

## Unfathomable 631

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“Quickly, we must prepare for the feast!”

“Yes, bring them in, they need to be prepared before we can have the feast!”

“Yes, yes!”

‘The hell are they doing...’

Zhang Dong had managed to sneak in through the chamber door while it was being opened. His form was that of a very thin shade so it was quite easy to make his way in. He had followed after the two mermaids that had captured one of his sect members. The room that all of them were being brought in had more than just this person, there were multiple of his sect personnel here.

To his surprise, they were all dumped in one spot on top of each other by these unseaming mermaids. The beautiful women were floating around and dancing as if they were at some kind of dancing event. It was actually somewhat strange and creepy when he took note of those big grins. They were certainly preparing something insidious and now that he came here he could confirm it.

This looked to be some type of kitchen, a strange large pot was right in the middle of it. What made the thing weird was that the water inside of this cauldron was starting to boil. Everything was already covered in water so this had to be some type of special cooking utensil that only affected the water inside of it while not allowing the heat to seep out.

There was one larger mermaid in the middle, her skin was gray and her teeth were a lot sharper than the rest. She was wearing a cap that he would only see on modern-day chefs back in his old world. This was probably the main cook that was starting to insert some herbs and vegetables into the now boiling pot. It was clear what was going on here, these fish people wanted to eat his sect members. The cook was already picking out a good knife to chop them up into something smaller.

‘Do they like to eat humans or something? Could this be what this is all about?’

The Demi-humans were here for the great hunt, the Emerald Phoenix Empire to gain power and resources. His friends from the magical kingdom were searching for their secret relics, all had some type of grand reason to be here. Could these undersea creatures just be there because they saw the cultivators as food?

‘There are techniques that change people into pills used by demonic cultivators... could they seek to enhance their bodies by eating us or something?’

He wasn’t sure what was going on and what the true aim of these people here was. It was possible that they were just part of this pocket dimension and were actually not related to the Cerulean Empress. It could have been some type of strange side quest that the mysterious being that created this world created for him. If it was anything like the previous location he was in, then perhaps he needed to prepare for the worst.

‘I should probably call gramps and Qiang before I go through with this.’

While the situation looked dire the people that were here weren't getting cut up just yet. Before turning this kitchen into a battlefield he needed to give his allies a heads-up. Thus he brought up his system window and now clicked the working faction window where he could actually contact the two.

'Gramps, have you found anyone?'

'Dong'er? Yes, I've managed to find six members.'

'Qiang, what about you?'

'Senior Brother, I have seven people with me!'

'Where were they when you found them?'

'Oh? They were at a similar resort as we were but the lovely ladies fled the moment they saw us coming.'

'So they were gathering our people at similar locations... together with the ones that are here, that makes it twenty-four, you really didn't take that many people with you.'

'Twenty-four? Then you found the rest of our group?'

'Yes, I'll attempt to free them but you should watch out for the world around you, it could go through a change. You two need to rendezvous back at that resort.'

'A change? Is it some type of trap?'

'Something like that. I've managed to sneak into their hidden lair, if this place is anything like the other one I visited, there could be trouble. It would be better if you rendezvous together and set up a few protective formations before I join you.'

'You can count on me, senior brother!'

'Is it that dire? Very well, we will wait for you Dong'er be careful.'

'I'll try to keep a low profile but I can't guarantee anything, talk to you later.'

It seemed that all of the people were accounted for. The group that went to search for him was composed of mostly elite members. There was one nascent soul master here that had gone along and the rest were core formation experts at the great circle stage. While they wouldn't offer much help to the stronger masters, they could act as eyes and spread out for the search. It was a lot easier for these small groups to function versus a huge army that needed to be micromanaged.

He ended the call between them and glanced over at one of the mermaids. She was in the process of carrying one of the passed-out cultivators toward a large wooden board. There were cuts and nicks on this board. It didn't take a genius to figure out that his sect members would be cut up on it and then their parts were thrown into the large pot. Perhaps others would be turned to sushi before his eyes if he didn't do anything about it.

'I should try using these new skills, maybe I can do this quietly...'

While it wouldn't be hard just to blast his way through these mermaids, he feared that some type of trap would be triggered. There were a lot of those general clones around this place that were at the nascent soul level. If he attacked without thinking they would probably swarm this location in a matter of seconds. Only if he could keep it quiet then would he be able to sneak out of this place.

Thus he initiated his new Dao of darkness. The shadow that he was sticking to started expanding. It traveled all over the walls to block all the light out from this large kitchen chamber. The mermaids only noticed that something was wrong only after the darkness fell all over the place. With his shadow covering the entire location no sound could escape outside and he was free to come out of his hiding spot.

"What is happening, how did it get so dark?"

"Is the Mistress angry? But it's not dinner time yet, we should have more time!"

He wasn't sure what these mermaids were talking about but he used this chance to quickly knock them all out. The normal ones were at the level of core formation experts with the cook being a tiny bit stronger. It didn't take much besides his Qi to seep into their forms to stun them. Soon all of them were down on the ground and as he had managed to silently take care of this situation.

'This went better than expected...'

Zhang Dong was standing in the middle of the room as the shades seeped back into his body through his feet. Usually, he took the radiant approach but thanks to this Dao other forms of combat were now possible. It was suited for assassination and trick attacks. He could see himself hiding attacks in shadows while fighting his enemies. If the environment was suited for it, then perhaps it would be possible to even sneak up on a master to take them out in one hit.

'I'll better put them into the medallion for now...'

After the enemy cooks were taken out he started gathering out the people that were brought here. Luckily he had arrived as the last person was brought over. Probably if Zhang Jin and Huo Qiang didn't find the other locations the sect members were being picked up, more of them would have wound up here. It was clear that the resorts were a honeypot trap.

The enticing mermaids would serenade the victims into a comatose state before bringing them here. Now that he got his hands on some of his sect members he was sure about it. They were all slumbering with stupid grins on their faces. They were all under a strong illusion technique which made them dream of nice things and events. They were probably still thinking that they were up in one of those resorts having some fun with these half-women half-fish.

'It seems to affect not only the men but the women cultivators too...'

The group of people that were formed to search for him wasn't composed of men only, there were several women in the pile that he rescued. The enticing melody could even affect people of the same gender it seemed. If it was this strong then perhaps he needed to watch his back. Perhaps the Cerulean Empress was capable of performing similar techniques that would probably be even further enhanced.

'They shouldn't affect me but it wouldn't be the same for the others...'

He could already imagine Huo Qiang and Zhang Jin charging at him just to serve their new Empress. Perhaps bringing over his entire army into this Angler fish was the wrong strategy. Now that he looked at this mess it was possible for it to go south. It would have been a lot simpler if he just set out on this journey himself.

‘Was this supposed to be a solo quest or something? Great...’

After shaking his head a few times he started packing up. There was no reason for him to stay here and the safety of his people was a priority. His teleportation feature was still not working so he couldn’t really set up a teleportation spot here. Thus instead he sank back into the shadows to quickly crawl through the way that he entered.

The words of the mermaids bothered them, they seemed to be making this human pot for someone. Probably if it wasn’t made that person would be mad and come to check. This was probably the leader of this palace and perhaps a side boss that he would need to handle. However, his main objective was still to just wrap things up here and return to the golden palace where his people were. There was no time to battle beasts and monsters without identifying who the Cerulean Empress was.

‘I’ll just grab a few things along with these mermaids, they should give me the info that I need!’

Thus he sank back into the shadows and made his way back to Zhang Jin and Huo Qiang that were waiting above ground. If everything went well, they would soon depart back to the palace and the volcanic area where everyone else was.

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‘Just a little bit more and I’m out...’

Zhang Dong was able to make his way out of the hidden headquarters. His Dao of Darkness which allowed him to blend with any shadow and even create some of his own, was too strong. Everything went well as no one was able to discover his presence and now he was in one of the tunnels heading above ground.

‘Usually, something goes wrong when I do these stealth missions, I guess it will be possible for me to switch to a stealth build now, should I start learning some of those techniques?’

The dark arts he was using were working so well that he was actually thinking about learning them to a higher degree. Inside his system’s library, there were a few good techniques that could be combined with others to create something better. At the moment he was just using the Darkness Dao without any main technique but he could see it expanding into something better.

It was a very nice art for sneaking around and solo missions as he would have probably been able to reach the hidden boss in that underwater palace before anyone spotted him there. However, with many of his sect members in danger he needed to look at the bigger picture. Now that they were all out, it was time to find a way toward the volcanic region.

“We greet the Patriarch.”

“Senior Brother, we came as you wanted.”

“Good.”

Finally, after following a path given to him by his mapping function he was back in the initial resort where Zhang Zhi and Huo Qiang were having their fun. Both of them had arrived a few minutes before him and were now giving him a little salute. After nodding at the sect members that he wasn't familiar with he gave a little nod to both Zhang Jin and Huo Qiang.

"Elder Qiang and Jin will join me for a talk, the rest of you stay here and keep watch."

"Yes, Patriarch!"

The small group of cultivators stood up at attention and quickly bowed. He could see the reverence in their eyes, they really thought that he was something special. That look of blind faith and loyalty didn't go unnoticed. It was something that still continued to add to the stress of living in this world. Everyone trusted in his judgment and decisions, and for the time being, he was able to somehow plow through all of the problems that lay before him. Contrary to their belief he was not so sure if he was making all the right choices.

Even now perhaps it was better to have blasted the underwater palace with one of his greater attacks. At that time they had no idea that he was there but by now the kitchen area might have been looked over. It could be the case that someone would go after them but it could also be the reverse.

"How can we help?"

"First, do you recall the place where you first appeared? I need the exact place."

"The exact place? Hm... it shouldn't be a problem, it wasn't that far from this place."

"Good job Elder, I didn't really pay attention that much... I do remember a large rock near that place though, but I'm not sure..."

