be tremendous.

He had made it past the wall where he saw something that looked like a medieval city. Luckily there were no farm animals walking around and no excrement was on the side of the street. At first glance, he noticed something off, while the city was quite large there weren't that many people living here. It was as if they didn't have enough manpower to fully use this place.

'Hm, was my assumption correct?'

Previously he assumed that perhaps due to his involvement he changed the setting slightly. The golden knights when counter together weren't all that strong compared to the enemy empires. Lucius and Argus would not have been able to defeat the demi-human emperor even if they combined their strength with some of the other golden knights. This side just didn't have that emperor-level unit and the reason was probably that they discovered the secret blade with limited help.

'It wouldn't be strange for someone stronger to arrive after they start failing, the same thing happened to the demi-humans. The Emperor only showed up after several of their tribe leaders were killed.'

Perhaps Lucius and Argus weren't the strongest but they still could put up a fight against the Saint Emperors. Luring in a stronger knight commander than Lucius also had drawbacks. The blond man was already stubborn enough, Zhang Dong could only imagine how prideful someone in a higher position could be. Then someone that was on an emperor-level could turn their fangs against him, it was probably better to work with these two.

'Better to have weaker allies than stronger enemies.'

"Greetings Lord Dong."

"Salutations to you Argus, did your beard get longer?"

Finally, someone that he knew appeared, and as always it was the wizard that greeted him first. Lucius was probably busy with some other stuff and still trying to act cool and collected.

"So then, I'm sure you got my message, I wanted to present it here as I was in the area..."

"Of course but... have you truly found the sacred aegis?"

"It should be it, it gave me the same impression as that sacred blade and it reacted to my holy energy in the same fashion."

"It reacted? Do you actually have it with you?"

Argus' old eyes lit up with excitement as it was revealed to him that the item they were looking for could be right here. Zhang Dong would have to disappoint the old man as he had no intention of handing it over just yet. This time around he didn't want to beat around the bush. Perhaps it would be possible to toss it out after defeating the Emerald Phoenix Emperor for them to find but these were his allies, he wanted to give them the benefit of the doubt and just bargain with them instead.

"No, I don't have it on me; however, your secret relic is in my possession just at a more secure location."

"It is? This is grand news! , we must tell it to Lord Lucius and gather the knight order, this... this!"

"Now hold on there, I didn't say that I would just hand it over now did I? But it would probably be better to not discuss this matter here right?"

"... Yes, we should change locations please follow me."

Argus was stunned for a moment but quickly realized the meaning behind Zhang Dong's words. A deal needed to be made and this area close to the entrance gate was ill-suited for bartering. The two took off into the sky with some of the soldiers using their flying horses to keep up with them. They were going toward the large sword shape tower in the background which gave him some time to examine the surroundings even more.

Just as his senses had told him, the city wasn't fully populated. At most twenty-five percent of the buildings were populated. Most of the people here were military personnel but he could still see servants. These were even weaker than the common people that resided in these lands. Without the magical armor that the soldiers were wearing, the power level of these people was quite low.

Finally, after flying through the air for a few minutes they arrived at another large wall. This was a wall within a wall that separated the outside city and this citadel. Inside he could sense a lot of magical power along with a high concentration of troops. Even though he considered himself to be quite powerful he didn't think that he would be able to get out of there alive without using his teleportation feature.

This didn't stop him from setting up a safe point within the compound. If he ever needed to infiltrate this place in the future it would be possible. He had decided to place it within the residential area while flying through the air. Putting it inside the giant sword structure crossed his mind but it was always better to measure the threat level from the outside. If he popped into the fortress directly and got surrounded then even he would have a bad time. There were ways that his teleport escape could be blocked, Wang Long used some type of blocking measure.

'So this is probably their headquarters, something is blocking my spiritual sense.'

While Argus was talking with the gate guards he tried inspecting the giant sword tower. He couldn't peer into it from the outside and now when he was closer the same effect persisted. There weren't many things that could block his senses which made him believe that something powerful could be inside the tower. This he would probably not figure out yet as their destination didn't seem to be the tower. Instead, they were going to a nearby palace that looked like it came from some kind of fairytale.

There was quite a bit of space inside this area surrounded by the second wall. It somewhat reminded him of how some sects build their inner sanctums. In the middle was the giant sword tower reaching all the way up to the clouds. Around it was seven castles and palaces, one of which was the one that they were going to. It didn't take him much to put two and two together to figure out what this meant.

'It's similar to the Heavenly Crane Sect and their ten lily factions.'

These seven castles look different and probably belong to six other knight commanders like Lucius. The one he was flying to was surrounded by a wide moat that looked more like a lake. One white bridge that had a vast amount of arches on it led to the only gate entrance on it. The walls were pure white and had angelic undertones to everything. Inside it, he could feel the presence of his acquaintance, Lucius.

'So, there are six other people on his level that would reside in those castles. The question is if he is the weakest one of them or not...'

Zhang Dong had an idea about the true power of these magical forces. Together with Lucius, there would probably be seven knight commanders. Then whoever resided in the sword tower was their leader. It was more than likely that this person was at emperor-level and he could appear at any point in time.

'One thing is clear, whatever that person says my two friends would carry out, I need to be careful.'

While Argus didn't seem like a bad man, he was only one of many subjects of this magical kingdom. If their king appeared they would have no other choice than to listen to him. Luckily for now there was no one above Lucius in prestige and everything that he decided would be carried out.

'Hm, these castles are like clans and they probably operate in a similar way. Seven duke families and one king, it's that kind of setting?'

"Lucius it has been some time, how have you been?"

"Zhang Dong, what have you come here for? I have heard that you are in possession of the aegis but are unwilling to part ways with it? What is the meaning of this."

"Haha, I'm happy to see you too, now put down that sword and listen to me."

He had finally arrived at the palace courtyard. He was surrounded from all sides by the golden knights that he had previously tussled with. They were all wearing their armor and ready to jump at him at any moment. It wasn't strange for Lucius to take this approach but he had hoped that the blonde would have a bit more trust in him.

"I do have your shield and I will hand it over if you help me out."

"Help you out?"

"Yes, you scratch my back and I scratch yours."

"Huh?"

Both Argus and Lucius were confused by the saying from his modern world. He could only cough into his fist while shaking his head before continuing with his point.

"I mean, that I'll help you if you do something for me in return."

"How do we know that this isn't a trick? What evidence do you have of possessing the aegis?"

"Wasn't finding your sacred sword proof enough already? You could say that I have a knack for finding holy relics."

Zhang Dong smiled at the grumpy-looking knight in armor. He had proven himself by finding the first item and they didn't have to know that it was just by pure luck. This however in their eyes was probably nothing more than a coincidence. Thus to make this more believable he decided to do a little demonstration.

"You will have to produce some evidence if you wish us to believe it."

"That's fine with me, just give me a moment, I'm sure Argus will be able to confirm my claim if he sees it."

He reached out with his hand to produce a blue ball of energy. At first the knights and Lucius were ready to draw the weapons but Argus was quick to stop them.

"My lord, that's a miniature teleportation gate, it's harmless."

"Teleportation gate?"

"Yes, and what do you think is on the other side?"

Argus was quick to move closer as he realized the item that was on the other side. It was clearly the aegis that they desired but before he could reach out to take it, Zhang Dong closed the connection to that location.

"Not so fast, first we make a deal, and then you'll get your item!"

"... Name your price."

Lucius had no reason to not believe Argus that was almost foaming at his mouth after seeing the sacred treasure. Now it was up to them to not get scammed too much but Zhang Dong on the other hand would make them work for it.

[Chapter 603](#)

“So let me get this straight, you want us to work as your army? Are we lowly mercenaries for you to call upon?”

“Hey, I didn’t say that, it’s more of a symbiotic exchange don’t you think? You will get your holy relic when the mission is complete. I helped you with your sword already, I think that should be enough to prove that I’m an ally.”

“I’ll be the judge of that, it is true that you have helped us in the past but...”

“What, you still don’t trust me? Well, I can’t do anything about that part but one thing is clear, you need this aegis and I have it, so do we have a deal or not?”

Lucius looked at Zhang Dong with a scoffing gaze. It was clear that the knight commander didn’t want to take on this mission but also couldn’t refuse it. His whole purpose for being here was to get the holy relics and this was a chance to get them. Zhang Dong wasn’t sure but he was expecting Lucius to be rewarded handsomely if he returned home with the divine items. Perhaps the sword had already been moved to the magical kingdom as he couldn’t feel its presence anywhere. However, it also could be inside this sword monument as he couldn’t peer through it.

“Lord Lucius, Lord Dong has been an honorable ally, I think we can trust him on this matter.”

“Hmph... very well.”

