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‘This went better than I expected, normally they would try to debate the issue for at least another week, I guess when it comes to actual war they know to strike the iron when it’s hot.’

Zhang Dong stepped out from a large tent that was moved onto a new flagship. It was sent out by the Heavenly Crane Sect and was flying next to some of the acquisition battleships of the enemy. Their talks have ended and the Heavenly Crane Sect had decided to make a push for it. It was clear that their motives were not pure but as long as the empire was clear of any invaders, it was fine.

‘I just need to be careful, calling over for some backup when the time comes won’t be such a bad idea either...’

“How does it look, has their Empress made a move yet?”

“No Patriarch, we are fighting the same exact waves of enemies, their strength doesn’t seem to be increasing either but...”

“Is there a problem?”

“Yes, we noticed that while their forces remain the same, the intervals between the attacks have become slightly longer.”

“I guess they reached a plateau and their resources might be running out... good, I might have to pull you to my side, be ready for anything.”

“Of course, Patriarch, the United Element Sect will always be with you!”

“Haha, that’s good, talk to you later Zhang Zhi.”

Zhang Dong cut the connection to his own general that was still out north and fighting against the fish people. There was a possibility for the Cerulean Empress to appear but for the time being, it was a repeating wave of fish monsters and clones. It was a true grindfest meant for the system holder to gather enough spirit points.

‘Zhi said that they are getting slower with the counter-attacks, this grind spot will probably dry out soon enough...’

It was clear to him that this world didn’t possess infinite resources. The northern Cerulean Empire could have been set up as a spirit point farm but it probably had its limits. Perhaps if he allowed them to invade their lands to get some resources back it would last for longer but that was not something he would do.

The Cerulean Empress might start making new moves if she starts running out of soldiers but that also wasn’t set in stone. She was strangely passive when it came to showing herself, instead only cloned generals and troops made up of sea creatures appeared. It wouldn’t be strange if after these armies all fell she would actually not appear. Perhaps she was a stationary boss that never moved from their initial base. The defenses would probably be quite hard to get through but it also gave Zhang Dong enough time to clear out the eastern side first.

“Well then, I should check up on my other friends.”

After taking flight he started moving towards a ship that looked like a floating Spanish galleon. It was much bigger than the counterpart from his world and had a knightly crest of a lion on its sails. Even though it was larger than most galleons, its size was only a fifth of the flagship he just left. The owner of this ship spotted him floating towards and didn't even offer up a smile to greet him.

“Zhang Dong.”

“Lucius”

It was a flying vessel from the magical kingdom, the knights that were gathered there didn't appreciate the way he didn't speak out Lucius' noble title but couldn't really say anything about it. If a fight broke loose they knew that Zhang Dong would probably be victorious or at least that their victory would be a hard-fought one.

“How long will this take?”

“I'm not sure, if we are lucky we might be able to drive them back after that Prince is gone.”

“What if we are not?”

“Then... I'm not sure either but it would be better if their Emperor is kept from entering this side, then I'll just have my troops block off the bridge and it will be done... hey stop looking at me like that, you'll get your shield after, I made you an oath and I'm going to keep it.”

“Hmph...”

“You're such a tsundere...”

“What?”

“Nothing.”

There wasn't much he came here to say and spending more time would only annoy the Duke even more. After relaying the plan of pushing towards the eastern side their meeting was concluded and the war was resumed. The following few days were quite boring as the enemy forces were on a path of retreat.

‘That guy is trying to send a message...’

It wasn't long until they arrived at the first big settlement or at least what was left of it. One of the large cities that previously contained millions of people was not burning before them. It was one of the war tactics used, burning everything so the enemy couldn't gain back their lost resources and lands. Everything was being destroyed by the retreating forces and Zhang Dong was unable to arrive in time to help.

This was the first time he was in these lands and splitting away from the forces was not a good idea. It wouldn't be strange if his new enemy was a crafty one, doing such things was meant to anger his side. People from the Heavenly Crane Sect were enraged at the loss of life but he wasn't sure if they were more concerned that this made them look bad. If cities under their name were eradicated from existence together with the people living there, then would put them in a bad light.

There was nothing there, the only thing in the air was a large amount of residue energy from Qi. Massive amounts of it were just shot everywhere but it seemed that life did find a way as hidden beneath rubble and sand there were some survivors. Perhaps this was done on purpose or just showed that they didn't have enough time for everything while evacuating.

'I can't just leave them to die...'

Zhang Dong had charged in front of the rest of the army and acted like a scout. His morals wouldn't allow him to abandon these people but this would slow their approach. Perhaps their enemy was counting on this. Even as he was using his spiritual energy to raise up the rubble and pull out injured people he was looking around for an ambush. When scanning the area he could see small pockets of people trapped underground, some were in the process of drawing their last breath.

'I can't do this alone...'

The city they were in was huge, ten million citizens had lived here before and now only a few thousand were scattered everywhere. The Emerald Phoenix Empire or in this case the Prince Cuilu Kong, didn't seem to have a conscience. To allow this much carnage and wanton destruction to occur a certain idea had to have taken over his mind. He must have seen himself as someone superior, as a god among humans to be okay with such atrocities.

Perhaps he was even worse than Wang Long, who convinced himself that the people living in this world were NPCs and not actual intelligent beings. He was someone that lived in this world for long enough to know better. This only made him angrier at the part that he played in all of this. Even though he knew that he didn't really have anything to do with their deaths, perhaps if he had taken things slower more people could have survived.

"What are you doing, do we really have time for this?"

"Lucius? Don't just stand there and tell your people to help me you know healing magic."

The whole army was stopped as they saw Zhang Dong's puppets flying around and taking injured people to the side. Lucius and his knights were the first to descend to ask about what he was doing. In their eyes, this was still a battleground and it was unwise to leave yourself open to an attack.

"You should leave this to your servants, this is no place for a leader."

"No place for a leader, huh? Want me to remain as some sort of radiant symbol that appears when the time is right or something? If you don't want to help then it's fine, continue with the chase, my puppets will still assist you and I can always get there when I'm needed"

The Duke nodded his head but to Zhang Dong's surprise instead of just leaving he actually called some of his men over. A bunch of knights wearing silver armor along with people that looked like servants started aiding the injured people. He did not expect them to actually listen to his proposal but more help was always welcome.

Time was being wasted but most of the army continued with their chase while he remained here to establish a teleportation gate. His own sect was mostly up in the north but that didn't mean that he couldn't activate some of his own medical staff. His sect was quite content in their healing and

regenerative arts. The medallion around his neck wasn't the only one they made and it would aid in evacuating everyone here.

After giving his people some orders he finally decided to join back with the main army that had actually encountered some resistance on the way. The small skirmishes were all won but there were far too many for them to not be a distraction. At strategic locations, they would be attacked and stalled for as long as humanly possible. Then the attackers would either flee or fight to the last man.

They would even perform a strange suicide art that left their bodies exploding like bombs, it was clear to him from that point that this Prince was stalling them. This became more apparent the further they advanced into the lands that the Heavenly Crane Sect once owned. There was nothing left for them to gain there besides more injured people that needed rescuing. What the Emerald Phoenix prince was up to still remained to be seen but it wouldn't be strange if he was waiting for some backup to arrive.

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'This isn't as easy as I expected, they decided to fortify themselves here...'

Zhang Dong looked at the volleys of spiritual cannon fire going back and forth between the two armies. One was composed mostly of flying ships and attacking formations while the other was a fortress. This time around he was the one performing the siege while the people from the Emerald Phoenix Empire were on the defensive.

"Everything is going according to our plan, Golden Dragon, we should be able to crush them in but a few months!"

"A few months, huh?"

"Yes!"

He looked towards Leader Shen and the other big wigs from the Heavenly Crane Sect. More of them had appeared, bringing the number up to six of the leaders being there. It seemed that they were becoming more and more convinced of their victory. The invaders that murdered their people were on the retreat and they were even able to capture some of them to gain more resources.

"I hope you are right Sun Shen."

"Is there something troubling you, honorable Golden Dragon?"

"I'm not sure yet, I'll let you know if I find some proof, for now, remain vigilant."

"We will."

The elders clasped their hands at him while he decided to fly over to his own army of puppets that had managed to be expanded in scope. Even though the enemy combatants went through the trouble of destroying everything, metals and materials for his factory couldn't be damaged that easily. Whatever he could use to create more of these automatons to help the refugees were taken in. Even though he had to make weaker medical units they weren't meant for combat and allowed him to resume the offensive.

While they were starting to win he couldn't help but think that there was something wrong. They went through some reinforced cities and even came across Saint Emperor generals. Usually, a commander would not throw away their troops so wantonly. He expected to be stalled by a skeletal army with maybe a few treasured items to back them up. Instead they were fighting full regiments not much weaker than the one the Princess arrived with.

'There could be an easy explanation for this but usually, they don't catch on this fast...'

There was one main reason that they were able to continue to push back into the eastern regions and that reason was called Zhang Dong. Without him around the Heavenly Crane Sect would be quite equal to the other troops composed of Saint Emperor, Martial Saints, and Supreme Saints. He always went for the strongest fighter in the group while everyone else had an easy time against weaker opponents.

Normally people like the Prince would gather all their forces in an attempt to drive him back. At that moment he would let his allies stall the others while he contended with their leader and some of their most powerful aids. He always took out the heads of the hydra and left the rotting body to his allies. Now on the other hand they were slowly cutting off the heads one by one. This probably left the main body some time to regenerate its head with perhaps an even stronger one.

'Is this guy actually wise enough to see that he wouldn't be able to beat me in a fair battle or even in one skewed in his direction? This does require some knowledge or he might be scheming something else...'