Zhang Jin answered while Huo Qiang nodded. The two arrived together with the other core formation experts being spread around the whole pocket dimension. Luckily Zhang Jin took note of where they were before the mermaids appeared to entice them away. Huo Qiang on the other hand wasn't that sure. He started listing a few rocks and trees that he noticed but there was nothing clear to go off.

"It's fine Young Qiang, I left a little of my spiritual imprint at the location, it won't be hard to find it."

"Well, at least there is one of you that doesn't only think with your other head."

"Haha, it's just the basics of surviving, this old man didn't survive for this long without learning a thing or two!"

Zhang Jin started laughing at Huo Qiang that was frowning. Luckily for them, the old man knew how to survive in a world filled with treacherous cultivators and powerful beasts. It was an old tactic to mark the initial point after initializing a teleportation trap. Usually, a person would lose their bearings and get lost, this was a good way to realize if a person was going in circles or not.

"But why do you want to go there, Senior Brother?"

"The area that you arrived at could have a clue, a trace of spiritual energy that we could perhaps follow to the exit. If not, then perhaps I could pinpoint where you came from and assemble a teleportation array to the spot the original trap triggered."

“Are you capable of doing that?”

“Perhaps...”

“That’s why you’re my Senior Brother!”

“Don’t get your hopes up, I won’t know what I can do until we get there.”

After coming back to the area where the core formation experts were hanging out all of them departed. Time was of the essence so instead of letting them use their flying swords Zhang Dong decided to surround the group with his golden aura. All of them looked quite happy to be taxied around by their Patriarch, perhaps when they got back to the palace they would see it as a badge of honor and tell their friends.

“It’s around here, yes we appeared between those two large rocks...”

“I knew that I remembered that rock!”

Huo Qiang pointed to a large boulder in the distance but Zhang Jin just shook his head around.

“It wasn’t that one, the two on the other side.”

“Oh...”

Everyone laughed a bit, even the core formation experts were having a good time. It was a stark contrast to the way some sects operated. It was rare to have the core formation experts act this nonchalantly when around nascent soul masters. Yet this sect was built up like this, it was meant to have a more familiar feeling where people actually worked together with each other. In other factions, it was usually a rat race to the top.

Limited resources, masters that wanted the best potential disciples, and everything needed to be fought for. In the United Element’s sect on the other hand, with the merit system around even the worst cultivator had ways of getting stronger. There was an environment of camaraderie instead of the usual competitiveness that could be found in other sects. Thanks to this, they weren’t as afraid to speak up when next to nascent soul masters. The way to this level wasn’t that outlandish and even some people they knew had made it there through some help from their Patriarch. Nevertheless, they would still act accordingly to their standing and in a formal way as the old ways would take some more time to be eroded.

“So this is it?”

‘Bob, start scanning, there should be some type of residue from the teleportation trap, if we can pinpoint the coordinates then it should be possible to get out of here.’

‘Scanning... found teleportation signature... analyzing... unable to complete the quarry, need more data.’

“Damn...”

“What is it, Dong’er?”

“It’s not enough, the residual energy has faded away, I need more of it to complete the formation.”

“Hm, that’s a shame... how about we ask the juniors? They had been scattered through the entire place just like us, maybe if we find enough of those locations, it might be enough?”

“That’s not a bad idea.”

There were almost thirty people that were stuck in this place. Some of them appeared in pairs while others were alone. This meant that there were other locations just like this one, if they were fast enough then it was possible for Bob to complete the data analysis. The ones that he saved from the underwater palace had started to wake up as well, it was time to let them out and make them be of use.

“The area that I arrived in shouldn’t be that far...”

“I’m sorry Patriarch, I don’t recall...”

“I left a slither of my Qi in the location, let me guide you there, Patriarch, it will be an honor!”

While some of the core formation experts had no idea where they arrived, some others were more useful. A few were smart enough to leave a trace amount of their Qi behind just like Zhang Jin and those places they would go to first.

“Good, Gramps. Give the ones that left their Qi behind some merit points when we get back, they did a fine job.”

“You hear that? Some of you will get rewarded!”

The ones that would get rewards for their smart thinking rejoiced while the others that didn’t think looked ashamed. This was a big chance to show their skills to their Patriarch and they blew it. He could see the horror in their eyes and only hoped that they wouldn’t take it too harshly. Yet he couldn’t let anyone be rewarded, the ones that didn’t use their head needed to be reprimanded as it could help them not do the same mistake again.

So the search for the trace amounts of teleportation energy started. Some had more than others and Bob was quick to analyze them. Luck was on their side as after the fifth location they had enough data to triangulate the location. Now, what was left for him to do was to build a teleportation array and send everyone back to the volcanic area they came from.

“The Patriarch is really amazing, he can do everything.”

“That is true, we were the ones supposed to rescue him but instead he was the one that saved us.”

People started murmuring while he was working. While he didn’t want to eavesdrop on the hidden messages about him, curiosity got the better of him. Even though she should be above things like praise, being someone that people relied on wasn’t all that bad. At least he was shown respect and given praise for his achievements and it gave him the needed motivation to move on. But then there were some parts of the conversations that he wished he never heard either.

“The Patriarch is so dreamy, think he would take me in as a mistress?”

“Do you wish to die? Elder Liena would not let it be, your whole family would be in danger.”

“You really think so? The Elder Jin has many wives, I’m sure the Patriarch has similar tendencies.”

‘Do I really look like that pervert?’

Some of the women from the group started gossiping while trying not to make it too obvious. He could feel their eyes focusing on his back while he was trying to assemble the teleportation array that would take them to the rest of the sect.

‘Let’s do this before something else goes wrong, it shouldn’t take more than an hour, I have all the materials that I need...’

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“There, it’s done, now we just need to get enough energy for it to work.”

“I see that there is nothing that my grandson can’t do. He must have gotten it from this old man!”

“Sure I did...”

Zhang Jin’s palm landed on Zhang Dong’s shoulder as he was praised for assembling a complex teleportation formation. The other sect members with them could not believe what had transpired. His movements were so fast that they were afraid to blink. None of them understood the techniques that were used but they already knew that it would help them further pursue the formation craft. Normally to see an expert like him at work they would need to either be his disciples or part of the inner sect. Even then no one was really granted any teachings besides the two main disciples Zhang Xue and Liu.

“You lot, stop staring and line up. We will be returning to the volcanic region you came from, I need you to focus on the mission.”

“Yes, Patriarch!”

Everyone jumped up in fright after he shouted at them for spacing out. While he appreciated that they were interested in his work, they were supposed to keep watch over the whole area. While he had the system it wasn’t perfect, when he was focusing on making the array his spiritual sense couldn’t be utilized to monitor the area. There was no way to track the enemies like in the azure empire through the map either.

“Huh?”

“What was that?”

Suddenly, before he could start the activation procedure, the ground started to shake. At first, it seemed to just be a little quake, maybe even some distant creature making a ruckus. However, after focusing on the area where the tremors were coming from, it became clear that there was something off.”

“It’s coming from that area...”

“Yes, where I met you two...”

Zhang Jin nodded at his comment as it was becoming clear that they perhaps didn’t have that much time. Quickly they turned around towards the teleportation array that still needed some time to be charged. This was a process that couldn’t be rushed as doing it too quickly would destroy the fine traces it was composed of.



“They had to chose the worst possible moment to come after us.”

“Gramps.”

“Leave the array to me and Elder Wuyan.”

This was the third nascent soul elder that came for this rescue mission. He was not as strong as Huo Qiang and more on the level of his grandfather. His expertise in the arts was true and he had lived around the same amount of time as his grandfather. Together the two would probably be able to handle the teleportation formation.

“I’ll leave it to you. Qiang, come with me.”

“Finally something to do!”

The big brute’s fists collided with each other as he pumped himself up. There was nothing more that a battle maniac like him liked more than a good challenge. Judging by the spiritual energy traces, the enemy that they were facing was at the apex of the nascent soul. This would normally not be an issue but there were multiple enemies at a similar level.

“It’s probably the Cloned Generals, there were a bunch of them down in that palace.”

“The more the better!”

“Don’t let your guard down, there is something else there... something much stronger...”

The first to appear were the generals with the tridents. They seemed to be the same soldiers that used to plague the seas close to the coastline. Previously his armies used them to farm a lot of spirit points which made this expedition possible. Huo Qiang had already faced them in battle so there was no fear of letting him handle most of them.

What he was more on guard against was the being that was following behind them. Even after the generals appeared on the surface the rumbling didn’t stop. Something huge was approaching and it was making this whole miniaturized world shake. It was hard to focus on the group of nascent soul masters with raised weapons when a giant torrent of earth was shooting up into the sky from right behind them.

It blocked out all the view and even covered some of them in mud. Zhang Dong could see some of the generals fleeing to the sides or surrounding themselves with water energy to not get swept by this avalanche. Soon enough he could see something appear there and it was thrashing around in all sorts of directions.

“Is that a giant tentacle?”

At first, he thought that it was another version of his old foe that forced him to take a five-year-old break from his family. The energy signatures that were coming from this thing were different though. It lacked the evil demonic aura and was more attuned to the water Dao that permeated through this pocket dimension.

“Wait... could it be something like a Kraken?”

An ugly head with huge tentacles at the sides appeared out of the ground. The creature somewhat resembled the Cthulhu monsters that he used to fight but it lacked the humanoid shape. Instead, it was composed mostly of a mass of tentacles and strange tendrils with other appendages at the end. Then there was one other difference, this beast could actually speak.

“My feast, they stole it! Bring them to me!!!”

To his surprise, the monster could articulate quite well. If he didn’t see the mass of tentacles and the ugly mouth filled with teeth then the voice could be mistaken for a woman’s. Considering that this was probably the leader of the mermaids it made some sense. This was probably their mistress and perhaps someone that created the fishy ladies that could serenade everyone to sleep.

“Qiang, don’t let them approach the array, we must not let them get to the other sect members.”