“Haha, I knew you’d see it my way but don’t worry, my forces and my other allies will do the bulk of the fighting, you will just act as a distraction to spread out their forces, it should be an easy task to perform for your warriors. However, we don’t need to rush things yet I still have to talk with my allies so this could take some time. Don’t worry, your relic is in a safe location.”

He wasn’t quite sure what his plan for the future would be just yet. The Heavenly Crane Sect still needed to give him an answer to his call and what the Emerald Phoenix Empire would do was still up in the air. For all he knew, they could decide to go into a more defensive battle and bunker up in the lands they already captured.

This would probably be a better solution when going up against forces they didn’t have much information on. His army of robotic angels was going around the less-defended cities and slowly liberating everyone that was still alive there. This did give the Heavenly Crane Sect some incentive to make a move as it would look bad on their side if someone else was doing the liberating.

“At a safe location? What will happen to the relic if something happens to you?”

“Don’t worry about it as long as my sect is in place, someone will know the location to your treasure”

“Hm... You leave me no choice but remember this, if you betray our trust and fail to relinquish the treasure...”

“Haha, don’t worry I don’t want to have you guys as enemies, have a little trust in people, otherwise you might get some hemorrhoids.”

“H... hemorrhoids?”

“Yeah, How will you find a good woman if you got those Lucius?”

Zhang Dong could see Lucius getting red in the face and the other golden knights being taken aback by what he had said. It was strange for them to see someone talking to their glorious leader in such a way without any reservation even more when the topic was his behind.

‘Hm... does he really have hemorrhoids? Their reaction is a bit strange.’

The soldiers were whispering to each other as if Zhang Dong had discovered a secret that their commander was trying to hide.

“Wait, do you actually have hemorrhoids? If you need some help, I could make you some ointment, it should get rid of them within a few days if you apply it directly or I could make a pill but that one would have to be inserted a bit further in.”

“... Further in...”

“Yeah, it’s not that big so you shouldn’t feel a thing, I gave it to my grandfather and it worked wonders, he was like a new man!”

“S... stop spouting nonsense!”

Finally, Lucius had enough of it and even went for his sword. The other knights backed off as if he hit a nerve. Zhang Dong knew that it was probably better to distance himself from this group but even he had trouble in holding his laughter in.

“Well, I have some things to do, I’ll get back to you after I have everything figured out...How about you show me out, Argus?”

“Y-yes, that might be a good idea, please follow me.”

While flying away he could see Lucius waking up from being stunned by the conversation and shaking his fist at him in anger. Luckily some of the golden knights managed to hold him back before he could embarrass himself even more.

“Hey Argus, I’ll send you over that ointment, give my regards to Lucius.”

“Maybe that’s not such a good idea...”

The old man gave out a cough while flying through the air. Just as fast as he arrived at the white palace, he was already leaving. This was enough to get an idea about the defenses that this place had as well as the other six remaining palaces that were mostly empty. They had some servants and silver knights here and there but no leaders.

‘I should probably get everything sorted out before they decide to call for backup. If the Emerald Phoenix Emperor and the Cerulean Empress are gone, even if their King appears it shouldn’t be an issue anymore.’

His power continued to grow while his enemies remained stagnant. If this continued he didn’t see a way of losing this scenario, that is if the Overseer didn’t get involved. That was always the dark horse in this situation and something he was trying to avoid. The contact with his brother was nonexistent. He had no

idea what would happen after everything was over, perhaps his brother would be the actual end boss of everything and for that occasion, he also needed to prepare.

“Lord Dong, are you busy? I still have to return that book that you lent me, why don’t you join me in my tower first?”

“You have your own tower?”

“Yes, it might not look like it but I’m part of this circle of wizards that is renowned in our country.”

“Sure, lead the way, I have a moment.”

While he could just teleport away, it wasn’t bad to know Argus a bit better. The man was a magician that was on the level of a nascent soul master. In contrast to the knights that wore magical armor, he was actually capable of producing powerful spells without the use of any outside sources. It was strange that he wasn’t given proper respect by those knights as they treated him more like a lackey.

It was something that he was very much interested in. Argus looked like a combination of some fantasy wizards from some books he read in his youth. A white beard, gray robe, and a large pointy hat were just a few things that made him look like a generic magician from fictitious worlds.

He also seemed to have a whole magical tower that was not part of the white castle nor any of the other ones around the massive sword. Instead, his residence was in what looked to be a guard tower, one of six that were built on top of the second circular wall. This made him believe that five other wizards would be joining them in the future if things got rough. Perhaps even one more if perhaps their leader had his own grand wizard.

“So this is your tower? I can feel quite the concentration of mana around it and also inside of it as well...”

“Lord Dong, I was meaning to ask you, where did you pick up the arcane arts, you are the only person in this vast Empire that seems to be knowledgeable about our field of studies.”

“Ah, well... let’s say that I’ve journeyed beyond these lands just like you and learned a thing or two there.”

“To lands beyond? Could you have come to our kingdom?”

“No, it was another one, perhaps after everything is over, I’ll tell you the story of my travel.”

“I’ll be sure to remind you of that.”

Argus smiled as he was quite intrigued by this fact. Luckily he understood that Zhang Dong was still a neutral ally and it would take more for him to relinquish his secrets. The two were working on that art as they had traded some books. Zhang Dong offered Argus some knowledge about spirit summoning as he was actually something similar. He received some basic magical knowledge in return which he could compare to the books he absorbed in the other world.

The magical system was almost identical but there were some subtle differences. It was clear that at a base point, the two world’s magic was very similar. They all probably had the same origin point but when spreading out, they became different and the focus varied. In the case of Argus, he was more

capable of producing attacking spells that caused immediate damage and didn't have much knowledge about summoned spirits which in their kingdom was more of a side job.

"This has been quite the read, I have even managed to perform a summoning act to conjure up a spirit, it's truly interesting and quite different from a familiar!"

"Oh, it's a fire spirit, not bad."

The two arrived at the magical tower. At first, it seemed that it didn't have any entrance door but with a wave of his hand, Argus produced a large door that swung open. To Zhang Dong's keen eye, the illusion that was placed there was easy to discover but other cultivators would probably have trouble identifying the spot with their lack of knowledge of mana. Inside they moved to a large open space surrounded by floating books and a flaming spirit that looked like a lion.

"Hoh, it seems to like you..."

"I was always good with cats and dogs."

The flaming lion jumped forth only to get petted by Zhang Dong's arm. Anyone would get third-degree burns when attempting something like this but his body which had been refined into a treasure in itself, would take any damage from such flames. The lion rolled over to its belly as it was petted which was quite a surprising sight to Argus who decided to cancel the summon.

"You do have a lot of interesting books are you proposing another trade?"

"You know me too well, Lord Dong."

Both of the men smiled at each other, they both had their own agenda but at this moment the only thing they wanted was more knowledge. Zhang Dong started producing copies of the books he ingrained in his brain while Argus allowed the flying texts to rest inside of some bookshelves that suddenly appeared from out of nowhere. It was time to take in some knowledge and perhaps become even better at using magic.

[Chapter 604](#)

"Keep your hips up... don't drop the weights!"

"Yes, uncle!"

"That's it, keep it up, remain in this position for the next hour and if you spill the water, you know what will happen!"

"Yes, uncle!"

'...He looks really motivated... but aren't those methods a bit extreme?'

Zhang Dong was looking at a scene playing out before him. A handsome young man with white hair was shouting at a young child. This young child had weights strapped to both his hands and legs. While they didn't look that bulky, they were made of special heavy material that weighed ten times what iron would.

The boy was standing in a horse stance with his hands to the sides. On his head, he had a large jar of water that was filled up to the brim. If he moved slightly the water would pour out and he would fail in his training. It was a standard training method to build up a martial artist's core and balance but when performed by his own son that wasn't even six, it was hard to watch.

'Should I tell Zhang Liu to chill out with this sort of training? But he probably went through something similar when he was younger... Little Jun also has that special martial physique that makes him more robust than other kids...'

He wasn't sure if it was pure luck or if the body he was given by the system had something to do with it but both his kids were considered special. His son had a natural talent for martial arts and at this age, he could start actually learning some of the basics. His sister was ahead of him but it wouldn't be strange if at some point the younger brother caught up to her eventually.

After having a talk with Argus and getting some more magical books into his library he decided to return home for a moment. His plan of surprising his kids was interrupted by their training. At first, he went to check up on his daughter but she was also busy learning some lightning arts from Zang Xue. Both his disciples were here for the time being and took some time off to train his own children while he was busy.

This wasn't anything out of the ordinary as usually fathers didn't train their own children. What they did was mostly give them some old texts before leaving their offspring to train by themselves. Then when the time was right they would see what the children had learned and correct them if they so desired. The Life of a family head was somewhat very lonely.

They were supposed to remain the pillar that everyone could lean on when times became rough. In this world filled with actual demonic beings, monsters, and cultivators that would murder you for almost any little thing, it was paramount to remain the strongest. Thus at this time of war, no one would think it was strange that his children didn't see his father.