After capturing the Princess he had some idea about what kind of a man this Prince was. From her point of view, he was a schemer but he could also be something else, a coward. The two didn't exclude each other and it was possible that after the easy defeat of the sister, the prince decided that the juice was not worth the squeeze. He was an old monster at the ripe age of half a millennium. Perhaps he was dead set on living out the second half of it and facing Zhang Dong would not be the brightest idea.

'Asking for reinforcements would be the smart choice but these cultivator types usually try not to do anything that would make them look weak...'

His expectation was for the Prince to not call for the Emperor's help. It would make him look like a weakling that could not do anything without his parent around. This move would however be the correct one if he measured Zhang Dong's power to be at the same level as their emperor. He would certainly not be able to win in a direct confrontation thus these stalling tactics were probably meant for this.

'Shit... it would be nice if I didn't have to face any more of those guys and he might not even be the one that I need to watch out for.'

Perhaps the Emerald Phoenix Emperor was not as strong as the Demi-Human Emperor but there was a difference between the two, one of them had a more organized army. Zhang Dong felt that even if this leader were to perish or run he would still have a fully functional army to contend with here. They were made up of other cultivators from many smaller sects, it wouldn't be strange for them to scatter or join the Prince faction to spread chaos through the lands.

He was not sure if he did the right thing now. Perhaps if he had gone with a more quiet approach things wouldn't be escalating this fast. His assumption of the cultivator's hubris working against them was

probably wrong. With them running back to their fortress things would become a lot harder. At least when he was fighting the demi-human's their numbers were quite low and concentrated. They might have been the weakest of all the enemies he was to face with the exception of Lucius and his people.

This didn't mean that he did the wrong thing. If the plan was altered then more of the Heavenly Crane Sect cities would have been captured in the time he took in investigating the eastern region. It would take time for him to sneak up and prepare the teleportation gate for his own forces to arrive. With how the northern region was becoming harder to predict the more time he spent the more lives would be lost.

'Should I toss out safety and go for it? How many troops did they leave to keep us here and when will their reinforcements arrive?'

Time was running out, the longer this war continued the more likely it was for the last boss to arrive. There were two options that he had, either he continued at this pace and slowly helped the Heavenly Crane Sect to push back their defense line. His power was still limited, there was no way of him just charging there and defeating everyone by himself. If that was possible then he wouldn't have had to seek help from Lucius and the Heavenly Crane Sect.

'If I fail, it will be over for everyone involved...'

He could only grit his teeth and set out into the battlefield. Instead of doing a maddened push by himself, he decided to keep with the current slow and steady approach. Even if the Emerald Phoenix Emperor arrived it wouldn't pose a problem to him, that was what he truly believed. The Prince that decided to retreat was probably still underestimating his power or had another plan in motion that he couldn't entirely dismiss.

...

"So these are the promised lands?"

"Yes, my Emperor!"

"The spiritual energy is indeed refreshing but besides that, it's a shit hole of nothing... were my stupid son and daughter really that inept?"

"Y-yes, my Emperor!"

An awkward silence filled the large room where a bunch of Saint Emperors were standing around. In the middle, there was a giant throne veiled in mystery. A figure of a somewhat thin man was radiating a greenish light while he was talking but his form could not be seen by anyone in this huge chamber. In front of the throne was a giant window through which everyone could see the massive lands before them.

"Can someone give me an answer, why do I the Emerald Phoenix Emperor have to be dragged here to clean up after those two brats? Did I not give them enough? Were their masters inept at teaching? The pills and elixirs that they devoured cost a fortune and this is all that they amount to!"

A surge of ferocious Qi filled the entire chamber. The Saint Emperors that could easily be masters of their own large-scale sects fell to their knees. Their hands started clutching at their hearts which were

close to bursting out of their chests. Their Emperor was enraged and they could not muster up even one word when under this much pressure.

"I have paved the path for those ungrateful brats, bring them over now, where is my useless son now?"

"P... please E-emperor..."

Even though the people wanted to reply they could not. The magnificent window that was presenting the lush forests and mountains outside started cracking before finally bursting into millions of tiny pieces. What should have been able to last through an assault from Saint Emperors could not resist the angered man's aura.

"Hoh... I might have lost myself a bit there, Ho ho ho... I've become irritable in my old years, this is unbecoming of an Emperor."

Soon the anger turned into laughing which made the Phoenix Emperor Sound like a jolly old man. No one besides him was laughing though, they were only glad that they weren't getting squished into the ground anymore by their enraged leader that had been losing it due to his advanced age. They knew that he had already reached an age that shouldn't normally be possible but no one was certain how.

"Now then, where is my son? You there, answer me!"

"Yes my Emperor, The Prince is already waiting for you at the nearby palace, it had been created in the image of the capital..."

"Ah, yes... it does look like that shitty palace... quite the eyesore it is, so wasteful, maybe if he invested that in the army he wouldn't have failed..."

"Yes, Emperor..."

A scared Saint Emperor general continued to nod while hoping that his life was spared. Neither the Emperor nor his son was simple and most people considered both to be worse than the other. They could only show fake smiles and continue with the charade while the old man went on another rant about his useless children. The Emperor was finally here and everyone knew that things would become difficult for anyone that opposed him.

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'I was too slow...'

Zhang Dong had to stop his push into the enemy defensive line to take a look at his map. There he saw a large red dot appearing right at the edge of the empire. It was coming right out of the bridge between worlds and belonged to the person he hoped to avoid. The map detected Qi signatures in the whole empire and this one was the largest he had seen.

'I couldn't see Wang Long's Qi on the map so this doesn't have to mean that this guy is stronger but it might not be an easy fight.'

It was certainly true that when he compared this area it was radiating more power than the Demi-Human Emperor did. It wasn't certain that all this spiritual energy was just coming from the Emerald Phoenix Emperor. It was possible that there were a lot of powerful experts around him or that some

beasts were there. Perhaps he was in possession of a powerful treasure that didn't necessarily have to have battle use, just like the immortal-level dimensional regalia he came in contact with.

'I guess there is no use to rush now, I should have a talk with my allies about this and prepare for the last battle.'

Zhang Dong had no time to mope about his first plan going up in flames. Perhaps if he pushed it hard into the eastern region while ignoring all the destruction it would have been possible. Though, when he considered the time it took for the Emperor to arrive, it made it seem that he wouldn't make it anyway. The Prince had decided to retreat quite fast which would force him to face more than he wanted.

'They lost a lot of troops during the escape, it wouldn't be strange if that little prince sacrificed more than half of his troops for this stunt. Is he that much of a coward or is he planning something?'

Without meeting with the man he couldn't really make a good assessment of his character. His sister was transported into his own sect and was stripped of her cultivation level. After it became clear that she could not really be used as a bargaining chip, there was no use keeping her as a potential threat. Without her power, she would not live for that much longer. Her age was rapidly increasing and it was clear that her beauty was artificially kept up with some beauty elixirs.

It was quite disheartening to see a sister be abandoned by her brother but Zhang Dong wasn't sure if the siblings had been corrupted by their circumstances. Their father was the leader of the whole empire and in their childhood, they had been fed information in a peculiar way. They never interacted with each other and were considered to be special. Maybe it was not that somewhere along the way they became monsters but had been brought up as ones from the start. He could only see this as a warning and not have his children follow suit.

"Honorable Golden Dragon."

"Patriarch Guan, it's good to see you and the guardians too."

"Yes, we couldn't leave all the glory to you, these are our lands and we will recapture them."

Zhang Dong smiled after seeing Tao Guan. The Patriarch had finally decided to move on his own accord. In the Heavenly Crane Sect's eyes, victory was right around the corner. They had managed to push all of the enemy forces back toward a small region. Before them was the citadel in which they would receive their rewards.

'It would be nice if they did this for something else than just fame and fortune, still this is better than not having any help.'

He didn't fool himself into believing that these people were doing all of this out of the goodness of their hearts. It was also clear that their perception of his motives was the same. It wouldn't be strange if, after the final battle, they would actually betray him in some sense. If he was at death's door they might even be inclined to present him with the last hit. They would just have to explain to his brother that he died during the confrontation with the Emerald Phoenix Emperor and died as a hero protecting the lands.

Things like this were quite common in the cultivation world. Every alliance was razor thin and whenever a side was on top they could change the details of their contract. No one could be trusted in this world

and this was a reality he had to accept for now. The other side was probably thinking the same, if they were weakened then they would be up for the taking by Zhang Dong and his sect.

“Haha, that’s good to hear, the enemy will surely be close to breaking apart.”

“Yes but their fortifications aren’t simple, we haven’t been able to continue at our usual pace. The ships are continuously firing but those shields aren’t going down.”

“You are right, Patriarch Guan. But as long as we get those down we should be able to surround their main base, after it falls it should be over.”

“That is true but I need to ask you, are you confident?”

“Confident in defeating their Emperor?”

“Yes...”

“It shouldn’t be a problem.”

Zhang Dong shrugged while playing it off as child’s play. He needed to remain confident and not show that there was even a possibility of defeat. These people from the Heavenly Crane Sect were very skittish. If they were even ten percent uncertain of their victory they would instantly pull out their troops. It wouldn’t be strange if they even abandoned him during the final battle if they saw no way out of it. Luckily for him, after so many victories they were convinced that he was at the level of the Azure Emperor.

“Glad to hear that, I will join my sect members now, if you wish to discuss something...”

“Sure, I’ll let you know, first let us just get through this protective shielding without wasting too many resources.”