“Leave it to me, Senior Brother!”

Huo Qiang was ecstatic when he saw the massive creature. Its body was as huge as a mountain and it was also apparently capable of floating above the ground. It was as if the creature was swimming through the sky while giving out orders to the many trident-holding generals below.

“Capture them! I want to feast on their sweet flesh!”

“Yes, Mistress!”

The clash between the two strongest elders from the United Element sect and the forces from the Cerulean Empire started. Considering that this thing had a female voice the thought of it being the Cerulean Empress crossed Zhang Dong’s mind. Yet the generals weren’t referring to her by this title which more than likely meant that this wasn’t the case.

“Are you the one that stole my feast? You will pay and join them inside of my stomach, I hunger for human flesh!”

“Sorry, but I’m not into those sorts of things, and your breath kind of stinks...”

The moment the monster octopus appeared it instantly picked him out as her target. Huo Qiang attempted to intercept her through a punch from his soul beast but was stopped by the generals that were acting like minions. They were in for a blazing inferno that was slightly diminished due to the nature of this place.

Even though his junior brother wasn’t showing it, his Dao of Fire was somewhat suppressed by the prevalence of water, even more after the squid monster appeared. Zhang Dong could tell so he decided to lure the monster away to the side to let Qiang have some breathing room while fighting.

The peaceful landscape filled with coconut trees and a relaxing atmosphere turned into a battleground. Trees were unearthed and burned by the giant fire monster and the man that was controlling it. All of the buildings that made up the previous resort were destroyed in the process of the squabble. Energy blasts made out of water energy, fire, and electricity were flying everywhere.

“Elders, shouldn’t we help the Patriarch?”

“Concentrate on the array and stop looking away, they are only distracting the enemy from us, remember our mission is not to defeat these beasts but to return to the rest of the sect.”

“My apologies elder.”

Zhang Jin paced around the array that some of the other core formation elders were reinforcing with their Qi. If it was up to him then he would just throw himself into battle along with Qiang and his grandson. Yet he also needed to keep the troops alive that were given to him, the easiest way out of here was through this teleportation device and it wouldn't take much more for them to finish it.

The only problem was the berserker creature up in the sky. The tentacles it was swinging around were so long and thick that they looked like giant towers. Each of these appendages also had smaller ones attached to them. Every time Zhang Dong dodged one that was approaching a swarm of smaller tendrils with spikes at the end shot out.

These squiggly fleshy whips were breaking the barrier of sound with each attack. There were so many of them that even Zhang Dong was having trouble keeping up and had to rely on his holy barrier to deflect the ones that he couldn't shake off. Then if this wasn't bad enough, even though he was constantly slicing through those tentacles they just kept growing back. No amount of holy energy that usually worked on demonic beasts could halt the regeneration that this beast was equipped with either.

“Dong'er, we are finished!”

Luckily he wasn't alone here and beating this monster was not the main plan. Zhang Jin called out to Zhang Dong who could tell that the teleportation array was activated. Some of the core formation experts were already going through to pave a path for their experts.

“Qiang, we need to retreat!”

“I'm not sure it will be that easy...”

The number of the generals wasn't low and even Huo Qiang who went through an upgrade was having trouble contending with them. Even though some of them were down on the ground with their faces melted off, some were able to deliver some flesh wounds to the muscular man and draw blood.

‘I'll open up the path for you, close your eyes and follow behind me.’

A hidden message was sent and right on cue a massive flash of light escaped from Zhang Dong's body. It covered the entire area in bright white light that disoriented the enemy attackers and even caused the squiggly beast to wiggle in pain.

“S-stop them, you shall not escape!”

Huo Qiang closed his eyes right in time as the flash took place. Soon after he combined his body with his soul beast and turned into a flaming comet. Both he and Zhang Dong were now in full escape mode yet the massive monster wouldn't just let them escape. Without any thought for her own men, she started elongating those appendages to cover everything in them. Qiang who was trailing behind a bit was the one to get smacked and even the coating of fire didn't protect him from the thick beast whip.

Even though he wasn't stopped, now a meteorite of fiery energy was heading straight for the teleportation array. Zhang Jin instantly jumped through while ordering everyone to do the same, it was

clear to them that whenever that bundle of fire energy collided with the teleporter then it would become unusable...

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“Haha, I knew that we would have made it, we are back, Senior Brother! ... Senior Brother?”

“Huo Qiang, where is Dong’er, wasn’t he in front of you?”

“Well...He turned around to diffuse some of the fire energy and tossed me into the teleportation array, then I think he was grabbed by some of those squiggly things...”

A confused Huo Qiang was rubbing his head while looking at the group of cultivators in the volcanic region. The spot they arrived at was actually the exact same one they entered the trap. It wouldn’t be strange for their allies to appear somewhere now but without the man that they were supposed to rescue here, they couldn’t really return.

“We must go back, what if he can’t find his way back here without us?”

Huo Qiang shouted out while turning towards the spot he arrived from. However even if he attempted to bulldoze his way back to the location he came from, there was no way of going back.

“Qiang, that’s not how teleportation arrays work, you can’t just go back. It was a one-way tunnel and the trap that sent us there is already out of energy.”

Zhang Jin was a bit calmer than the hot-headed Huo Qiang that was punching at the air. No one from this group actually knew how their Patriarch was able to create the array. In theory, they should be able to reverse engineer his method and use the ambient energy from the previous zone to create a similar array. This was easier said than done as they had no way of knowing how he was able to analyze the faint traces of Qi tied to the other location.

“Does this mean that he is trapped there?”

“Perhaps, Liena won’t like this...”

Just as all seemed to be lost, both nascent soul elders felt something. There was a ripple in the space and it started expanding.

“Wait, something is happening, prepare yourselves!”

Everyone pulled out their weapons and fists to stare at the spot in front of them. Suddenly a torrent of black goop shot out from thin air to coat everyone in a strange-smelling substance. This wasn’t all as screams of their favorite Patriarch followed soon after.”

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA”

His form which was usually white as a snow flower tumbled through while being black as obsidian. He was spinning around like a helicopter propeller and collided with the first person that was standing there, Huo Qiang. The collision caused the volcanic rock under them to shatter and sent many jagged rocks flying everywhere. Everyone was quick to disperse to get away from the liquid and mass of tentacles along with it.

...

"Uh... I made it?"

Zhang Dong gathered himself to his feet as he arrived at the other side of the teleportation array. He had been forced to save his junior brother from tumbling to the wrong side of their escape route. If he didn't act then he would have been stuck there with the flying tentacle monster and its goons. Yet after shifting his position a bit he had been caught by a vast quantity of tendrils. They were quite slimy and not something that he liked touching his body.

A struggle with the Queen Octopus thing quickly ensued as his escape route was closing up. It wouldn't last more than a few seconds but now that all of the people from his faction were on the other side, he just needed to join them. His Qi skyrocketed to the zenith as he incinerated the mass of tendrils that were constantly increasing. The regenerative capabilities of this monster were truly tremendous.

However, it was still a beast that had to abide by the rules of this world and setting. Like any other beast in this world, it had a core that was supporting all of its cultivation. It was the size of a golf ball and squiggled around through the water-based monster like an eel. Perhaps if he wasn't working against time, there would be a better way to go around this but instead of a pinpoint precision attack he just decided to make everything explode. With everyone safely going through the teleportation array he didn't need to worry about any collateral damage.

Soon a massive amount of swirling energy was gathering on his fingertips and expanding into a sphere of energy. It was time to make everything explode with this tiny star attack of his. The monster squid wasn't having any of it as it attempted to engulf his entire form with the energy ball forming. For a moment everything went silent and it actually looked as if he had gotten devoured. Yet suddenly, the monster's body started glowing like a Christmas tree. The light was shooting through those suction cups and various pores in its ugly body.

**\*BLAM\***

Everything was covered in a black ink-like substance, Zhang Dong included. He didn't even remember how he got out of there but without getting this liquid off he bolted for the teleportation array exit. The rest was history, in the nick of time he made it through and collided with Huo Qiang on the other hand.

"Senior Brother, what's that smell?"

"It's the Smell of victory..."

He wanted to give Qiang a smack on the head for making him go through this experience. Being surrounded by that squid's body was truly traumatizing. Even though he was able to encase himself in a shield made of Qi, he could see all of those ugly tentacles trying to get him. It was like he had been put into a horror movie with fleshy monster walls closing down on him. Then there was all this smell that had seeped right into his clothes.

"Why would victory stink like that..."

"Come over here and I'll give you some of that victory."

"I think I'll pass, Senior Brother."

Zhang Dong shook his fist at Huo Qiang while looking around. Finally, he realized that they were around a pool of lava that was constantly popping bubbles. It didn't seem that there was any nearby water supply where he could clean all this gunk out. During the explosion, he needed to push through all of the monster's guts to get to the teleportation array. Even for someone of his power, this wasn't that easy and in a moment of weakness, he was drenched in all the stuff.

"Hoho, I'm glad that you made it out Dong'er, now my life is safe!"

"What are you babbling about?"

Zhang Jin laughed at the state that his grandson was in before moving over. Now that the Patriarch was here, the Matriarch wouldn't be mad. When he was leaving for the mission she made it clear that if he didn't return with Zhang Dong, then something would happen to his nether region.

"The fire elements are strong here but it shouldn't be that hard."

Zhang Dong on the other hand needed to get cleaned out. Luckily he knew some water techniques and conjuring up some of it even in this volcanic environment was still possible. It was something that he used to do when short on time. Developing a quick cleaning technique that left him clean and dry wasn't that hard. The other sect members also loved it as it allowed them to train more and not worry about their smelly clothes.

Soon he was surrounded by a sphere of water through which no one could see his body. Within it, his clothes, body, and hair were being cleaned out of the strange black liquid. Luckily it didn't seem that the monster was alive as it wasn't reforming from some of the tentacles here. He was not sure if he had managed to get the beast's core but as long as it wasn't on this side, the monster couldn't retake its previous shape.