He was actually the oddball out of the bunch, other fathers would just lock themselves up in cultivation chambers while pondering the Dao. It wasn't strange for some children to not see their parents for months or even years before they came out of self-imposed training. This couldn't be helped as the strongest fighter needed to remain at peak condition, ready to swoop in whenever their family needed them.

'I guess, I should leave him to his training.'

Zhang Jun's expression was very motivated, not something he would expect to see on such a young child. When he tried to remember what he was doing at that time, it probably revolved around watching TV or playing video games with no worries in the world. However, he somewhat knew that this little guy was doing all of this to impress his old man.

This brought him immense pride while also shame. To everyone in the sect, he was a big hero that sacrificed his life for the people. He had worked tirelessly to achieve his power and status when going against evil sects like the Dark Palm Sect. The truth wasn't really out there as he knew that his strength was given to him by the system. He had entirely skipped through a lot of steps that would force him to work like his son was working now.

The body he had would just get more powerful by absorbing treasures and he could even further his cultivation by spending spirit points. His starting point was a cheat in itself as he didn't really need to focus on training all that much. He bought skills and techniques through the system and could even copy scriptures directly into his brain. Skipping so many steps others needed years to spend on was really what made him what he was today and when watching this child that was trying too hard, it made him feel somewhat inadequate.

No one really knew this part of him, not really even his wife that had met him when he was already quite strong. The only thing he could do was now act as something his family and sect could look up to. If he managed to not shatter this superman like persona that he built up, then his people would have something to aspire to. While his power was given to him by underhanded means he could still use it for others. Wang Long would remain a cautionary tale as to what not to do while he tried to strive for greatness and act as a beacon for his family and friends.

'Hm... well this will cut my visit short, Liena is still helping people in the north and I only had an hour or so...'

His visit was supposed to be a surprise but instead, he would cut it short. This didn't mean that he would go without doing anything. Instead of speaking with his kids, he decided to leave them a little souvenir instead. He had been working on the angelic puppets quite a bit which left him with some scrapped material. This was enough to make two dolls, one a bit cuter for his little girl and another one a bit more manly for his boy.

He wasn't set on the design but after interacting with his kids they did seem to prefer a difference in the toys they received. After leaving each doll that could actually perform simple orders and a letter behind he decided to head out. The issue in the east was not resolved yet so he could not spend more time here. Now that his army of puppets was loose he needed to reel in the Heavenly Crane Sect some more.

'They are going to have another meeting, I guess I'll pop up and push them in the right direction otherwise, nothing will ever get done here...'

With that in mind, he went to his system window and activated the teleportation feature. His body blurred and quickly vanished to appear at another location. It was a luxury inn that was usually not used by anyone by people in high places. He spent some time there waiting for those old farts trying to decide on things without killing each other. Now it was a spot he could teleport to and perhaps a mistake by what he was seeing.

"Oh mister, don't be so hasty."

"How could I not be hasty with such a tasty morsel in front of me... hehe... huh?"

"Well, this is embarrassing... Does your wife know about this, Sun Shi?"

A scene was playing out before him, the elder that visited his sect was trying to loosen up the clothes of a younger lady. He had no idea who the woman was but she had a lot of makeup on and looked like this world's version of a courtesan. Zhang Dong didn't want to assume but it wasn't anything strange to see things like this. His own grandfather was someone one of those elders that couldn't keep his pants closed for a day and it seemed that this old man was the same.

“... Honorable Golden Dragon... w-why are you here...”

The color drained out of Sun Shi's face as he saw Zhang Dong before him. The woman jumped back trying to cover herself up with a nearby bedsheet. This was quite the unlucky moment to appear in this place. He would need to make a note to never leave teleportation spots inside of rooms of inns.

“Ah don't mind me, I'm just passing by... I was looking for Faction Leader Shen but for some reason, I ended up here... I'll take my leave...”

“No, this isn't how it looks!”

Sun Shi stood up from the spot as he had previously found himself in bed. To Zhang Dong's dismay, the man forgot that he had lowered his pants. A pure white loincloth was tightly wrapped around the old man's nether regions. It was quite the tight fit as the old man had been caught in a moment of arousal.

“Oh boy...I need to go!”

Shouted Zhang Dong while turning his face towards one of the windows. He did not want to stay here any longer nor ask why Sun Shi had returned to the main sect. It seemed that it was worse than he anticipated if they were pulling out important nascent soul elders from the frontline. Someone needed to put an end to all of this bickering as this was the time to act. Thus he turned into an arc of light in the sky and headed over to where the meeting place of all the faction leaders was.

Perhaps he was not invited to the meeting but he felt that after liberating so many lands in the Heavenly Crane Sect's name, he was owed something. It didn't seem that they would come to a conclusion without him forcing the issue. Now that he had saved their people, returned lands to them, and even given them war prisoners, they owed him something in return.

“We must act while we have the momentum, Long Dong had given us this chance, we can reclaim our lands!”

“No we need to wait, now that the Emerald Phoenix Empire has finally taken losses they will surely switch to a defensive battle, our losses will be staggering!”

“You damn old fools!”

“No, you are the fool!”

‘I see they are at it again...’

He wasn't sure if he should smile or frown after hearing his two favorite faction leaders bickering back and forth. It was the same as the last time and nothing was being done. However, just like the last time he had the intent of shifting their ideas. This he would start with a powerful landing and he was already preparing for it by making the clouds above to gather.

[Chapter 605](#)

“What is happening?”

Suddenly a loud thunderclap was heard by the ten nascent soul masters from the lily factions. The clouds above them started circling around their gathering location and changing color. Soon a strange

deep yellow glow that resembled gold appeared in the middle. Inside they noticed a person, he had his hands behind his back and was standing on the clouds like a ferocious sword.

"It's the Golden Dragon? Was he part of this meeting?"

Everyone looked towards Sun Shen, the faction leader of the Moon Lily faction. The old man shook his head as he had not been informed of this. Even the old woman from the faction known for their seers looked surprised. The only thing they could do was wait while slowly reaching for their weapons. Could this be some kind of attack, perhaps the Golden Dragon had been coerced by the enemies? He had spent a lot of time in those lands and that strange army of angels had also appeared out of nowhere.

"Are you this surprised to see me? What's with those looks on your faces?"

"Honorable Golden Dragon, why have you appeared before us without informing the council about your presence in the sect? We would have of course welcomed you if we just..."

The Patriarch was the one to speak out but the two guardians that were behind him started to move as well. They had mostly recovered from their wounds and were now aching for a rematch with the person that gave them their first loss in a while.

"You just what? Threw a big feast? Wasted more time bickering here? When will you make your move, I already set the stage for you, do you really want me to do everything myself? Is the Heavenly Crane Sect this week?"

"Weak? Long Dong, you are going too far!"

"Hoh, did I touch a nerve? But isn't what I'm saying true? How do you think your sect will look if all the lands that you previously owned are liberated by me? Well... to be honest that might not be a bad idea, I could just turn them to my vassals instead, the resources there aren't bad..."

Zhang Dong was slowly floating down from the sky while going into a monologue. He knew that these people didn't pose a threat to him. After he one-sidedly beat up their twin duo all of these masters were scared of him. If they came at him together as one unit and had some good teamwork then perhaps they would be victorious. However, the ten were divided. One side was even in favor of what he was doing and he could see the old lady even joining his side if a fight broke out.

"What are you insinuating, do you mean you wish to take over our lands?"

"Do I wish to take over your lands? No, that is not what I want, my intention from the start was to get rid of the Emerald Phoenix Empire but if you are not willing to give me aid, I will take care of everything myself."

Just as he was about to land his body became a blur made of golden lightning energy. His landing shattered some of the ground and produced some smoke. It looked like he was attacking which made the Patriarch and his bodyguards that he appeared next to flinch. However, this was the end of it, no follow-up attacks and no talking, just silence. It was as if he was saying to them that he could have taken their leader's head if he wanted to and they would not be able to do anything about it.

"You must excuse my actions but this is an issue I will not back away from, the Emerald Phoenix Empire will continue their way to the north and west after they are done with you. Alone you will not be able to

stop them, but with my help it is possible, so let me help you and I will promise to leave everything as it was.”

“So, your goal is the eradication of the invaders?”

“Yes.”

“Do you really want us to believe that? What is the real reason?”

Leader Zhong once more was the person to doubt his words. Zhang Dong wanted to give the man a slap across the face but attacking this group of people would just ruin the whole plan. While he could let the Heavenly Crane Sect perish while taking out some of the Emerald Phoenix Empire armies, it would be a net loss in his eyes. They could do so much more if they worked together and fewer people would have to perish.

It wasn't strange for Zhong to be skeptical about Zhang Dong's motives. Saints existed in this world but they never really got to the level of a nascent soul master. Each and every cultivator sooner or later had to walk over someone else to gain their position. To him, there had to be some kind of hidden treasure or something that Zhang Dong or his sect would gain from helping them.