Both Tao Guan and Zhang Dong parted ways. He could see the two guardians looking at him funny as if they wanted a rematch. The enemy had set up strange tower-shaped markers that produced a huge protective shield that went up into the stratosphere. Usually, a barrier was in the shape of a dome but this one just went straight up.

In this world, there was some type of force that didn’t allow even a nascent soul master to go past a certain threshold. Besides spiritual energy thinking out the higher a person flew, there was no air and some kind of strange pulling force that wouldn’t allow a cultivator to leave.

From Zhang Dong’s perspective, it was a safeguard put in by whoever made this planet. It didn’t allow anyone to see it from a high enough vantage point to spot the other empires. If they could leave the atmosphere of the planet it would also be possible to circumvent the bridges between the various empires. It wouldn’t be strange if only a being at the immortal level would be able to break through these shackles.

‘At this point, I wouldn’t even be surprised if we weren’t on a planet but in some kind of huge fake dimension...’

While looking at his replica medallion he was reminded of the huge space in the original. The area in that one was almost as big as the planet he came from but it was not round in shape. It was just a

massive chunk of land floating in nothingness and it continued to increase in size with more energy being fed into it.

This could be the same for this world, with the only difference being the scale. If a being of power wanted to make a new world it could conserve energy in this fashion. Otherwise, there would be a need to create a solar system with a working star and other planets around it. If they just put everything on a floating island and divided it with some magical barriers, it would save a lot of resources.

It was not possible to scale these walls as they were out of reach of anyone. The triangle-shaped monoliths looked like they were actually not transported here. Instead, it seemed that they rose out of the ground as if they had been placed here beforehand.

‘Could it be a safe zone established for them to make this last longer?’

This shield was quite sturdy and it was possible to rip a hole for a moment to get through. If a person wanted to have a whole army to travel through it complicated things. When looking at this forcefield it made it seem like it was meant to keep armies out but let strong cultivators through. It would be certainly possible for him to power through it in one quick burst of energy but it would be draining.

At the moment he wanted to conserve his power for the Emerald Phoenix Emperor. Pushing in through the front door by himself was now off the table. This time around sneaking in to place some traps and maybe encountering the prince and princess would have been the better option. As it stood now, he had activated the last boss of this questline and he would have to take care of it the hard way.

‘How does it look back there?’

‘Patriarch, as you ordered we have pulled our troops back after the last wave of enemy troops has been defeated.’

‘Good, if they appear again, let them push in a bit while you conserve your strength, have the palace move back towards the mainland, and wait.’

‘Yes Patriarch but how will we make it in time?’

Zhang Zhi asked while being a bit confused. Zhang Dong had ordered everyone to stand down and get ready for a potential attack in the eastern region. The only problem was that if they wanted to get the Golden Dong Palace there, it would take several weeks as it was not a very mobile fortress. Due to the focus on being a defensive bastion, it wasn’t very good when it came to speed.

‘Oh, don’t worry about it, remember how we got it during the Wang Long pursuit?’

‘Yes!’

‘It took some time but I made my preparation, so just be ready to fight some cultivators, have the troops look through the battle records.’

‘Yes, Patriarch!’

During his travels, he was sure to have the puppets record all of the battles they had. With the data, he could have his soldiers ready for when the time came. His main plan was to take care of it with the help of the Heavenly Crane Sect but it wouldn’t be wrong to have a backup plan when things went sour...

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'It's really strange that they don't seem to be interested in any of my recent moves...'

Zhang Dong looked at the huge army and flying ships that were almost through the protective shielding. He could see one of the pointy towers generating it starting to crack. At the moment he wasn't thinking about the Emerald Phoenix Emperor that had probably arrived but his counterpart the Azure Emperor. Ever since his encounter with his wife, there had been radio silence.

Even when he continued to push to the north and then to the south no one from the Long Clan came to complain. It was as if they checked out of this war between nations or that they were busy with something else.

'Could they be preparing to swoop in and take out the victor? That's not a bad strategy but would they attack my sect with no warning?'

The Long Clan and their leader could not be just ignored. Zhang Dong was pushing hard into the eastern front because he wanted to finish everything before more people were hurt. It would have been quite easy to just rest his forces and bunker up in the western region.

The demi-human scourge had been defeated and without a new Emperor, they would be busy with their own politics now. Unless a strong leader appeared he didn't feel like they would muster enough forces to attempt a crossing through the bridge. Going against someone that managed to defeat their undefeated leader was not the smartest idea.

Hundred years was a lot for someone that spent his life in the modern world. Even though Zhang Dong had achieved a lifespan of a thousand years he had not really partaken in this longevity. His time in this world didn't even go over ten years. To him waiting for so long was quite a bit and the number of people that would die if he didn't act kept him up at night.

It was the right thing to do but maybe not the best thing if he considered his own people that had already gone through a lot of hardship. As he was looking at the bursts of spiritual energy colliding with the shield he kept thinking about it all. Was it right to endanger the people that believed in him? Why should they be forced by him to partake in this fight that they could avoid?

As it stood he believed that even if the Emerald Phoenix Emperor continued he would probably not be well-equipped to take on the western lands. While the Heavenly Crane Sect would probably fall they would take some time to dominate their lands before probably pushing toward the center where the Long Clan was.

Perhaps the Azure Emperor would not be able to defend himself alone but at that moment he could lend him some help. Apparently, they had some kind of super weapon that the two dragons could operate together. It might be enough to defeat their forces and clear everything up without the western region even getting involved.

If he considered himself as the Western Emperor then perhaps he would be inclined to do that but the Empire was much larger. As it stood now, some people actually liked him more than the previous Emperor that had done nothing to aid anyone. It was not the Azure Dragon that was liberating the lands

but the Golden Dragon. Some even started whispering of a new Golden Emperor arising if the war in the east was won by him.

He was not deaf to these rumors and they somewhat made sense. If Zhang Dong managed to help the Heavenly Crane Sect win this war, then from people looking from the outside, they would be considered sworn allies. The scale would be tipped in favor of the United Element's Sect as it was already part of the big three.

The Soaring Dragon Sect that had previously been in that position could never find common ground with the Heavenly Crane Sect to go against the Azure Emperor. People believed that if two factions decided to work together with each other, then even the Azure Emperor would not be able to stop them. Thus it would be strange if the Long Clan was part of that side and didn't try to somehow intervene, that is if the overseer didn't exist.

It was possible that the Empress was somehow keeping everyone from acting. If she was there to keep the scenario running it made somewhat sense. The Long Clan felt like they were allies meant for anyone with the system. They safeguarded the Golden Dong Palace for him and perhaps were never meant to be a roadblock for him. They were very passive in keeping to themselves in the center of the empire and had some sort of way of preserving themselves even if the whole palace was overrun.

'There is one way of lasting out without people being able to reach you...'

Zhang Dong looked up into the sky where the large barrier was flickering. It was close to breaking and he needed to push his thoughts back and get ready. The map that he acquired from the Long Clan continued to give him a strategic advantage. They already knew that the Emerald Phoenix Emperor remained stationary due to the large red dot remaining close to the bridge.

"The defensive barrier is wavering, concentrate on the large monoliths and take them under our control"

He could hear leader Zhong Shouting at his people as it was time to battle once more. The barrier was quite powerful due to one reason, it didn't allow the defenders to go through it either. Usually, the Qi signature was aligned with the cannons on the side of the defenders. This weakened the barrier structure slightly and made it less powerful. This one on the other hand had just one purpose and that was to be a defensive stopping point.

Finally, after it was about to flicker out of existence the enemy troops started firing back. Many cultivators were gathered at the giant spires in hopes of repairing them. It would be a fight for time, could they destroy the barrier mechanism or would they be pushed back by the other army?

"They really have the manpower on their side, didn't expect them to have this many soldiers and masters left behind... if they gathered all of them at the start..."

It was strange to see this many enemy soldiers still left. They just kept coming like there was no end to them. He had seen a red fog moving from their main base on the map to bolster the defenses. They had been on standby and now after the field of spiritual energy was broken, they started fighting back.

"They must have not expected us to drive them back this fast, it seems natural considering the lower regions not having the best defenses."

“Mhm.”

Sun Shen was with him and the two were floating in the air close to some of the battleships that were moving in. It seemed that these forces were part of the Prince's entourage. It would make sense that when the Emperor arrived with the true army they would have been discarded to act as a wedge to keep Zhang Dong busy.

“I'll join with the troop, I can sense some strong masters among them.”

“Strong masters? Could that cowardly prince be among them?”

“I don't think so, he might have retreated to his fathers side.”

“For a future emperor, that man is quite gutless.”

“Perhaps he is but I wouldn't be surprised if he wasn't planning something, his sister wasn't weak, it would be better if we didn't underestimate him when the time comes.”

“As always the honorable golden dragon gives wise advice.”

Sun Shen clasped his hands and the two parted ways. Zhang Dong joined his army of angelic puppets that acted as the main attacking force and the faction leader from the Heavenly Crane Sect ordered his forces to push after them. The lifeless automatons were perfect at taking the initial hits and even if they were damaged after gathering all the scrap metal from the surroundings, it was easy to repair them.

Thus their push continued, and the large defensive structures were quickly swarmed by the metallic angels. The soldiers stationed there did their utmost at defending but without the help of their powerful masters that were being kept busy by Zhang Dong, they were not able to defend their position.

After one of the monoliths fell under their control it was finally safe to have their flying armies push in. Soon enough the second one was also secured and the path was clear. Their troops received some minor damage here and there but their progress could not be stopped, certainly not while Zhang Dong was there to tower over everyone.

With his aura spread in all directions and their strongest masters incapable of beating him, victory was assured from the start. It was a truth in this world led by the minority of powerful cultivators, one person could decide the faith of many.