"Senior Brother, could you..."

"Yeah sure..."

He was now clean but Huo Qiang had been covered in the sticky stuff as well. The cleaning technique allowed the clothes to be cleaned as well. Within a few minutes, the two best combatants were back to their old looks and the black sludge was evaporating due to the heat.

"Now that we are back here, we should find the Golden Palace and rendezvous with the others, lead the way, gramps."

"Sure thing, just follow this old man."

The description of this place that he was given didn't give it justice. The place was just a wasteland composed of lava and volcanoes. All the air here was filled with strange vapors that were of various colors, most of them black or filled with yellow sulfur. This was not a place a regular human would be able to survive, without the enhanced cultivator bodies that everyone here had it would be impossible to breathe.

"Be careful Senior Brother, the volcanic beasts here are quite ferocious."

"Are they?"

It was surprising to hear this quote from the battle maniac that was his junior brother. Normally he would be ecstatic to engage in battle with new creatures. If they were giving Huo Qiang trouble then even he needed to watch his back. After scanning the area with his spiritual sense he sensed some of these monsters nearby.

‘Hm, are they body refiners? Don’t feel that much Qi coming from them.’

When glancing toward one of the pools he felt a living organism. It wasn’t alone nor was it moving, like a predator waiting for a victim to get closer. When performing a more thorough search he could detect many similar lifeforms everywhere. It was like they were also underwater creatures like all the others, just instead of water they were using lava.

“Wait...”

“What is it Dong’er? If we hurry up we should be able to arrive at the palace within a day’s time.”

“We might have to move a bit faster then...”

“How so?”

Zhang Jin’s cultivation wasn’t as advanced so he couldn’t feel it. The environment was also working against them as the monsters that were gathered here blended in with the lava and Dao of Fire quite well. There weren’t just a few beasts looking at them, it was closer to hundreds or perhaps thousands.

“I think that our arrival here had woken up the natives.”

“Are we being watched?”

Everyone started looking around as they couldn’t see anyone within the flaming environment. Their leader knew though that perhaps the teleportation array or his cleaning method had roused some of the beasts here from their slumber.

“Yes and I’m not sure if they will let us just pass without a fight, get ready.”

## [Chapter 635](#)

“These guys are tough, what is their skin made of? Can this even be called skin, it looks more like some type of organic rock, could it be this that allows them to stay down in the lava without dying?”

Zhang Dong looked at the various claws trying to slice him apart. The creatures that were previously hidden deep in the lava pools and lakes had decided to engage them in battle. Their forms were humanoid as a base but their arms were a lot longer and ended up with hands that looked more like claws. Then there were their bodies, it looked like they were golems with lizard faces and massive amounts of teeth.

“Some type of dragon offshoot? They do look like overgrown lizards to a point.”

After seeing the cloning technology that this Empire was equipped with, it wouldn’t be strange if they could splice things together. When examining the creatures further he spotted a monster core that was fueling their bodies. It felt slightly off, similar to the one the squid creature possessed. It wouldn’t be strange if this feeling was due to it having been altered as the spirit energy pattern felt off.

“Get in formation!”

“There are just too many of them elder, what should we do!”

“Just follow the Patriarch’s orders!”

Behind him, the group of twenty cultivators had retreated into a battle formation. It took the form of a serpent composed of spiritual energy with a fire aspect. There seemed to be a lot of people from the Huo Clan in this rescue party. While they were good at contending with the flames and the environment, this could not be said for their attacking power. Creatures that could live in lava could not be easily defeated by flame attacks. Even Huo Qiang and his ifrit which could generate even more heat, weren’t doing much to blast through those thick rock-like muscles.

‘Leave it to the Patriarch, huh?’

“Fire attacks won’t do you much good, you must counter the flames with their counter element.”

Zhang Dong proclaimed while pointing out toward one of the lizard-like monsters that lunged itself in his direction. Before it could get to him though he decided to increase the gravity around it which made the beast fall back down. Even though it was slammed into the hard jagged rocks, the thick hide made of organic rock didn’t take much damage. It was clear that these creatures were used to being in extreme conditions. Physical attacks were almost useless, even their organs and the inside of their mouths seemed reinforced for combat.

It was like fighting beings made from metal that didn’t seem to have a weakness. However, there were a few tactics that would work. The easiest one would be to produce some ice, these creatures more than likely needed the hot temperatures to survive. Just like most reptiles, they were probably cold-blooded. There was no need to regulate the temperature inside of their bodies if the environment was this hot. This meant that they would probably not survive extreme cold regions.

‘There are too many natural flame elements around here, with my incomplete knowledge of the Water Dao I won’t be able to perform this task too well...’

He knew a lot of techniques, some were based on the Dao of Water. While he could use them to a degree, his fortitude was lightning and holy attacks. Electrifying these walking monstrosities would probably be slightly better than using flames but it would also be inefficient. It seemed that even their insides had been enhanced to take a lot of damage, perhaps swallowing lava had something to do with it.

While he could brute force the issue against these monsters, this wasn’t the problem. There were many people relying on him here and without the flaming serpent they were forming, they would stand no chance of surviving in this environment. What he needed to do was try to find a way of getting through those reinforced shells without using too much of his power. These monsters were probably just the tip of it so he could not waste all of his power on them.

“Get behind me, we can’t waste time here, if this many creatures appeared here then perhaps the Golden Palace and everyone there could be at risk.”

“Dong’er, do you have a plan?”



“Lowering the temperature would probably work but that won’t be possible with all these active volcanoes around. However, there is a way to disable them for the time being.”

“There is?”

“Yes, just follow my lead, we are going to break through.”

Zhang Jin nodded while turning toward Huo Qiang and the rest of the sect members that were with them.

“You heard that, get ready we are going to go straight to the palace, follow the Patriarch!”

While there weren’t any external techniques that he could use to stop these monsters, there was an internal one. His Dao of the Souls would be the best way to go against strong-body refiners. While their bodies were reinforced to an extreme degree, it wasn’t the same for their souls. Even though they might have been beasts made through cloning and selective breeding, they still possessed this core to hold themselves together.

‘Their soul energy is quite weak, It’s like a child driving a tank’

There were several ways of utilizing his Soul Dao but he chose to go with the most lenient one. In truth, he wasn’t sure how he felt about attempting to use this technique. Previously he only used the Dao of Souls against evil spirits that attacked him. Tearing souls from bodies was not something he was inclined to; it was also not as easy as it sounded.

The connection between a body and its soul wasn’t that easily broken. Yet it also wasn’t that hard to affect this strange energy that resided on another plane of existence. It was something that kept everything together. All living creatures in this world had souls, even the ones created through nefarious methods. A corrupted demonic soul was still a soul and could be affected by his Dao.

“Protect me for a second, I need to concentrate.”

Thus when everything was ready he clapped his hands together and began to concentrate. A pale almost transparent aura washed over his body as he gathered his energies. There were a lot of these volcanic beasts everywhere so it would take some force to knock them out at the same time. Even more, if he actually intended to rip away the connection their bodies had with their souls.

The art that he was preparing needed to be on a certain frequency. Luckily these creatures were quite similar to each other which probably had something to do with how they came to be. Suddenly as they approached the group of cultivators and their white-haired leader a colorless burst of energy flew in all directions. It was hard to see and wasn’t even followed by a gust of wind but the moment it enveloped the bodies of the approaching beasts, they crumbled down to the ground.

“Now!”

After giving the signal the group of cultivators turned into a flaming meteor. They flew up into the sky while the monsters that were keeping them in check started to pass out. The group could barely believe it, how could the bloodthirsty swarm of volcanic creatures just drop down?

“Are they all dead?”

“No, I just damaged the connection their souls have to their bodies, it will naturally mend itself in time but for now, they will be passed out for a while.”

Tearing this connection to shreds was also possible but after battling with the squid monster and assembling the teleportation array, Zhang Dong needed some rest. His Qi reserves had been drained by even this wide area stunning technique. There were just too many enemies here, it was better to retreat to the golden palace where everyone else was. With their help, he intended to finally start the counter-offensive and perhaps even take over this pocket dimension.

“Connection to their soul, that’s fascinating.”

“Is it?”

“Yes, soul arts aren’t easily attained, you should teach me some of them if you have the time.”

“What, do you want to inhabit a new body after the old one is unable to have its fun?”

“What? That’s not it!”

Zhang Jin shouted out in protest while trying to concentrate. All of them were using their spiritual energy to produce a shield around themselves. Even the core formation experts were adding with their battle formation that allowed them to fly at an increased pace. With the initial ambush resolved the lava pits and pools remained calm. Without them keeping to the ground they didn’t trigger any new encounters.

“That should do it, relax and gather your energies.”

Soon he gave the order to lower the pace. If they continued for too long they would just burn through all of their Qi and render themselves useless for any further battles that were waiting for them. Returning to the Golden Palace was important but considering that it was a flying fortress, they didn’t really need to worry about the safety of the people there as much.

At a slower pace and with everyone alive they flew forward. Now with some time to organize his thoughts, Zhang Dong could look this place over. The volcanic region was quite a desolate desert of flames. Similar creatures that they just got away from roamed the lands and there were even some capable of flight. Luckily even at the reduced pace they were just too fast.

The flier types looked to have a similar lizardly origin point like the volcanic creatures below. They didn’t seem to be bothered by the toxic fumes escaping from the volcanoes. Their similarity to flying dinosaurs was uncanny but luckily they weren’t quite nimble enough to pose a threat.

‘What do these creatures even eat here? Do they just hunt each other? Doesn’t seem like there is anything that is weak for them to eat...’

There were no volcanic fish that could be eaten, just the unending flames and fumes that shouldn’t be able to support any life. It was as if these monsters were just dumped here to act as a source of spirit points for whenever a person with the system arrived.

‘I still can’t seem to connect with the faction system.’