“You want a reason? Shouldn't you be asking yourself a different question though?”

“A different question?”

“Yes, is this a bad deal for you? How about you stop worrying about what I'm getting for this and think of what your profits will be? It's fine if you don't trust me but is it a bad deal for you?”

“The golden dragon isn't wrong... the weapons of those invaders are quite peculiar, perhaps we could gain their wisdom and adapt them to work with our techniques!”

“Yes... the samples of their pills were also interesting... there is much that we could gain from this.”

“See, now you're thinking in the right direction, you get your treasures and the only thing I will ask for, is their Emperor.”

“The Emerald Phoenix Emperor?”

“Yes, you can have the rest, but their leader is mine.”

“Hm...”

The Patriarch and all the other elders started thinking. They knew that the leader of the enemy empire would probably have the best treasures on his body. It wouldn't be strange to want what was the best for them, considering they were one of the big three in the empire. However, they were in the presence of Zhang Dong, the great Golden Dragon. It was clear to them that they wouldn't be able to defeat him in a fair fight.

‘Hm... They will probably agree and when the time comes weigh their options again.’

“I think what the Golden Dragon is saying isn't a bad offer, there will be many treasures to be gotten.”

"I also agree, those pill formulae are already good enough and will help us bolster our sect for generations to come!"

Soon some of the factions that were on the fence started to agree. Their greed was strong and when given the option of gaining potential treasures in the form of weapons, pills, and techniques they weren't able to refuse. The only thing they needed to do was to give Zhang Dong the belongings of their leader.

Even this was a potential chance, he knew that they were hoping for the two leaders to take themselves out. When the two most powerful cultivators fought to the death, there was always a chance for a third party to snatch it all at the end. If Zhang Dong won and was gravely injured, they could swoop in to take the prize.

The same rule applied if he lost, as long as one of the scary Emperor level threats was weakened they could attempt to take everything. In either scenario, they would be gaining a lot, thus their decision swayed towards sending their troops. Even if there was a chance to lose some people, the chances of gaining more power outweigh any potential deaths of their sect members.

"I see your point Golden Dragon but you will have to leave us so we can vote on this matter as our traditions require us."

"Of course but keep this in mind, it won't take much more time until their counter-offensive."

"They plan to attack us? Do you have proof for this claim?"

Leader Zhong shouted out from the distance as always as he had been planning to bunker up instead of charging in.

"Proof? No, I don't have anything substantial, this is just an opinion made on my own observation."

This time it was the Patriarch who was interested. They still didn't really know their enemy's true motives. Were they after something specific or were they just warmongers trying to capture more lands? Some would probably be fine in giving up some of their lands if they retained the more critical locations that were closer to the center of the Azure Empire. It wasn't strange to back off and wait, cultivators were long-lived so even waiting for hundred years wasn't anything new for them.

"Then what is the basis for your actions?"

"I would say, their nature and lack of time? I, I forgot that you are not the Long Clan, you still do not know what is happening."

"Golden Dragon... could you explain it to us then?"

All the elders here were quite intrigued by Zhang Dong's claims. What were this true nature and lack of time he was talking about? They still didn't know about the fact that within a hundred years, the bridge would be closed and the Emerald Phoenix Empire would need to evacuate. They also didn't know of their hundred of thousands of years of prep time. This he could quickly explain to them which would probably push them in the right direction.

If they knew that their enemies resided in another section of this world that was only accessible every hundred thousand years, they would surely get interested. They were just like them if they could, they

would probably like to invade the Emerald Phoenix Empire lands if they could. It would be an intriguing place to visit that could even have various different treasures that could be received by them.

Zhang Dong had to actually persuade his own people to not cross into the demi-human empire while the bridge was still there. The option to plunder their lands while they were in the process of a civil war was enticing. Their leader had been killed and most of the tribe leaders were as well. It wouldn't be hard to take over their lands but it would also split up their resources. However, perhaps if the northern sea creature problem was done with, then perhaps the demi-human empire could act as a secondary source for spirit points.

"Well then, sit tight as this one might take a while, let me first explain the bridges that have appeared all over the empire and the great divide..."

[Chapter 606](#)

"This subject greets the Supreme General!"

"I hope you bring good word, otherwise my father won't be pleased..."

"My liege..."

The moment of silence caused the man sitting on a throne made of green jade to frown. The chamber he found himself in was vast, and many guards were forced to spread out as if it were empty. At this moment they were slowly reaching for their swords as if ready to punish the messenger of bad news.

"Fine, talk."

"Y-yes Supreme General! Our armies have been forced to retreat ever since a strange master appeared."

"The Golden Dragon was it?"

"Yes, Supreme General, the same... after driving our forces back an army of strange metallic warriors appeared which have been quickly driving our people back towards this region..."

"Are you saying that our generals can't handle one person and some army made of puppets?"

"I..."

"I heard enough!"

The man on the throne snapped his fingers and just as the snapping sound ended the head of the man that brought the message landed on the floor. The supreme general looked at the body sprouting a fountain of blood before sprawling out on the ground with disgust. Only after another wave of his hand did two servants move forward to take care of the mess one of the soldiers made.

"I want you to bring me all the information you have on this 'Golden Dragon'. My father left this mission to me and I will tolerate no failure, let this be a reminder to all of you, failure is not an option!"

"Yes, Supreme General!"

A group of other men dressed in armor saluted while looking at the body and the head of one of their own being dragged away. With their spiritual sense, they could see it going towards a row of pikes that

was placed in front of the supreme general's palace. The bodies of the commanding officers that had retreated were lined up there and this one would be added to the pile. It was clear that retreat was not an option anymore, it was better to try and fight it out than return here and be beheaded by the Prince.

"Elder Brother Kong, you shouldn't bully the generals, what if they decide to run away when we need them?"

"Yahui? Hah, they wouldn't dare."

"That is true, they don't want anything to happen to their little clans and sects back home~"

A woman of immeasurable beauty approached the Supreme General from the side. No one else dared to move while the two were interacting. They continued to follow the subtle movements of this beauty who was a forbidden fruit that they could never have.

"So this is the man that stands in your way, brother?"

"Yes..."

"Let me have him."

"I know that look, you should take this seriously."

"I am, do you actually think I would lose to a single man? He is just my type that's all, I won't play with him too much~"

"Fine, take care of it."

"Hehe~"

Both of them were looking at a recording of one of the fights at the border. They could see the golden warrior going through their large ships and performing feats outside the norm. However, to these two he was still only a slightly larger bug than the rest.

...

"You won't regret the decision."

"I hope so, our sect will lose much otherwise."

"Yes, but if you are victorious then your power will skyrocket! Try thinking about all the treasures and new powerful cultivation techniques you might gain. As you have seen, these cultivators abilities to use our Qi are greater than ours."

"This is true, if we could harness this power... we would be..."

The Patriarch from the Heavenly Crane Sect covered his mouth as he didn't want to finish the sentence. It could be taken as a challenge to the Azure Emperor if this sect became too strong and Zhang Dong was still considered part of that faction. The group had finally come to a conclusion and decided to engage in battle and rid these lands of the Emerald Phoenix Empire.

'Just the idea of getting a bit stronger is enough to move them, suddenly all caution flies out of the window when resources and power are involved.'

While their goals were sketchy they were willing to activate their army. Some of the Lily faction leaders would be joining the counter-offensive together with him. Both Sun Shen and Leader Zhong were part of the initial troops. He was not sure how the two would do when fighting side by side or commanding troops. Both of them hated each other's guts and this might lead to some friction.

'The Patriarch isn't going to move for now, and those twins won't either... Well, this is better than nothing. I just need them to keep their soldiers busy while I take out their leaders.'

He did not have too much faith in the Heavenly Crane Sect. If he wasn't here along with his angel army to back them up, it would have been better for them to actually bunker up at their base. However, when he was at the scene they had an ace up their sleeve. The opponents were also cultivators, when their most powerful elder was defeated their morale would plummet.

"I will excuse myself then while you prepare, we shall meet out in the field of battle."

"As you wish, Golden Dragon, we have informed our elders about the allies from the south that wear robes made of metal."

"Good, let us discuss tactics later."

After a small back and forth with their Patriarch Zhang Dong decided to head back out to the field. Lucius and his squadron of golden knights would arrive in a few days from the southern region and the Heavenly Crane Sect would need some time to mobilize their forces as well.

The large war machine was now activated but it would take some time to gather all the soldiers and weapons. Soon people would be getting letters and communication jade messages that they were to assemble. This was just the first draft that required all of the sect members to gather. They were all experienced warriors and required no further training, what they just needed to do was to meet up at a specific location and wait for orders.