‘They really don't have any intention of surrendering, their fear of the Emperor must be tremendous...’

A common sight was before him, even when he shouted out that they could be spared no one reacted. The mangled troops that were being showered in spiritual energy were unwilling to back off. It was as if they had a sword at their throat that would slide their necks open if they dared to back off.

After spending some time out on the battlefield and comparing it to the way his own sect members looked, he knew that this was different. His people had a sort of passion in their looks, even when he wasn't there they were fighting not with desperation but with hope in their eyes. There was no hope in these people's gazes though, it was just desperation.

‘The interrogations confirmed this already but seeing this so close... I need to end this fast and not only for my people's safety but also for theirs...’

This desperation could only arise due to bad leadership. He already knew that these people were terrified of the Emperor and what he would do to them and their families. In one way or another the soldiers were coerced into abiding, they would either lose their life if they failed or their families would be in jeopardy. To end this cycle of carnage he would need to push forth towards his confrontation with the Emperor.

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“You are a disappointment.”

“Forgive me, father, I...”

“I didn’t allow you to speak. So, pathetic, you left your sister to die and retreated by yourself. This might have been the best choice considering what you were against but you should have been able ”

“Y-yes...”

In a large throne room surrounded by many guards that were all experts at Saint Emperor level a sound echoed. The Emerald Phoenix Emperor’s old palm connected with the Prince’s face while he was kneeling down. No one dared to utter a word while seeing this exchange between probably the two most influential people in their empire.

Now that the Princess was gone, Cuilu Kong had become the prime candidate for the throne. Everyone knew that the Emerald Phoenix Emperor was in the twilight days of his life. Regretfully for his son, this secret space had opened up in their lifetime and the order came to put his life on the line for victory. The prince was known for not taking any risks, and when he encountered someone who could defeat his sister in single combat, he decided to run.

While Cuilu Kong was the crown prince it didn’t mean that he was the only one that could take on that role. Other branch families and even the Prince’s own children could fill out that role if he lost his life here. The Emerald Phoenix Emperor had no siblings left; after taking the throne, he promptly dealt with any opposition. Everyone was at least certain that the whole empire would become really busy after his demise and that the rivers would flow with blood.

People were getting ready for a war, the factions had already been formed and this venture that appeared only once every hundred thousand years was also calculated. Many young emperors had perished inside it but some were also victorious. The current line of nobility had survived ever since they had been victorious and brought back various resources. Cultivating in this domain was known to boost spiritual energy to an extreme. Even the Emerald Phoenix Emperor looked a bit more lively. In the past, he would probably have someone else strike his son but after arriving here he was becoming active again.

“Now... I can feel that someone strong is approaching... but this place... it truly is fascinating, I feel a hundred years younger, I must absorb more of this spiritual energy!”

The old man that usually kept his face hidden started standing up from his throne. His visage was revealed once again to everyone, even though he was moving and saying that he felt invigorated, his appearance was less than stellar. He was nothing more than a lanky bag of bones with a long white

beard and lack of hair. Only thanks to his large hat and long robes was he able to hide most of his weak features.

However, there was some kind of change, with a wave of his hand the huge glass window that was in front of them shattered into many tiny pieces. The old man that looked like a corpse flew up into the sky, the long emerald phoenix pattern on his robe continued to flutter in the wind while everyone watched. They weren't sure what he was doing but soon they realized as the amount of Qi in the vicinity started to drop.

They were all experienced cultivators and could feel all the energy rushing in the direction of their leader. He was eating it all up, all of what was in the air in a radius of several kilometers around them was being sucked up by the emperor. The Qi turned into tiny balls of pale light which started turning green when they appeared next to the old Emperor's body.

"More... I need more... bring me all of those herbs and pills, I need more!"

His voice which was normally quite silent started booming through the entire fortress. People started scrambling almost instantly to the warehouses where they had stored all of the spiritual herbs and pills they stole from the natives. Even before bringing them over all of these items started floating up as they were drawn into the small black hole the Emerald Phoenix Emperor was producing.

People started dropping down to their knees soon after. While the energy was being sucked up by their Emperor it still was there. Soon the concentration was making it hard for them to breathe as their leader didn't do anything to protect them. Only thanks to all the generals that were present were the lesser cultivators able to survive through this ordeal.

"Hah... if I knew it was like this, I would have never told my useless son and daughter to come here."

Soon the sound of the Emperor's laugh was heard by everyone. The ones that glanced up were greeted by a green glow. This aura of spiritual excellence was brought forth by a flame that was gently spinning around the man's frame. Muscles and a healthy complexion replaced the previously lanky appearance. This man that looked like he would die when hit by a breeze now looked mighty and ready for any challenge.

"Hm..."

Yet after getting a good laugh the Emperor calmed down, the energy that surrounded him started to thin out once more. It was as if he had a problem in containing all this might and of this, he was aware. Without saying anything the radiant emerald glow died down and he descended down to the ground.

Even though he was now containing the new gained power inside of his body, the experts that were around here knew that it was only a temporary boost. All of them had gone through a similar intoxication with their newfound energy but it also had its limits. In the case of the old emperor, it wouldn't last as long due to his advanced age. There was no way of beating time, nevertheless he had gained some by coming here and his old power had been restored. With their leader in such a state there was no reason to believe that their enemies would be able to defeat them.

"Unwelcome guests are coming... one of them... how interesting..."

After mumbling some words to himself the old emperor returned to his previous throne room. It was time to face his new opponent which had appeared before him. The other generals and masters knew this well, their enemies were done taking care of the remnants of Cuilu Kong's forces. They would soon appear here to lay siege to their fortress but with the Emerald Phoenix Emperor being here, they knew that their enemies stood no chance.

People started cheering at the display of power, after weeks of nothing but losses they knew that victory was at their fingertips. Not everyone was glad, there was one person that wasn't looking at the Emperor with reverence but with disgust. His face was somewhat similar to the man that had regained some of his lost youth.

"Engorge yourself in this moment of glory, it will be short-lived..."

Soon he vanished into the shadows without anyone being the wiser. With so much happening around them and the enemy army quickly approaching there was just no time for anyone to pay attention. Soon the gong resounded through the encampment and the huge flying fortress that the Emerald Phoenix Emperor arrived in started moving, it was time to show why this Emperor had managed to place a whole empire under his boot.

...

'What is happening there, looks like the red fog is getting sucked into that middle dot... and it's growing in size?'

Zhang Dong had previously identified the Emerald Phoenix Emperor as the big red dot on the map. Now it was gradually increasing in size while the other smaller red symbols started getting smaller.

'Is he absorbing the spiritual energy around him? These guys do get a power boost when coming to this side...'

He remembered that just by stepping foot into the Azure Empire it was possible for the people from the other one to get a power boost. This was another chance that he probably lost, if he moved faster then perhaps he could have battled the Emerald Phoenix Emperor while he was in his incomplete state. Now his power had risen further and perhaps could even rival his own. Even when being still far away from their base he could feel a powerful being in the distance and he was sure that he had been spotted by that person.

'Hope this Emerald Phoenix Emperor likes duels, if I have to fight him and multiple Saint Emperors it might go badly... but not like I'm alone and there is always that option that I can activate.'

It was getting close to the last showdown, the enemy was at their base which would make it more favorable for them. He was at the helm of the attacking army with his angelic automatons, on the left were the Heavenly Crane Sect forces, and on the other Lucius with the golden knight squadron. His new allies had actually committed quite a lot of resources to this and had already gained a lot of rewards along the way.

Regretfully there weren't that many reinforcements along the way. The Emerald Phoenix Empire forces were quite diligent in murdering any cultivators from the Azure Dragon Empire. There were no prisoners to liberate along the way, only injured women and children that were left behind as servants.

This didn't mean that they didn't garner any help from others. When word started reaching that the invaders were being eradicated many sell swords decided to join. It wasn't anything new for people to join the winning side, it was an obvious choice to the cultivators living in this world. They weren't all that strong but they did offer some help and also could bolster their defensive or attacking formations with their spiritual energy.

"Hoh, so they do have one of those... I might have to get my bastion over here a lot faster than I expected..."

Zhang Dong and his forces started slowing down as the enemy fortress appeared before them. While there were some defensive structures down on the ground along with defensive towers this was not what he was looking at. Up in the air was a massive flying structure that was even larger than his own Golden Dong Palace. It was truly massive and produced a massive shadow over the land it was hovering over.

"Everyone, stop!"

His words echoed through the whole army which instantly reacted. It was time for a quick talk between leaders. Naturally, he didn't believe that this could be talked through but if even a minuscule chance existed, then he had to try.

"Emerald Phoenix Emperor, I am Long Dong, the Golden Dragon, I wish to have an audience with you!"

"Hah, so you are the brat that drove my useless son back... interesting..."

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The sky started rumbling as black clouds filled with rainwater appeared. All attention was towards two people, on one side it was a man clad in a white battle robe and radiating golden energy. On the other, an old man was surrounded by a haze of emerald flames that made him look like he was on fire. The old man was at an advanced age but for some reason had managed to regain some of his youthful demeanor. Instead of looking like a corpse he had reverted to an appearance of a seventy-year-old.

'He is strong but... I don't think this guy has the stamina for this fight, I can use this to my advantage.'

Zhang Dong was of course the one clad in golden energy. He could feel that his opponent was facing him on borrowed time. Perhaps he had made a mistake by not pushing in harder before the Emerald Phoenix Emperor achieved his power boost. The Qi his current opponent was radiating was truly tremendous, it was certainly not below his own and this was probably only the tip of the iceberg. However when focusing really hard he could feel that there was something off, the bountiful spiritual energy was decreasing with each passing moment.