Soon his attention went away from the mobs living around this place. His system window wasn't showing his wife or the Golden Palace that she was supposed to be in. It didn't seem that he would be able to teleport to their location. He could only hope that nothing bad happened before he arrived.

"Gramps, I think everyone rested enough, we need to pick up the pace, I have a bad feeling about this..."

He called out to his grandfather, there was no time to waste, they needed to rendezvous with the others before something like that tentacle monster appeared again. Even if the Golden Palace was resistant it would not survive forever in this type of environment that would eat away at its energy and shields. Sooner or later it would fall and be opened up to a full push by these ferocious beasts.

### [Chapter 636](#)

"Matriarch, the protective barrier won't last for much longer, shouldn't we move to another location?"

"If we move now, it will be hard for Elder Qiang and Jin to find us."

"But if we remain here, we might not be able to leave, these beasts are relentless, there is no end to them, we need to..."

"Your input is appreciated, Elders but we will hold out for now, that will be all."

"Matriarch... if that is your wish."

Five nascent soul elders clasped their hands at Zhang Liena. The group soon left after discussing some issues involving their stay here. Already close to a week had passed in this volcanic area where they had appeared. All search parties that went off too far had not returned to give a report, instead, they were in a constant state of being besieged.

"Was that the right decision..."

"The Patriarch will find his way back to us, he always does."

"Elder Zhi, you might have more trust in my husband than me but it's true, he hasn't let us down before..."

Zhang Zhi was the last one to leave and after the comment, she felt somewhat reassured. Yet, she could not help but worry about Zhang Dong. While others thought of him as some kind of deity, to her he was only a man. His facade of the perfect Patriarch was something that he always did put on but that was the problem, it was partially a facade. His power was tremendous, but he made mistakes and sometimes others needed to pick up the slack.

"I'll have to move the fortress if this takes too long, the other elders are right, if we run out of power, then it's all over."

The problem was due to their main generator, it was slowly getting drained. Normally the fortress should be able to replenish the energy reserves with time, that was if it wasn't burning through energy constantly. The protective barrier needed to be in place to shield them from the toxic fumes and hot environment. Not everyone would be able to survive outside if it wasn't in place.

Then there was the second problem with them wasting energy, constant attacks from the residents. The strange lizard-like creatures with almost impenetrable scales were the problem. They could be defeated by continued spirit cannon barrages but all of this took their precious resources and fuel. The beasts just continued to come at them, even the nascent elders needed to get themselves involved to allow the barrier to function normally.

Even as she was thinking about the correct move forward, the lights turned red as the alarm went off. She hadn't gotten used to this yet, the red flashing lights and the loud sound was something her husband came up with. Something about it showing the gravity of the situation better than just having an announcement done by an elder.

"What is it now?"

Zhang Liena was the temporary owner of the Golden Palace. She could easily teleport herself to the command room in which she could observe the outside of the palace. The alarm had a tint to it and by the look of it, the situation was dire outside. Normally it started out with a yellow, then moved on to orange, and ended up on red when the situation was critical.

"What is that thing, it's as big as the whole palace... not it's even bigger..."

She soon realized what the problem was, outside there was a towering being made of molten rock. Its size was gigantic and constantly increasing as it was trying to rise itself out of the lava lake it came from. It had a humanoid shape that lacked any legs, and its underside looked like it was stuck to the ground but perhaps it was only hidden there.

The massive arms were made of black obsidian rock that was on fire. Cracks filled with lava constantly spit out a fiery concoction along with black smoke. Without the need to analyze this thing, it was clear to her that this was a problem. The creature was slow but its size was a problem. With the Golden Dong Palace stationed in place, it would be an easy target for this monstrous being.

There were a few options she could go with, the easiest one would cause more energy to be spent. This volcanic monster that looked like a flaming stone golem was still an easy target. The large number of spirit cannons that were placed on the floating bastion would eventually kill it. How much of the barrier would be damaged in the process was a problem and she also didn't know if more of these creatures could appear. If they started getting pounded from all sides, sooner or later all of their reserves would run out.

"I haven't really had an opportunity to test that new gift he made, this might be a good opportunity for it."

Liena looked at the lumbering giant slowly approaching the golden palace that was conserving its power. Soon she found herself outside where she could see masses of spirit bullets flying from the defensive towers. The shield was designed to allow the cannon fire to pass from the inside but would not allow anything to enter from the other side. The same was true for anyone that wanted to go outside. They would be free to leave but entering back in wouldn't be as easy. Only someone like Liena had all the privileges could move back and forth at her own pace.

"Matriarch?"

“Stop the cannons, I’ll take care of this creature myself, aim them back at the smaller beasts instead.”

“As you command!”

Her voice echoed through the entire palace and no one dared to say anything against it. The only person that didn’t like this plan was Zhang Zhi who decided to hang out in the back. At the moment he didn’t raise his complaints but Liena knew that he would prefer to perform this task instead.

He was a loyal soldier to her husband and would probably give his life to protect his dear Patriarch’s wife. She wasn’t that fond of this treatment as the man trying to protect her was actually weaker, proving to him that he didn’t need to baby her around was also part of this encounter. Sometimes the people forgot but she was one of the great three founders of this sect and just as strong as any of them.

Soon her form started exuding copious amounts of emerald light. She shot out like an arrow from a bow to cross to the other side clad in a veil of wind energy. The rays of emerald light that were surrounding her body slowly intensified as she went through a change. Everyone could feel it, a great Dao of the Wind taking form and a marvelous power that she wielded with it.

The ugly lava golem that was trying to emerge from the huge lake could see the bolt of green light getting closer. As a reaction to the attack, it started opening its large mouth which was filled with volcanic ash and magma. Soon a torrent of red flames emerged from within with the target being the green energy.

The emerald light looked so tiny in comparison to the huge torrent of lava coming it's way. No one would expect Liena to be able to handle this amount of molten rock. The sect members expected her to just gracefully dodge to the side before launching a counterattack but instead, they saw the lights of their Matriarch being engulfed by the burning earth instead.

Some gasped, others were stunned and even Zhang Zhi reacted in shock. However, before acting, he realized that the power Liena was exuding was still there. Suddenly a massive burst of green took shape, the torrent of lava was forced to the sides and submerged the lizard beasts.

“A mindless beast like you is not a worthy opponent of this Zhang Liena!”

Her form became noticeable to everyone and it had changed. Instead of the flowy dress robe that everyone was used to, a suit of armor could be seen instead. It fully covered her body from head to toe and glistened like an emerald. To her back something that looked like four wings were fluttering yet when taking a closer look, they were metallic in form. Instead of being actual wings made of feathers, they were composed of many flying swords.

These swords were soon utilized as weapons, she just needed to point in a direction with her right hand and the whole wing on the same side started disassembling itself. Multiple green blades emerged and flew right toward the massive beast made from lava. Even though its body was composed of hard rock the swords made it through.

The creature was attempting to smack the glowing green fly away with its massive hand. Yet just as it was taking a swing the shining swords started cutting into it. Their speed was astonishing and each and everyone could produce a green beam of light that cut through the hardened rock. In a matter of moments the monster’s whole arm was shredded into pieces and fell to the ground.

Yet this monster defied the natural laws, even though the chunks of its arm were landing on the ground a new one was forming back in place. A surge of lava escaped from the stump that was left behind. It soon took the same shape as the old limb. The molten rock soon hardened and Liena had to continue with a few more tests to realise that this approach wouldn't be enough.

"It's regenerating its body through the connection to the ground."

She could feel the fire and earth elements being sucked up from underneath to replace any missing body parts. This beast was quite large and when trying to feel for the core that should be the weak point, it was hard to pinpoint. There was a vast quantity of fake cores inside the monster. It was one of the ways these creatures became almost impossible to beat as a fake core could become a true core if that one was destroyed.

"If I destroy all the cores at once, it won't be able to transfer its consciousness into a new one."

She waved her left hand to activate the flying swords from the left wing. This time instead of using them for more slicing she called back all the blades. They all swirled around in front of her to create something that looked like a hexagram. From the center a massive amount of Qi energy was then quickly gathered as she prepared for a technique that this armor came equipped for. She wasn't quite sure about the technology her husband invented but the destructive power it had, was quite real.

A massive burst of energy flew forward and collided with the volcanic monster that was still busy reforming its body. The emerald light shredded into the volcanic body tearing it apart into tiny pieces. It was as if the monster was getting cut apart by millions of tiny wind blades, even the swarm of fake cores could not shield it from its demise.

"Hoh... I see you didn't really need my help..."

The beam flew up into the air to push the clouds to the side and revealed a glowing orb of golden energy hidden within. Inside of it, there were a few familiar faces but only one, in particular, brought a smile to her face.

## [Chapter 637](#)

"Took you long enough."

"Sorry for making you worry."

"Hmph."

Zhang Dong flew over to his wife that at the moment was clad in the emerald armor that was created for her. During the trip here he was able to pinpoint their location after she activated her prestige unit skill to make her more powerful. With it, she was able to easily destroy the being made from lava and all the fake cores along with it.

"Isn't that cute, little Liena is blushing."

"Shut your mouth if you don't want me to make you into a woman old man!"

One of the blades that were flying in the sky aimed itself at Zhang Jin's crotch after he made the comment. Then it actually flew toward the old man's crotch and would have connected with his tool if

he didn't dodge to the side. Zhang Dong started scratching his head while watching his wife chasing after his grandfather. It was quite surprising to see Zhang Jin dodge those high-speed attacks without getting scratched.

"D-dong'er please help me! She has gone crazy!"

"... Should I? Hm..."

"What if she damages it? How could you be so cruel to your grandfather!"

"Ugh, fine..."

Even though it was fun to see his perverted grandfather being chased around by his angry wife, this was not the time to waste their energy. While the huge mountain-sized lava creature had been defeated, it was not the only one out here. When he was flying towards this place where the Golden Palace was parked he saw another of its kind moving to this area. They were probably attracted to either the sounds of battle or the massive amounts of Qi being wasted during it.