Zhang Dong expected this to take around a week. At such times some of the sect members would choose to flee. Not everyone was willing to risk their lives for resources and glory, without the nascent soul elders breathing down everyone's neck it would probably be impossible to progress. There weren't that many sects like the United Element Sect that loved their Patriarch to the point of throwing themselves into harm's way blindly.

However, thanks to the recent victories the morale wasn't low, even people that were on the fence could see a reason to fight, and a chance to make a name for themselves was possible. Deserting was always an option later but if they found themselves on the winning side, their value would skyrocket.

Even the weakest soldier would be handsomely rewarded at the end of the battles and for a lot, this was enough to take the risk. Most people saw themselves as the heroes in their story and the thought of death was a minor possibility if their side was stronger.

Time started passing as he retreated to his golden fortress. It was a good time to see how many spirit points his troops have harvested. The sum was quite staggering and would even allow him to upgrade the bastion to the next stage. For the time being, he decided to postpone the upgrade. The cost of teleporting the palace toward the Eastern Front from the North would be quite staggering.

This was one of his trump cards that he needed to hold on to, only after having enough spirit points for a two-way teleportation and the upgrade would he spend them. It was better to hold onto this load as teleporting the masters from his sect around was also a possibility. The distance was quite tremendous though and would burn through the reserves he had his forces farm for him.

News of the Heavenly Crane Sect armies on the move started reaching other people in the empire. It wasn't something that could be hidden away, however even though the old powerful sect was on the move, someone else's name was on the end of the tongues of everyone. The name Long Dong and Golden Dragon had become even more popular among the populace.

If Zhang Dong could see his approval rating in the whole empire he would see an arrow going straight up. His popularity was skyrocketing which brought its own set of pros and cons. He could not worry about it, for now, the Emerald Phoenix Empire needed to vanish from within these lands. What would happen after this, needed to wait.

'We do have an upper hand here...'

Zhang Dong floated in the sky and looked at the horizon. There he saw a storm approaching that in the past would make him dive inside to absorb the lightning's energies. They weren't in range for his senses but he knew that from that direction a large army of cultivators was flying in this direction. It was vastly more numerous than the ones that were trying to push into the border region.

Thanks to his map he was able to follow their every move and relay that information to his new friends. He had even produced a replica of the region to make it easier for them to devise a good strategy. While they could see the main force on the map, it wasn't that easy to make out smaller squadrons that could have split up.

'But what will they do, they will probably be a bit more strategic about this engagement than last time, the brute force approach didn't work...'

Zhang Dong had prepared some surprises for his new enemies. One of them was waiting below ground for a moment to strike. It was easy to predict where the bulk of the army would arrive to place some traps and some formations. All they needed to do now was wait and let their web close around the invaders.

'I should probably get in place too, let's see how they fare without my help.'

He glanced at a war tent made by the Heavenly Crane Sect. Inside were four of the Lily Faction leaders discussing the battle that would transpire. He did not want to use these people as the lure but going solo against a proper army like this would not work out too well even for him. Thus until the right moment arrived he would bide his time and then strike swiftly to end it all.

[Chapter 607](#)

'This is just like that one time... will it be as easy though? The scale is a lot different, they did bring a lot more people... and what is this, I think they actually thought things through...'

Zhang Dong was looking at some rocks after digging himself into an underground cavern. Above ground, there was a storm coming and along with it a bunch of enemy cultivators from the Emerald Phoenix

Empire. He had decided to prepare a few traps beforehand and the underground tunnel he dug himself into was a part of it.

His finger moved around in a strange pattern before a magical symbol appeared. The symbol embedded itself into the rocks while making them glow with energy. Many were pushed to the side of the wall and they produced a pentagram-like symbol with many strange rune-like symbols around it. Just as fast as these magical letters appeared did they vanish again and the glow died down.

The plan wasn't that intricate, just a few formations boosted by his knowledge of mana from the other world. This knowledge he intended to use to get one over the enemy cultivators that weren't versed in ways of mana. They would have probably had ways of countering formations that used traditional knowledge from this empire as their own wasn't that different.

While the effect that was produced was similar, the way of going about it was different. It was like saying the same words in a different language. Without knowing the language a person wouldn't be able to decipher what was being said. Perhaps they could vaguely read into the situation but the true meaning behind the words wouldn't be able to go through. It was the same with these altered formations, before they figured out how to go around them it would be too late.

He had hoped to just wait here until the enemy armada was on top. With his current powers, he could hide his presence from all conventional means. It wouldn't be strange to assume that the only thing that could pick him up would be an Emperor-Level threat that was close to his power. However, a problem appeared, the enemies had decided to go below ground and it was not a small force at all.

'Hm, they are quite bold. Going this deep underground in a location they don't fully know could be very disadvantageous... Though they did capture this area for a moment, did they take the maps with them to learn about all these natural tunnels?'

Zhang Dong had his system which could pierce through the ground to show him all the various tunnels down here. Some of them were eroded through millennia by underground streams while others were dug through by large beasts. Such corridors as the one he was in weren't that uncommon but maneuvering through them without a map like he had wasn't easy.

'Hm... this is a chance, but if I start killing them then the guys on top will know that they are moving into a trap, I will have to be careful.'

With the help of his mapping system, he could easily follow after his enemies. First, he needed to figure out what they were up to down here. Only after that would he make a decision on what he would do. Thanks to his high cultivation level and some higher knowledge he gained in the Dao of Earth, he sunk into the hard rocks and began to swim through them.

While it looked as if he was diving into water in reality his body was surrounded by a thin layer of spiritual energy. This energy would push the earth in front of him out of the way as he flew forward. Then after all the rocks and soil were out of the way, more spiritual energy would connect everything back into place. It was a constant process of disassembling the earth and then assembling it right behind him that made it seem as if he was swimming through it. No tunnel was left behind in his wake which would make following him quite a troubling task.

‘There they are, around twenty people but some other groups are in other directions... I see, they had a similar plan as me.’

After waiting for a few minutes he rose out of the ground in a location previously occupied by people from the Emerald Phoenix Empire. They had traveled through these tunnels doing the exact same thing as him. At the spot that he was in he could see hidden formation pathways in the walls and even a flag was left embedded in the rocks.

‘Hm... what a peculiar formation... when activated it will start affecting spiritual energy of a certain wavelength... I see so that’s what they are up to.’

At first, he assumed that they were planting some traps just like him but this wasn’t their battle strategy. Instead, this formation would create a large area that would only affect the denizens of this empire and their spiritual energy. In simple terms, it was a kind of spiritual energy-dampening formation, not something people of the Azure Dragon Empire would really ever use.

It wouldn’t really make sense as this affected every person in the same fashion. It would lower the power output of any Qi-related skills by about twenty percent. Only people from the Emerald Phoenix Empire would be safe from the effects as their cultivation methods and how they used spiritual energy were slightly different. In short, they wouldn’t be affected by the formation while his allies would suffer a long-lasting debuff.

‘Wait a minute, I can probably use this to my advantage, I don’t even need to take them out... if I change it around a bit... then this will be quite the surprise when they activate the formation.’

Zhang Dong started grinning as he realized that this gave him a better chance at winning than his own previous plan of activating trap formations. His enemies would do all the work for him while he just slightly altered the formations. After they realized what was happening it would already be too late. If all of their people remained alive and healthy they would not be aware of the subterfuge.

Thus his plan started to be implemented, following these people wasn’t hard. Even though they had some powerful experts with them, no one was able to detect his presence. At critical junctures, he would pop out from a wall of the ceiling to change a few things around. There wasn’t even that much for him to do besides keeping to the shadows.

...

“Faction Leaders, the enemies are upon us!”

“Where is the Golden Dragon? Wasn’t he supposed to lead the charge?”

Asked Leader Zhong when looking at Leader Shen.

“He said that he wanted to prepare something for them but don’t forget that he had left some of his own forces behind.”

The two nascent soul elders decided to leave the tent where they were deciding on a strategy for this battle. Their forces were all on one side while the enemies from the Emerald Phoenix Empire were on the other. In their eyes, they were on the losing side, at least if Zhang Dong wasn’t with them. To bolster their forces they were aided by new allies, one was a large army of strange metallic warriors and

pyramids. The other was a small group of armored men riding on winged horses. Each group was radiating power worthy to call themselves their allies and with them, they could see victory.

“They do seem capable...”

“They do, don’t worry while the Golden Dragon is powerful I will not stand idle if our sect members are slaughtered, we must be ready for all possibilities Leader Zhong.”

“I agree...”

Both men that usually weren’t on good terms nodded at each other. To them the survival of their sect was very important, if victory became shaky they were ready to abandon their newfound allies and even use them as a shield while they retreated. They were still on the fence about the whole situation but the treasures that could be gained seemed worth the risk that they were taking.

“Heavenly Crane Sect, advance!”

“For the Sect!”

“Long live the Heavenly Crane Sect!”