No one besides Zhang Dong could probably tell this but the Emerald Phoenix Emperor was slowly running out of juice. He was like a bright candle shining the most before it was burned out. The deterioration process was very minuscule but it was there. This made him believe that if he managed to stall and get his opponent to perform large attacks he would eventually gas himself out. A defensive strategy was his best bet of winning this as the power the old man was emanating was perhaps even above Wang Longs when they fought.

“So you are the Emerald Phoenix Emperor? I can see why they would fear you but... that title is a bit bothersome, do you perhaps have a name to go along with it?”

“You dare talk to me in such a fashion?”

“Why wouldn’t I, old man? If you’re not willing to give me a name, I’ll just call you ... how does, old fart sound? Oh, judging by that vein on your forehead it’s not to your liking? Would, Old farty emperor be better then? You know, cos farts are green and you are the Emerald Emperor and stuff...”

“Y-you...”

Zhang Dong’s first tactic was easy, it was always better to make an opponent mad at him. In a fight between cultivators, focus was something that needed to be kept. Charging in with fist swinging and Qi blasts firing was a good way of getting killed. Normally people expected old monsters like the Emerald Phoenix Emperor to be more stoic but the reality was mostly different.

They usually came from a long family line that was used to looking down on others. They expected everyone to bow down their heads when they appeared and be on their best behavior. Thus when they were against someone that offered them nothing else than ridicule, they didn’t know how to react.

“Me? Farty pants gramps, are you feeling okay? Maybe we should get you an adult-sized diaper, you are looking rather pale...”

“How dare you ridicule me, Cuilu Fenghuang, I am the Emerald Phoenix Emperor, I will rip out your spine and keep your head alive in a jar! You shall know my wrath for the reminder of your pathetic life!”

Everyone could sense the rage building up in the Emerald Phoenix Emperor as the whole place started being filled out with greenish flames. Even though Zhang Dong was only mocking him, the name of the old man was revealed to be Cuilu Fenghuang. However, that would just give Zhang Dong more ammunition to continue egging on.

“Was that so hard, Fartyhuang?”

“My name is Fenghuang! It’s going to be the last name you remember! I had enough! Attack!”

“You should watch your blood sugar gramps! Everyone, it’s time, attack with me!”

There were two sides to this fight and they were waiting silently for the two most powerful experts to finish talking. Both needed to shout their orders for the battle to truly commence. Finally, the large number of metallic puppets reacted to Zhang Dong’s call and was then followed by the Heavenly Crane Sect and the focus from the magical kingdom led by Lucius.

On the other side were the Emerald Phoenix Empire forces. Their fighting potential was quite similar to their opponents but they had more ground fortifications. Due to the retreat, they had lost a lot of their flying ships that were now even being used against them. Nevertheless, the whole place was brighter than a fireworks show.

Various colored spiritual energy blasts started flying around the whole place. Attacking formations that took the shape of dragons were quite prevalent on the Azure Empire side while ones that took the appearance of legendary birds on the other. The clash between the many powerful cultivators and

treasures started warping the space around this area. The ground could not sustain this mass of spiritual energy and it started to crack. The last battle had finally begun.

...

"For someone with such a foul mouth, can you only run?"

"But if I get too close to you, I'll get engulfed by those green farts!"

"You still dare mock my emerald flames?"

Zhang Dong continued to run his mouth at the old man that chased him up into the air. They moved far out of the range of the battle that was taking place just like he liked it. Without anyone around him, it was possible for him to let loose. When fighting around an army there was always a danger of his attacks killing some of his allies. Cuilu Fenghuang didn't seem like someone that would care about killing his own men, so angering him was the first step of getting him away from the battle.

This was of course noticed by some of the Saint Emperor generals from the Emerald Phoenix Empire army. Though they would remain unable to aid their great leader as Lucius along with Argus and some of the Heavenly Crane Sect masters were there to keep them busy. This was a strategy they agreed on before this whole attack even started. They would isolate Cuilu Fenghuang from the rest while Zhang Dong battled him alone.

'What's with this feeling, something seems to be off here... I'm not losing but this is a bit too easy...'

Zhang Dong wasn't sure what was happening but the victory was coming too easily. Everything was going according to his plan and he was managing to slowly drain his opponent of precious Qi. They had already clashed a few times and with every confrontation, the Emerald Phoenix Emperor was growing weaker. To keep up with the facade he also made sure to lower his own power level to his opponent. Through this and continued insults he was able to fool Cuilu Fenghuang into believing that he was actually keeping up during this confrontation.

The fight wasn't easy and there were a few instances in which he received real damage. The gash on his cheek was barely healing as his opponent actually had enough spiritual energy to make it hard for even Zhang Dong to heal. Even though it didn't take long to heal small wounds, during a confrontation like this which was taking place at high speeds, it could be the difference between life and death. It was better to let some of his blood to spill than to risk a bigger injury if he tried to apply his healing arts.

His enemy was using a large double glave and he was quite proficient with it. These invaders had a different cultivation method so he didn't need to worry about any unexpected soul beasts. Bahamut who could help him was aiding the army that was able to hold out for now. However even when his plan seemed to be working, there was something that was missing. Without any proof, he could only stall a bit more but the more he waited the harder it would be to win this confrontation.

He was trying to fool his enemy into making a big mistake. Only one was needed to turn this into a one-sided slog and he had offered up some wounds to gain this opportunity. Even though there was something bothering him, he could not confirm this bad premonition with anything substantial. Zhang Dong needed to trust his allies to keep any potential help from coming to the Emerald Phoenix Emperor.

'He is going for it... I must make it count.'

The time to strike back had come, after bouncing multiple techniques between each other the Emerald Phoenix Emperor raised his glove into the sky. There a massive phoenix composed of flames started to appear. It was some type of grand attack that took some time for him to generate. The time to counter would come after this, the moment their attacks collided with each other there would be a tiny timeframe for him to land a deadly attack. He had lowered his speed just for this moment and was hoping to catch the Emerald Phoenix Emperor off guard.

The emerald phoenix wasn't just formed, the man himself was being pulled into the massive bird of flames that was even larger than Bahamut his familiar. Even the heavens were being charred by it, the stormy clouds that were generated by Zhang Dong's Dao were forced back by the appearance of a strong wind. His current opponent was proficient in both winds and flames, with the two working together the flames could be enhanced even further.

Even though his body had reached a new realm it was still human at its base. He was not able to contain all of this heat which made him sweat. This attack if not dodged would really hurt, he wouldn't be surprised if his enhanced body that was as strong as a heavenly treasure wouldn't just melt outright. It was also a chance for victory as the moment his own spinning energy ball that was emulating a star collided with the emerald phoenix, it would be the time to strike.

This was at least what was supposed to happen but at the moment that the phoenix started forming something strange happened. A thin ray of black light shot forth from the large floating fortress the Emerald Phoenix Emperor had appeared from. The speed was tremendous and gave no time for anyone from his allies to react.

"I got you now you old bastard!"

"Huh?"

Zhang Dong called out in surprise as he heard the voice of the Emperor's son calling out. This wasn't the only baffling part as the beam that was almost at its target was not aimed for him but at the Emerald Phoenix Emperor instead...

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"What is that thing and why is it coming for the Emerald Phoenix Emperor and not me?"

Zhang Dong was holding a huge sphere of twirling energy above his head that he intended to throw at the man he was fighting. It was a critical moment between the two masters that were charging up some of their strongest attacks. His opponent was on the cusp of charging at him but right as he was about to go a strange black beam of light appeared.

It was traveling fast but it looked too thin to be able to pierce through that mass of emerald flames that were surrounding the old Emperor. He was transforming into a green phoenix of some sort, it wouldn't be strange if a person had to go through a more complicated process to kill him. A Phoenix was a bird of many legends, they were known to be immortal. It was the same in this world and the technique that Cuilu Fenghuang was using was similar to one that Zhang Dong knew about.

It was different in a few places but in theory, it shouldn't be different. From the outside, it would look like the person turning into the phoenix could be reborn as long as a tiny fraction of their flames

survived. Even if their main body was damaged as long as some of those flames existed then they would be able to come back to life. In reality, it involved soul energy and the practitioners becoming one with the flames on a spiritual level.

Unless a person performed attacks aimed at the soul it would be impossible to defeat such a foe. Against someone like Zhang Dong that was versed in soul arts and their energy it wouldn't be that difficult. He had expected Cuilu Fenghuang to go with a technique like this and was preparing to deliver a hit to his soul while the flames were in disarray. This would apparently not come to pass as when the black beam connected with the emerald bird, a change started to take place.

"Haha, you old fool, I waited hundreds of years for this moment!"

"Y-you... Kong, what do you think you are doing?"

"Hah, so now you remember my name father? All those years, do you think I wouldn't take my revenge on you? You have already lived too long, I shall become the new emperor."

"W-what do you think you are doing... t-the emerald flames, you are corrupting them with demonic magic? Who taught you this technique?"

"You don't need to know but today the Emerald Phoenix Empire dies and a new one shall be born, one that this Cuilu Kong shall rule as the Obsidian Phoenix Emperor!"

Zhang Dong was momentarily stunned by what was happening. After the ray of black connected with the green flames it was like a virus. It started taking apart the emerald light and corrupting it into a shadowy black. It took him a moment to realize that within the black beam existed a powerful soul, it was probably Cuilu Kong's very essence.

The son had used some type of demonic technique to strip himself of his own body. His energies were all concentrated into the beam which made it this fast. After colliding with the green flames a battle for supremacy between father and son took place. Fenghuang was already old and in his twilight years, the longer the battle took the quicker were his flames being doused.