"Liena, think that's enough, the other sect members are looking at you... Do you want to be known as the mad Matriarch in the future?"

He played it off as a joke and it worked like a charm. The people in this world like to keep an image and his wife wasn't different. The moment she saw some of the juniors and elders glancing her way with confused expressions she managed to return to her old self. The armor that she was wearing vanished into green particles of light and her lovely figure along with her flowy robe was revealed underneath.

"No one saw anything, understood?"

She covered half of her face with one of her battle fans while glaring at the people down below. With haste, all of the sect members started bowing with approval while shouting.

"Yes, Matriarch!"

"Good..."

It was hard for Zhang Dong not to smile in this situation. All the stress and fear of having his sect members along with his wife slaughtered was gone. The palace was there and along with it everyone that had gone out for this trip. While he wasn't sure if there were no casualties, the palace was in good shape which probably meant that they were all fine.

"I think she grazed it a bit... is it still there?"

Zhang Jin on the other hand started looking down at his robe which had been slightly nicked in a few places. Luckily he discovered that his little gentleman down below had not been damaged. This allowed him to release a sigh of relief while also fleeing from the sky to not get poked at again.

"We should return inside."

"Yes we should and don't forget to tell me where you vanished to, I thought that teleportation technique was supposed to be perfect?"

"About that..."

Now that he was flying down to the golden palace along with his wife he had some explaining to do. Previously she was assured by him that nothing could go wrong. Even if they were lost somewhere with the help of his system there would be no way of him finding everyone back.

"It seems that my technique doesn't work that well if I get stuck in a pocket dimension."

This was the crux of the problem, these miniaturized worlds that were inside of this fish. For one reason or another, his system was bugging out and Bob couldn't do anything about it. He wasn't sure if it was due to the separate dimensions as he would be able to teleport himself into the Dimensional Regalia with the help of his faction system. But this could be due to it being a treasure that he was the master of. Perhaps other similar ones would be able to block out his system which now he needed to account for.

"Does this mean that we won't be able to escape from here?"

"I don't think so, if I can't use my technique then I probably won't be able to use it on the whole palace like I intended to."

"Then are we stuck in this place?"

"No, there are ways of getting out of these pocket dimensions, we just need to find the correct area."

The two continued their conversation while returning to the hidden control room in the golden palace. Zhang Dong could use the system's or the palace's teleportation feature to get them out of there but this wasn't the end of it. He had already managed to assemble a teleportation array to transfer himself and the group of cultivators to the lava dimension. This meant that it was possible to use the old method of traversing through these pocket dimensions and to do that he just needed to pinpoint the correct one.

"So, we need to find the right place?"

"Yes, I don't think this fish that swallowed us is a sentient being, it's more like a gateway to other smaller dimensions, like a very complex treasure."

"Then if it's a treasure, then it has to have a master!"

"Yes, if we find whoever is controlling this thing, then we'll be able to leave."

"Could it be the Cerulean Empress?"

"It might be but I'm not sure how this place works yet, the dimensions are thin in a few places and they also connect to one another."

"But how will we find such a place? These lands are filled with those creatures, I don't think they will make it easy for us to pass."

"The longer it takes us to find the exit the least amount of power will the palace have..."

Zhang Dong knew that there was a way out of this place. In the cold region he was able to find a gate that would allow him to travel to a different area. There he found his grandfather and the other cultivators. He knew that a place like that should be here as well.



'Bob, if I find another gate like the previous one, could you figure out how this place works?'

'More data is required for travel, more sources of input are required to calculate the quarry, the possibility is at 24,56%.'

'I see, so if I give you more time then it could work.'

The previous time he encountered a gate to another pocket dimension he had Bob store the data from it. If he was able to find a secondary gate like the last one, the data that his Ai received could be enough to triangulate other locations. What he was looking were not the ones that brought them to dangerous zones like this one but to the one that the leader of the underwater people resided in.

"It could work."

"Have you figured out something, husband?"

"Yes, we need to find a certain location first and I think it won't even be that hard."

Liena smiled at Zhang Dong who started to go to work. The golden palace needed to take off and head to the next location. The spot that they were occupying was already known by the enemies. They couldn't just blindly fly through the volcanic area, sooner or later their engines would lose power and he would need to turn himself into a battery to keep everything running.

'Bob, find the wavelength similar to the gate that I traveled through, there is probably at least one exit like that which connects to another pocket dimension, use the golden palace as a magnifier for the signal if you have to.'

'Affirmative...'

'Calculating...'

'Signal found, 94,23% match, sending over coordinates...'

It took a few minutes but Bob was able to find a spot with a strong enough signature. Soon enough the Golden Palace was starting to take off and flying in that direction. On the many screens that were in the control room, he could see the volcanic creatures following after them. They were all over the place, it didn't seem that this volcanic area had any safe locations devoid of conflict.

Without the giant base that could hold so many people, it would have probably not been possible to minimize the casualties this much. It was the correct choice to wait for enough system points for the upgrade. If he took the previous version of the Golden Dong Palace into these depths, then it would not have been such a smooth ride.

Even with him knowing the way the road was a bumpy one. The monsters were on to them and continued to chase them throughout the entire journey. Getting their shields pelted with lava-filled rocks was an hourly occurrence. Their ship wasn't the fastest one and as they were trying to conserve power, they couldn't move at full capacity.

It took a few days but they made it to the location that Bob pinpointed. It was another giant structure but this time instead of a tower it looked like a mountain stretching above the heavens.

‘This one clearly connects somewhere as well but I’m not sure if we should just cross through it. Then there is the problem of taking the palace with us...’

It didn’t seem that it would be possible for the whole golden palace would fit through the dimensional door that was hidden within this mountain. At the bottom was a similar-sized gate that could probably only fit people through it. Leaving the flying fortress that was their main weapon wasn’t really an option so another way needed to be found to get through here.

‘Bob begin the analysis.’

‘Affirmative.’

Zhang Dong gave the order as his intention was to figure out the pattern between these connectors. If he could map them out then it would be possible to just teleport to the source without the need of jumping through hoops. Yet to his surprise, this wouldn’t be as easy as he hoped for.

‘Warning...warning... threat detected.’

‘Huh? What is it now?’

The moment Bob began analyzing the pathway forward some type of defensive system was triggered. It was similar to the time he attempted to bust his way through the sky and with it triggered more of the lava monsters would be coming to this location.

#### [Chapter 638](#)

“That’s a lot of them...”

“Where did all of these monsters come from?”

“This didn’t happen in the previous zone, it must be some inbuilt defensive mechanism against analyzing the gates.”

“Defensive mechanism?”

Zhang Dong nodded to Liena who could also see a scene playing out on the outside. The whole place became shrouded in black smoke. Previously they could at least see something but now it was as if a demonic miasma was being conjured by an evil cultivator. From within this dark mist, more of those strange creatures started arising. Their intent was obvious as they all charged at the golden palace that was hovering slightly above the ground.

‘When I was in the ice zone they stopped attacking me when I arrived at the teleportation spot. They have some type of ingrained command that will force them to back off or attack depending on a situation, this is clear.’

It was like fighting an army made out of automatons. The creatures didn’t seem to have a mind of their own and reacted to something their creator ingrained into their brains. It was clear that his hacking attempt was the trigger for this situation to arise. The person that created this pocket dimension maze didn’t want anyone to shorten the trip. Perhaps the path was linear but it was possible that more of these teleportation spots existed.

‘This would have been fine if I came alone but there is no way I’m getting out of here without the palace.’

While Bob was busy analyzing the teleportation patterns he got up from his chair. Along with Liena, they needed to head outside to stall the monsters. There was one unconfirmed theory, that this place was meant for a solo adventure and could only be finished by a system holder. It was possible that if he tried to go through the gate alone that it would be shut off.

His people would then be stuck in this lava region facing countless waves of volcanic monsters. There was no way of knowing that even if he reached the end if they would be set free. This whole place was somewhat above his knowledge as he had no idea how pocket dimensions were formed. All that he could do was analyze the portals between them.

Luckily he wasn’t alone, even without giving out the commands the people in the palace quickly picked up the pace. The cannons started reigning down doom on the approaching beasts and the nascent soul masters used their own attacks to support everyone. They were like a well-oiled machine that knew how to handle things.

This force was mostly composed of the cultivators that were fighting out on the sea. They knew how to circle out and keep everyone fresh. There was a system in place allowing only the well-rested warriors that be directly involved on the battlefield. The ones that were tired would quickly retreat and get treated for the loss of stamina and spiritual energy. After they were back at full it was time to go back.

“I guess they don’t really need me...”

“Stay here and leave everything to us, the Patriarch needs to be ready for the worst case scenario.”

“I guess you are right, be careful out there.”

Liena along with Zhang Zhi and Huo Qiang were all out there doing their thing. Zhang Dong on the other hand remained in the control chamber while the analysis took place. If he didn’t use up his own Qi then it would actually go a little bit faster. As the strongest person in the sect he needed to conserve his battle power. If a being of unfathomable power arrived he needed to be ready to battle it when at full power. If he used up too much energy on minions and side bosses, everything could turn sour fast.

It wasn’t the easiest thing for him to do. Just sitting here while doing nothing wasn’t really his style. Ever since he arrived in this world he was kind of forced to act by himself while the people he led only had a small role to fill. Now that they had been trained up to a force that could rival the old big three, it was time to let them handle things. Zhang Dong needed to stop treating his people like little children that needed him for every small thing.

This wasn’t the easiest thing for him to swallow. He knew that if he didn’t get involved that people would get hurt and perhaps even make bad decisions. Yet just as a parent sending off their child into the world he needed to do the same for his people. They needed to be able to handle themselves, otherwise if something happened to him, they would be defenseless. Finally, they were able to defend themselves, all that hard work, sweat, and tears was all for a day like this to arrive.