The warriors started shouting while moving to the skies. Their fleet was composed of flying ships and various attacking formations created by core formation cultivators. Many nascent soul masters were also on their side, all ready to push in when the time for them to act arrived. There wasn’t much strategy involved in this clash, just two large forces meeting each other in an open field.

A clash between spiritual energies caused the ground to rumble. With these many flying vessels and powerful cultivators around the whole atmosphere started morphing before finally, everything exploded into a frenzy. First, the ships started to fire their spiritual cannons from afar, the defensive formations were the first line of defense.

White spirit bullets shot away from the Heavenly Crane Sect and collided with a bright green shield. In response, cannon bolts of green spiritual energy were shot right back and collided with a semi-transparent defensive formation on the other side. It was a race now, the defensive shield that broke first would be the first devastating blow and a sign of the tides shifting in one direction. Only after both shields were unable to offer any defensive advantages would the place erupt into a massive brawl.

Both sides seemed to be somewhat equal without anyone being able to advance. That was before it appeared, a massive beast clad in golden scales and surrounded by the lightning of the same hue. It was a massive golden dragon, presumably the soul best of the man with the same title. It gave out a massive roar before gathering golden light within its maw. A beam of condensed energy soon appeared from within and collided with the green defensive shield of the Emerald Phoenix Empire.

“Their defensive formation is crumbling, everyone attack!”

The tide started shifting, and with the help of the giant dragon the Heavenly Crane Sect felt invigorated. Their forces started pushing inside while the Emerald Phoenix Forces were in disarray. With the dragon pushing in first and the metallic angels following after it the others followed soon after. It didn’t seem that they would need to weaken their enemies with their ranged attacks anymore, the golden dragon was just this strong.

The enemy forces were retreating and trying to escape. It seemed that they were actually too scared to continue fighting. While some saw this as a chance to show their might others with a more keen eye for strategy found this strange.

“Leader Zhong, doesn’t this look strange?”

“Yes, why did they abandon their formations this easily... wait, what if they... tell everyone to halt their attack, this is a trap!”

Just as Zhong had shouted out the orders a strange field of energy appeared all around them. It was then quickly followed by the appearance of a beauty of unprecedented proportions that started laughing.

“Haha, Is this really all you can do? Just like little flies inside of my spider web~”

[Chapter 608](#)

“It was a trap, they have surrounded us but... their forces are too thin to stop us, their formation won’t be hard to break, what are they planning?”

Leader Zhong shouted out while floating up in the sky. Their forces attempted to engage with the fleeing Phoenix Emerald Empire forces. It seemed like all of them were scattering to all sides after their protective shield had been broken. However, after a few quick maneuvers, they had encircled them. It was as if they wanted them to break into their formation. The only problem was that they didn’t seem to have enough manpower to block them. There must have been more to this tactic than met the eye.

“Be careful, that woman isn’t simple...”

Sun Shen retreated back to where the other faction leaders were floating and looked towards a certain woman that had appeared before them. At the moment the net closed on them she appeared up in the sky. She was wearing a very long emerald dress that was being held up by two powerful female cultivators that were giving these two great circle nascent soul masters a bad feeling.

“You danced on top of my palm very gratefully, I wasn’t expecting that dragon but it won’t be a problem. Where is that handsome man though? I wouldn’t have come here if I knew that he was just using them as disposable pawns.”

The woman started going into a monologue while the battle stopped. This didn’t sit too well with some of the masters here. It seemed that she had decided that victory was already in her grasp without even trying or taking part in the battle. While she was talking some of the ships that were flying there took aim with their cannons.

“What uncultured little bugs! Do you really wish to die sooner? Very well, this has already become a trivial matter, activate the formation and kill them all, your Princess commands you!”

The spirit cannons rained towards her location but instead collided with some kind of secondary shield that was around the giant flagship she was hovering above. It seemed that the grand barrier they broke through was just a distraction and that each ship had its own field that needed to be broken. Their attacks didn’t leave much of a dent while previously they saw some cracks forming after the first volley.

Right as she finished the sentence a strange force took over the whole place. A massive formation that was under them started appearing and giving off a strange energy signature. The people were stunned, how were they lured into such a simple trap without knowing?

“Did the Golden Dragon betray us?”

The Heavenly Crane Sect members had previously discussed tactics with the man in question. He had told them that he would prepare a few trap and illusory formations under the battlefield before they started. However, since his disappearance, there was no word from him and instead, the massive creature appeared. They thought that it was there to guide them to victory but perhaps this was all a trick.

If it was just a soul beast it could leave the battlefield at any moment. Zhang Dong wasn't there and perhaps his true goal was for the Heavenly Crane Sect to be eradicated instead. This was what some of the faction leaders were leaning toward but others weren't quite sure.

The puppets were still there and had put themselves between the invaders and it didn't seem that they were turning around to attack them. It was the same for the men clad in golden armor, they weren't doing anything sketchy. This would be the right moment to turn their blades towards the Heavenly Crane Sect but they didn't.

“Wait... nothing is happening? Do you feel that something is off about this trapping formation?”

“Yes... it's not affecting us... but look at their ships and soldiers, don't they look tired?”

To everyone's surprise, the ones that were getting weaker or entrapped weren't the forces of the Heavenly Crane Sect but the ones from the Emerald Phoenix Empire. Right as the formation was activated they started charging toward their army and using their own ships in charge. However, after a few moments, they stopped as if they weren't feeling well. The shields that were previously absorbing the cannon fire from their ships started wavering.

“What is happening, why is the formation affecting my army? Who is responsible for this, who dares betray the Emerald Phoenix Princess!?”

The woman in charge started shouting out in anger as she noticed that something was wrong. Her expression changed from a cold beauty to an angered brat within just a second. Her aura burst forth making most of the opposition experts to fall back, one of the beings there didn't flinch through. Instead, it opened its toothy mouth to shoot forth another concentrated beam of golden energy right at the woman.

“An overgrown lizard dares to attack this Cuilu Yahui?”

Cuilu Yahui's eyebrow shot up while she remained in place. Instead of moving forward herself the two attendants that were behind her acted. First the beam of energy collided with a green shield that was produced by the flagship under them. Even though it managed to pierce through it, the moment it arrived before the two battles maidens it was severally weakened. They had no trouble dispersing the energy that quickly turned into radiant bubbles around them.

“Hoh, you managed to block it?”

“Who is there?”

They heard a voice of a man echoing through the whole battlefield without any proper spot to pinpoint. This soon turned out to be just a ruse as a massive amount of energy had begun forming directly under their main ship. Due to all the chaos that ensued from the trap being altered a chance was presented. A massive beam of energy that looked like a sword pierced out from the earth and went through the massive esthetically pleasing emerald ship.

It happened in a fraction of a second and didn't give anyone a chance to react. This was not all, while this energy sword was the largest it was not the only one. Soon after the flagship was hit, smaller sword attacks appeared from under them, all going for the largest flying vessels with the highest fighting potential on this battlefield. Before the tide of battle could shift in favor of the Emerald Phoenix Empire's troops, they took a large hit to their fighting potential.

“Well, this turned out better than expected, I didn't have enough time to analyze this formation of yours but it should still work at around seventy percent capacity on your troops instead, quite an interesting idea of disrupting spiritual energy, I'll have to study the concept later.”

Finally, the voice that was echoing became clearer and all eyes focused on the man that it belonged to. He was standing on top of the giant golden dragon's head with his hands behind his back. His body was radiating an unfathomable cultivation base that could not be denied. The invaders were stunned, even their princess that was considered a matchless genius could not produce a staggering amount of Qi as he could. Even before the battle started everyone was inching away, they knew that more than likely if they tried to engage this man, they would die.

...

‘It's always easy to go against ‘smart’ people, they always think that they are ahead of everyone and never expect to be beaten.’

Zhang Dong had finished his preparations and waited for the enemies to activate their formation. Only after it was running did he go after them, Bahamut took their attention while he dealt with the cultivators that were underground. After making sure that there was no one there to disable the cracked formation, he decided to join in the battle.

Instead of their forces suffering a weakening in their cultivation base, the people of the opposing army were. It wasn't as strong as the original formation but it was enough to give him time and destroy some of the more important ships. With time the enemy cultivators would figure a way to either stop the formation or block its effect from affecting them. However, before that could happen he and his allies would put an end to this.

“Don't let this chance slide, the enemies are weakened, give them hell and join me in battle! Leave their leader to me!”

“You heard the Golden Dragon, don't give them a chance to recover!”

“For the Heavenly Crane Sect!”

Soon after his allies shouted their orders and the encirclement that was supposed to be a trap became a perfect opportunity. The forces outside were weakened and not prepared to fight enemies in this

fashion. Their shields were faltering and their war formations wouldn't properly take shape, they were quickly getting pushed back. It was clear that if this continued that they would lose.