By Zhang Dong's calculations, the old man wouldn't last more than a few years even less if he was forced to use his spiritual energy. It was the perfect time to make a move by the younger man that still had half a millenia left in the gas tank. The reason for this absorption process was certainly to achieve a power boost. Otherwise, Kong could have just waited the few years and taken the throne afterward. Perhaps the aim was to turn those flames black as the power level had actually spiked and his new opponent was perhaps even stronger than the original Emerald Phoenix Emperor.

'I need to stop this...'

The attack was already formed above his head so he decided to just throw it at the mass of green and black flames. With his own soul energy in the mix there was still hope of interrupting this procedure. Perhaps if he was lucky then he could deal with both father and son at the same time, if not then he would have a new enemy to contend with.

"No, I am the Emerald Phoenix..."

"I shall take what is rightfully mine you old stupid man, give all of it to me, I deserve it!"

“N—noooo...Arghh...”

Even as he was tossing the ball of condensed spiritual energy at the mass of flames he could only feel saddened. How could a son do such a thing to his own father, instead of killing each other they should have been fighting at each other's side. While the Prince wasn't as strong as his father, it was possible for him to cause some harm.

Both of them seemed to only garner negative feelings for each other, something he could not understand. How could a parent and his child grow so much apart that one of them wanted to kill them? Could this be something brought on by hundreds of years of living in a parent's shadow? Could Kong's state of mind have become eroded by people constantly comparing him to his superior father? The young man was probably one of the most powerful cultivators in their whole empire but this was apparently not enough.

Nevertheless, he could not just stay there and do nothing. His two enemies were battling each other within those soul flames and the black ones were winning. Even though the situation was quite drastic this was a good turn of events. Considering that he could now directly hit his opponent without him not being able to dodge.

The skies were lit up with green, black, and golden light. The people below them backed away to the sides as the spiritual energy produced was not something anyone below a nascent soul level could handle. Even those experts that were of lesser quality started to pass out in the middle of their own fights.

A giant hole in the sky appeared as all the clouds in the vicinity were pushed to the sides. A sunny day greeted the battlefield but right in the middle of that blue sky was a strange or of pitch-black light. The only person that could tell what was happening wasn't far away from it. To some, it looked like a black hole but to him, it was a swirling mass of black flames with only a few emerald ones still trying to hold on.

“Yes! I did it... I finally did it, I have become the new Emperor!”

Zhang Dong continued to float in his previous spot without approaching the spiral of flames that started to slowly form into the shape of a human. His new opponent looked different than the Green Emperor, he looked like a fusion of a crow and a person with wings made of pitch-black flames. His eyes were all red and he was radiating a massive amount of spiritual energy very similar to the Emerald Phoenix Emperors but at a more stable rate. At least when it came to energy, he would not be able to wear this new enemy down as easily.

“How could you kill your own father for something like power?”

“Huh? What is it to you, your fate is to be a stepping stone for this new Emperor.”

His legs had become a bird and his skin took on the color of obsidian. The current Cuilu Kong looked like some kind of beast that had attempted to become human but failed at it. It was clear that he was stronger but it wasn't to such a degree that he could ignore Zhang Dong's own might. Perhaps the son was watching the battle of his father. But his opponent was hiding part of his true power, in this moment of victory, he had misjudged his enemy to be a lot weaker than he actually was.

“Cuilu Kong is no more, now the Obsidian Phoenix... no I must discard that filthy title, I will become the Obsidian Crow that darkens out the lands, all shall know my might!”

His voice echoed through the whole battlefield causing people to bleed out of their eye sockets and also ears. Luckily for everyone, there was a person that could match this spiritual output. An aura of gold erupted from Zhang Dong that shielded his side of the battlefield but left the enemy generals to feel the burn.

“Is that so... are you finished? Old farty pants was already bad but you take the cake...”

“Heh, for someone that is about to die you like to talk, I must commend you for helping me take care of my stupid father, I could not have done it without you, and for this, I will offer you a painless death but if you resist I shall make it as painful as possible.”

“Hmm... that’s a very tempting offer but I think I’ll go with option three so... how about you surrender and call off your army, I’m sure they will listen to their new featherbrained emperor.”

“You dare mock this Emperor? I gave you a chance now you shall become the first one to die by my hands, you should feel honored!”

“I see... you actually haven’t noticed yet huh? Okay, then have at you crow boy let me see what you are made off!”

Zhang Dong smiled at Cuilu Kong in a mocking way. If people from outside compared their energy levels then they would probably give the Obsidian Crow the edge. However, he knew otherwise. There had been something that his opponent didn’t notice as he had been too busy fighting for supremacy with the old emperor. These sorts of demonic techniques always had a chance of failing and even more if they were tempered.

The clash between the two resounded in the air as all the fighting below ground had stopped. It was normal for everyone to be confused after the leader had been exchanged for another one. Everyone was waiting for one of the masters to be victorious as it was clear that the ones without their top fighters would be at a massive disadvantage. Some were already preparing to flee the moment the victor presented themselves.

“What is this? How can you be this fast?”

“Am I fast, or are you just slow?”

“Huh?”

The battle continued for a while but none of the attacks aimed at Zhang Dong’s throat were getting through. It looked like all of his moves were being moved but in reality, Cuilu Kong started noticing that something else was happening.

“H-how could this be... what have you done to me?”

“I see, it took you a while but you finally noticed...”

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“W-what have you done to me? How is this possible...”

“Oh I didn’t do much, it was your fault for attempting that stupid technique next to me. Did you think that you were the only one versed in soul arts?”

“Y-you...”

The angered self-proclaimed Obsidian Emperor mustered all his might to charge at Zhang Dong. To his dismay his movements were quite sluggish, it was as if he was neck-deep in tar. Each time he wanted to land a hit on his enemy there was something stopping him from connecting with the hits. It was as if something that was deeply ingrained into his very being wasn’t allowing him to kill this man.

“I think that’s about it, regretfully even the little trick I did won’t last forever, so this will be it for you...”

After letting his little spell take over his opponent Zhang Dong decided that he needed to finish this. During the fusion of the two flames that had a basis in soul arts, he managed to interfere with the process. It was similar to putting a person under a soul-binding contract where they couldn’t go against the contract holder. This process was forced and done rather hastily so it wouldn’t last forever. Cuilu Kong was still at the pinnacle of power and not inferior to Zhang Dong in any way, a forced soul-binding technique wouldn’t last but it would keep him in place long enough for the final finish.

What was supposed to be a fight of a century was ending up being a letdown. People that were down on the ground could only watch with fear in their eyes as Zhang Dong pulled out his golden sword. After going into a stance with the blade above his head he started to charge up.

“Why isn’t the Emperor moving?”

“Is he under some kind of technique?”

“S-shouldn’t we help him? But how are we supposed to get through that thick cloud of spiritual energy?”

The generals from the Emerald Phoenix Empire started murmuring among each other. Even if they wanted to aid their leader there was a mass of metallic puppets blocking their way. They weren’t the only ones as the armies from the Heavenly Crane Sect saw this as a chance to drive them back. Their master was winning and this was the time to strike. Whenever the strongest cultivator from an enemy troop was losing, it was time to shift the tide.

“No, I refuse to die! I can’t die! I won’t die! What are you blubbering idiots doing, protect your Emperor!”

Cuilu Kong was angry, he had plotted for hundreds of years for this very moment. When Zhang Dong appeared and showed his power against his sister his long plan could finally commence. He had retreated and gave his father a good excuse forcing him to arrive in this place. During the clash, he took over all of the emerald flames that were usually passed down as the Emperor was dying. Now that he had forcefully taken them, he was supposed to be the next god among men.

Instead, he found himself at the mercy of the man in white armor and the blade above his head. Normally as someone baptized by the phoenix flames, he would not fear death, as long as some connection to them remained he could be reborn multiple times. This attack that was being built up,

wasn't simple, it contained something that caused his very soul to tremble in fear. He knew that if the sword energies collided with his body, his life would be over.

"Calling for help now? Why would the people that you so tyrannized help you out now? Wouldn't they be joyful that they don't have to fear the overbearing Emperor anymore?"

"What are you talking about, they live to serve... they belong to me and the dynasty, it has always been like this!"

"Is that so... how about before you die we ask them?"

"What are you?"

Zhang Dong raised the sword even higher while gathering all of his holy power. His voice was enhanced by all of this spiritual energy and with an addition of his soul power was able to resonate with everyone gathered here.

"People from the Emerald Phoenix Empire, You might have heard my name while coming to those lands, some call me the Golden Dragon and others Long Dong."

Some people were ready to charge up and even others were still fighting as the inborn fear of the Emerald Phoenix Emperor was still very real. They could not see their Emperor ever losing and if he remembered the faces of the people that didn't act, all of them would die. Nevertheless, they stopped as the master of the opposing force started talking directly to their souls. For some reason they got the feeling that he was on their side, his presence was just as mighty as that of their late Emperor but much gentler in comparison.

"Hear me out, your Emperor has died and his son will follow suit. You have two options now either you continue with this pointless battle where you will surely lose or... you leave. On my name as the Golden Dragon, I will guarantee your safety and I will make a soul oath that no harm shall befall you."

"This... how is a soul contract being formed at such a scale..."

The words echoed through their minds as a contract was being established. Something like this was inconceivable but there it was. Though they couldn't trust in Zhang Dong's words they could at least trust in the pact that was made. Perhaps it was some type of rouse but it looked believable, if they just retreated they would not be harmed. The only thing that they needed to do was offer up the new Emperor that was shouting at them in a rabid voice.