‘80%...85%...89%...92%...99%... calculations finished, transferring data to the user.’

The analysis of the signal had been done and now it was just a matter of time for him to input it into the golden palace. First off he needed to see where they were and how many of the pocket dimensions other than this were accessible.

‘Bob, give me a visual representation of the situation.’

‘Affirmative.’

While the rumbling noises continued outside he looked at one of the screens that was being filled out by some spheres. They looked like marbles with different colors, the red one in the middle was a representation of the lava pocket dimension he found himself. Other ones had their own main theme that gave him an idea about the most prevalent Dao in them.

‘So this is where I am and that one looks like the one gramps and Qiang were sent to... everything is connected...’

There was not much variation in the structure of these pocket dimensions. They were created in a straight line that wrapped around like a serpent. The ice biome that he arrived in had two locations it connected to, one of them was the previous world he found his grandfather in. There were always two pathways that could be taken but everything was connected into one singular pathway.

‘So, if we just keep going through the gates we will arrive at the ice zone I first appeared in? This can’t be right, there must be something else...’

‘Bob, is there a hidden area somewhere? This can’t just be a loop of pocket dimensions, there must be some type of way out of here... Try to analyze the data again.’

‘...Hidden world found... attempting to find a pathway...’

Just as he had concluded there was an area that connected to the middle. There seemed to be one main world right in the middle of the serpent. All of the side dimensions connected to it but it required more time to analyze. This of course put more time constraints on the whole situation which was quickly turning ugly.

Many large-scale volcanic monsters like the one Liena destroyed had managed to arrive. They were showering the protective barrier with their volcanic fists and attacks. Even when they were pelted by multiple attacks they were hard to eradicate. The false cores were almost impossible to destroy at once without using up one of the special transformations.

This power had a cooldown period and wasting it on a wave of monsters before going into the belly of the beast wouldn’t be the best idea. There was a secondary option though, instead of teleporting to the main pocket dimension they could make their way into one of the smaller ones. They would be used as a soft reset as the monsters there should not be aware of their whereabouts.

The only problem was just like before, the Golden Palace. Considering that he needed to get it over to the other side in its entirety, it would cost a lot of energy. After one jump they would burn through half of it. They would be unable to make repeatable jumps and could even find themselves estranged in the new area. It would be much better to have a fully functioning fortress when they arrived at the enemy's doorstep.

‘Bob, keep at it.’

After giving his Ai the order he looked at the screens to see a small problem. The long battle outside had attracted something even worse than the titanic lava golems. It was something that reminded him of his familiar that was left in the main sect as its main protector. It was a massive dragon that was as big as four of those lava creatures put together. It didn’t seem to possess any wings capable of flight but its massive size that towered over everything was real.

This was not an opponent that the golden palace and his sect could handle alone. The fire coming out of this dragon’s mouth would not be stopped by the barriers for too long. Even as he was glancing at the monitors he could already see the energy dropping down rapidly. This time around he would need to go outside to get his own hands dirty. At least that was his intention yet before he could step take a step out of the hidden control room, he received a private message.

“Senior Brother, let me handle this.”

“Qiang? Are you sure? That thing might be too much for even you.”

“Haha, this is what I live for!”

Huo Qiang was willing to endanger himself to fight this massive monster instead of him. Zhang Dong wasn’t so sure about this but if he went outside now then this whole thing would take even longer. Bob needed to use his spiritual energy for processing power. It was like trying to run a game while many files were being copied at the same time in the background. It was certainly not an optimal process and not like there was an end to these monsters here.

“Very well, just be careful, that thing is probably resistant to flame attacks.”

“Haha, it might be but so am I!”

Just like Liena his wife Huo Qiang was in possession of a separate mode. His armor was soon taking form as he finally activated his battle mode. The frame wasn’t too bulky but the sun designs became apparent. He was someone that could wield the Dao of the Flame almost to perfection and along with it came the energy that stars were made from.

The battle between the two fire-wielding monsters soon started. The environment that was composed of hard obsidian rocks started melting as the dragon opened its huge mouth to intercept the incoming fire cultivator. A battle of immense proportions was taking place and for once Zhang Dong would watch it from the sidelines.

### [Chapter 639](#)

“Take this, Solar BUSTERRRRR!”

“...”

“Tremble before the might of Huo Qiang, the sun god!”

“...”

“Haven’t had enough?”

‘Does he have to shout out his attacks every time, I know that that dragon is slow... but everyone from the sect can hear him.’

Zhang Dong had trouble concentrating on helping Bob crack the code to the main pocket dimension where their true enemy was probably hiding. When the massive dragon monster appeared before them he was going to defeat it but instead Huo Qiang wanted to have a go at it. It seemed that he was actually winning but the performance was rather loud and unnecessarily long.

Huo Qiang quickly shifted into his enhanced form that placed him inside of a large glowing armor. He did look like a sun deity by tossing large plasma-filled solar bombs at the fire dragon. Even this creature made of molten rock started to melt into liquid as the fight continued. It seemed that after a while he shifted from taking it seriously to showboating. The sect members that cheered him on from afar only fueled this whole situation.

‘Maybe I shouldn’t have recreated those comics and mangas when I was bored.’

A while back he implemented a new technique that he became aware of. Thanks to his brain being enhanced as a cultivator he could recall all the pieces of fiction he once read or saw back in his previous world. It was quite easy to infuse those old works into books inside his system library. Then copying it into the real world wasn’t hard anymore and some of those works contained manga. These usually had the heroes call out their special attacks before attacking and after reading a few Qiang seemed to develop this quirk.

‘Well... he probably won’t go overboard with it, at least he is luring the other monsters away from the palace with all of that shouting.’

With the flamboyant performance, it was hard for the creatures to concentrate on one target. It was actually a good tactic to lure them toward Huo Qiang and that huge dragon boss. The beast was so huge that it could destroy even the lava golems. Even now one was crumbling after getting hit by a tail swipe. The monster was clearly enraged as the fight wasn’t going its way.

‘Bob, speed it up.’

Soon he just decided to sit down and concentrate. By relegating some of his own spiritual energy into Bob the process could be hastened. Only now that he knew that there was no reason to save up power did he push himself to the limit.

‘Calculations complete, sending trajectory data to the user.’

‘Finally!’

The triangulations were complete and the visual representation of the map showed him a world filled with green and blue energy. This indicated that the element of wood along with water were probably the most prevalent there. Perhaps this was a clue to what he would be getting if he managed to defeat the master of that place. Yet he couldn’t know if that was the finish line for this military expedition.

‘Hm... this is going to take out a lot of energy... luckily these monsters let me farm more spirit points.’

While he couldn’t farm spirit points by killing monsters it was possible to use it in tandem with his faction system. The monster waves that were being cleared out by anyone above a certain favorability

ranking was giving him some points. This together with the constant passive gains from his enlarged territory would be enough for a two-way trip.

“Qiang, stop playing around and come back, I’ll be teleporting us and the Golden Palace away from this place and you better be in range before that happens.”

“Already Senior Brother? Fine, I shall end the life of this overgrown lizard!”

After it was possible everyone was given the order to return to the inner parts of the palace. They all needed to be inside during the teleportation procedure or otherwise, they would be lost in this place forever. Soon the only person that didn’t retreat was Huo Qiang that instead was gathering a large attack over his head.

It was somewhat similar to Zhang Dong’s finishing move which created a miniaturized star. Qiang on the other hand made his from plasma energy which made it look like a smaller sun. It was then promptly tossed at the already injured volcanic dragon that could only activate its fire breath to go against it. The two forces clashed with each other to generate a massive explosion. Even the creatures that lived in this volcanic region weren’t able to sustain themselves in all this heat. Their scales and hides started turning to black charcoal or just melting.

Soon the golden palace started glowing brightly and together with the flame technique, everything in the vicinity went white. Where once stood the massive golden palace nothing more remained and near it a giant hole that spawned a few kilometers with a headless dragon remained.

“Did you see that!”

“Yes, I saw a lot of stupidity, there was no reason to cut it so close you idiot, when my husband gives you an order you better comply immediately!”

“You’re just jealous that I took out their boss!”

“Why you!”

“Calm down you two, this is not the time for petty squabbles, we could be in for a lot of resistance on the other side so conserve your strength.”

Zhang Dong’s voice could be heard through the speakers. He was still sitting in the command room and adding power to the teleportation procedure that was taking place. The golden palace was shaking quite a bit and the shields outside were having some trouble holding together. The passage through dimensions wasn’t that easy and he still didn’t fully understand it.

He could only let the system along with Bob guide him through it while hoping for the best. This was not something he wanted to keep relying on. The system that he was given was created by a strange unknown force. The reason for its existence was unknown to him but it didn’t seem to be anything too good. If it was created by a benevolent god then monsters like Wang Long would not have been created from it. The Overseer that was there didn’t even react to the wanton destruction that he created.

The only time it showed itself was when he was about to go through a transformation into something new and greater. It was as if these beings were only here to keep the system holders from discovering the full truth of the matter. Perhaps if his strange cultivation variation was found he would be in for a

world of pain. Before that could happen he needed to get stronger and clearing out this last area could bring him over the edge.

‘We are here...’

The Golden Palace stopped shaking as it finally appeared in the hidden region. All the other ones were connected to form a loop. Perhaps there was a secret pathway that would be created after he visited all of those pocket dimensions but through this way, he was free to end it faster.

‘Looks quite peaceful... similar to the area I arrived in first but there is a lot more of this strange water here...’

At first glance, there was no reason to be alarmed. The creatures of this new zone didn’t seem too violent or too powerful. It was a quiet place filled out with breathable water like in the underwater base of that squid monstrosity. This water was very clear and didn’t really impede the view as much as regular seawater did.

To check some more he gave Bob the order to scan for everything he could find. All the information was transferred to the golden palace’s main computer which could then forward the information to his army. They were quickly getting a visual representation of the region's geographical structure.