"Don't you dare surrender, I, Cuilu Yahui have never known defeat and this will not change!"

As their morale was at an all-time low a burst of energy exploded from the Emerald Phoenix Princess. It was so powerful that it managed to send out a shockwave that pushed the Heavenly Crane Sect's and the Army of Angles back. However before any damage could be done it faded away, not due to not having enough power but due to Zhang Dong that decided to cancel this energy out.

"So your name is, Cuilu Yahui? If you surrender now, I promise to let your people live. Be smart and don't prolong this struggle, enough people have already died for your greed and hubris."

"You want me to surrender? The Daughter of the Emperor? The most powerful woman in the whole Empire? You overestimate your abilities, after I'm done with you, you will be nothing more than a slave below my heel!"

"Sorry, but I'm happily married and I'm not really into that stuff... but I'm not sure if my Grandfather wouldn't indulge in something like that... Nevertheless, you will not win."

"Hah, empty words, nothing more!"

Many things were happening all at once but as the two most powerful fighters started talking, everyone else stopped. It was clear to them that if any of them died and the other survived it could sway this battle in another direction. This was just how powerful they were, each one of them was a one-person army.

Zhang Dong parted from his dragon's head and took flight. In his hand, a shiny sword appeared which he intended to use against the woman that he was facing. While he wasn't happy about having to fight a woman, this was war. She was a capable fighter that could not be ignored, even he would be in trouble if he didn't take it seriously.

Cuilu Yahui in response waved her hand to disperse that long wavy dress into a type of energy. It surrounded her body to produce a more tightly fit battle robe, something more suited for this confrontation. With a second wave of her hand a mass of swords appeared behind her, there had to be thousands of them and each one radiated a force equal to a heavenly treasure. The clash between the two experts was soon to start and everyone started holding their breath while hoping that the master from their side would be victorious.

[Chapter 609](#)

'She is a bit better than the others... but not much stronger than a demi-human tribe leader.'

Zhang Dong was flying through the air while evading a swarm of swords. There were thousands of high quality weapons zooming around in strange patterns. Sometimes they would combine into other geometrical shapes, and other times into large hands and fists while trying to kill him.

Any of his allies would have probably been dead by now, and even Lucius would have probably fallen to these attacks as even the woman's defensive capabilities were quite high. Each time he fired back, the

mass of metal would set up a shield to counter his own sword energy. Even if some of the weapons broke they were quickly replaced by a new batch.

‘It seems she has a limit of how many swords she can use but has more of them to replace the broken treasures...’

Below the area, they were fighting it started sprinkling sharp chunks of metal. The swords were cut up by his own superior one that he was using with his one hand. The metallic chunks looked like confetti after being shredded by him and dropping down to the ground.

‘Hm, I could probably arm my angels with these, most of them are low-grade heavenly treasures but some are higher quality...’

It was clear to him that the swarm of lesser-quality swords was meant to act as a distraction. The weapons that were actually meant to kill him were mixed in with the attacking wave. During each exchange one or two such swords would go for his head or chest in an attempt to pierce it.

He was managing to evade each and every one of them or just smack them away with the help of his own sword. Some even made it inside his spatial bag for sampling. This seemed a good opportunity to gain some easy weaponry. All these swords could be given to masters from his sect or to outfit the angelic puppets later. However, first, he would need to win this fight and as it looked, he wouldn’t have trouble performing this task.

“You are a very slippery man but I like it when they play hard to get!”

“Hoh, some people might misunderstand those words if they heard them out of context... now I think this has continued for long enough...”

Just as always he liked to get a good feeling for any new opponent that he was fighting. This woman gave herself the title of Princess and was apparently related to the Emerald Phoenix Emperor. She would probably be worth a lot more as a war prisoner than die. Perhaps the Emperor was a family man and would pull his forces back for a trade. While he didn’t like the idea of blackmailing a father with their own child, too many people had already died here.

It was clear that his enemy was strong and if he wasn’t here to take care of her himself, even Bahamut his dragon might have not been able to defeat her. She was a true expert and powerhouse that would have been probably able to turn the empire upside down. There was only one problem for her, she was facing someone above the norm. Zhang Dong had realized it already, he had become strong, far stronger than even these people.

As it stood now he wouldn’t be surprised if he wasn’t already the most powerful regular cultivator in both of the Empires. Perhaps the Overseer was above him but he could not even see himself losing to the Azure Emperor anymore. Ever since he had defeated Wang Long it was as if a tiny fraction of his being had ascended into a new realm. Even this tiny amount was enough to propel him onto a new playing field that these people were locked out of.

“Long enough? Oh no, handsome. This is only the start, you will become one of my man servants and serve me for the rest of your miserable life!”

“Hah... I refuse.”

“Huh?”

The woman named Cuilu Yahui was stunned as for a moment Zhang Dong's body vanished. She considered the man to be a worthy opponent but he wasn't doing anything besides dodging her attacks. Considering that she didn't yet fully commit to the fight it was reasonable to assume that she would have been victorious. That was before he had appeared at her side and a fist made its way toward her gut.

“Hueck...”

Zhang Dong's fist connected with Cuilu Yahui's thin waistline. The woman was a lot smaller than him and her body didn't seem to be in the possession of a comparable body refining technique as his. She was clearly a cultivator focused on her Qi and control of high-quality treasures. If she was a character in a game then she would be a glass cannon mage. High ability to do damage but no defenses to speak of. It wasn't that she was weak nor did she underestimate Zhang Dong this much, the difference in skill and power was just this vast.

One punch was all that it took, on the outside, it looked rather anticlimactic. Cuilu Yahui's body started slumping forward as she started to lose conscience. A small shockwave was produced by the impact and the moment the woman fainted her hold on the swords was gone and they started dropping down to the ground like dead birds.

In reality, the hit wasn't as simple. It took a lot of Zhang Dong's spiritual energy to take this woman out with one hit. The moment the concentrated punch landed on her gut he injected his energy into her body. For a fraction of a second two types of spiritual energy started battling for supremacy and his had won. Without her Qi protecting her body she wasn't much and quickly lost all her fighting capabilities.

“T-the Princess... she lost?”

“How could this be... she is one of the most powerful cultivators of the Empire...”

“Their commander has been defeated by the honorable Golden Dragon, now is our chance, attack with all your might, drive these savages out of our lands!

While the people from the Emerald Phoenix Empire were stunned at the quick loss, the ones from the Heavenly Crane Sect took this chance to fan the flame. Their masters let out a loud battle cry and started pushing as hard as they could. Everyone knew that whenever the strongest fighter from a side fell, then victory was almost assured. It was their chance to take over and it didn't seem that the enemies had counted in this variable.

“They aren't retreating even when their morals have dipped? They look afraid... they must really fear their Emperor...”

Zhang Dong placed some Qi-suppressing shackles on the passed-out woman before throwing her into his medallion. Soon after he looked at the faces of his enemies, they looked afraid as if they didn't want to continue this fight. It was as if someone was holding a spear to their backs.

“Do they think they will be killed if they dare to abandon the fight? So that's how they run things back at the Emerald Phoenix Empire...”

He had his own way of treating his people and it contained some respect. Here on the other hand it was clear that defeat was not an option, the people fighting here were doing it out of fear. If they retreated they would have probably been treated as deserters and probably killed for it. It was a way of forcing people to remain fighting, it was better to try their luck against their enemies than to return to certain death back home.

This of course didn't mean that they wouldn't start retreating and would be quite beneficial to Zhang Dong's plans. It meant that these troops could not return to their base but instead remain outcasts. Their only way of surviving would be to hide their association with the Emerald Phoenix Empire. As long as they didn't show up in front of their old leaders there was a chance of living and to some, it was a more reasonable plan than to die here when winning was not an option anymore.

"I... I didn't come here to die..."

Soon the first Nascent Soul level master from the opposition turned into a wisp of light and started running. Even though the fear of being killed by their leaders was high they didn't see a way out of this predicament. If they returned they would be done for and if they continued here, either they would be dead or become slaves. For them, a life of a vagabond was still better than whatever they would have to go through when confronting their old masters.

'I guess this method only works as long as there is someone there to punish them...'

It was very eye-opening to Zhang Dong, he saw the limitations of ruling people through the sword. Perhaps there were some merits in some places but when it came down to it, these people would not sacrifice their lives for a tyrant. His forces on the other hand were more willing in that regard as they had a closer relationship with their fellow sect members and superiors.

This didn't mean that everyone was willing to desert and each had their own reason. Zhang Dong wouldn't be surprised if some had some soul-binding contracts placed on them. Others could have had their families back home that would be murdered if it was ever found out that they deserted. Nevertheless, as long as some broke the formation the enemies would crumble away.

He was not part of the Heavenly Crane Sect so he could not order them to be merciful to the people that had massacred their people. They started chasing after the escaping invaders while he focused on taking down the enemy generals and the flying ships. Some of them didn't need to be destroyed and would be a great augmentation to his own army of automatons. The battle was coming to an end and a victor was obvious but before a total collapse was achieved a voice echoed through the battlefield.