"What are you idiots doing? You're not actually considering his proposal? I shall kill all your clans if you betray me! You lowly bugs belong to the Empire and I am that Empire, you serve me!"

"Hah, is this the Emperor you wish to follow? Turn back, your families are waiting for your return, let this madness end with the death of this man."

"I... My grandchild has just been born, I was not able to see her because of the conscription..."

"My son has recently married, I have not been able to see his face in many years..."

"Me too..."

“I...”

The scary-looking cultivators started slowly inching away to the other side. For some reason the moment the soul contract was being formed they were reminded of their loved ones. A lot of these people were leaders of their own clans, sects, and factions. They had been forced to work under the Emperor and fight in this battle for supremacy. While they also had their own selfish reasons for being here, all of those started going out of the window as they started getting nostalgic.

“What are you doing? You dare retreat? I will have your heads!”

“You can stop, they can’t hear your words anymore.”

“What did you do?”

“Nothing much, I just reminded them of things that matter more than power. I’m sure you think that every person is as selfish as you are but everyone has a small sentiment somewhere deep inside, I just inched it to the forefront.”

Zhang Dong used a combination of techniques to tug on the people's heartstrings. They were more likely to retreat if they remembered their family and friends, or other things that would go away if they continued this fight. Even the stronger masters started getting sentimental which left the lesser ones open to his little suggestions even more. Soon enough they started retreating while their new Emperor was shouting up a storm. To finish this he needed to deliver the killing blow and perhaps all of this would be finally over.

“Farewell, I don’t know what happens to people like you when they die, but I sure hope that if there is an afterlife they won’t make it easy for you.”

“No...NO!”

All the energy that he gathered was pushed into his blade which started shining. The glow was blinding and mostly white as it packed a lot of soul power behind it. The trick to killing a phoenix was in destroying its soul and this was what this attack was aimed at. With a quick downward swing, the blade started cleaving down even though it took only a fraction of a second for an attack to move down, for the Obsidian Emperor it was like a century.

Zhang Dong wasn’t sure what was flashing through his enemy's mind before he died. Were there any good memories in this monster's mind? Could his father be the true villain in this instance that had led his son to crave power this much? He didn’t know but too many people had died by this man’s hand for him to feel any amount of pity. To end this war early his head needed to roll and he would be the executioner.

A beam of light flew into the sky and exploded into a radiant shower of light. It looked like a swarm of falling stars dispersing everywhere. Cuilu Kong’s body had been cleaved into two equal halves and the black body that he was so proud of began to crumble. Black flames appeared from within but quickly started turning white as they started to be cleansed from inside of his body.

The soul that kept the technique going was being destroyed and the rebirthing flames could not activate. Without the soul to stabilize the form, Cuilu Kong had died and his body started to vanish. The

Obsidian Crow that was destined to black out the sun was now gone, he did not live even for one hour and his legacy would never be remembered.

From within the broken flames, one of them remained intact. It was not part of the man but similar to the triple horn that the Demi-Human Emperor's body dropped after he was defeated. The item in question looked like a black feather made of flames, what was supposed to be emerald green had become corrupt and it term given him a little bonus. Bob's robotic voice resounded inside of his head the moment he beckoned the black feather over.

'The item is compatible with the user's system, do you wish to absorb it?'

'Yes go ahead, absorb it.'

The Dao absorption had become, what he thought would be two paths turned into three. His body was washed over by three distinct energies, Fire, Wind, and then Darkness...

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"Darkness is it... well, they say that a balance between light and dark needs to be maintained and only then true power can follow..."

Zhang Dong looked at the prompt on his screen while holding the flaming black feather. After defeating the Emerald Emperor's Son he gained the prize that he was after. Perhaps after enhancing his cultivation level with these three higher Daos it would be possible to push into the immortal realm? This was an important question as he wasn't sure if he wanted to make the transition just yet. He had to consider the time and place as the Overseer could become aware of this transformation.

'But what if someone steals the feather before I can use it, just like that time...'

There had been a chance to absorb Wang Long's power and he let it slip. What if the same thing happened as last time and he had to actually go through regular cultivation for close to a thousand years? Even though he didn't really mind retiring for a while after this war was over, a life with some strange powerful being watching over him would be stressful.

Thus a decision was made to just go through with the absorption of the three Daos here. Zhang Dong wondered if this was some kind of hidden scenario that he was given three at once where he expected to get one or two at most. Wind, Fire, and also Darkness. With the last one, he was conflicted a bit but darkness didn't really have anything to do with demonic cultivators. As long as he was careful he would not be taken over by demonic urges that originated from ingesting demonic Qi.

'Okay Bob, let's do it, start the absorption process.'

'Acknowledged'

The black feather that was in his hand started crumbling into dust and vanished from this plane of existence. The knowledge that he was missing concerning the Dao of fire and wind started filling his very existence. He already had a fairly good grasp of those so the increase wasn't that great but when it came to the Dao of Darkness it was different. This was something he only grasped a tiny bit of after combating the demonic cultivators in the north.

Just as the knowledge was filling his brain the little seed began opening up even more. His power started growing and the people below that were still unsure of what to do started trembling. He could not stop his aura from seeming out and to the weaker warriors it was a soul-crushing experience. However just as fast as this boost in power came, it vanished quickly after. The seed stopped opening instantly after the process was over and still wanted something more.

‘Hm... it’s still missing something, perhaps the fire and wind Dao’s aren’t special enough to fill out this seed...’

While fire, water, wind, and earth were the basic elemental Daos and were also higher ones, they could be considered the most basic ones. Something like the Dao of Gravity or the one of Darkness that he just took in were a notch above them. This meant that in theory if the Cerulean Empress that was left behind only had the Dao of water to absorb, he wouldn’t be getting much from that confrontation.

‘Hm, I’m sure the hidden boss from the lands Lucius and Argus came from probably had the Dao of Light or Holy which I already have and he won’t probably ever appear now...’

This mission was now over and he would be giving Lucius his reward. With the holy aegis shield relic in their hands, they would perhaps not have any reason to stay here anymore. That is unless a third relic was needed to complete their mission. Nevertheless now with the east and west sides of the empire cleared out, they could just go on their search without anyone getting in their way.

Zhang Dong’s name was already famous enough to open up all doors to people associated with him. The only place they would be barred from would be the Azure palace that even he didn’t have access to. That place was meant to be his last destination after all the Emperors were gone and it looked like that time would come sooner than he had expected.

‘I never thought this would go this smoothly, I over-prepared for the occasion.’

He had prepared a whole army made out of metallic puppets and also taken time to save up on spirit points. He was ready to call forth his close aids which included his wife, Hao Qiang and Zhang Zhi. The three were integrated into his system and possessed a battle power equal to the strongest nascent soul masters in the empire.

His grandfather would also arrive in his golden stronghold that needed a lot of points to be brought over here and then back to the northern battlefield. All of these resources were not used up and everything ended rather quickly. Luckily he could use the automatons somewhere else and perhaps turn them into a task force in the western region.

‘Hm, maybe that is a bad idea. It’ll make me look like some power-hungry dictator trying to police everything... but it would probably save some lives, at the cost of some freedoms...’

Zhang Dong wasn’t sure if he wanted to become a benevolent dictator. In theory, this wasn’t a bad idea if the dictator was knowledgeable enough. This however was not something he was confident of nor did he want to stifle the freedom of the people living here. Everyone was free to do what they wanted and he could only present a system that would not allow for too much bloodshed. Considering how quickly people in this world were to seek conflict, he would need to think it through when the time came.

“It’s over, both the son and the father are no more.”

Finally, the time to end this all came. His voice boomed through the entire area and interacted with everyone's soul. The enemy army was slowly inching back, even though they had the giant fortress floating in the back without their emperor it couldn't be fully utilized. A design flaw that rigged it to only work with their emperor. This meant that it was now nothing more than a large floating palace with no attacking or defending capabilities.

"Just as I promised, you all may now leave but you'll have to leave some things behind..."

The enemy Saint Emperors that were previously generals in the Emerald Phoenix Empire army could not say anything against those words. It was already enough that they could just leave. Normally if their side was victorious they would have slaughtered all of the Heavenly Crane Sect cultivators and everyone else that got in their way. The faction leaders from the sect knew and raised their voices in protest.

"Honorable Golden Dragon, why should we show these savages mercy? They had gone through our lands, they pillaged, raped, and killed, they deserve no mercy!"

"You speak the truth, Leader Zhong, they have performed atrocities but they were still only following orders... answer me this, why didn't you do anything when these acts of violence were being performed on your people?"

"That is..."

He knew that the Heavenly Crane Sect didn't really care about their people that much. If they did, then they would have pushed back harder. It wasn't impossible for them to drive the initial forces back if they utilized more of their nascent soul masters. They didn't though and now that a weakened leaderless opponent stood before them, they just wanted to perform the same acts of slaughter that they did.

"I have given my word, they are free to go. Of course, they will leave their battleships and all the ill-gotten gains that they stripped from your lands will be returned, if they don't abide by the rules then we will resume our battle."

"But honorable..."

"I shall not repeat myself, are you trying to go against my decision?"

Zhang Dong needed to put his foot down. He had worked with these people and they had gotten the wrong idea that they were on the same level. They needed to understand that if he wanted, then they would not be able to stop him. This was achieved by his aura spiking to a tremendous degree. His power had actually risen by absorbing the new Daos and this would be felt by the nascent soul masters that could measure it.

"Please appease your anger honorable Golden Dragon, Leader Zhong had spoken out of terms, we shall follow your proposition."

"Y-yes..."