“Is everyone alright? If you feel teleportation sickness please rest for a bit in the medical chamber.”

“P-patriarch, you are here.”

Zhang Dong removed himself from his hidden command room and appeared in the official one where all the elders from his sect gathered. Zhang Zhi and Liena were here along with Zhang Jin. Huo Qiang had barely made it in so his location was outside the inner walls of the golden palace. His condition wasn’t all too great, the amount of spiritual energy he went through to defeat the large dragon was staggering. At the time being, he was passed out on the ground in a starfish position.

“Can someone peel Qiang off the ground? The barrier is still in place but the water should be breathable even if that doesn’t make sense. “

“Patriarch, should we be cautious of it?

“It should be fine but considering the enemy, we are facing is proficient in water techniques, it would perhaps be better to minimize the contact.”

The elders in the room nodded at each other. Even though the water allowed them to function without using air this didn’t mean it was safe. What if the strange liquid entered their bodies and was then used against them by whoever was living in this place. Taking in a foreign substance always carried a risk so it was better to remain vigilant and evade any contact as if it was composed of poison mist.

“Dong’er I’ll be the first to ask, where are we now?”

“Let me explain the structure of these strange zones to you first before we continue.”

Zhang Dong presented his theory to the elders gathered in the room. The circular structure and that they found themselves in a hidden area that they should not be in. Immediately everyone was stunned by the scale as they could see the mockup map that Bob had created for Zhang Dong before. There were



twenty-one other pocket dimensions in this anglerfish that they found themselves in. Each and every one of them was the size of the current dimensional regalia.

“Fascinating, what is this creature, and who would be capable of creating such a being... is it even alive, or is it some type of automaton with no soul?”

Some of the elders brought their speculations to the forefront. Zhang Dong himself was inclined to believe that the fish was not a real living being. If it actually had a proper soul then it would have been large enough for him to notice it. Instead, the monster fish was already chomping down on the golden palace before anyone knew what was going on.

“That’s a good theory but we must stay focused, I expect heavy resistance after whoever owns this place realizes that we are here.”

“Yes, Patriarch!”

While it would have been nice to have the drop on their enemies, they were in a strange place that worked on peculiar rules. There was no way of knowing what would happen to them after their protective barrier stopped working and before that could happen they needed to get this mission over with.

#### [Chapter 640](#)

“This looks like it’s going to take a while.”

“They aren’t budging an inch, this barrier is one strong barrier...”

Zhang Dong, Huo Qiang, and Zhang Liena were looking at the screen. There they could see a bunch of spirit blasts colliding with what looked to be a giant soap bubble. Inside this bubble, there was a massive structure that was covered in a strange haze. More than likely this was the last place in this journey but they were having trouble in getting through it.

“Patriarch!”

“Speak, how much longer will it take?”

“The elders believe that it will take more than two months.”

“Two months? That is a lot of time...”

“That it is...”

Replied Huo Qiang while yawning. Ever since they arrived at this new location not much had happened. It had become a snooze fest for everyone yet they were unable to relax. The longer they stayed in this strange pocket dimension the worse everyone’s mental state became. Some like Qiang were holding it in but he knew that others would not.

“Hm...”

“This sounds troubling. If we waste two months in here we put ourselves in danger. We also might not have enough energy left for the main battle with their leader, what should we do? ”

Zhang Liena commented while the three main elders deliberated. In reality, it was mostly just him thinking of a way to get there. Huo Qiang was just a muscle brain that was only good when a fight broke out. Liena on the other hand was a lot more helpful but would also not push the matter too much, instead she would give him a few choices on which he needed to decide by himself.

“There is probably a way to shut that thing off from the inside...”

“There is Senior Brother?”

“Are you an idiot? Why wouldn’t there be?”

“It could be one of those barriers, you know the ones that become stronger if they just focus on defense!”

Huo Qiang laughed at Zhang Liena that furrowed her eyebrows. Luckily he was here to stare the two down before they could get into another fight. For once Qiang was actually right, some barriers were only in a single direction which enhanced their defensive capabilities. Even with their massive cannons and the golden palace along with a few leftover flying ships, they weren’t even putting a small opening in the thing.

“Perhaps their leader never intended to leave their headquarters? This could be why we only saw waves of cloned troops instead.”

He murmured while taking into account that this whole place was probably set up to be a solo mission for a system holder. If he went at it from that angle then another option of getting in there should be somewhere. This also meant that bringing his forces here had been a mistake on his part which actually made this whole mission a lot more difficult. Now he needed to watch for his troops' safety as they were unable to teleport out of the large fish that swallowed them all.

This complicated things as he couldn’t just leave them all here. What would happen to them if even after taking care of the enemy Emperor there was no way of getting out? Would the Golden Palace be able to handle a collapsing pocket dimension or another trip through them?

At the moment it was possible for him to squeeze through the pathways between these dimensions but the path outside was being blocked by something. Perhaps all the answers that he was looking for were inside this soap bubble but if he entered it then he was risking the lives of his people.

‘What’s the alternative here... waiting for two months or more? There might be another barrier if we try forcing it inside, what if something happens to the kids while we are in here?’

He could not trust his so-called older brother. The Azure Emperor was a big unknown to him which made him a potential threat. Perhaps the Heavenly Crane Sect was afraid of him now but this wasn’t the same for the Long Clan. Without him in Spirit Spring City, spies would be able to sneak in.

What if they send word that he was missing and someone decided to attack? The Azure Emperor was probably on the same level as the other Emperors. He would be able to make it in as the strongest three elders were all out on this mission. Then there was also that overseer that he didn’t know much about. The longer they stayed in this place, the more dangerous it got for the people outside.

“What are you thinking about?”

“... I might have to do something that you probably won't be too happy about, my lovely wife.”

“Oh do tell?”

“Well...”

While he was thinking about the next step, Bob was busy analyzing everything in their vicinity. If he was not meant to go through the direct route then there had to be another one. Just like in the other pocket dimension he had discovered small underground tunnels that spawned through everything like an anthill. This was probably his way in and he needed to do it alone.

“You want to crawl through those tunnels alone? I’m not sure if that’s such a good idea.”

“Yes, senior brother, how about I go instead?”

“Your Dao of Flames is ill-suited for traversing those dark underwater caves. Sending a larger force won’t work either, they are very narrow and surrounded by strangely resistant rocks, even I wouldn’t be able to force my way through without using a large amount of my own spiritual energy...”

Everything kind of confirmed his previous theory of this being a test for a system holder. Bob was able to analyze the underground pathways to an extent. After around two hundred meters all of the bedrock became incredibly hard. It was possible that it was made from similar rocks that surrounded those nuclei with massive amounts of spiritual energy in them. This place had clearly been tailor-made for him to go through it alone and everyone else would just be a burden if they followed after him.

“It’s ill-suited? Maybe junior Zhi should go instead then?”

“Oh? You can actually say smart things from time to time?”

“Well, of course!... Hey, what’s that supposed to mean!”

His wife was not willing to let him go that easily. Zhang Zhi, who was a master in the Dao of Water would probably be able to survive the trip, at least to a point. He didn’t have an Ai companion like Bob that could show him the way. Even if he made it inside the soap bubble he would probably not be able to find a way to shut it off. It was possible for him to handle a general-class enemy but if that Empress appeared then he would probably be a goner.

“I don’t think Zhang Zhi will be up to the task, this is something that only I can probably do. Don’t worry, I’m just going to find a way to disable this barrier, you then need to be ready to come to my aid.”

“It sounds like you have already made the decision to leave.”

“I’m sorry but we won’t be able to progress any other way. Let me explain, this is more similar to an immortal abode.”

To get his wife on his side he had Bob show her the layout of the underground tunnels on the large screen. It was a large maze of thousands of narrow corridors without any way of knowing where to really go. Only with the help of the system’s mapping function and his knowledge about illusory formations would he be able to get through this maze. Any other person would be trapped there and perhaps never be able to come out.

“The rocks are too sturdy, even Zhi wouldn’t be able to dig himself out of there if he got lost and I don’t think maneuvering through underground tunnels is one of his specialties.”

“You do have more experience in infiltration... a bit too much if you ask me.”

Liena narrowed her eyes while frowning. To her, it was suspicious that he always went away on these strange missions. It was as if he liked to put himself in danger or didn’t trust anyone else to do a better job. Yet she also couldn’t think about anyone from their sect that would be able to outdo her husband in this field. Even less after he showcased his brand new Darkness Dao. It was impossible for even her to tell if he was inside of the room if he decided to hide inside of a shadow.

“Fine but you better inform me about your whereabouts whenever you can, I’ll be waiting!”

“No problem, that should be possible for now... at least until I go inside that barrier.”

At this point in time, his faction system was back to working in a diminished fashion. He was not able to reach anyone outside but at least everyone that was here in this pocket dimension was identified by it. Thanks to this even teleporting back into the golden palace should be possible and communicating with Liena and the others was also possible.

Thus after he had the talk with his wife and Qiang he made his preparations. To not make it look like they were plotting anything the golden palace would continue with the attack. It would act as a distraction while he went through the mass of tunnels down below them. Luckily this place also had a day and night cycle which made it easy for him to go unnoticed.

While sinking into the shadows he made his way down onto the land. The strange feeling of having this breathable water did not go away and it was even stranger after he had to sink into an actual lake to get to one of the entrances. It was a very similar experience as in the other pocket dimension.

Thus he continued while shrouded in full darkness. With Bob’s help, he could map out each tunnel that he went through. Perhaps the other dimension was supposed to be a practice run for this first maze as it was very similar yet slightly more intricate in its design. Thanks to that previous experience he was inclined to believe that this would be another cakewalk.

Perhaps it wouldn’t even take an hour to get through all of this and turn off the barrier above him, yet he couldn’t be more mistaken in his assumption as this new maze was not as easy to traverse as the other ones...