"Forces of the Emerald Phoenix Empire, your Prince orders you to retreat."

It was a very short announcement but instantly the people that were still frantically fighting for their life started fleeing. All sorts of treasures that aided in escaping were used and the enemy soldiers started scattering in various directions. To his dismay the ships that he wanted to capture started going up in flames while also being thrown in their direction and exploding.

'So their commander is at least smart enough to conserve his troops to some extent... and he would rather blow up his ships than leave it to use huh?'

The battle had ended and he ordered his army of puppets to not pursue. A lot of them had been damaged and he needed to see if there was some usable material around this battlefield that he could use to restore them. One battle won but others still remained on the horizon and this prince would perhaps be his next opponent.

[Chapter 610](#)

“Honorable Golden Dragon, may I ask why that woman is with you?”

“Ah, don’t mind her, she is harmless in the state she is in.”

“Big brother, why have you taken me here.”

“My precious sister, I just need you to tell our generals the plans our father the Emperor had in store for us, also don’t forget to inform them about my own orders.”

“Oh brother, you are so forgetful.”

“This is... mind control?”

“Similar but not quite, she thinks that I’m her brother Cuilu Kong. That man is the current Supreme General of the Emerald Phoenix Empire forces.”

“I see, fascinating.”

The group of faction leaders from the Heavenly Crane Sect was looking at a beautiful woman. She was named Cuilu Yahui and just a few days ago was captured by Zhang Dong in the confrontation between their two armies. It was clear to them that she was under some kind of mind spell as she was treating them as part of her army.

“Hey, are you listening to me?”

‘Remember to play along, call her princess and give her a few bows. She thinks that you are generals from her army that are subservient to her. She told me that they normally put their seniors up on pikes if they are being rude.’

“Y-yes, Princess.”

Zhang Dong sent a hidden message to Sun Shen and the rest of the faction leaders in the room. They were quick to straighten up as they didn’t want to have any part in getting themselves impaled on logs.

‘But Honorable Golden Dragon, how did you achieve this...’

‘Oh, it’s just a little trick I picked up along my travels, she is under an illusion spell, to her we look like the people from her army. I told her that she passed out during the battle and that I as her older brother had managed to slay the horrible Golden Dragon’

‘I see!’

While under his spell it would be impossible for her to catch their hidden conversation. The elders were quite fascinated by this interrogation method that didn’t use any drugs but just showed the person a different version of the world. However Zhang Dong knew that it had its limits, he would need to hire

some good actors to play the parts of the prince and the generals if she had a closer relationship with them all.

Luckily the two didn't seem to interact with each other that much. The other generals that he captured gave him some input on the state of their royal family. They were seen as horrendous spoiled brats with their own power bases. They were rumored to never interact with each other besides in family meetings. It was a stark contrast to the relations his own son and daughter had.

'So, is this what happens when the parents are not present?'

Zhang Dong was still a new father, he only had a few years under his belt. His five-year disappearance also complicated things and made him lose precious time with his children. On the other hand, the Emerald Phoenix Emperor didn't seem to treasure the two as much. Even sending them here without any proper supervision and help was already a sign that he wasn't that perturbed by their fate.

'That or perhaps his belief in his children is so strong that he thought that they would be able to complete the mission without him? Could it have been some tough love of a parent to teach them a lesson?'

He wasn't sure and at his current stage of parenting, he was still taking care of pre-teens. It would be hard for him to send his children without their mother being present. The only reason he was willing to go stay away from them like this was all thanks to his system. Otherwise, he would probably be scared that something could happen to them while he was away from the sect.

'But, these two are already adults, I'll have to learn to let go in the future...'

The woman he was using to get more information from was actually close to four hundred years old. She might have looked young on the inside but after capturing her he was able to identify her physiological structure thoroughly with the system and his spirit sense. Her brother was supposed to be a hundred years older which would make their father even older. His next enemy was someone at the peak of their power and with a lot of experience to go with it. While he might not have the raw stats like Wang Long he would probably have better battle sense.

'Well... that or he will be too used to being the top dog and easy to surprise. Maybe one blitz attack will be enough.'

He could only hope that his new opponent would underestimate him as all the others did. The element of surprise was one of his better tactics and in a world filled with old monsters that became too prideful for their own good, it was something that usually gave him an edge.

"F... for the Emerald Phoenix Emperor!"

"Bother, these generals are being rude we should...huh?"

"I think that was enough for now, go back to sleep..."

Zhang Dong snapped his fingers next to the woman's ear, making her pass out in an instant. She was still a powerful cultivator that could go berserk at any moment. On her wrists were spirit energy-dampening shackles but they could only lower her power to the level of a core formation expert. It would be

possible for her to make a run for it if she realized that something was off and he had gotten enough information out of her in this way.

“What will you do with her Golden Dragon?”

“Nothing, for now, was planning to use her as a bargaining chip, perhaps her family is sentimental enough to back off into their own empire.”

“The chances of that being are...”

“Yes, probably very low, when I was playing her brother she was always on edge, she doesn’t show it with that haughty attitude but in reality, her fear was almost palpable. It was the same whenever the Emperor was mentioned.”

“Yes, her heartbeat did increase whenever she mentioned her father...”

The other nascent soul masters here used their own spiritual sense and techniques to see if the woman wasn’t lying. Some of them even got into the role quite well while others like leader Zhong continued to be awkward and disgruntled. However thanks to this act they all heard some good information about their new enemy.

“Yes and also this, Prince Cuilu Kong will be the next opponent if they don’t agree on the trade.”

“Well, about that trade... think it won’t be happening...”

“Honorable golden dragon?”

“I did send one of my puppets to send a message to their leader but it seems they have destroyed it instead but it’s better if I just show you.”

Zhang Dong wanted to speed things up so coming here was just a little presentation. He had already heard the woman out and knew about everything. A few of his angel puppets were sent out to meet with their leaders and send them a message. However, before they could actually discuss things the automaton was destroyed. This was quite unexpected as he expected the man to at least hear them out, maybe even a trade could occur. While they wouldn’t turn back, perhaps some of the enslaved citizens from the Azure Dragon Empire could be set free.

“So that’s, Cuilu Kong?”

“Yes, he does look like someone that would let his sister die...”

“Those eyes have no mercy in them...”

A small holographic image of the last few minutes of the puppet’s life was played in front of the people gathered here. There wasn’t really much as it arrived at what looked like a massive throne room with one man sitting on the end. The pre-recorded voice of Zhang Dong played informing the man of his sister’s capture. Right as the part with the demands was about to play the puppet’s main camera started flying through the air. Someone in the room had cleanly sliced it off and the last part it captured was the Prince’s foot crushing its head.

“I think he is the type to not negotiate with terrorists.”

“Terrorists, Golden Dragon?”

“Ah, just ignore that, think we need to prepare for the next encounter, I don’t think they will just rush into combat now after losing so many people and equipment.”

Zhang Dong nervously coughed into his hand after his joke fell on deaf ears. It was clear that the man didn’t want to hear any of it and was probably already preparing a counter-offensive. It wouldn’t be strange that even if they tried using the princess as a human shield the enemies would just ignore that fact.

“Hm, I don’t think we can use that woman as a bargaining chip.”

“Leader Shen might be right but we can’t discount the enemies just trying to disorient us.”

“It could have been just for show, you mean? Hm... I’m not sure if that’s possible, for all he knows we could have instantly killed her just for that.”

“That might be true but...”

“Don’t worry, I’m not going to kill her. Perhaps they think that she is already dead or something, it’s worth a shot but we shouldn’t base our tactics on this point anymore.”

Everyone in the tent nodded. They needed to account for all the options, perhaps the Prince would get a bit more sentimental over his sister if she shows up on the battlefield. Zhang Dong didn’t want to become the villain of the story but people’s lives were at stake and even if he would dangle her as a damsel in distress he would not endanger her life. This was probably more than his enemies would give him but he was not someone that killed off prisoners of war. After everything was over they would serve their time and depending on their sins, be released.

“Well then my friends, we have more work to do, I don’t think that our enemies will try to assemble another regiment to get here, instead they will probably retreat.”

“We confirmed this with the map you supplied us, some of their scattered forces have started retreating towards the outer regions, just where the bridge to their Empire is located.”

“Hm... this will become harder but in my opinion, it would be better to cut off the head of a weakened tiger before the dragon appears.”

Zhang Dong knew that if he didn’t push now then the Emerald Phoenix Emperor would surely appear. The only problem was that he was cooperating with people that weren’t so keen on battling it out. They were not desperate enough to see the bigger picture and after the recent victory were content on resting their troops before the next engagement. It was now up to him to either convince them otherwise or face his enemies alone yet again.