The man that had usually gone against him quickly went back on his statement after feeling the tremendous power coming from Zhang Dong's form. He wasn't the only one here, the army of metallic angles was also turning their heads towards the Heavenly Crane Sect and so was Lucius. They were sending a clear message that if they continued with the prodding that all hell would break loose.

This of course was a surprise to the Emerald Phoenix Empire forces that couldn't really believe that a powerful master would allow them to just leave. There was no reason not to now, they had already lost and without the large emerald palace behind them, it would be impossible for a counterattack.

"Do you agree? If you promise me to relinquish your weapons and stolen goods, then I will allow you to take a few ships that can contain the remainder of your people and cross the bridge back to your own lands. Of course, you are not allowed to come back and I can not guarantee the safety of anyone that attempts to come back here."

"C-can we really trust in your word?"

"General Xiang, what are you doing? Are we really going to surrender our weapons to them? What if they attack us right after?"

"Look around you, General Qiuyue, do you think they need us to relinquish our weapons to achieve a victory?"

"That is..."

Zhang Dong waited for the generals to converse with each other. Now that the Emperor was gone a new faction would form. At the moment it would consist of the strongest Saint Emperors and luckily they were starting to agree with each other. It was true that there was not much to gain from letting them go and that his side didn't really have to. Everyone was already shocked that they had not attacked after the Emperor was dealt with.

He could feel the will to resist fade as he surrounded the area with his aura. Even he had to give them a little nudge to lose all semblance of resistance. Luckily these people were primed to follow strong people and he had proven to be even stronger than the Emperor that terrorized them their whole lives. There was no way that they could hope to go against him and thanks to this some lives would be spared today.

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"Is this really wise? What if they return with a new force? Shouldn't we snuff out the flame while it is still small then face a blazing inferno later?"

"I'm of the same mind but... how about you tell that to him..."

"..."

The Patriarch from the Heavenly Crane Sect looked along with a few other faction leaders from his sect towards the sky. There a lone man with snow-white hair was gently floating, his hair even though long was not affected by the winds. It was as if he was standing in a vacuum with no air around, with feet planted in something robust.

At the moment the armies from the Heavenly Crane Sect were looking at a handful of ships leaving towards the bridge between worlds. A massive wall of chaotic elements was blocking the pathway from all sides with only a thin passageway going to the other side. On all of those ships, there were soldiers from the enemy side and this would have been the best moment to just blast them to kingdom come.

They were on their way out of this empire and this place would be soon turned into a fortress. Even though these were the Heavenly Crane Sect's lands it didn't seem that they had a say in this. To each side of the bridge to another land, two towers were being assembled by the strange flying automation that originated from the United Element's Sect.

The whole spectacle was quite strange, out of nowhere a group of strange cultivators appeared. They were dressed in white coats with black gloves that looked as if they were made from rubber. Their leader's hair was all over the place and he was wearing dark goggles to cover his eyes. After shouting out some things the man took control of the flying automatons and together with a few other men started ordering them to build structures. Even though the Emerald Phoenix Empire forces were still in the process of gathering they were already working on setting up the barricade.

"It would be better if we cut our losses here, maybe in the future an opportunity will present itself but for now, we must wait."

"The Patriarch speaks the truth, we should let the Golden Dragon settle things with the Emperor first before we make a decision."

"I concur, we still don't know if they are working together or not... another war might start soon and it will be wise to not get involved with it."

The Lily faction leaders started nodding at each other. Surprisingly all of them were in agreement, they did not want to get mixed up in the battle for the throne. At first they all were thinking of teaming up with Zhang Dong to force the Azure Dragon to relinquish some resources. They had made a mistake as they had considered their sect to be at least on the same level as the United Element's Sect.

Now after seeing their leader in action, they knew that they were not in the same league anymore. It wouldn't be strange if Zhang Dong was able to kick the Azure Emperor off the throne if he wanted. Some were already making up schemes and possible scenarios in their head. Perhaps Zhang Dong was actually the real Azure Emperor and the one sitting on the throne was just a trick to let him go through the lands easily.

"We shall wait and be watchful..."

The old masters nodded at each other while exchanging hidden messages. They would have not dared to utter words out loud out of fear. The way Zhang Dong defeated the monster that was the Emerald Phoenix Emperor was still fresh in their minds. The battle was incomprehensible to them, even though all of them assumed to be great circle nascent soul masters they could not place themselves on equal footing with Zhang Dong.

The gap between them had even become larger as for some reason the man felt even more fearsome than before. It was in their best interest to not anger him as he could very well become the new Emperor of these lands. They couldn't discount that he already was the hidden leader and was just making things official by coming to the eastern region by himself.

Perhaps all of this was just a ploy to make them realize that they were not part of the big three that they had assumed. Maybe there were never three forces in the whole empire to begin with. After seeing him in action it wasn't strange to assume that he commanded the strongest force on the entire plane. If not, then sooner or later he would come for the current head which was the Azure Emperor. The Heavenly

Crane Sect wanted no part in this war and would be sure to barricade themselves at their home territory until everything was done with...

...

'Hah, they really are afraid of me now. I wonder what they would do if they knew that I can read their hidden messages on my system screen? Though even there they are referring to me in a cordial manner...'

This was quite normal as they saw something that shouldn't be possible. The Heavenly Crane Sect had a lot of nascent soul masters but even their Patriarch paled in comparison to the Emerald Phoenix Emperor or his opponent that was the Golden Dragon. It was an entirely new world for them that thought to have reached the zenith of power in this world. It was a gap that they didn't really know how to cross and the decision to wait wasn't wrong.

'But they think I might go against the Emperor huh? That would probably be the path of a regular cultivator...'

There was a saying that there was no room for two Emperors in one empire. It wouldn't be strange for him or the Azure Emperor to make some kind of move. In the eyes of this Heavenly Crane Sect, a long-lasting war was not off the table. The United Element's Sect would only have to announce that they are taking over the western side of the empire for themselves and creating a new region with them at the top. This or refusing to pay taxes to the current leaders was also a way out. Then it would be up to the Long Clan to retaliate and if they didn't then it would send a message to everyone that was living in that region.

'In the system's scenario, the Azure Emperor was supposed to be my ally. He might have been destined to fall from the start but could also be there as the strongest opponent...'

After interacting with the Emerald Phoenix Emperor's son he knew that things could shift at a drop of a hat. If he wasn't as close as he was to the father and son when the absorption process was taking place then he would be in for the fight of his life. Cuilu Kong was a master that had lived for half a millennium, even though he was around at the same level as Wang Long he was probably a much more advanced combatant with many tricks up his sleeve.

'I got lucky again... I even have this thing now, it's quite similar to the Golden Dong Palace, a late-stage weapon'

There was a thing about flying castles and this was one of them. It was of similar size to his golden bastion but at the moment was offline. It was mostly made of some type of green metal that glistened like an emerald when sun rays collided with it. For the time being the whole thing was in some type of hibernation. It was floating around but nothing really worked, Bob was already working on ways of cracking the defenses.

This artifact was meant for the Emerald Phoenix Emperor's use only and would only react to his bloodline. This would leave Cuilu Yahui as the next in line after both her father and brother had died. He hoped that it wouldn't get to that but perhaps he would have to use her in conjunction with this emerald palace. Even though the woman was stripped of her cultivation base she was still alive. Her fate would be to live as a mortal while having to bow her head before even the weakest cultivator.

‘But It might be possible to emulate her bloodline to make this thing see me as its master, it’s nothing more than an intricate DNA scanner. Either I’ll have to alter the scanner itself or go with the other option.’

This flying ship was not part of his faction and had no long-range teleportation features. The plan now was to drag it back to his sect where some specialists could look over it. There were probably some hidden treasures on board that needed to be analyzed. With how the weapons of this empire eclipsed theirs, this flying treasure trove of knowledge would probably usher in a new age of weaponry.

“Now that it is over, I would like you to keep your promise.”

“Hm? Oh, Lucius.”

As he was looking at the large palace being attached to ten flying ships they collected from the enemy fleet, Lucius and Argus appeared before him. Now that the battle was over, they had come to claim the prize which was the holy shield. With it in their possession, they might have nothing left to do here and this would be the end of their relationship.

Perhaps others would have decided to hold on to a weapon that they don’t really understand but he was looking at the bigger picture. It was unwise to allow another emperor-level threat to arrive at his doorstep. The Cerulean Empress was the only one that remained but the side Lucius came from wasn’t fully revealed to him. As his people had proven themselves to be capable no further reinforcements were needed.

“Haha, you should stop grimacing so much or your eyebrows will get stuck like that.”

Lucius frowned while Argus that was flying behind him started chuckling. It was quite funny to see him flinch the moment the duke looked back. Zhang Dong pulled out the relic from his replica of the dimensional regalia and threw it toward his allies. The man in golden armor looked quite panicked as he tried catching the item in question.

“C-careful...Argus... is this really it?”

“Hm... yes, it does resonate, it is the sacred shield! With this, it’s almost complete!”

“Huh? Almost complete, is there really more?”

Zhang Dong butted in as for some reason he expected the second relic not to be the last one. After the second one become apparent it wouldn’t be strange that there wouldn’t be more he just never really asked to confirm this claim.

“Ah, yes, if we just need to find the sacred plate and it will be complete.”

“Secret plate? Is it a suit of armor?”

“Yes, do you perhaps know its whereabouts?”

“No... but I’ll be sure to tell you when I find it...”

If a suit of armor was the only thing left this brought some trouble with it. What if it was scattered in multiple places? Perhaps the helmet was at one location but the gauntlets at another instead of it being

at one location. However, this also meant that his new friends would be staying and now with the freedom to move around almost the whole empire, they could find it themselves.